NOTE TO USERS

Completing the Vision:
Søren Kierkegaard's pseudonymous texts
and *Attack upon Christendom*

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ABBREVIATIONS

Unless otherwise stated, all citations and references in the thesis are to the latest Princeton editions of Kierkegaard's works, translated and edited by Howard and Edna Hong.

Attack	The collection of pamphlets and newspaper articles that make up
Moment	Kierkegaard's final writings is commonly referred to as *Attack upon Christendom*, from the title given to the first English edition of these writings. (Trans. Walter Lowrie, Boston: Beacon Press, 1960) The usage is widespread throughout Kierkegaardian scholarship, and for this reason the short title ***Attack*** will be used in the main discussion of the thesis. However, the definitive edition of these final works has recently been collected under the title *The Moment and Other Late Writings*. (Trans. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) For this reason, the abbreviation ***Moment*** will be used in the footnotes and citations.
Fear	*Fear and Trembling*. (Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong.
FT	Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983)
Fragments	*Philosophical Fragments*. (Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985)
Journals	*Journals and Papers*. (Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton:
JP	Princeton University Press, 1978)
Postscript	*Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. (Howard V. Hong and Edna H.
CUP	Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992)
POV	*Point of View*. (Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998)
Practice	*Practice in Christianity*. (Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991)
Sickness	*Sickness unto Death*. (Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980)

And when he remembered his old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow-prisoners, do you not suppose that he would felicitate himself on the change, and pity them?

-*Republic,* 516c.

We may regard it as felicitous that he died when he did, or the whole thing might have ended up by being extremely annoying.

-Bishop H. Martensen

"Memoirs" *Af mit Levnet*, III

Thesis Introduction

Søren Kierkegaard's final words written under his own name represent the culmination of the most important themes evident in the earlier pseudonymous works, and they stand as the fulfilment of the vision of authentic Christianity that Kierkegaard develops throughout his authorship. The texts in *The Moment* and *The Fatherland* magazines that together make up *Attack upon Christendom* bring to fruition the key ideas that have developed throughout the previous writing. Many secondary commentators tend to see it as a deviation from Kierkegaard's earlier concerns, or turn *Attack* into an aberration. This is done either explicitly by pointedly ignoring or dismissing *Attack*, or unintentionally by bestowing meaning onto the final work that has little connection to what has come before. This is unfortunate because as we shall demonstrate, it is only by studying *Attack* in its proper relation to the earlier pseudonymous texts that the fullest picture of both can emerge. *Attack* completes and gives practical significance to those themes that concern Kierkegaard's most important pseudonyms in the *oeuvre,* namely Johannes de Silentio, Johannes Climacus and Anti-Climacus. In turn, it is the earlier pseudonymous texts that ground *Attack*, pointing to the fact that this final phase of Kierkegaard's life stands as a consistent conclusion to the development of Kierkegaard's thought. The key themes that develop throughout the pseudonymous works are the Kierkegaardian notions of the 'leap', the 'offence' and 'indirect communication'. Each theme is important to the pseudonyms who use them, but the fullest expression of the ideas cannot be found in any one character in static isolation from the others. Kierkegaard's final, self-declared works, most notably *Attack upon Christendom* bring to fulfilment the conversation begun by the pseudonyms; it is in *his* attack that *their* concerns come to fruition. It is only by recognising that his authorship is essentially dynamic and dialectical, and by taking seriously the final works in conjunction with the earlier ones, that scholars can begin to understand the inner connection of Kierkegaard's writings, i.e. the *whole* Kierkegaard.

Attack is not the title of a single work, but is instead made up of a series of polemical articles which originally appeared in the journal *The Moment* and in *The Fatherland* newspaper from 1854 until Kierkegaard's death in 1855.[1] With *Attack*, Kierkegaard spoke out openly against the established church, his contemporaries and Danish society. It displays little of the lyrical polish of the earlier works, abandons philosophical dialectic and concentrates instead on specific people and events in

[1] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Moment and Other Late Writing* (non-pseudonymous 1854-55), trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna, H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

Kierkegaard's native Denmark.[2] The work abandons pseudonymity and is passionately concerned with the essence of Christianity. More than merely *writing*, however, this final phase of Kierkegaard's life is pre-eminently concerned with *action*. With his very public engagement, Kierkegaard draws attention to his own lived life as an embodiment of his message. Kierkegaard is not claiming that he is an example of an ideal Christian, but instead he highlights his own social and physical inadequacies as a follower of Christ.[3] It is proposed that Kierkegaard uses these weaknesses to present his own life as a sign of contradiction, an offensive posture that acts as a catalyst for honestly choosing between *either* authentic Christianity, *or* the inauthentic religion of Christendom. It is only the offensive sting of the gadfly that arouses people to make a true decision[4]- a decision made without recourse to sophisticated rhetoric, charismatic leader-figures or the populist comfort of the herd mentality. For this reason, although the most recent English translation of these works has been entitled *The Moment and Other Late Writings*, it is useful to retain the title of Walter Lowrie's original translated collection. The swirl of events, editorials, polemics and appeals to the public that came from all sides in the debate served to create a time that is much more accurately described as an 'Attack upon Christendom' than a mere 'collection of late writings' would suggest.[5]

The analogy of the cave in Plato's *Republic* provides a useful paradigm for reading *Attack* and the relationship that it has with the rest of Kierkegaard's literature.[6] The account of the *metanoia* of the philosopher-king contains a logic of ascent and descent which, when employed as a hermeneutic tool, clarifies the method of Kierkegaard's project. The story tells of the journey of the philosopher king from his shadowy cave to the open air vision of the true Good, and then details his descent back into the cave where the philosopher faces persecution while attempting to enlighten those still in darkness. The movements of the philosopher king are dictated by a notion of the Good which holds that merely having a vision of the Good is not enough, for the *whole* of the Good entails that this vision be enabled in others. As Socrates says, "Now, *that which imparts truth to the known and the power of knowing to the knower* is what I would have you term the idea of the good."[7] The process of ascending and descending, from thought to praxis, is made manifest in Kierkegaard's *oeuvre* by tracing the development of the 'leap', the 'offence' and 'indirect communication' throughout his works, all culminating in *Attack upon Christendom*. From one pseudonym to the next, these themes grow in

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[2] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 3-15, 16-18, 25, 54, 56-58, 67-68, 79-85, 207-208, 329-30, 343, 348.
[3] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 23, 25, 38, 60, 74, 78, 83, 213, 290, 311-12, 333, 340.
[4] Cf. *Moment*, p. 107.
[5] Søren Kierkegaard, *Attack upon Christendom*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Boston: Boston Beacon, 1960).
See also T.H. Croxall for a brief history of the origin of the 'Attack' title. *Kierkegaard Commentary* (London: James Nisbet, 1956), p. 237.
[6] Plato, *Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936): 498D-523A.

importance and accuracy until they are revealed in the light of Kierkegaard's notion of the 'Good', which for him is authentic Christianity; a phenomenon that in his opinion stands in opposition to the deluded religion of Christendom.[8] Ultimately, the presence of authentic Christianity within Christendom must lead to a clash, a break of the former with the latter that has far-reaching effects.[9] The movement of ascent towards authentic Christianity is evident throughout much of Kierkegaard's literature, however three pseudonyms particularly stand out, representing as they do key stages in the journey of conversion: Johannes de Silentio, Johannes Climacus and Anti-Climacus.

It is argued that Silentio is a character still in the 'cave' of Christendom, someone who suspects that there is something more real beyond the flickering shadows,[10] but without the means to discover what that could be. As a result, his version of the 'leap', the 'offence' and of 'indirect communication' is faulty because he does not yet apprehend the essence of Christianity. Climacus can be seen to represent the next stage in the ascent to enlightenment where the philosopher is still stumbling around in the dark, but making his way toward the light.[11] Climacus is partly informed by the Christian vision, and thus his understanding of the leap, the offence, and of indirect communication is more developed than is Silentio's. Yet Climacus is a self-confessed "outsider",[12] a character who does not claim to be a Christian, and who makes significant errors too, errors that are left to be corrected by the next pseudonym in Kierkegaard's carefully constructed series. It is proposed that Anti-Climacus can be read as a character who stands above ground, in the full presence of the source of the light itself.[13] Anti-Climacus develops the themes to their purest theoretical point, presenting the most thoroughly Christian version of the 'leap', the essential possibility of 'offence', and the most important version of 'indirect communication'. Anti-Climacus stands at the zenith of the ascent. Kierkegaard intended Anti-Climacus's vision to be of the highest standard, higher than any of the previous pseudonyms', and in terms of its ideal Christian purity, higher than Kierkegaard's own vision. In his *Journals and Papers* Kierkegaard writes:

> Johannes Climacus and Anti-Climacus have several things in common; but the difference is that whereas Johannes Climacus places himself so low that he even says he himself is not a Christian, *one seems to be able to detect* in Anti-Climacus that he considers himself to be a Christian on an extraordinarily high level... I would place

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[7] *Republic*, 508e, emphasis added.
[8] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 32, 42, 110, 194-96, 248, 256, 335, 351.
[9] *Moment*, pp. 226, 248, 287-92.
[10] Cf. *Republic*, 514a-515b.
[11] Cf. *Republic*, 515d-515e.
[12] Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (attributed to Johannes Climacus 1846), trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna, H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).,p. 16.
[13] Cf. *Republic*, 516a-516b.

myself higher than Johannes Climacus and lower than Anti-Climacus.[14]

It is good to note the ambivalence in Kierkegaard's statement, for Anti-Climacus's ascension to the heights is not the last of the movements to be made. On the path of *metanoia* the whole Good of the Christian life, as with its analogue of Plato's philosophical kingship, does not consist in vision alone. Finally, it is proposed on this analogy that with his non-pseudonymous polemical *Attack* Kierkegaard 'descends' back into the cave.[15] *Attack* is Kierkegaard's public engagement with his fellow citizens in the 'cave' of Christendom, where he seeks to impart the power of knowing the Good to the knower, and he demonstrates the *visible* and *external* implications of an unmediated authentic vision. Kierkegaard is *not* preaching Christianity; instead he is promoting the awareness that everyone in Christendom faces the same choice: *either* truly to follow Christ, *or* honestly to reject God. Essential to interpreting Kierkegaard is to take seriously this practical direction of Kierkegaard's project, and his self-understanding that with all of his writing he is "serving something true." (*Moment* 106)

Review of Contemporary Literature

By speaking of *Attack* as completing themes begun in the earlier books, of the pseudonymous and non-pseudonymous works following a trajectory of ascent and descent towards a specific Christian goal, and even of 'Kierkegaard's project', we are striking deep into controversial territory. Many commentators are suspicious of imposing an ideological structure onto the broad spectrum of Kierkegaard's thought. For example, Louis Mackey proposes that Kierkegaard was primarily a poet-artist who did not have an overarching plan for his pseudonyms.[16] For Mackey, arguing that in Kierkegaard there is a doctrine that needs to be accepted or rejected "makes about as much sense as agreeing or disagreeing with *Hamlet*."[17] "Taken as instruments of his intent", writes Mackey, "his works add up to a magnificent nonsense."[18] Benjamin Daise, expressly following Mackey, also attempts to separate 'Kierkegaard' from any one philosophical or theological point of view.[19] The implication of this assumption for the later more overt Christian works such as *Attack* is that they are approached with suspicion, if they are approached at all. Daise only looks at the Climacus books, and Mackey intentionally

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[14] Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), VI 6433. Emphasis added. See also *JP* VI 6431 and 6501 where Anti-Climacus is styled as a judge over Kierkegaard and the other pseudonyms. Also Søren Kierkegaard, *Point of View* (non-pseudonymous 1848/59), trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna. H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 15.
[15] Cf. *Republic*, 516c-520e.
[16] Louis Mackey, *Kierkegaard: A Kind of Poet* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971).
[17] Mackey, *A Kind of Poet*, p. x.
[18] Mackey, *A Kind of Poet*, p. 290.
[19] Benjamin Daise, *Kierkegaard's Socratic Art* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1999), p. viii.

avoids Kierkegaard's last works, claiming that this is in line with Kierkegaard's original preference; he thereby implies that the later Kierkegaard is not representative of the best Kierkegaard.[20]

Here we come to the crux of the problem that much of contemporary critical literature has with the later, non-pseudonymous Kierkegaard. It is often assumed, and occasionally made explicit, that Kierkegaard's Christian polemics are an academic embarrassment, the *Attack* in particular a product of an increasingly deluded and fading mind. This view can be traced back to Kierkegaard's contemporaries, most notably Bishop Martensen, against whom much of the polemic was personally directed.[21] In his memoirs, Martensen writes:

> [Kierkegaard] was a noble instrument who had a crack in his sounding board. This crack, alas, became greater and greater. To this I attribute his broken health, which increasingly exercised a disturbing influence on his psychological life... No one can say to what degree he is accountable.[22]

Michael Plekon (who does not himself hold to this line of argument) reports that in conversation "not a few scholars have muttered, off the record, that the rantings and ravings... the raw material for the public attack literature, are decidedly inferior to the earlier writings and ought to be ignored."[23] Some scholars do not ignore it, but effectively make an anomaly of the final phase of Kierkegaard's life. Danish critics K.E. Løgstrup[24] and Johannes Sløk[25] are amongst those who make the charge that *Attack* exemplifies a distortion of Kierkegaard's earlier dialectics and intellectual position. Their influence is discernible in the English scholarship. David Aiken, for example, proposes that with the overtly Christian writing, and especially *Attack*, Kierkegaard was breaking with the precedent that his earlier works had set. Aiken suggests that Kierkegaard's accounts of authentic Christianity act as a sort of literary confession of failure, and mark a regression from the highpoint that had come before in the pseudonyms.[26]

It is, perhaps, Kierkegaard's claim on behalf of Christianity itself, more than the coarseness of the polemics, which most irk some critics. One of the commentators most

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[20] Mackey, *A Kind of Poet*, p. xi.
[21] See for example *Moment*, pp. 3-12, 19-27, 79-85, 98, 100.
[22] Hans Lassen Martensen, *Af mit Levnet* III, (p. 12ff), trans. T.H. Croxall *Kierkegaard Commentary* (London: James Nisbet, 1956), p. 244-45. Bishop Martensen was not alone amongst Kierkegaard's peers to hold this opinion, see Michael Plekon, "Introducing Christianity to Christendom" *Anglican Theological Review* LXIV (1982), pp. 328-29 and 331. A modern example of this view lies behind Josiah Thompson's *Kierkegaard* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1973).
[23] Plekon, "Introducing Christianity", p. 332. This view is made 'on the record' by Valter Lindström, *Efterföljelsens teology* [The Theology of Imitation] (Stockholm: Diakonistyrelsens Bokförlag, 1956), pp. 128-29.
[24] K.E. Løgstrup, *Opgør med Kierkegaard* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1968).
[25] J. Sløk, *Da Kierkegaard tav. Fra Foratterskab til Kirkestorm* (Copenhagen: Hans Reitzel, 1980).
[26] David Aiken, "Kierkegaard's Three Stages: A Pilgrim's Regress?" *Faith and Philosophy* 13 (1996): 352-367.

openly hostile to the Christian Kierkegaard is Henning Fenger.[27] Fenger is forthright about his aversion to Christianity, and is especially critical of any proposal that there is a legitimate 'theological' direction to Kierkegaard's works.[28] He does not find Kierkegaard's role as "persecuted martyr in the market town of Copenhagen" very appealing; he implies instead that this event was in fact a product of Kierkegaard's own delusional tendency for self-destruction.[29] Fenger is sceptical of Kierkegaard's late claims, in his journals and in the posthumously published *Point of View for My Work as an Author* (written 1848, first published 1859), in which Kierkegaard retroactively stated the religious direction of all of his writings.[30] This Kierkegaard, Fenger says, was a "falsifier of history",[31] and Fenger views with a "deep and fundamental distrust" the late journals and other Christian writings.[32] It is the interpretations of so-called 'theologians' who attract most of his ire, and he criticises them for letting ideology cloud their judgement when reading Kierkegaard.[33]

While it may be theologians who are singled out for such criticism, it is not only those scholars with an explicitly theological agenda who tend to impose a simplified and unified vision onto the myriad texts of Kierkegaard. By maintaining the essential autonomy of the pseudonymous voices, and by casting suspicion on the Christian direction of the works, Mackey, Fenger and the others represent the side of interpretation that acts as a reaction against a so-called 'blunt' reading of Kierkegaard. The 'blunt' approach tends to mine the books, regardless of context, for the desired information. The style of interpretation tends to suppress the pseudonymous voices in favour of finding one unified voice, often finding *Kierkegaard*, instead of a pseudonym, in every text. Critics may complain of 'theologians', but there are others who fall under the spell of blunt reading, including scholars with philosophical, political and biographical interests.

Philosopher C. Stephen Evans claims to be sensitive to the problem of ascribing too much of the pseudonyms' ideas to Kierkegaard himself,[34] yet Evans's books consistently refer to Climacean positions as Kierkegaard's own.[35] John Elrod *intentionally* ignores the pseudonymous nature of his chosen texts when he attempts to

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[27] Henning Fenger, *Kierkegaard: The Myths and Their Origins* trans. George Schoolfield (London: Yale University Press, 1980).
[28] Fenger, *Myths*, p. 214.
[29] Fenger, *Myths*, p. xi.
[30] See *POV*, especially part 1, pp. 27-37.
[31] Fenger, *Myths*, p. 1.
[32] Fenger, *Myths*, p. 20. The reasons for this mistrust will be discussed below.
[33] Fenger, *Myths*, p. 214. Fenger tends to label anyone who recognises that Kierkegaard was primarily a religious author as a 'theologian'.
[34] C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard's 'Fragments' and 'Postscript': The Religious Philosophy of Johannes Climacus* (Highlands NJ: Humanities Press, 1983), pp.7-8.
[35] Besides *Kierkegaard's 'Fragments' and 'Postscript'*, this is especially evident in Evans's *Faith Beyond Reason: A Kierkegaardian Account* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998).

delineate a Kierkegaardian notion of personal identity.[36] Louis Pojman and Merold Westphal provide further examples of scholars who effectively ignore the pseudonyms in favour of treating the literature as an undifferentiated whole providing equal access to *Kierkegaard*'s thought. Like Evans, Pojman explicitly focuses on Climacus, and throughout his book refers to all of the positions in *Philosophical Fragments*[37] and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* as Kierkegaard's own.[38] Occasionally the other pseudonymous characters are also enlisted in order to provide a picture of unified thought. Pojman even takes it upon himself at one point to "reconcile" some discrepancies between Kierkegaard and the pseudonyms Climacus and Silentio, assuming that Kierkegaard himself had overlooked the difference.[39] Westphal alludes to many of Kierkegaard's works, but usually attributes the ideas to Kierkegaard himself, finding from Kierkegaard's private journals that he "personally affirmed" doctrines found in the works of Silentio and Climacus.[40] Westphal also expressly follows Walter Lowrie in affirming that *Practice in Christianity* is to be read as a non-pseudonymous work.[41] Lowrie, Kierkegaard's earliest English translator and the father of the blunt reading approach, stands as the prime example of a commentator who finds direct biographical and theological significance in the pseudonymous literature. Whereas some of the critics mentioned above – Elrod, Evans, and Westphal - tend to ignore the 'stages' by focussing on particular pseudonyms in the middle of the journey of ascent, Lowrie goes straight to the top. For Lowrie, it is the overtly Christian works that inform all of the rest. He considers *Point of View* and the two Anti-Climacus books, *Sickness unto Death*[42] and *Practice in Christianity*[43] to be Kierkegaard's three greatest books, claiming that "*this* is the Kierkegaard I love."[44] Lowrie's admiration tends to influence his reading of all the books. In his translator's introductions the impression is given that the Christian Kierkegaard looms large in every text, and he finds throughout the Kierkegaardian corpus an unwavering religious writer with a clear Christian vision. As Lowrie says of Kierkegaard in the introduction to *Point of View*, "he was a religious writer...he was that

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[36] John Elrod, *Being and Existence In Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).
[37] Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments* (attributed to Johannes Climacus 1844), trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna, H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).
[38] Louis P. Pojman, *The Logic of Subjectivity* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1984) See especially the preface pp. xi-xii.
[39] Pojman, *Logic*, p. 149.
[40] Merold Westphal, "Kierkegaard and the Logic of Insanity" *Religious Studies* 7 (1971), p. 210.
[41] Westphal, "Logic of Insanity", p. 210.
[42] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death* (attributed to Anti-Climacus 1849), trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna, H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).
[43] Søren Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity* (attributed to Anti-Climacus 1850), trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna, H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).
[44] Walter Lowrie, *A Short Life of Kierkegaard* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), pp. 173-74.

and nothing else."[45] Concomitant with this approach is the suppression of the polyvalence of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms, for Lowrie often points out when pseudonyms are speaking 'clearly' for Kierkegaard himself.[46] For example, of *The Concept of Dread*, an early work attributed to the pseudonym Vigilius Haufniensis, Lowrie writes:

> We need not therefore apply to this book [Kierkegaard's] emphatic admonition not to attribute to him anything that is said by his pseudonyms. This was his first completely serious book, and everything we find in it may safely be regarded as his own way of thinking.[47]

Of Anti-Climacus, Lowrie claims that the pseudonym was adopted "merely to relieve [Kierkegaard's] own fine feeling of propriety." The pseudonym, writes Lowrie, was an afterthought - and *Sickness unto Death* and *Practice in Christianity* are "the sincerest expression of his own belief."[48] Lowrie then goes on to state that with the Anti-Climacus books, Kierkegaard writes "with complete frank-heartedness, without resort to the device of '*indirect communication*'".[49] Lowrie is not alone in ironing out the pseudonymity of the texts. In the commentator's introduction to the earliest English translation of *Fragments*, Niels Thulstrup makes the claim that it "cannot be considered a truly pseudonymous work."[50] He does this by comparing Kierkegaard's journals and other books, concluding that "*Philosophical Fragments* undoubtedly represents Kierkegaard's own view at the time it was written and published."[51]

If Kierkegaard's voice is considered to be obviously evident even in the pseudonymous texts, it is no surprise that the final non-pseudonymous works are taken at face value by some scholars. Lowrie disagrees with those who assume that *Attack* is an inconsistent conclusion to Kierkegaard's career,[52] characteristically viewing *Attack* as proof for Kierkegaard's overriding religious concerns.[53] In this period, Lowrie says, Kierkegaard expressed his essential vision of Christianity sharply and clearly.[54] Paul Sponheim sees in this work a shift towards a direct communication of Kierkegaard's

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[45] See Lowrie's translator's introduction for *Point Of View* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), p. xxiv.
[46] See, for example, throughout Lowrie's introduction to his translation of *Fear and Trembling* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973) Lowrie makes a practice of mining the pseudonyms for overt biographical information in *Short Life* and *Kierkegaard* vols. I and II (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962).
[47] Lowrie, translator's introduction to *The Concept of Dread* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. x.
[48] Lowrie, translation notes for *Sickness unto Death* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 138.
[49] Lowrie, translation notes *Sickness*, p. 138, emphasis added. Whether Kierkegaard ever abandoned indirect communication, even under his own name let alone a pseudonym's, is an important question dealt with fully in Ch. 3 'Indirect Communication'.
[50] Niels Thulstrup, introduction to *Philosophical Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p.lxxxv.
[51] Thulstrup, introduction *Fragments*, p.lxxxv. See also pp. 146ff.
[52] Lowrie, *Kierkegaard* Vol.II, p. 492.
[53] See for example Lowrie's introduction to his translation of *Attack upon Christendom*, p.xiii, and *Kierkegaard* Vol. II, pp. 487-93.
[54] Lowrie, *Kierkegaard* Vol. II, p. 487.

Christian vision,[55] a vision that has a systematic unity with the earlier works.[56] John Elrod's study *Kierkegaard and Christendom* finds in the final phase a "transition to direct discourse."[57] He proposes that *Attack* was Kierkegaard's "ethical-religious critique of the modernisation of Denmark"[58] and he applies the same blunt approach to writings from the last period of Kierkegaard's life as he did in his earlier look at personal identity in the pseudonymous works. Elrod's 'ethical-religious' Kierkegaard stands in-between the purely religious figure favoured by Lowrie, Sponheim and others and the political revolutionary character found elsewhere in the secondary literature: for not all commentators who take *Attack* seriously read it as a primarily Christian communication. Roger Poole and Bruce Kirmmse are representatives of a trend in Kierkegaardian studies which seeks to reinstate the final phase of Kierkegaard's life as worthy of academic interest by appealing to the social critique inherent in any attack against the establishment. They suggest that underneath its old-fashioned Christian clothing *Attack* has a modern and relevant socio-political message. Kirmmse chooses to read the final works as a social and governmental critique, explicitly downplaying the Christian aspect.[59] He proposes that "the attack on Christendom can only be understood intelligently, not as an aberration, but as a response to the social and political developments of Kierkegaard's time."[60] Likewise, Poole finds in Kierkegaard's polemic a model for *anyone* who opposes the current status quo, explicitly attempting to 'modernise' the message so that it's appeal can extend to social critics who have no time for Christianity.[61]

Critical Response

The common outcome for the large majority of these approaches to Kierkegaard's late literature is that *Attack* is turned into an aberration. This is the obvious and intentional conclusion for the religious sceptics and other critics dismissive of the non-pseudonymous, later Kierkegaard. Yet those commentators who wish to argue for the essential continuity of *Attack* with the rest of the Kierkegaardian corpus also end up with a deviation. While Kirmmse claims that *Attack* was not an aberration, he nonetheless bases his arguments on Kierkegaard's response to the political and social events of the time, not on any line of thought evident in the pseudonymous works. In the same vein,

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[55] Paul Sponheim, *Kierkegaard on Christ and Christian Coherence* (London: SCM Press, 1968), p. 33.
[56] Sponheim, *Christian Coherence*, p. 164.
[57] John W. Elrod, *Kierkegaard and Christendom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 270.
[58] Elrod, *Christendom*, p.304
[59] Bruce Kirmmse, *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 467.
[60] Kirmmse, *Golden Age*, p. 4.
[61] Roger Poole, *Kierkegaard the Indirect Communication* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), p. 26.

Poole and any other academic who seeks to separate Kierkegaard's 'Christian' from his putatively 'secular' concerns, fall short of according *Attack* its rightful place within the Kierkegaardian *oeuvre*. As we will seek to clear in the following discussion, the driving force behind all of the texts is Kierkegaard's ongoing movement towards awareness and appropriation of authentic faith. To imply that in *Attack* Kierkegaard was essentially laying out a program of merely political rebellion is to introduce an idea that is alien to his previous writings. This does not mean that one must retreat into a 'blunt' Christian reading for, as we have seen, the theological commentators also make an aberration out of *Attack* by assuming an overly facile version of Kierkegaard's Christianity. A similar outcome that the blunt readers share with their opponents who disregard the Christian direction and emphasise the essential independence of the different pseudonyms, is that the Kierkegaardian idea of 'stages on life's way' (or 'stages of existence') falls by the wayside, and the nuances between the stages leading to authentic Christianity are flattened out.[62] Disregarding the pseudonyms in favour of finding one consistent idea regardless of context does damage to the picture of Christianity developed by Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms, a Christianity that is *essentially* concerned with the dialectical 'give-and-take' process of subjective appropriation.[63] This, in turn, makes an anomaly of *Attack*, and renders its extreme polemical style redundant. Kierkegaard's vision of Christianity is not so static, but rather emerges in the dialectical movement from one pseudonym to the next. Each stage occupied by Silentio, Climacus, and Anti-Climacus represents only a part of the whole vision. Kierkegaard's eponymous *Attack* is part of that dialectical conversation, a logical outcome of the vision of authentic religion, but not itself intended or indeed able to shoulder the whole burden of 'Kierkegaard's Christianity'. Although Lowrie claims to promote the idea that *Attack* is in continuity with the previous works,[64] it is hard not to be led to the contrary conclusion when he says of Kierkegaard that at this time "this most dialectical man ceased to be dialectical."[65]

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[62] The idea of 'stages' runs throughout the literature, however, it is explicitly addressed in *Stages on Life's Way* (attributed to the editor Hilarius Bookbinder 1845), trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); *CUP*, pp. 513-24, 520; *POV*, pp. 41-57. *JP* I: 852, 868; II: 1232, 1565, 1567, 1690-92; III: 2807, 2858, 3074, 3245, 3272; IV: 4379, 4398, 4407, 4416, 4437, 4444, 4447, 4453, 4454, 4459, 4467, 4474, 4476. Cf. Gregor Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Thought*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 48, 50-53, 77, 109-11, 118-20, 126-28. See also Aiken, "Kierkegaard's Three Stages", pp. 352-67.

[63] Cf. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (attributed to Johannes de Silentio 1843), trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 54-67, 79-81; *Fragments*, pp. 37-39, 49-54; *CUP*, pp. 15-17, 77-79, 365-69, 576-79, 587-92; *Sickness*, pp. 85-87; *Practice*, pp. 53, 94, 101, 106, 136, 249-50; *Moment*, pp. 73, 236. See also Ch. 4 'Indirect Communication'.

[64] Lowrie, *Kierkegaard* Vol.II, p. 492.

[65] Lowrie, *Kierkegaard* Vol.II, p. 488.

Traditionally the proof for finding a straightforward Christian direction in all of Kierkegaard's work has come from his private writings[66] and from the posthumously published *Point of View*:

> The content, then, of this little book is: what I in truth am as an author, that I am and was a religious author, that my whole authorship pertains to Christianity, to the issue: becoming a Christian... (*POV* 23)

Based on the evidence gleaned from these sources, it can then come to seem obvious that *Attack*, far from being an aberration, merely serves to confirm what was already claimed. Commentators sympathetic to the Christian direction of Kierkegaard's work often rely heavily on the wealth of information found in these journals, diaries and books unpublished in Kierkegaard's lifetime, and the avowed Christian direction of Kierkegaard's *oeuvre* is thus taken at face value. Three prominent examples of this trend already mentioned are Lowrie, Evans and Elrod, all of whom make extensive use of this material to try to discover what Kierkegaard *really* meant.[67] Ideas found in the pseudonymous books are matched up with the journal entries that best seem to correspond with the time of writing. In this way, it is hoped that one can discover when Kierkegaard 'agreed' with his characters, and when one can slot *Attack* neatly into a pre-determined space.

This approach has two problems. First, it fails to read the corpus *as it is*. By selectively choosing passages that conform to a fixed static position taken as Kierkegaard's, one cannot claim to be reading the 'whole' Kierkegaard in its intentionally dialectical presentation. The second problem has to do with the source material itself. The bulk of criticism directed against readings like Lowrie's and Elrod's is that they uncritically accept what Kierkegaard said about his own work in *Point of View* and in the journals. This is the direction in which Fenger takes his critique. He calls Kierkegaard a "falsifier of history" based on the argument that with his various reports to history, Kierkegaard was retroactively finding a Christian direction where before there was none.[68] Fenger is not so much levelling criticism at Kierkegaard's prerogative to write his journals however he wants, as much as he is arguing against the top-heavy use that is made of the unpublished Christian material by 'theologically' minded secondary

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[66] For example "It is Christianity that I have presented and still want to present; to this every hour of my day has been directed." *JP* VI 6205.

[67] See also Christopher Brookfield, "What was Kierkegaard's Task? A Frontier to be Explored." *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 18 (1962): 23-35, and Thulstrup's introduction to *Philsophical Fragments*, p.lxxxv.

[68] Fenger, *Myths*, p. 1, also pp. 1-31.

commentators.[69] On this point, Fenger and others are on solid ground. Taken as a final authority, such material should be read with caution.[70]

There are thirty-six volumes of journals, for a total of over 7600 pages spanning 1846 to 1855. From the years 1833 to 1846 there are twelve other diaries of various sizes. There is much ambiguity surrounding the collecting, binding and hence the interpretation of the journal material.[71] After Kierkegaard's death in 1855, H.P. Barfod, a keen chronicler, arranged these works for publication. The journals were confusing, often not in chronological order, or with entries entered apparently at random, according to whatever blank book was at hand. Some entries were clearly intended for publication, others existed in various states of polish and disrepair. Much of the writing was material excised from books that Kierkegaard had already published. Barfod took it upon himself to systematise the papers, arbitrarily assigning the material to three categories. 'A' took the typical diary entries, 'B' the preliminary drafts and manuscript omissions, and 'C' the entries related to Kierkegaard's reading and his studies. In a further move unbelievable by today's standards, Barfod then destroyed the originals as waste paper after committing the new arrangement to print! The legacy of such treatment is not hard to imagine. The ordering and then destruction of the papers, writes Joakim Garff, "has given the reader a false impression of the homogeneity and consistency of Kierkegaard's texts."[72] Documents such as *Point of View* suffer equally as fonts of historical inaccuracy. Commentators need not be as hostile as Fenger to point out that *Point of View* is very much a selective literary autobiography. "Kierkegaard was a pastmaster of the peculiar genre of candid concealment."[73] Even with his 'private' diaries, Kierkegaard seemed to be acutely aware that they would one day be read. Entries are edited and arranged, and cryptic clues or taunts exist in the journals. "After my death no one will find in my papers the slightest information (this is my consolation) about what has really filled my life..." (*JP* V 5645)

The result is shaky ground for those who would find in the unpublished works proof of an obvious Christian direction. This material is a mix of diary entries, rough drafts and half-formed ideas, and as a reliable source for Kierkegaard's 'real' meaning, they do not bear well under critical scrutiny. And yet, for their part, the sceptics are also overly hasty to conclude from the untrustworthy evidence of the journals and *Point of View* that there is simply *no* Christian project, or any purposeful connection linking one

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[69] Cf. Fenger, *Myths*, Ch 1.

[70] Other cautious voices are Joakim Garff, "To Produce was my Life: Problems, Perspectives Within the Kierkegaardian Biography" *Kierkegaard Revisited*, trans. Stacey Elizabeth Axe. eds. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn and Jon Stewart (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997): 75-93; Michael Strawser, *Both/And: Reading Kierkegaard from Irony to Edification* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997).

[71] Joakim Garff provides a particularly excellent history of the journals in "To Produce".

[72] Garff, "To Produce", p. 79.

pseudonym to the next. Occasionally this study will make use of this material, however, one does not need to rely on the unpublished works to get a clear sense of Kierkegaard's Christian project. There is a wealth of information pointing to the direction and dialectical unity of Kierkegaard's thought in the finished and polished works published in Kierkegaard's own lifetime. What is needed is reconciliation between the two approaches described above. On the one hand, Kierkegaard's claims of Christian purpose need to be treated with some caution, and it is undoubtedly the case that uncritical use made of Kierkegaard's 'unpublished' literature has been weighed and found wanting. On the other hand, it remains clearly demonstrable that Kierkegaard's Christian concerns were the driving force of all of his writing. It is proposed that Kierkegaard's dialectical ascent towards an authentic Christianity provides the source and structure of his *oeuvre*, and that maintaining this Christian purpose in full view is best served by closely examining the *published* pseudonymous and non-pseudonymous works. By doing this we will be doing Kierkegaard the honour of reading his works in the way that he himself proposed:

> Therefore, if it should occur to anyone to want to quote a particular passage from the books, it is my wish, my prayer, that he will do me the kindness of citing the respective pseudonymous author's name, not mine...[74]

Method and Chapter Overview

The approach of this thesis is that it is only by treating *both* Kierkegaard's Christianity *and* his pseudonymity with respect that we can begin to move towards a legitimate interpretation of the earlier works and of *Attack upon Christianity*. The problem of the secondary scholarship has been a problem of wholeness. Those commentators who suppose a fundamental disjunction between the pseudonymous voices, and who disparage the idea of an over-arching Christian structure even in the face of Kierkegaard's own words to the contrary, can only propose a fragmentation the Kierkegaardian canon. The other side, whilst in some ways staying truer to the spirit of Kierkegaard's self-proclaimed project, also do damage to the dialectical character of the literary collection. They do this by affirming a facile version of the Christian message in the works, finding an immediate and essential agreement in the pseudonymous voices where Kierkegaard intended there to be dialectical tension. By ignoring the movement through the stages, they create a static picture of Kierkegaard that bears little relation to the dynamic image that emerges when the texts are read in succession. As a result neither of these fragmented or static approaches seems to know quite how to deal with *Attack*. It is time for another look at the place that this work has in the whole.

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[73] Garff, "To Produce", p. 82. See also Poole, *Indirect Communication*, pp. 20-21.
[74] From the non-pseudonymous 'First and Last Explanation' section in the *CUP*, p. 627.

The practical and social discourse of Kierkegaard's final phase, too often ignored or misused in the history of Kierkegaardian studies, is a culmination of his great literary undertaking. That *Attack* is to be viewed as a culmination to the unfolding project is demonstrated by the presence of key themes running throughout the pseudonymous literature. *Attack* acts both as the fitting end to the dialectical conversation carried out in the works, and as the key to properly understanding those works. Here, the Platonic metaphor of dialectical ascent and descent serves the very useful purpose of emphasising the intrinsic unity of Kierkegaard's thought. It does this without sacrificing the integrity of Kierkegaard's 'stages' so important to faithful interpretation, and equally importantly, it does this without dismissing as an aberration a late work that rewards our most careful attention.

We can trace the themes of the 'leap', the 'offence' and of 'indirect communication' following the line suggested by the Platonic analogy of the philosopher's conversion. The Kierkegaardian literature does not separate these themes, and in the concerns of each authorial voice the themes often dovetail and overlap. However, in the present thesis it is helpful to consider each theme individually as component parts of the whole dialectical process. Each pseudonym can be seen to correspond to a stage in the ascent out of the 'cave'. Using the analogy as a hermeneutic device, we will consider the development of each theme with chapters demonstrating how the 'leap', the 'offence' and 'indirect communication' respectively grow in depth and importance for the pseudonyms as they approach authentic Christianity. Finally, each chapter will conclude with Kierkegaard's own appropriation of these themes in his *Attack upon Christendom*. It is with *Attack* that Kierkegaard works out the practical implications of that which his pseudonyms could only theorise about.

The first chapter looks at the 'leap'. Beginning with the author of *Fear and Trembling* (1843), Silentio sees the leap as an innate skill belonging to the Knight of Faith, a 'double movement' of resigning and hoping.[75] Silentio is still in the 'cave' of Christendom however, and his views contain significant errors. Next comes Climacus with his *Philosophical Fragments* (1844) and its sequel, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846). Though dim, the Christian vision still informs Climacus and here he introduces the distinction between the immanent 'Religiousness A' of Christendom and the transcendent 'Religiousness B' that he understands as authentic Christianity.[76] From this Climacus develops the idea of the leap as a transition between incommensurable categories; the shift to Christian belief that is qualitative and not based on the quantity of

[75] Cf. *Fear*, pp. 48-49, 115.
[76] Cf. *CUP*, Part II, Section II, Chapter IV, pp. 361-580, esp. pp. 555-60.

arguments of the accumulation of information.[77] However, Climacus has not made the transition himself[78] and as a result he too makes some errors. It is left to Anti-Climacus to correct the previous pseudonym's faulty vision in *Practice in Christianity* (1850). Anti-Climacus develops the 'leap' into the idea of *contemporaneity* with Christ.[79] Contemporaneity crosses out the accumulated detritus of Christendom's grand historical delusions, and results in a relationship towards the humble person of Jesus Christ who demands *either* faithful obedience *or* offence.[80] Yet although Anti-Climacus enjoys the vision of the fully ascended his is not the last movement that needs to be made. Following the conception of the Good, one cannot know and possess the Good without the necessary corollary of also imparting the Good.[81] Extending the analogy to authentic Christianity, it becomes clear that individuals such as Anti-Climacus cannot stop with basking in glory, for the vision also involves an *Imitatio Christi*. Kierkegaard, writing under his own name in the texts that make up *Attack upon Christianity* (1854-55), 'descends' back into the cave with a very public engagement. The 'leap' in *Attack* retains Anti-Climacus's contemporaneity, but its practical implications are magnified. Kierkegaard calls his pamphlet *The Moment*, referring to the point in time when the chasmic gap between 'this world' of Christendom and authentic Christianity is crossed. This 'leap' transition has visible, social consequences; specifically, *offence* both given and received by individuals who truly follow Christ.[82]

The second chapter traces the development of this 'offence' from *Fear and Trembling* through to its final manifestation in *Attack upon Christendom*. Again drawing from the Platonic analogy, we begin with Silentio and his shallow view that the offence connected to authentic faith arises from a breach of civil laws and social morality.[83] Climacus comes closer to the light in *Fragments* and *Postscript*, finding the locus of the offence in the assault on reason presented by the God-Man: the inscrutable union of the finite with the infinite that Climacus dubs the *Absolute Paradox*.[84] In *Sickness unto Death* (1849) Anti-Climacus differs from Climacus by recognising that the *essential* offence has to do with man's sinful will, and not his ignorance.[85] In *Practice* Anti-Climacus builds on the offence in *Sickness* to see the offence as a matter of obedience. The possibility for offence is always before the contemporaneous individual, because

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[77] Cf. *Fragments*, pp. 62, 63, 72-76; *CUP*, pp. 83, 93, 95, 98.
[78] *CUP*, p. 617.
[79] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 18-19, 26-28, 52, 63, 82, 96.
[80] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 26-27, 35, 63, 65, 81-82, 94-102, 102-121, 139.
[81] Cf. *Republic* 508e, 516c-520e.
[82] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 17, 39, 226, 248, 257, 287-92, 334.
[83] Cf. *FT*, pp. 52-53, 55-56, 60-61, 66.
[84] Cf. *Fragments*, pp. 37, 39, 44-47, 49-54.
[85] Cf. *Sickness*, pp. 87-96.

Christ's invitation to follow him is always present.[86] This is potentially offensive because Christ, as both lofty God and lowly human, exists as a *sign of contradiction.*[87] The deep ethical aversion that this gives rise to bypasses the lesser offences against Silentio's civic morality and Climacus's realm of the intellect. For Anti-Climacus this offensive sign of contradiction is a mode that is available only to Christ.[88] Finally, Kierkegaard extends the possibility to normal humans when his *Attack* spells out the ramifications for Christ's followers in Christendom. Ultimately, the presence of authentic Christians in Christendom will be as potentially, and *essentially*, offensive as the presence of God is with man.[89] Significantly, in *Attack* Kierkegaard himself becomes a Christ-like figure of offence when he imitates Christ's mode of indirect communication, which leads us to the final section of the dissertation.

The third chapter examines the development of the theme of 'indirect communication' throughout the pseudonymous and non-pseudonymous writing. Kierkegaard and all of his pseudonyms share the conviction that matters of faith and Christianity cannot be didactically expressed, but must be subjectively appropriated, and thus *indirectly* communicated.[90] At the start of the trajectory out of the cave, Silentio looks at Abraham and concludes that for the Knight of Faith, there can only be silence. Although silence meets some of the criteria for 'indirection', it is ultimately found to be useless for communicating the content of faith.[91] True to his name, at various times throughout his book, Silentio himself must fall silent, unable to penetrate the darkness.[92] Climacus develops indirect communication as *double reflection* a process that allows for communicating Christianity while necessarily keeping apart the triadic points of listener, messenger and message.[93] In a review of the previous pseudonymous texts, Climacus praises the double reflection he finds there, considering this form of communication to be the best way to bring about the subjective appropriation of Christianity without turning it into an objective matter involving leaders and followers.[94] At the top of the ascent, Anti-Climacus finds that double reflection is an inadequate form of communication for what is essential to authentic Christianity – Christ himself. With the Incarnation, Christ demonstrates the highest form of indirect communication. Anti-Climacus calls this *reduplication,*[95] and finds in Christ the only instance where the Teacher draws attention to

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[86] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 26-27, 35, 63, 65, 81-82, 94-102, 102-121, 139.
[87] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 94-102, 102-121.
[88] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 85, 87, 93, 94, 120-21.
[89] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 17, 39, 226, 248, 257, 287-92, 334.
[90] Cf. *FT*, pp. 38-41, 82-120; *Fragments*, pp. 26-32; *CUP*, pp. 72-80, 242-50; *Practice*, pp. 127-36, 142.
[91] Cf. *FT*, pp. 14, 23, 38-41, 53, 82-120.
[92] Cf. *FT*, pp. 9-14, 15-23, 27-53.
[93] Cf. *CUP*, pp. 72-80.
[94] Cf. *CUP*, pp. 251-300.
[95] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 123-24, 131-36.

himself by existing *as* the Teaching; a form of communication that collapses the relationship of distance between messenger, listener and message that Climacus sought to engender.[96] Anti-Climacus hints at, but does not develop, the possibility that reduplication could be extended to anyone else. With his *Attack*, Kierkegaard imitates Christ's indirect communication when he reduplicates his life as a sign of contradiction. Here, Kierkegaard is not communicating *Christianity*, but *honesty*.[97] In *Attack*, Kierkegaard himself becomes a 'stumbling block'[98] that repels even as it draws attention to itself, thus provoking a response not based on false, outward appearances.[99] The offensive nature of the polemic is compounded by the personal inadequacies of the polemicist, a fact that Kierkegaard used as a catalyst to bring his listeners to a place of decision. Each individual is responsible for their choice, without resort to charismatic leader-figures or sophisticated rhetoric. In the ostensibly Christian Christendom, that choice is clear: *either* truly to follow Christ, *or* honestly to rebel against God.[100]

Far from being an aberration, Kierkegaard's *Attack upon Christendom* stands as the culmination of the most important ideas running throughout his literature. It is the aim of this dissertation to demonstrate how the themes become increasingly refined as the pseudonyms ascend towards the light of authentic Christianity, and ultimately how these themes are brought to fruition in the actions and writing of Kierkegaard during the final phase of his life. If anyone is surprised by *Attack* then they have not been reading Kierkegaard properly, and if anyone ignores or dismisses the final part, then they are unable to lay claim to understanding the whole.

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[96] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 95-98, 134-36.
[97] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 29, 46, 48, 49, 74, 97, 236.
[98] Cf. 1 Cor. 1:23; *Practice*, p. 135, *Moment*, p. 161.
[99] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 15, 20, 23, 25, 38, 42, 46, 60, 74, 78, 83-84, 135, 180-82, 197, 213, 290, 311-12, 316, 321, 324, 333, 329-54.
[100] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 13, 29, 33-34, 40, 48-49, 73-74, 76, 97, 101, 110, 197, 212, 236, 336-37, 340-47.

CHAPTER 1 - LEAP

Introduction

In contrast with the other two key themes of the offence and indirect communication, the development of the leap is marked by a *decrease* in importance, at least in name, as the pseudonyms progress towards Christianity. The leap is most important for Silentio, receives proportionately less attention by Climacus, and is not named at all by Anti-Climacus. Nonetheless, the categories for the leap laid out by Climacus are taken up by Anti-Climacus and turned into the movement of contemporaneity – a movement that is crucial for Kierkegaard's project. In *Attack*, Kierkegaard considers the time of decision that can only be made in contemporaneity as the most important point in time in his readers' lives, so much so that he named his self-published pamphlet *The Moment*, and said of contemporaneity that "this thought is for me my life's thought." (*Moment* 290)

Silentio sees the leap like that of a nimble dancer, who is able to rise and fall without faltering.[1] For Silentio, it is only the Knight of Faith who can manage the skilful double movement of resigning all and at the same time believing in faith that all will be acquired.[2] Silentio is an outsider who only claims to know what faith looks like, he does not have faith himself.[3] It will be argued that the Climacus's understanding develops Silentio's leap in two ways. First, Silentio's leap is concerned with a faith that focuses on losing and gaining, which is a minor concern next to Climacus's problem of overcoming the distance between God and man, a distance that exists because of sin.[4] The second development is related to Climacus bringing two new classifications to the discussion. 'Religiousness A' and 'Religiousness B' are used to differentiate between the immanent (human and therefore essentially pagan) religion of Christendom, and the authentic, transcendent Christianity that Climacus is trying to discover for himself.[5] By using Climacus's categories, it is proposed that Silentio fits the profile of Religiousness A. His leap does not bring him to true Christianity, for the leap of *Fear and Trembling* relies on the innate skill of the individual, an immanent category that does not allow the subject to break out of the realm of logical necessity and quantitative results. Climacus identifies three different, but related, leaps in *Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*: the 'leap of letting go',[6] the 'leap of a

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[1] *Fear and Trembling*, p. 41.
[2] *FT*, pp. 48-49, 115.
[3] *FT*, pp. 33, 51.
[4] *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, pp. 267-68.
[5] *CUP*, pp. 15-17, 555-61.
[6] *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 43. Cf. *Fragments*, pp. 18-19; *CUP*, pp. 99, 100, 595.

qualitative transition or shift in genus',[7] and the 'leap of the small step'.[8] The development in the leap that exists between Climacus and Silentio is more drastic than that which lies between Climacus and Anti-Climacus, who is content to use Climacus as a base for his own concerns without altering the essential nature of Climacus's three leap categories. For that reason, the bulk of our attention will be devoted to the critical implications that Climacus's leap has for Silentio. It will be seen that for Climacus, the leap becomes not a problem of *doing* the right thing (as it is for Silentio) as much as it is *being* in the right place in preparation for change, like the individual who places himself over 70 000 fathoms of water[9], willing to be exposed to an "actuality that is not one's own." (*CUP* 232) There is a small contribution that the would-be believer can make, but ultimately the leap involves the transcendent, and all human attempts must assume secondary importance.

Anti-Climacus builds on Climacus's categories, but does not mention the leap by name. This is because Anti-Climacus, the only self-proclaimed Christian pseudonym, is not as worried as the previous pseudonyms are with the intellectual, aesthetic and moral problems posed by taking a leap. His focus is on the actual living, breathing God-Man Jesus Christ and the possibility of offence that must be passed before faith in Christ can take hold.[10] However, where Climacus emphasises the challenges that faith poses to reason, Anti-Climacus dwells exclusively on the demand for obedience and imitation that Christ makes, especially considering who it is who is making the demands.[11] The 'leap' continues in *Practice in Christianity* in that Anti-Climacus uses the language of Climacus's leap to describe the importance of contemporaneity. The 'leap' of contemporaneity results in the letting go of historical demonstrations to prove that Jesus is God.[12] Anti-Climacus's contemporaneity also recognises the small contribution that one must take in response to Christ's invitation.[13] Most importantly, Anti-Climacus's contemporaneity represents the gift of *becoming* that is given to the Christian – a qualitative shift in being, and not a gradual change by way of degree.[14] In the end, the development of the ideas started by Climacus take hold in Anti-Climacus with the crucial link that he makes between the leap and the possibility of offence. Without the

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[7] *CUP*, p. 98. Cf. *Fragments*, pp. 62, 63, 72-76; *CUP*, pp. 83, 93, 95.
[8] *CUP*, p. 102. Cf. *Fragments*, p. 43; *CUP*, pp. 95, 99, 100, 140, 204, 232, 288, 323,
[9] *CUP*, pp. 140, 204, 232, and 288.
[10] *Practice in Christianity*, pp. 65, 81-82.
[11] *Practice*, pp. 52, 249-50.
[12] *Practice*, pp. 26-27, 52, 96.
[13] *Practice*, pp. 18-19, 82.
[14] *Practice*, pp. 27-28, 63.

'leap' into contemporaneity there can be no possibility for offence. And without offence there can be no Christian faith.[15]

Carrying on with the tradition set by Anti-Climacus, Kierkegaard does not refer to the 'leap' as such,[16] but he makes the issues of contemporaneity and the moment of decision central to his argument. *Attack* also serves as the final development of the qualitative distinction, where Christianity is considered to be of a separate genus from Christendom, the 'leap' of contemporaneity being needed to cross this chasmic difference.[17] Christendom is the illness for which contemporaneity with Christ is the only cure.[18] Kierkegaard finds tangible evidence for contemporaneity. True followers of Christ who undergo the "radical cure" of contemporaneity will suffer "a break, the most profound, the most incurable break with this world." (*Moment* 17) In *Attack*, Anti-Climacus's idealised contemporaneity is given visible, social consequences.[19]

Considering the distinctive stages of development for the leap motif evident throughout the pseudonyms, it is surprising how little this is commented on in the secondary literature. Scholars writing specifically on the leap either tend to conflate the different 'leaps' in order to arrive at a unified notion of *the* Kierkegaardian leap,[20] or they tend to focus on one of the pseudonyms at the expense of any others, thereby giving the impression that that one pseudonym speaks unambiguously for Kierkegaard himself.[21] This is due the problem of attributing to Kierkegaard a static position without giving due regard to the pseudonymous ascent to the vision of authentic Christianity and Kierkegaard's subsequent 'descent' which completes this vision. Instead, it is argued that Silentio's leap found in *Fear and Trembling*,[22] which is concerned with the lesser paradox of faith and resignation, should not be read in the same light as Climacus's leaps of *Fragments*[23] and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*,[24] which centre on the Absolute Paradox and its attendant transitions. Likewise, Anti-Climacus diffuses Climacus's language of the leaps throughout his *Practice in Christianity*,[25]

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[15] Cf. *Practice* p. 65. The point is discussed fully in Ch. 2 'Offence'.
[16] In the whole of the collected final texts, the term is used only once. See below p. 24 and the *Moment*, p. 93.
[17] *The Moment and other Late Writings*, pp. 39, 162.
[18] *Moment* pp. 17, 99-100, 316, 345.
[19] *Moment*, pp. 226, 248, 287-92.
[20] Two significant examples are Arnold Come *Kierkegaard as Humanist: Discovering My Self* (Montreal: Mcgill-Queen's University Press, 1995) and Merold Westphal, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Reason and Society* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987).
[21] An example is M. Jamie Ferreira in *Transforming Vision: Imagination and Will in Kierkegaardian Faith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) and in her essay "Faith and the Kierkegaardian Leap." *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 207-35.
[22] *FT*, pp. 41, 48-49, 115.
[23] *Fragments*, p. 43.
[24] *CUP*, pp. 98, 102.
[25] *Practice*, pp. 18-19, 26-28, 52, 63, 82, 96.

developing yet further a specifically Christian category of the 'leap', a category of contemporaneity that Kierkegaard puts to practical use in his final work.[26] Besides righting some wrongs that have been done to the Kierkegaardian oeuvre on this point, another useful side effect of studying the complex and shifting nature of the leap in its pseudonymous context is that this will put to rest the cliché of the so-called 'leap of faith' - a fideistic phrase that none of the pseudonyms ever used, let alone Kierkegaard himself. It is usually *Fear and Trembling* that gets saddled with the dubious honour of promoting such an idea, with Silentio's treatment of Abraham as the prime example of 'Kierkegaard's leap of faith'.[27] The best and most definitive treatment of this subject comes from Alastair McKinnon. Through the use of computer analysis, he concludes that the Danish counterpart to 'leap of faith' (*Troens Spring*), as well as all other conceivable derivatives of the phrase, never occur in *Fear and Trembling* or any other of Kierkegaard's works.[28] The simple fact that this actual phrase never appears in the writings, and that *Fear and Trembling* is an intentionally pseudonymous book, is all that should be needed to silence the argument that *Fear* represents Kierkegaard's last word on faith and leaping. For our purposes it is much more interesting instead to look at what pseudonyms actually say about the leap, and at the use that they make of it.

Silentio and the Leap

In the context of the development of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms, Silentio can be seen to be at the end of the aesthetic-ethical stage,[29] where it is beginning to dawn on him that the eternal fortunes of a man are not necessarily tied to the cultural and moral systems of this world. *Fear and Trembling* is very much a book about ethics, but only in the context of how ethics relates (or does not relate) to faith. *Fear and Trembling* then is a book primarily about faith. "In our time, nobody is content to stop with faith but wants to go further." (*FT* 5) Silentio is a pseudonym who represents the thinking man aware that his society is not being honest with him or with itself. The business of 'going further' is, for Silentio, completely

[26] *Moment*, pp. 17, 39, 99-100, 162, 226, 248, 287-92, 316, 345.
[27] This is the usual presentation in various surveys and 'introductions' to philosophy as well as more in-depth academic treatments. Among many examples are Frederick Copleston *Contemporary Philosophy* (New York: Newman Press, 1972), p.153; Brand Blanchard, "Kierkegaard on Faith" *Essays on Kierkegaard* ed. Jerry Gill (Minneapolis: Burgess, 1969), pp. 113-26; Ronald M. Green "The Leap of Faith: Kierkegaard's debt to Kant" *Philosophy and Theology* vol. 3 (1989): 385-411; George E. Arbaugh and George B. Arbaugh *Kierkegaard's Authorship* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1968), index p. 428; Louis Pojman *The Logic of Subjectivity* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1984), p. 172. Michael P. Levin, "Why the Incarnation is a Superfluous Detail for Kierkegaard" *Religious Studies* Vol. 18: 171-175.
[28] Alastair McKinnon "Kierkegaard and the Leap of Faith" *Kierkegaardiana* vol.16 (1993): 107-25.
[29] Cf. *Point Of View*, p.37 and Howard Hong's introduction to his translation of *Fear and Trembling* p.xxxi.

ridiculous. It is a 'Hegelian' game played in the universities and the respectable churches, whereby people assume that they have faith as a matter of course, and that more is needed to move beyond this primitive stage. In opposition to the received wisdom of the age, Silentio examines faith throughout *Fear and Trembling* and concludes in the 'Epilogue' that: "Faith is the highest passion in a person. There are perhaps many in every generation who do not come to faith, but no one gets further." (*FT* 122) Earlier in the 'Epilogue', he suggests that his book, like the wily spice merchant who dumps his cargo into the ocean, acts as a device that makes faith more difficult, thereby removing the glut of faith on the market making it all the more valuable. (*FT* 121) This 'making faith more difficult' occurs through taking an honest look at what faith actually is, rather than heaping man-made restrictions onto an already well-understood concept. Silentio is not writing an evangelical tract calling people to faith. He is trying to show how almost no one, including himself, has faith at all.[30]

To this end, Silentio introduces two different archetypes, the Knight of Infinite Resignation (also called the Tragic Hero) and the Knight of Faith. The Tragic Hero lives, and possibly dies, for the ethical, which is another way of saying that he lives by *universal* principles, and is willing to give up his own good for the sake of the greater good.[31] The Knight of Faith cannot appeal to recognisable ethics, for God demands of him a unique and individual sacrifice, which is above the universal. "Faith is namely this paradox that the single individual is higher than the universal..." (*FT* 55) Silentio is not out to disparage the Tragic Hero, but every stage does have its place. "Infinite resignation is the last stage before faith, so that anyone who has not made this movement does not have faith..." (*FT* 46) Faith has resignation as its presupposition, and it is "the paradox of existence." (*FT* 47) Silentio takes great pains to explain what he means by this curious statement. The common-sense of Christendom assumes that the Tragic Hero is the epitome of faithful living, but faith, Silentio explains, is not the *renunciation* of anything, it is in fact by faith that "I receive everything". (*FT* 48-49) The bulk of *Fear and Trembling* is taken up with an attempt to explain and bear witness to this particular concept.

It is here that the leap finds its function. In *Fear and Trembling*, the leap is the fluid ability to move from resignation to faith without missing a beat. Learning this skill is for Silentio the task of a lifetime.[32] The most important picture of the leap that Silentio paints is found in the 'Preliminary Expectoration' of *Fear and Trembling*, and it informs the idea of

[30] See for example *FT*, pp. 7, 37, 122.
[31] Cf. *FT*, pp.42-44, 93, 115.
[32] Cf. *FT*, p.46.

the leap for the rest of the book. Indeed, nowhere else in *Fear* does the leap receive such explicit treatment as it does here. The leap that Silentio proposes is that of the nimble dancer:

> [The Knight of Faith] is continually making the movement of infinity, but he does it with such precision and assurance that he continually gets finitude out of it... It is supposed to be the most difficult feat for a ballet dancer to leap into a specific posture in such a way that he never once strains for the posture but in the very leap assumes the posture. Perhaps there is no ballet dancer who can do it – but this Knight does it. (*FT* 41)

The difference between the ones who merely resign and those who are truly faithful is at the heart of Silentio's project to show faith for what it is, and to show up those speculators who think that faith is easily surpassed. The leap is the skilful leap of the one who navigates the "paradox of existence" – resigning and yet still living in utter confidence without awkward grasping during the transition, for even a second.

> The knights of infinity [the Tragic Heroes] are ballet dancers and have elevation. They make the upward movement and come down again, and this, too, is not an unhappy diversion and is not unlovely to see. But every time they come down, they are unable to assume the posture immediately, they waver for a moment, and this wavering shows that they are aliens in the world. ... But to be able to come down in such a way that instantaneously one seems to stand and walk, to change the leap into life into walking, absolutely to express the sublime in the pedestrian – only [the Knight of Faith] can do it, and this is the one and only marvel. (*FT* 41)

Silentio proposes Abraham as an example of what it could mean to live in the paradox of renouncing everything in this life, and yet at the same time holding fast to those same things. Silentio claims that "Abraham makes two movements. He makes the infinite movement of resignation and gives up Isaac, which no one can understand because it is a private venture; but next, at every moment, he makes the movement of faith." (*FT* 115) It is the 'double movement' that is central to Silentio's picture of what it means to have faith. And it is the leap that is central to the double movement. Unlike the suggestion of those who would here ascribe a 'leap of faith' to Kierkegaard, the leap is not identified with faith itself, but it is instead the fluid capability that all who have faith are found first to possess. The faithful one can live in this world and all that it has to offer while at the same time having resigned it completely. The movements of the Knights of Faith are those of the graceful dancer, leaping seamlessly from one posture to another.

It is important to note that not only is Silentio not a Christian, he does not claim to have any faith at all.[33] From such an 'outside' position Silentio is a dubious guide to the life

[33] Cf. *FT*, pp.33, 51.

of Christian faith. His results, lyrical as they are, are not intended to be taken as Kierkegaard's final word on the form and content of faith. Silentio is correct on two points – faith involves a paradox, and it involves a leap. But he has not recognised the essential character of either the paradox or of the leap. To come closer to this essence, we will have to go to the one whose vision is more informed by the light of Christianity.

Climacus and the Leap

If *Fear and Trembling* is about 'faith', then Climacus's *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* are more specifically about 'Christianity'. Silentio drew out the previously unforeseen difference between the Knight of Infinite Resignation and the Knight of Faith, but he finds his examples in Greek myths and in the Hebrew patriarch.[34] Silentio does not clothe 'faith' in any Christian trappings. When he says that "faith is the highest passion in a person" (*FT* 122), Silentio is radically individualising it, making the matter of faith something that only exists for the individual facing divine demands which have been uniquely tailored for that person, apart from any one religious tradition.[35]

In *Fragments*, Climacus too avoids naming Christianity, but his reasons are very different. It will be shown that Climacus sees a disjunction between generalised 'religion' and authentic Christianity. Because Christendom has conflated the two, it is necessary for him to re-introduce essential Christian concepts as if they were not known before,[36] but he concludes *Fragments* by promising a sequel which will give his subject its proper title and "costume".[37] In *Postscript* Climacus spells out the division between the assumed view of 'religion' and of 'Christianity' as the difference between a religion of immanence ('A') and a religion of transcendence ('B'). 'Religiousness A' is what Silentio is looking at through his ethically-tinted opera glasses. 'Religiousness B' is named as true Christianity, but it cannot be reached until the individual has well and truly come through Religiousness A[38] Climacus devotes a hefty portion of *Postscript* to detailing Religiousness A, and claims that *Fragments* is concerned with B.[39] As he writes in *Postscript*, "Since I neither presumed in *Fragments* nor presume here to explain the issue, only to present it...please note that this presenting is of a singular nature, because from the introduction there is no direct transition to becoming a

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[34] Cf. *FT*, pp. 84, 87, 94-98.
[35] See also Ch. 3 'Indirect Communication'.
[36] See for example Climacus's defence of his 'plagiarising' and poeticising Christian themes throughout *Fragments*, pp. 21-22, 35-36, 68, 109.
[37] *Fragments*, p. 109.
[38] The theme runs throughout Climacus. See especially *CUP* section II, chapter IV, division 2 A and B. A key sub-section is found in pp. 555-61.
[39] *CUP*, p. 561.

Christian, but on the contrary, this is the qualitative leap." (*CUP* 381) This does not at the outset seem to be about Religiousnesses A and B. However, it should be noted that the audience he is writing for is not one that is totally ignorant of the 'what' of Christianity. They exist already in a quasi-religious state, literally the state of Christendom, and so the transition that Climacus is talking about is not one from non-religion to religion, but rather from one level of religion to another. In *Postscript,* he says of *Fragments* that it was written for "people in the know, whose trouble is that they know too much."(*CUP* 275n) Note that while it is the transition from A to B that guides Climacus's main purpose of discovering how individuals like himself might become a Christian,[40] the transition has not yet happened to him. Climacus can only *claim* to know what the authentic Christianity of Religiousness B looks like,[41] but as a character still on the ascent, the accuracy of his assessment of 'true' Christianity has yet to be put to the test.

Religiousness A is one of immanence. As with the teaching method of Socrates, the truth comes out by degrees from within the individual. "...it appears that basically every human being [already] possesses the truth."[42] Religiousness A marks the end-point of a journey through the stages of aesthetics and ethics, a culmination, or *accumulation*, of personal change and deepening inwardness that eventually reveals truth. It is a religion of *quantity* of information. Climacus recognises that most of the religion called 'Christian' that one finds in Christendom is at this level.[43] By contrast, authentic Christianity (Religiousness B) marks a *qualitative* shift from what is derived from human categories to what is provided only by the transcendent. He speaks of the moment when the transcendent is encountered as having decisive significance, as opposed to the Socratic method of teaching by degrees. (*Fragments* 19) In the moment, a man is reborn, a time of decisive transition as drastic and abrupt as a shift from *non-being* into *being*:

> In *the moment*, he becomes aware of the rebirth, for his previous state was indeed one of 'not to be'... Whereas the Greek pathos focuses on recollection, the pathos of our project focuses on the moment, and no wonder, for is it not an exceedingly pathos-filled matter to come into existence from the state of 'not to be'? (*Fragments* 21, original emphasis)

The leap for Climacus is directly linked to his project of presenting the difference in quality between Religiousnesses A and B. The leap first makes its appearance in the third

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[40] Cf. *CUP*, pp.15-17.
[41] *CUP*, pp. 369-381, 555-561.
[42] *Fragments*, p. 13. Cf. *Fragments* Ch.I. Benjamin Daise provides a good discussion of Socrates and Kierkegaard *via* Climacus throughout his *Kierkegaard's Socratic Art* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1999).
[43] *CUP*, p. 557.

chapter of *Fragments* with a discussion of the apologetic arguments for the existence of God. We can build up an argument for God, Climacus writes, but eventually one must come to the end of the logical manoeuvres. God either *is* or he *is not*, and the believer, in order to be an authentic believer, must 'let go' of all arguments:

> Yet this letting go, even that is surely something; it is, after all, *meine Zuthat* [my contribution]. Does it not have to be taken into account, this diminutive moment, however brief it is – it does not have to be long, because it is a *leap.* (*Fragments* 43 original emphasis)

More will be said below about Climacus's original notion of the believer's 'contribution', but for now it is important to note the relation of the leap to the problem of immanence and transcendence. The leap's contribution, the letting go of evidential arguments, cannot be ignored, otherwise we return back to immanence, Socrates and Religiousness A.[44] The leap is the moment of qualitative transition, and in this there is a necessity of a sort in that the change, when it comes, is completely transformative. However, the moment of transition is not of a *logical* necessity; as if it depended on the accumulation of data and on incontrovertible evidence in order to effect the change as a matter of course.

In *Postscript* particular attention is paid to the leap in the section on Lessing, and it is here that all the useful categories for the leap are first laid out. "Lessing has said that the transition whereby one will build an eternal truth on historical reports is a leap."[45] Christianity posits and requires a *decision* within time. If the decision is seen as simply the necessary end-point of a drawn out process, it is no longer a decision and the result is no longer Christian. Thus Climacus writes, "Lessing opposes what I would call quantifying oneself into a qualitative decision." (*CUP* 95) There cannot be a natural or obvious transition from historical reliability (or apologetic arguments) to eternal truth. This is Lessing's famous 'ugly broad ditch',[46] and Climacus sees in it the point upon which everything else turns. "The transition whereby something historical becomes decisive for an eternal happiness is a *shifting from one genus to another*...It is a leap".[47] Besides the 'letting go', and the 'shifting-genus' functions of the leap, in this same section Climacus introduces yet another form when he relates a conversation that took place between Jacobi and Lessing. Climacus does not ultimately think that Jacobi has understood the true nature of the leap, but he thinks that there

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[44] *Fragments*, pp. 18-19.
[45] *CUP*, p. 93 quoting Lessing, "*Ueber den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft*" *Schriften*, V, p, 80; cf. *Lessing's Theological Writings* tr. Henry Chadwick (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), p.53.
[46] Lessing, *Schriften*, p.83; Chadwick, *Theological Writings*, p.55.
[47] *CUP*, p. 98 emphasis added. Climacus has earlier discussed the 'shifting genus' as a "coming into existence", but he does not in this first instance make explicit the connection to the leap. See *Fragments* pp.72-76.

is something "rather well said" in Jacobi's use of the *salto mortale* – the somersault that, if only the person will step in the right "elastic spot", will catapult by itself.[48]

Within the context of Climacus's task detailing the differences between the religions of A and B, it can be seen how he uses the leap to particular effect. As a 'letting go' the leap emphasises the impossibility of tying faith to necessity. As the shift or transition from one incommensurable category to another, the leap acts as the divisive line between the Christianity of Religiousness B and the dialectical immanence of Religiousness A, which uses the historical triumphalism of Christendom to prove the truth of its religion. (*CUP* 595) With the self-propelling somersault, Climacus brings to the leap a most important factor – a pointer to its true nature and origin that manages to escape the pitfalls that Silentio could not avoid, as shall be shown below.

The Leaps Compared

If Silentio is to become drawn into conversation with Climacus, we need to ask if Silentio does indeed represent Religiousness A. A look at the sort of religion Silentio thinks his leap will produce reveals that this is a legitimate claim. There are, of course, some obvious ways in which Silentio's Knight of Faith is *not* the same as a cultured Christendom churchgoer. Abraham does not abide by the socially acceptable morals. The Knight puts his reason ('common-sense') aside in the presence of the paradox. Silentio does not think that the leap to faith can be made on human strength alone. Resignation marks the end of all human power – Silentio admits that faith comes from somewhere else. (*FT* 38ff) This does not appear to be a mark of an immanent religious thinker. To see that Silentio is one of the Religiousness A people to whom Climacus is writing we need to look beyond what Silentio himself says about faith, and instead look at what he *does not* say. Silentio's desire for a new understanding of religion is authentic, but he is not yet equipped to have that kind of faith, as he himself readily acknowledges.[49] Finding confusion and cross-purposes in such a discussion should not be surprising in the context of Religiousness A. Climacus could be describing Silentio's approach when he writes about the discourse of Religiousness A:

> The religious address...however well intentioned, [is] at times a jumbled, noisy pathos of sorts, aesthetics, ethics, Religiousness A and Christianity – it is therefore at times self-contradictory. (*CUP* 555-56)

[48] *CUP*, p. 102. Here Kierkegaard references Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Ueber die Lehre des Spinoza, Werke* IV (Leipzig, 1812-25) p.74.
[49] *FT*, pp.33, 50 and 51.

This stage of religion contains some "lovely passages", but ultimately "it can very well be heard, but it cannot be done." (*CUP* 556)

Why cannot Silentio's leap take him where he needs to go? Silentio still does not understand the true nature of the paradox. For him, the Knight of Faith lives in the paradox that exists between faith (acquisition) and resignation. It takes Climacus to recognise the absolute, decisive difference that exists between God and man. To worry about anything less than the Absolute Paradox (as Silentio does) is to miss the point. Silentio's God is not obviously immanent – that is, he is described as existing outside and above the universal human sphere of the ethical life, yet he is not quite transcendent either. The God of *Fear and Trembling* collapses back into immanence because Silentio has not recognised the source of the gap that exists between man and God. It is Climacus who identifies what the previous pseudonym was missing. "Sin is a crucial expression for the religious existence. As long as sin is not posited, the suspension [of the God-Human relationship] becomes a transient factor that in turn vanishes or remains outside of life as the totally irregular." (*CUP* 267) Commenting on Silentio, Climacus points out that 'sin' was used only occasionally in *Fear and Trembling*,[50] and then only to shed light on Abraham's ethical dilemma.[51] It does not occupy the crucial place that Christianly it should.[52] Because Silentio does not recognise the state of the relation that exists between God and man, *Fear and Trembling* is unclear about the source of faith, and subsequently, the function of the leap. Silentio *claims* to recognise the limits of human ability when it comes to faith:

> So I can perceive that it takes strength and energy and spiritual freedom to make the infinite movement of resignation...The next movement amazes me, my brain reels, for, after having made the movement of resignation then by virtue of the absurd to get everything... that is over and beyond human powers, that is a marvel. (*FT* 47-48)

But because for Silentio 'sin' does not have the corrupting force that it does for the Christian thinker, there is still confusion over where exactly faith does come from. Silentio is inconsistent, for throughout *Fear and Trembling,* the impression remains that faith and the leap do in fact occur according to degrees of skill. In *Fear* there is an unspecified suggestion that faith is a product of an innate ability. Nimble dancers, after-all, are using learned skills that were originally latent *in themselves.* Silentio is uncomfortable with the idea that faith is a product of human power, but he still seems at a loss to say what else it could be. As an

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[50] Cf. *FT*, p.62.
[51] *CUP*, p. 268.
[52] Although Climacus at least recognises the significance of sin, Anti-Climacus will show that Climacus misunderstands the true nature of it. See Ch.2 'Offence'.

indication of the immanent source of Silentio's faith, it is significant that when he discusses his own relation to faith, Silentio backs down, claiming "I lack courage." (*FT* 72) Faith, although apparently not an act of human strength, is still acquired via a "paradoxical and humble courage" which Silentio regrets he does not have (*FT* 49). "If I ever *manage to be able to make* this movement, I will in the future [go on parade] with four horses." (*Fragments* 51, emphasis added)

Does the leap come from an innate ability and, if so, is it a volitional action that we do? Some commentators, apparently following Silentio's lead, seem to think so. Merold Westphal, in a work that quotes from different pseudonyms but attributes all of the thoughts to 'Kierkegaard', suggests that the discussion of the leap is a discussion in a context of voluntarism. Westphal argues that the Kierkegaardian leap is one in which a person *chooses* to interpret facts in such a way as they are seen to be works of God. "Kierkegaard has a leap that is more of an act of will than of intellect".[53] Westphal then accuses Kierkegaard of circularity. Because the leap is supposed to be a free, uncompelled decision, he says, Kierkegaard is wrong to force a decision between a number of interpretative options. Kierkegaard's leap, criticises Westphal, "directs our attention to the necessity of choice and the inescapability of the leap."[54] If the leap was truly transcendent (as Westphal agrees Kierkegaard wants it to be) then it is contradictory to have a leap that occurs as a matter of necessity, that is, in the immanent realm where bit by bit the facts pile up until 'faith' occurs as a logical end to a string of propositions.

However, criticising Kierkegaard in this way betrays the fact that Westphal has not appropriately considered the leap in the light of the pseudonymous project. The circularity of having a free leap that turns out to be only a forced choice of limited options was not lost to Kierkegaard. If one attempts to find the leap in the immanent sphere of degrees of decision and an innate capacity to choose rightly, then one will run up against a wall. It is indeed circular to promote a leap that is supposed to be beyond human power, but which in actuality comes only from human ability. To point out that Silentio's leap does not move beyond the quantitative sphere is to go along with the results of Climacus's own investigations. The leap resulting in Religiousness B is the qualitative shift that Silentio wants but does not have. Silentio comes up against the problem but it is Climacus who recognises it: is the leap something that humans 'do', or is it 'done' to them? If it is simply the former, then we have not left the immanent quantitative realm. As Climacus writes in *Fragments*:

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[53] Westphal, *Kierkegaard's Critique*, p. 92.
[54] Westphal, *Kierkegaard's Critique*, p. 94.

> It is easy to see, then...that faith is *not an act of the will*, for it is always the case that all human willing is efficacious only within the condition. For example, if I have the courage to will it, I will understand the Socratic – that is, I understand myself, because from my Socratic point of view I possess the condition and can now will it. But If I do not possess the condition (and we assume this in order not to go back to the Socratic), then all my willing is of no avail. (*Fragments* 62-3, emphasis added)

However, according to Climacus, it cannot *simply* be the latter option either, i.e. that faith and the leap are 'done' to us like a bolt from the blue. Existentially it is still important for Climacus that the "leap is the category of decision." (*CUP* 99) However, the *category* of decision can contain more that just the common-sense view of a straightforward volitional action or an 'act of the will'. Climacus works out a *via media* between the totally active and the totally passive. It is this unique addition to the theory of the leap that prevents a conflation of the leap of Silentio and Religiousness A with that of true Christianity and Religiousness B.

Silentio's leap of skilful dancing, courage and contrivance seems close to what Climacus playfully refers to as a feat worthy of a fabled storytelling imp: "One closes one's eyes, grabs oneself by the neck *à la* Münchhausen, and then – then one stands on the other side..." (*CUP* 99) Negatively defined, the leap involved in true faith cannot be like this. This would be as silly as a strongman who flexes and twists his arms in order to demonstrate the quality of his prayers. "The inwardness and the unutterable sighs of prayer are incommensurate with the muscular" (*CUP* 91), and so the leap is not something that can force a transition from the 'ground up'. The leap is also not an event imposed upon the individual 'top down', either by God or by logical necessity. The faith of Religiousness B is not just passive, and it is not a form of factual knowledge. (*Fragments* 62)[55] As has been noted earlier, Climacus is explicit that the leap belongs in the category of decision. Christianity, he writes, enters and posits a "decision within time."(*CUP* 95) In the cases looked at above, with both the simply muscular and the purely passive, the leap does not escape the immanent. If someone tries to carry himself into faith, then he is relying on his own accumulated resources. If someone waits inert, expecting the leap to happen to him like a voice from on high that cannot be ignored, then he is expecting a forced conversion that once again belongs to the immanent world of logical necessity. Climacus finds the positive definition of the leap when he explores a new way of thinking about action and passivity. As a sinful human, he recognises that volition alone cannot produce faith. But as a free human, he also sees that he cannot be levered into faith, and along with Lessing he opposes the attempts to "quantify

oneself into a qualitative decision" (*CUP* 95). The positive form is the Climacean development that the leap can be a decision *and* a transition, at the same time displaying active and passive aspects.

The transition function is related to what is passive about the leap. Unlike Silentio, Climacus does not think of the leap as just another thing that we have to do, but it is a transition in the quality of essence, a transformation that happens *to* individuals, and is in this sense 'passive'. Religiousness B is as different from A as being is from non-being, and the move from A to B requires a qualitative transition. In a journal entry, Kierkegaard stresses that Christianity is *not* just a development of what man is originally.[56] As Climacus says, "to become what one is as a matter of course – who would waste his time on that?" (*CUP* 130) Significantly, Climacus refers here to this becoming a Christian as subjective *acceptance*. Thus, the transition is passive in that it is an acceptance of the change, but it does not follow that the change was forced. A response can be free even while it is a response *to* something.[57] The psychological category of the 'Gestalt shift' is an example of a transition that is non-volitional and yet not forced.[58] Gestalt shifts in perspective are obviously related to what goes on before, but there is still a qualitative change that is not just cumulative. A simple example of this is of a black and white picture that on initial viewing shows the profile of a rabbit, yet after a few minutes of staring, the same outline reveals a duck.[59] Gestalt shifts, writes Ferreira, "are qualitative transitions which are not...brought about by direct decision."[60] Although useful, it is good not to stretch the analogy too far, as the Gestalt shift is still a purely psychological, and therefore immanent, phenomenon. However, it is a transition of this type that helpfully points towards the sort of change in outlook and perspective that is entailed with the transitional leap. Perhaps a more relevant example of a fundamental and transformative reorientation could be when a person comes to a change in their 'world view' in light of the complexity of a particular issue. Someone does not *have* to adopt a particular view towards a country, political party or cultural assumption, but they might nevertheless find that their views have changed once they know more about the context or consequences of their old beliefs. In this case, the person has not originally set out to make a muscular attempt to question the ethics of bombing Iraq, fox-hunting or shopping at Walmart etc., but it

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[55] For the relationship between Reason and Faith in Climacus, see Ch. 2 'Offence'.
[56] *JP* III 416.
[57] Ferreira, "Faith", p. 219.
[58] Ferreira makes much use of this model in *Transforming Vision* pp. 34-36, 72-76; "Faith" pp. 217ff.
[59] For this and more simple visual examples see, Julian Hochberg *Perception and Cognition at Century's End* ed. Julian Hochberg (New York: Academic Press, 1998), p. 258 fig. 3.
[60] Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 34. See also Ferreira "Faith" p. 217.

has happened, and happened freely through no outside compulsion or internal act of intentional willpower.

It is important to note that Climacus does not see 'divine gifts' and 'human action' as mutually exclusive categories. The transition to faith is a *given* (something that cannot come from us) but it is also something that we *do* - we let go, we respond, we embrace the paradox, etc. These 'doings' are the small contributions that the individual can make in preparation for the transformation. If the leap as transition is passive, then the leap as decision is active, even if it is not muscular. From his first mention of the leap in *Fragments*, Climacus is keen to show the unique volitional nature of the leap. 'Letting go' seems to be an oddly passive way of describing action, yet it is "surely something; it is, after all, *meine Zuthat* [my contribution]." (*Fragments* 43) In *Postscript* Climacus says that the leap "is left to the single individual to *decide* whether he will by virtue of the absurd *accept* in faith that which indeed cannot be thought." (*CUP* 100 emphasis added) It would be a mistake to assume that this action is the same as that of a Münchhausen. Whereas the immanent individuals direct their energies towards effecting the transition itself, Climacus sees the leap as a decision to *prepare for* change. It is because of this particular focus of the action of the leap that Climacus can praise Jacobi for his *salto mortale*, even if he does not agree with everything Jacobi says. Jacobi talked of the elastic spot that, if one would only take a small step in the right place, it would automatically catapult the leaper. Climacus thinks this is "rather well said", but directs his attention to the issue of the small step. It is *this* that constitutes his contribution as a leaper, and not the flight through the air.[61] The 'leap as preparation for change' is also apparent in Climacus's well-known image of faith as stepping out over 70 000 fathoms of water.[62] You must place yourself in the right position before faith can happen – this is your small step or contribution to the transition. Note that this is not a matter of accumulating information, for this would be to return to immanence. Instead, it seems that the preparatory action of the leap is merely the will to expose oneself to a given 'picture' of the world that is not objectively certain or in line with received wisdom. "To be infinitely interested and to ask about an *actuality that is not one's own* is to will to believe and expresses the paradoxical relation to the paradox." (*CUP* 323 emphasis added) The necessity of the change comes in when the individual is transformed by the actuality that is not his own, but this is not due to the individual's own piecemeal efforts to build a new world-view.

[61] Cf. *CUP*, p. 102.
[62] *CUP*, p. 204, also pp. 140, 232, and 288.

With 'infinite interest' we come to the glue that binds the passive and the active natures of the leap together. Climacus identifies infinite interestedness with passion and with faith.[63] For Climacus, 'leap' and 'passion' both refer to the same transition, as in *Fragments*, where the transition occurs with the happy passion of faith.[64] The Danish *lidenskab* (passion) shares a root with the verb *lide* (to suffer), where 'passion' denotes a feeling which is just as much a response as it is an action.[65] The leap might well belong in the category of decision for Climacus, but it is a decision that has more to do with engagement, response and interpretation than it does with objectively choosing amongst options. "Passion," he says, "is the highest pitch of subjectivity". (*CUP* 199) With this passionate response we seem to come full circle back to Silentio and the double movement of resignation and acquisition. Yet B really is at a higher stage than A, for one cannot reach 'true Christianity' without first passing through the first stage of religious awareness. It is certainly not Climacus's intention to discourage the Silentios of this world, for A must first be present before the individual can become aware of B, and experience its transformative power.[66] To the outsider, there may not be an observable difference between the two, but that is because B does not do away with A, but rather completes it. One of the running themes of *Fragments* is that the condition for B needs to be given, but once it *is* given, then that which is valid for the Socratic (i.e. immanent) learner again becomes valid.[67] *Postscript* stresses that Religiousness B is not opposed to the dialectic of Religiousness A. As the religion of 'inwardness' however, B demotes the dialectical to second place after existence.[68] In short, B keeps all that is important to A, but it understands the religious in light of the transition that has been given and received. From this point of view, the 'picture' must be reinterpreted and the categorical priorities sorted out.

Just as any exploration of 'Kierkegaard's' view of faith and the leap cannot stop at Johannes De Silentio, so too the same *caveat* must be applied to Johannes Climacus and Christianity. Silentio stands about to enter Religiousness A, and so does not properly realise the true nature of faith. Climacus stands about to enter Religiousness B, and so does not know first hand what it is to be a Christian.[69] Both pseudonyms claim to be providing an honest assessment of the true nature of faith and religion as they see it. But they are speculating, and Kierkegaard does not intend the reader to take either Silentio's or Climacus's

[63] See for example *CUP*, pp. 324 and 326.
[64] *Fragments*, pp. 51, 59.
[65] Ferreira, "Faith" p 224.
[66] *CUP*, p. 556.
[67] Cf. *Fragments*, Ch. IV, especially pp. 62ff.
[68] *CUP*, p. 559.

word as final authorities. Regarding Christianity, Climacus is made to say at the end of *Postscript*, "therefore let no one bother to appeal to [this book], because one who appeals to it has *eo ipso* misunderstood it. To be an authority is much too burdensome an existence for a humorist..." (CUP 618)

Anti-Climacus and the Leap as Contemporaneity

Anti-Climacus is not a humorist, or even a curious speculator. He is Kierkegaard's only properly Christian pseudonym, and as such, he occupies an important place when considering the development of the key themes.[70] Anti-Climacus does not drastically alter Climacus's categories, but instead brings to them an 'insider's' point of view that is unavailable to the earlier pseudonyms. Anti-Climacus's curious contribution to the development of the leap is that he does not refer to it by name.[71] However, it is proposed at the same time that the 'leap' lies behind everything that Anti-Climacus writes, in the form of *contemporaneity*. Contemporaneity is the central theme running through Anti-Climacus's works. The term describes both the imaginative positioning of oneself next to Christ, and the reality for those Christians who are aware of the Christ of the New Testament as a continuing presence in their lives. In *Practice*, Climacus's three leap categories are diffused throughout the text. 'Small steps with infinite consequences', the 'letting go of demonstrations' and especially the 'qualitative transition from one genus to another' are key to Anti-Climacus's argument about the importance of contemporaneity for authentic Christian faith. Anti-Climacus builds on Climacus, and does not here run counter to him in the same way that Climacus counters Silentio. By not identifying Climacus's three categories as *leaps* however, Anti-Climacus avoids the non-Christian associations connected to the phrase. Even at the highest point in the ascent to enlightenment, is it the case that Anti-Climacus truly represents 'authentic Christianity'? Kierkegaard muses in his journals that Anti-Climacus is a character who "*considers himself* to be a Christian on an extraordinarily high level". (*JP* VI 6433 emphasis added) As the recipient of pure ideal Christianity, Anti-Climacus stands as a judge over the other pseudonyms, and over Kierkegaard himself.[72] However, it will be shown that even with his ascent, Anti-Climacus has not finished the journey. Although he has attained the right theory, it has yet to be practically applied, and it will be Kierkegaard who takes himself back in the cave to complete the demands of authentic Christianity. However, at this

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[69] Cf. *CUP*, p.16, 597.
[70] For Anti-Climacus as a Christian, see 'Thesis Introduction' and also Hong's comments in *Practice* p. xiii.
[71] A fact that seems not to have been noticed by those secondary commentators who are concerned with 'Kierkegaard's leap'.

point in the literature, Anti-Climacus is a reliable guide as to the essential form of the leap, and it is appropriate to measure what has come before against his unadulterated vision.

We have seen that to his detriment Silentio claimed he understood faith, even though he did not have it. Climacus is used to highlight the particular problems that arise with a Silentio position. However, Climacus too is an outsider.[73] *He* claims to understand Christianity, but is not himself a Christian. Often what Climacus writes about the difference between Religiousness A and B is correct from an Anti-Climacean point of view, but Climacus himself is not always consistent, and Kierkegaard makes him occasionally blind to the implications of his own insights. Climacus may be mostly correct about Religiousness B, but he himself is not at that stage. His language of 'leaping' belies a stage that is still overly focussed on the *how* of Christianity. Not confident in his standing regarding Christ, Climacus (no less than Silentio before him) is not able to tear his eyes away from the seemingly impossible content of faith. Climacus occupies himself with the technicalities of the demands of the Christian religion, especially the intellectual demands. Christianity for him takes place primarily in and against the realm of the intellect and the understanding.[74] Thus, we can see that although Climacus is correct to recognise Silentio's failure to have a leap that can leave the immanent category of human skill behind, he does not himself escape an unhealthy focus on the human contribution to eternal happiness. Anti-Climacus, on the other hand, refers to the 'small step' of uncomplicated obedience without using language that suggests a dredging up of inner resources. He speaks of contemporaneity with Christ that allows one to let go of historical demonstrations, but then, more so than Climacus, also emphasises contemporaneity as a given state that transforms the believer.[75] The new transition is a gift that comes from a transcendent source.

Anti-Climacus's contemporaneity is in fact a development of an idea first found in *Fragments*, where Climacus deals with the fact that there can be no second-hand disciples.[76] There Climacus argues that even those who are contemporary with the God-Man still have to make exactly the same decision that those who only hear about the God-Man have to make.[77] This is because what is important about the God-Man is not anything that can be seen physically, and so everyone is in the same position with regard to the Absolute Paradox.[78]

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[72] Again, see Cf. 1, and *JP* VI 6431, 6501; *POV*, p. 13.
[73] Cf. *CUP*, p. 16.
[74] This is further discussed in Ch. 2 'Offence'.
[75] For Anti-Climacus' use of the 'small step', the 'letting go' and the 'transformative' functions of the leap as contemporaneity see below.
[76] *Fragments* Ch. V 'The Follower at Second Hand', pp.89-110.
[77] *Fragments*, pp. 104-105.
[78] Cf. *Fragments* 'Interlude', pp. 72-88.

Climacus does not link contemporaneity to the leap however, and it is only with Anti-Climacus that we see the leap apply to this important concept. It has been mentioned above how this term describes both the imaginative positioning of oneself next to Christ, and the reality for those Christians who are aware of all their actions as done "before God". Contemporaneity allows no intermediary interpreter or the history of Christendom's triumph to blunt the impact of standing before a lowly man who claims to be God. Contemporaneity is important because it is by facing this man that the possibility of the essential offence remains a live option. Furthermore, it is only by choosing not to be offended that one can be a true Christian, for the only options available to the contemporaneous person are *either* rejection, *or* faith.[79]

This, then, is the contemporaneity that Anti-Climacus crafts from Climacus's leap. The three Climacean leap categories that Anti-Climacus uses (but does not name) are the leap of 'letting go',[80] the leap of the 'small step'[81], and the leap of the 'shifting-genus' or 'qualitative transformation'.[82] By using the themes with reference to contemporaneity but without actually mentioning the word 'leap', Anti-Climacus manages to steer clear of the non-Christian associations and problems connected to the 'leap' while at the same time retaining what is most useful about the category. We will look briefly at 'letting go' and the 'small step' before considering the more important phenomenon of the transcendent transformation connected to contemporaneity.

In *Fragments*, in keeping with his emphasis on reason and the intellect, Climacus talks of "letting go" of demonstrations and philosophical arguments for the existence of God. His letting go "is a leap" (*Fragments* 43) which represents the triumph that the paradox has over the understanding. Anti-Climacus retains the idea of letting go of demonstrations, but he finds the demonstrations in history, not philosophy. He speaks of a "theological professor" who writes a new book on the historical "demonstrations of the truth of Christianity" and who would be disappointed if his readers did not afterwards admit that Christianity has now been proved. (*Practice* 96) The theological professor is merely reflecting a mistaken attitude that runs throughout all of Christendom. The "calamity of Christendom" is that Christ is seen as an historical figure – "some kind of great somebody". (*Practice* 35) Preachers point to the miracle accounts in the New Testament and to the victorious eighteen hundred years that have elapsed between the time of Christ and their present situation. Has not Christianity triumphed

[79] See for example *Practice* pp. 65, 81-82. This is discussed fully in Ch. 2 'Offence'.
[80] *Practice*, pp. 26-27, 96, 52.
[81] *Practice*, pp. 18-19, 82.
[82] *Practice*, pp. 27-28, 62-63, 102, 140.

over the world? "Has not history established adequately, or more than adequately, established who he was, that he was – God?" (*Practice* 26) This is directly opposite to the attitude that Jesus took towards his own actions and presence in the world:

> Christ himself, however, says no more than that the demonstrations are able to lead someone – not to faith, far from it...but to the point where faith can come into existence, are able to help someone to become aware and to that extent help him to come into the dialectical tension from which faith breaks forth: Will you believe or will you be offended. ...in the situation of contemporaneity it is impossible to demonstrate directly. (*Practice* 96)

Thus Anti-Climacus considers historical demonstrations to be useless for the kind of job that their proponents want them to accomplish. "Can any more foolish contradiction be imagined than this, to want to **demonstrate**...that an individual human being is God?" (*Practice* 26, original bold emphasis) Such a demonstration assumes a relation of degrees:

> If we begin [with this demonstration], we cannot, without somewhere or other being guilty of a μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος [shifting from one genus to another], suddenly by way of a conclusion obtain the new quality God, so that as a consequence the result or results of a human being's life at some point suddenly demonstrate that this human being was God...how many centuries must pass in order to have it demonstrated...? (*Practice* 27)

We will consider the shifting of one genus to another below, but for now it is enough simply to note that Anti-Climacus, along with Climacus, wishes to let go of demonstrations. However, Climacus and Anti-Climacus differ in the type of demonstrations that they think are worth abandoning. Climacus wrote against empirical, philosophical and other intellectual 'proofs' for the existence of God.[83] Anti-Climacus, the 'judge' who stands outside of the cave of Christendom, is more concerned with the propensity of Christian culture to assume that history proves the 'obvious' glory of Christ. Instead it is only contemporaneity which brings people to the state whereby they feel the full force of divine demands coming from the actual man Jesus Christ. Christ is, of course, a man with an historical past, but it is not this history that produces Christian faith, and it is certainly not the common-sense of making a decision based on the accumulation of data. "So imagine yourself contemporary with him, the inviter...He, the inviter, demands that you shall give up everything, *let everything go*". (*Practice* 52 emphasis added)

Climacus's leap of letting go was his small contribution. Without resorting to an over-emphasis on the human contribution to the becoming of the Christian state, Anti-

[83] *Fragments*, pp. 42-44.

Climacus also retains a 'small something'. Here, he is building on Climacus's category of the small step that one takes before being catapulted in to the leap.[84] Like Climacus, Anti-Climacus recognises that a tiny movement can have infinite consequences, but again, unlike Climacus, Anti-Climacus sees this step through the lens of contemporaneity.

> The invitation stands at the crossroad...come here, you are so close to [Christ]; one single step onto the other way and you are so infinitely far away from him. (*Practice* 18)
>
> Oh, turn around [*vende om*] and come here, here is rest! (*Practice* 19)

It is precisely this call to rest, however, which contains the possibility of offence, for here we have the individual man Jesus drawing all men to himself.

> It is in the situation of contemporaneity with an individual human being, a human being like others – and he speaks about himself in such a manner! ...he directly makes himself totally different from what it is to be a human being, makes himself the divine – he, an individual human being. (*Practice* 100)

The natural response of Christendom to such a proposal is to remove the sting of the offence by suppressing the humble ordinariness of Christ and expounding instead on his 'obvious' glory. A triumphalist history is used to erect a barrier between the real being of Christ and his followers. "Well, if one goes and lives intoxicated in fantasies, if one allows the fantasy to create a fantastical figure of Christ, to which one then relates at the distance of imagination – well, then one perhaps does not notice the offence." (*Practice* 100) Anti-Climacus urges that the small contribution of the potential believer is simply not to keep at a distance he who is asking to draw near, the contribution of allowing contemporaneity to take place: "no relation to the God-Man is possible without beginning with the situation of contemporaneity." (*Practice* 82)

Contemporaneity reminds the individual that the Christian situation is given, not self-induced or produced as a matter of degree. Faith in Christ is a "special kind of reception", and does not come as a transition in increments little by little. (*Practice* 140) Anti-Climacus here builds on Climacus's category of the leap of a shifting-genus or qualitative transition. Whereas Climacus deals with the rather abstract and speculative ideas of immanence and transcendence however, Anti-Climacus instantiates those ideas in the transformative situation of the Christian life. It is nothing new for Kierkegaard's pseudonyms to talk of the difference

[84] Cf. *CUP* p.101ff.

between God and man,[85] but we have seen that previous characters have had trouble crossing the gap. Anti-Climacus introduces the idea that God wills to transform humans – to transform them "into likeness with God". (*Practice* 63) What this means for Anti-Climacus is expressly *not* what Christendom's preachers mean. The idea of a religion that reflects and gloriously completes the 'good life' is far removed from Anti-Climacus's authentic Christianity. "If [Christianity] is relaxed to the merely human, to what has arisen in the human heart, then people naturally think well of it and in turn naturally think well of the kind speaker who is able to make Christianity so mild...". (*Practice* 62) Instead, the contemporaneous one will recognise that "Christianity came into the world as the absolute, not, humanly speaking, for comfort; on the contrary, it continually speaks about how the Christian must suffer...". (*Practice* 63) Thus, because there is indeed such an "infinite chasmic difference between God and man" (*Practice* 63) to be transformed into the image of God (in Christ) is to be transformed away from the comfort of the merely human, and into, "*humanly speaking*, an even greater torment...". (*Practice* 63, emphasis added) The transformation is a qualitative transition, which cannot be effected by innate human skill. We have seen that Anti-Climacus says that to start historically and move from Jesus to God cannot be done without involving a "shift from one genus to another". (*Practice* 27) Man and God do not resemble each other as a matter of degrees, but are separated by an "infinite qualitative difference". (*Practice* 28) With Climacus's paradigm of the leap as a 'transition in kind' as a theoretical foundation, Anti-Climacus statements about *becoming* take on a stronger significance than the preacher's rhetoric normally suggests. "One becomes a Christian only in the situation of contemporaneity with Christ, and in the situation of contemporaneity everyone will also become aware." (*Practice* 102) Being in the state of contemporaneity and Christianity is a transcendent gift.

Part of Silentio's and Climacus's problem is that they *admire* faith and the paradox. According to Anti-Climacus, admiration lies below *imitation*. The admirer may, like Silentio, praise the man of faith, or, like Climacus, gaze in awe at the Absolute Paradox. But admiration is not enough. Anti-Climacus gives as an example Nicodemus who came to Jesus at night as an admirer, but was not an imitator in the day.[86] Nicodemus was willing to "assure, reassure in the strongest expressions" his admiration, but "it perhaps escaped him that there is a limit to this *ascending scale* of assurances and reassurances... it perhaps escaped him that the more strongly someone makes such assurances while his life remains

[85] 'Problema II 'Is there an Absolute Duty to God?'' in *Fear and Trembling* speaks of the difference between the sphere of men and the sphere of God. See p. 68ff. See also *Fragments*, pp. 44-48.

unchanged, the more he is only making a fool of himself...". (*Practice* 248-9 emphasis added) By dealing with such an incremental scale, admiration has not yet left the immanent realm of the merely human.

> There is an infinite difference between an admirer and an imitator...Only the danger of actuality can really make it manifest, and therefore in contemporaneity with Christ it really [becomes] manifest who [is] the admirer, who the imitator, how few of the latter there [are]. (*Practice* 249-50)

Anti-Climacus complains that in Christendom, contemporaneity with Christ has disappeared to such a degree that now only the admirers are considered to be religious, when in fact it is "only the imitator who is the true Christian." (*Practice* 254) Contemporaneity is very rare. Without contemporaneity there can be no possibility of offence, and hence no faith or Christ-imitation.[87] In his discussions on Christian transformation and imitation, Anti-Climacus suggests, but does not fully develop, the ramifications for a Christ follower on earth.[88] *Practice* focuses overwhelmingly on the offence which Christ occasions, but here and there appear hints that the offence can also be caused by the human life imitating Christ.[89] We have seen that Anti-Climacus speaks of contemporaneity using the same categories that Climacus used to describe the leap. Thus, in Anti-Climacus the leap has developed to the point where it underlies what is most crucial for Kierkegaard about Christianity – contemporaneity that leads to offence which leads to faith, and the qualitative transformation of a new life in active imitation of Christ. The development of the leap follows the trajectory of ascent, as Kierkegaard's reader is led upwards to the true source of Christian faith. The descent back into the cave of Christendom is suggested as a Christian life that offends others, but for the full realisation of the descent we will have to look to *Attack*. As important as contemporaneity is to Anti-Climacus, in *Practice* the concept often comes across as unsatisfactorily vague. As befits one who is gazing at the light aboveground, Anti-Climacus is good as a lyricist for the theory, but not so good when it comes to the praxis of communicating his message to the people in the cave. Ironically, considering the title of Anti-Climacus's main book, it is not left to him to put contemporaneity into practice.

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[86] John 3:1-21.
[87] Compare the *essentially* Christian notion of contemporaneity with Sartre's use of the term in his essay, "Kierkegaard the Singular Universal." Sartre says Christianity is a dead issue, and that 'Kierkegaard's' contemporaneity will help us "go further." "We are all contemporaries" he says. *Modern Critical Views: Soren Kierkegaard*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Pub., 1989), pp. 76-98.
[88] Cf. Ch. 4 'Indirect Communication'.
[89] Cf. *Practice* pp.85-94 and the discussion in Ch. 2 'Offence' and Ch. 3 'Indirect Communication'.

Kierkegaard, Contemporaneity and Christendom

Attack upon Christendom builds on the work started by *Practice*, using Anti-Climacean themes as a sort of theoretical 'diagnosis' of the illness of Christendom. Kierkegaard's conclusion is that Christianity looks nothing like 'the world' or its culture.[90] He also concludes that Christianity is dead, or nearly so, and that it is the disease of Christendom that has killed it.[91] Kierkegaard sees individual contemporaneity with Christ as the practical cure for Christendom, and the only way for true Christianity to emerge.[92] Kierkegaard here continues to speak using Anti-Climacus's language of the leap as contemporaneity, with its shifting transitions, chasms and heterogeneous qualities.[93] Unlike the pseudonymous *Practice*, however, Kierkegaard in his attack does not shy away from expressing the full and concrete implications of contemporaneity for the would-be Christian in the here and now.[94] More so even than in *Practice*, contemporaneity in *Attack* is necessarily conjoined with offence. The contemporaneous imitator of Christ will give offence to his surrounding culture, and suffer offence in return.[95] Thus, it should be kept in mind that wherever 'contemporaneity' appears in Kierkegaard's *Attack*, 'offence' hovers in the background, and *vice versa*. However, for our purpose of following particular developing themes throughout the literature, we are intentionally making an artificial, and temporary, separation between the two themes where in Kierkegaard's writing they are two sides of the same coin.

Attack retains the language of transitions between incommensurable qualities, and thus it retains the idea of the 'leap as contemporaneity'. In *Attack*, Kierkegaard's 'leap' reaches its culmination with the presentation of contemporaneity as the radical cure for a Christendom that has forgotten that Christianity is not on the same spectrum as 'the world'.[96] At times he is like a surgeon, inflicting violence so that a greater good may emerge.[97] At other times, the decisive imagery grows more savage. The sickness of the age is that everything is entered into to "a certain degree". (*Moment* 93) But not for Kierkegaard, here specifically employing the image of the leap for the only time in his polemic: "No, something decisive is introduced differently from anything else. Like the leap of the wild beast upon its prey...something decisive is introduced..." (*Moment* 93) Kierkegaard identifies this

[90] *Moment*, pp. 17, 26, 206, 214-15, 248, 257.
[91] *Moment*, pp. 39, 143.
[92] *Moment*, pp. 99-100, 316, 345.
[93] *Moment*, pp. 10, 20, 214-15, 222, 226, 302, 334.
[94] *Moment*, pp. 17, 39, 248, 257.
[95] *Moment*, pp. 226, 288-89, 292, 334. See also Ch. 2 'Offence'
[96] *Moment*, pp. 17, 20, 99-100, 316.

'something decisive' leap with contemporaneity: "...if you wish it, this book can help you to become aware of this matter of contemporaneity. And this is the decisive point!" (*Moment* 290) It is significant that Kierkegaard ended his life's work with the self-published magazine entitled the *Moment*- a word which describes the temporal point when the individual is faced with the choice of making the decisive leap into contemporaneity, or remaining in sickness.

Christendom as Disease

When looking at Kierkegaard's diagnosis of the disease of Christendom, three symptoms become apparent. First Christendom reduces truth to a matter of historical triumphalism and majority vote.[98] Secondly Christendom encourages the assumption that one can be Christian 'in addition' to all the other charming aspects of civilisation.[99] These symptoms lead to the third, and underlying, problem; that Christendom confuses quantity with quality[100] - a problem that Kierkegaard discusses by drawing from the earlier works of Climacus and Anti-Climacus.[101]

The first symptom regards the false sense of importance that is attached to cultural and social success. As a demonstration of their smug assumption that the truth of Christianity is obvious, the citizens of Christendom like to think that they wouldn't have taken the life of the prophets of old, or of Christ and his apostles. Instead, Kierkegaard points out that Christendom builds glorious churches in memory of Biblical heroes, ironically placing itself in the exact same position as that of the Pharisees, the "brood of vipers" that Jesus lambasted for hypocritically erecting monuments for prophets who died at the hands of the Pharisee's own fathers.[102] Like those Pharisees, says Kierkegaard, Christendom's preachers have let the triumph of history get in the way of being contemporaneous with Christ.[103] Kierkegaard suggests that the seed of historical triumphalism was sown with the swelling of the ranks in Acts 2:41, when "three thousand were added to their number on that day."[104] Such rapid growth is anathema to Kierkegaard's conception of subjective appropriation and imitation of Christ. Instead of individuals working out their faith in fear and trembling, Christendom looks for the quick fix of official statements and popular sentiment. This is the fate of Christian truth in Christendom, that it has become a matter of majority opinion:

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[97] *Moment*, p.12, 24.
[98] *Moment*, pp. 133-34, 181, 209.
[99] *Moment*, pp. 10-11, 18, 57,
[100] *Moment*, pp. 36-37, 39, 93-94, 109, 162, 183-184.
[101] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 14, 20, 50, 69, 287ff, 290.
[102] *Moment*, pp. 133-34. Cf. Mtt. 23:29-33 and Luke 11:47-48.
[103] *Moment*, p. 134.
[104] *Moment*, p. 181.

> [Christendom] is the public. This humanness, to ask whether an opinion in itself is true, no one cares about; what they care about is: how many have this opinion. Aha! The number decides whether an opinion had physical power, and this is what they care about all the way through: the single individual in the nation – well, there is no individual, every individual is the public. (*Moment* 209)

Majority opinion leads to public policy and official status. The most ridiculous thing of all for Kierkegaard is the state-sponsored oath that the clergy must make in order to be licensed teachers of Christianity:

> Christianity relates itself to the kingdom that is not of this world – and then the state accepts from the teachers of Christianity an oath, an oath that signifies that he is swearing loyalty to what is the very opposite of the state. An oath such as that is a self-contradiction... (*Moment* 147)

The wholesale appropriation of 'Christianity' as the official and *de facto* cultural religion has produced the second symptom of Christendom's sickness; the idea that one can be a Christian in addition to being something else. Kierkegaard attacks the assumption when he writes against Martensen's eulogy of the late Bishop Mynster as a 'truth witness'. There is much that one can be 'in addition' to something else, he says, but only in proportion that those things are unimportant. Thus, one can be both an amateur violinist and a captain of a shooting club:

> But to the degree that the important is the important, it has precisely the characteristic of being to the same degree unsuitable for one to be that – and something else in addition... *truth witness* relates to Christianity's heterogeneity with this world. (*Moment* 10)

Living a comfortable life as an officially sanctioned Bishop or clergyman and at the same time being a Christian who by definition is supposed to renounce the world in imitation of Christ, is to Kierkegaard a monstrosity likened to "a bird that in addition is a fish". (*Moment* 11) Kierkegaard goes on the press the point, this time extending it to all proponents of Christendom, those men who are *tout-à-fait* cultured men of the world and who also wish, in addition, to be Christians who have at the same time broken with the world. It is equivalent to a virgin with a flock of children.[105] Reading the New Testament, Kierkegaard writes, fills him with a horror of both/and. (*Moment* 101) "The mark of what is God's service is: Either/Or." (*Moment* 94)

[105] *Moment*, p. 18, see also p. 57.

The third and most important symptom underlies all the others. Christendom clouds contemporaneity with cultural common-sense, and thinks of Christianity as just another club in which one can excel only because it has confused the quantitative and the qualitative categories. Here, Kierkegaard is bringing his earlier work on the problems besetting inward appropriation to bear on the problem of cultural Christianity. He regularly refers his readers to work that has already been done in *Practice*, and he also elaborates on Climacus's earlier theoretical discussion of the leap as a shift between the incommensurable categories of quantity and quality.[106] Climacus and Anti-Climacus talked of the problem of turning the individual's choice of belief into a matter of quantitative proofs and common-sense necessities. Now, however, with his attack, Kierkegaard applies this problem directly to the whole cultural phenomenon of Christendom. Kierkegaard regards it as an illness that Christianity is considered to be a matter of accumulative quantity: "the disaster of the time is precisely this 'to a certain degree', to enter into everything to a certain degree, when precisely this is the sickness...". (*Moment* 93) His attack is described as an attack on this quantitative approach, for it "transforms [Christianity] into blather." (*Moment* 94) Kierkegaard mockingly likens the preachers of Christendom who boast about the vast quantity of Christians to a foolish pub landlord who sells his beer for a penny less than he pays for it. Seen as individual bottles, the barman clearly makes a loss, but because he sells so many units, the man deludes himself into thinking that he is making a profit. So many bottles sold cannot go wrong![107] When one assumes that Christianity is a matter of population, and that because of Christendom's cultural, economic and military success Christianity must be true as a matter of course, then one has succumbed to a similar delusion. Christendom's Christianity, says Kierkegaard, "removes from the essentially Christian the offence, the paradox, etc. and replaces it with: probability, the direct." (*Moment* 184) In fact, according to Kierkegaard, it is not even accurate to call the religion of Christendom 'Christianity'. There are not two different types of Christianity, categorised as 'primitive' or 'advanced', as some of Kierkegaard's contemporaries were arguing[108]:

> No, I place them opposite to each other in the unaltered opinion that the Christianity of the New Testament is Christianity, the second a piece of skulduggery; they resemble each other no more than a square resembles a circle.[109]

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[106] For example *Moment*, pp. 14, 20, 50, 69, 287ff, 290.
[107] *Moment*, pp. 36-37.
[108] *Moment*, p. 183 and especially n. 98.
[109] *Moment*, p. 183, see also p. 65.

By confusing two essentially different categories, Christendom has falsely merged what should have been kept apart. "Christianity is related inversely to number – when all have become Christians, the concept 'Christian' has dropped out." (*Moment* 143) This is why Kierkegaard exclaims, "Oh Luther, you had 95 thesis – terrible! And yet... the matter is far more terrible – there is only one thesis. The Christianity of the New Testament does not exist at all." (*Moment* 39) Anti-Climacus stressed the "infinite chasmic difference between God and man". (*Practice* 63) Kierkegaard spells out the implications for this in social terms – there is a qualitative gap between the New Testament version and the present cultural reality.[110] Of the relationship between the prevailing society and Christianity, Kierkegaard writes:

> ...the separation, the distinction between the finite and the infinite...[this is what] Christianity, with the passion of eternity, with the most appalling either/or, holds apart from each other, separated by a chasmic abyss. (*Moment* 162)

No population census or official decree will be able to make the Square of Christendom into the Circle of Christianity. "What the devil do these two things have to do with each other?" (*Moment* 109)

Contemporaneity as Cure

It is contemporaneity that acts as the cure to the blasé Christianity of Christendom. Kierkegaard points out that when Christ was crucified, he had no followers. It is only now, a thousand or so years distant, that crowds of people flock to churches (on special days) claiming to be Christians. To shine an honest light onto the situation, he proposes a "dose" of contemporaneity to discover who is truly a follower of Christ. If Jesus were to return, Kierkegaard suggests, "the whole crowd would be as if blown away, or it would, as a mob...rush at Christ in order to kill him." (*Moment* 316) Contemporaneity is a useful tool. When present it will reveal the very rare individual who will accept Christ's invitation to "follow me". Most people, predicts Kierkegaard, will say "thanks for nothing!" (*Moment* 345) For this reason, Kierkegaard styles himself as a doctor,[111] and his attack as a distasteful, yet valuable, medicine. In a pamphlet entitled "Take an Emetic!", Kierkegaard reinforces his theme that a dose of contemporaneity will make it clear how humanly disagreeable Christianity is.[112] In this same vein, he refers his readers to *Practice in Christianity*, "This

[110] *Moment*, p. 39.
[111] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 12, 24.
[112] *Moment*, pp. 99-100.

book can help you to become aware of this matter of contemporaneity." (*Moment* 290) We have seen that contemporaneity in *Practice* served the function of awakening the individual to the potential offensiveness of Jesus the God-Man. With *Attack*, contemporaneity serves the same 'offensive' function, yet now Kierkegaard is more explicit about what it will look like when someone subjects himself to the violent cure.

Everyone is born into the untrue world of Christendom, where their outward appearances and assumptions do not reflect their inward reality. Kierkegaard describes this situation as part of what contributes to the sinful state of all human life. "Every human being is by nature a born hypocrite." (*Moment* 302) For this reason, God stipulates that "it is precisely life's task to *be transformed*..." (*Moment* 302 emphasis added) The qualitative transformation from Christendom to Christianity cannot be anything other than a radical break from 'the world', which by this stage in Kierkegaard's career is the same thing as Christendom.[113] God wants you to die, writes Kierkegaard, to die to the world. God hates specifically that "which you cling to with all your zest for life". (*Moment* 177) To have faith, he says, is

> to venture out as decisively as possible for a human being, breaking with everything, with what a human being naturally loves... Venture out so decisively that you break with all temporality and finiteness... (*Moment* 214-15)

This break is fundamentally different than that of the silent renunciation of Silentio's Knight of Faith, who moved invisibly throughout society, and in the case of the quiet tax-collector, remained a loyal contributor to that society.[114] It is different from Lessing, who Climacus praises for his ambiguous stance towards Christianity,[115] and from Climacus himself, who defers the moment of decision, preferring instead to gawp at the intellectual impossibility of the Paradox.[116] In *Attack*, Kierkegaard's 'break with the world' is decisive, visible, and not without social consequences. The authentic Christian, he says, is in society "a stranger and an alien". (*Moment* 257) More than Anti-Climacus did, Kierkegaard provides a clearer picture of his version of the Christian life. The contours of *Attack*'s Christianity are essentially derived apophatically, the idea being that whatever 'the world' *is*, then Christianity is *not*. New Testament Christianity "is based on the thought that one is a Christian in *relation of contrast*..." (*Moment* 168 original emphasis) Christianity is a fundamental change, a radical

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[113] Cf. *Moment* pp. 26 and 206 where Kierkegaard sees Mynster's Christendom as representing 'the world', and pits it against Christianity.
[114] *FT*, pp. 39ff.
[115] *CUP*, p. 65.
[116] Cf. *Sickness* pp. 130-31.

cure, "a break, the most profound, the most incurable break with this world." (*Moment* 17) Christ's followers are heterogeneous from this world.[117] This means, among other things, a very real separation from society and its daily concerns:

> To become a Christian in the New Testament sense is designed to work the individual loose (as a dentist speaks of working the gum loose) from the context to which he clings in immediate passion, and which clings in immediate passion to him. (*Moment* 248)

This builds on what Kierkegaard has earlier said about Christians in relation to Christendom's herd. Imitating Christ, he says, works better as single individuals and not as part of a crowd. (*Moment* 42)

The tangible evidence of contemporaneity lies in the imitation of Christ, and the imitation of Christ can only mean one thing for Kierkegaard: suffering. It is the shift from one genus to another - from Christendom to Christianity – that will necessarily result in suffering. In an important pamphlet entitled "Contemporaneity; What You Do in Contemporaneity Is Decisive",[118] Kierkegaard provides a short exposition on Matthew 10: 41-42, where Jesus says that whoever gives a cup of cold water to someone because he is a follower, the giver will not lose his reward. Kierkegaard turns this into a commentary on contemporaneity, for the discourse is about identifying with, and doing something for, Christ's contemporary (the 'follower'), which is the same as standing contemporaneously with Christ himself.[119] In contemporaneity, giving water *because* one is a follower involves a costly decision for the giver. There is a punishment involved in being involved with Christ and his followers in contemporaneity, for the giver will indeed receive Christ's promised reward, but it is a 'prophet's reward', to be despised and rejected by others. [120] Christendom considers such identification and imitation to be uncomfortable and unnecessary in the present age of sophistication and the historical triumph of 'Christian' culture. Kierkegaard warns his readers not to be side-tracked:

> Pay sharp attention to this matter of contemporaneity, because the crucial point is not the fuss you make over a dead person, no, but what you do in contemporaneity or that you make the past so present that you come to suffer as if you were contemporary with it – this decides what kind of person you are. (*Moment* 289)

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[117] *Moment*, p. 20. See also p. 149: The divine "wants at no price to be a kingdom of this world, on the contrary, wants the Christian to risk life and blood to prevent its becoming a kingdom of this world." also pp. 222, 226, 334.
[118] *Moment*, pp. 287-92.
[119] Cf. Matthew 26:40 "...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."
[120] Cf. *Moment*, p. 288.

The preachers and assistant professors of Christendom pride themselves on objectively staying away from having to suffer as a contemporary.[121] They are the negative examples by which one can define authentic followers of Christ. Kierkegaard proposes that Christianity is so opposite to the worldly idea of comfort that if someone proclaiming Christianity is rich or profiting from it, this is a guarantee that at one point or another the proclaimer has falsified the doctrine given by God.[122]

> Christianity is renunciation of this world. The professor lectures on this and then makes lecturing on this his career, without ever admitting that this actually is not Christianity – if this is Christianity, where then is the renunciation of this world? (*Moment* 226)

The rules for membership in the 'genus' of Christianity are unequivocal. *Only* contemporaneity with Christ, evinced by literal renunciation of the values of the world, which itself leads to physical suffering both economically and socially, represents authentic Christianity. This is the picture of contemporaneous imitation and identification with Christ that is given in *Attack*. "*The prototype*, Jesus Christ...does unconditionally place, and unconditionally everyone, under obligation...you must make *the prototype* present in such a way that you come to suffer as if you in contemporaneity had acknowledged him for what he is." (*Moment* 292 original emphasis)

It is with the discussion on the offence in the following chapter that the particular forms of suffering will be made clear. In *Attack* Kierkegaard does not separate the notion of contemporaneity from the notion of offence. He dwells on the particular shape that a transformed, Christ-imitating contemporaneous life will take in the real world of Christendom. Kierkegaard's conclusion is that the life will be one of physical and social suffering, just as Christ was rejected by all men when he was crucified by his society.[123] Suffering, for Kierkegaard, is a sign of the presence of the offence. It is only by being contemporaneous with Christ that one will be open to the possibility of taking, and giving, the offence that is so important to honest faith. As such, contemporaneity underlies both the offence, and the indirect communication that arises because of that offence.[124] The developing theme of the leap throughout the pseudonyms culminates in contemporaneity, which is itself a lynchpin of Kierkegaard's other most important ideas. Thus near the end of his career, Kierkegaard can truly say of contemporaneity that "this thought is for me my life's thought." (*Moment* 290)

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[121] *Moment*, p. 291, also 83 and 226.
[122] *Moment*, p. 334.
[123] *Moment*, pp. 288-89, esp. 292.
[124] Cf. Chs. 2 'Offence' and 3 'Indirect Communication'

Conclusion

The pseudonyms and their 'leaps' are component parts of a dialectical whole. Mackey, Fenger and their school would have us ignore the later Kierkegaard in favour of the earlier, 'non-Christian' pseudonyms.[125] Mackey especially does not allow for the possibility of an essential connection between the works, let alone an improvement from one pseudonym to the next.[126] If we were to follow this idea then we would be left with Silentio's unsatisfactory fideism, or with Climacus's cloudy version of the leap, a version that fails to fully account for the one thing that he wanted the leap to do – allow for an individual to become a Christian. Yet the scholarship is replete with examples of commentators who do indeed read Silentio and Climacus in isolation, further damaging the interpretation of the *oeuvre* by taking truncated versions of the ideas and attributing them to *Kierkegaard* himself. It is this practice that lies behind the wholly erroneous notion of the 'Leap of Faith' and the elevation of Silentio as Kierkegaard's spokesman. The practice of failing to recognise the development of the leap from one pseudonym to the next compounds the damage. Pojman commits this further error when, curiously, he attributes to Kierkegaard the Silentio-esque 'Leap of Faith' *and* at the same time reads the Climacus works as providing the best of Kierkegaard's thought.[127] Westphal accuses 'Kierkegaard's leap' of circularity, but he fails to note that *Climacus's* leap corrects the mistakes that *Silentio* makes.[128] By refusing to treat the pseudonyms with respect as individual entities, Pojman, Westphal and others such as Ferreira[129] and Come[130] conflate what should be kept separate, finding an easy unity in what is demonstrably dialectical. Likewise, it is a problem in the scholarship that Anti-Climacus's position is too readily identified with the fullest expression of Kierkegaard's Christianity. Lowrie,[131] Elrod[132] and others do not dismiss *Attack* but they also do not read it properly in its context as completing themes idealised in *Practice*. To take Anti-Climacus's theory of contemporaneity as *Kierkegaard's* final position is to do Kierkegaard the injustice of ignoring his real final position, namely his committed assault on Christendom. It is only in his own name that Kierkegaard is able to work out the implications for the leap as contemporaneity, bringing to fruition what the rarefied Christian pseudonym was unable to do. Kierkegaard's

[125] Cf. Louis Mackey, *Kierkegaard: A Kind of Poet* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), p. xi; Henning Fenger, *Kierkegaard: The Myths and Their Origins* trans George Schoolfield (London: Yale University Press, 1980), p. xi, 20.
[126] Mackey, *A Kind of Poet*, pp. x, 290.
[127] Cf. Pojman, *Logic*, pp. xi-xii, 172.
[128] Cf. Westphal, *Kierkegaard's Critique*, pp. 92-94.
[129] Cf. Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*.
[130] Cf. Come, *Kierkegaard as Humanist*.
[131] Cf. Walter Lowrie, *Kierkegaard* Vol. II (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), pp. 487-93.

contemporaneity necessarily leads to suffering and confrontation. It is this fundamental coupling of the leap of contemporaneity with the giving and taking of offence which brings us naturally to the discussion of the next chapter.

[132] Cf. John Elrod, *Kierkegaard and Christendom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

CHAPTER 2 - OFFENCE

Introduction

The matter of what constitutes an 'offence' changes throughout the pseudonymous works. Each stage of offence reveals the particular concerns of each pseudonym, and thus each stage constitutes part of the dialectical whole. The changing nature of offence leads to the final development of Kierkegaard's thought, when he turns to his final *Attack on Christendom*. Beginning the movement of ascent, it will be shown that in *Fear and Trembling* Silentio only dimly apprehends the true locus of offence. Silentio couches 'offence' in terms of the affront to civic morality that arises when an individual is set against the universal.[1] This is Silentio's 'teleological suspension of the ethical', and it is this faith demand that God presents to each individual that Silentio finds so offensive.[2] Offence in *Fear and Trembling* serves the useful purpose of preventing a facile approach to faith. In keeping with Silentio's purpose to understand (and possibly even acquire) faith,[3] he is concerned when people assume that they can easily 'go beyond' faith.[4] Only when people are "horrified" by Abraham will they truly understand what is involved in, and required by, faith.[5] Yet Silentio is not himself a man who has faith,[6] and as a result, his opinions about what is offensive are not much more informed than anyone else in Christendom.[7]

Next in the ascending series, Climacus in *Philosophical Fragments* comes closer to the essential offence by appreciating the importance of inward appropriation of offence, and recognising that offence is inextricably bound up with individual's response to the God-Man.[8] However, Climacus intellectualises the offence, locating it in the sphere of reason and understanding. He describes the God-Man as the Absolute Paradox who is actively opposed to reason, seeking its downfall.[9] It is in the moment when the reason "collides" with the paradox that Climacus finds the offence.[10] Climacus calls this collision the "unhappy understanding", because the reason refuses to bow to the Paradox.[11] He sees that this refusal is bound up with human sin, and he describes sin as ignorance.[12]

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[1] *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 52-53, 55-56, 60-61, 66.
[2] *FT*, pp. 54-67, esp. 59-60.
[3] *FT*, pp. 47-48. See also *FT*, pp. 33, 51.
[4] Cf. *FT*, pp. 121-22.
[5] *FT*, pp. 52-53
[6] *FT*, p. 48.
[7] Cf. *FT*, p. 55.
[8] *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 37, 39, 47, 49-54.
[9] *Fragments*, p. 47.
[10] *Fragments* p. 39, see also pp. 37, 47, 49, 50, 53.
[11] *Fragments*, p. 49. See also pp. 39, 44-45, 46.
[12] *Fragments*, p. 50.

Viewed from Anti-Climacus's higher vantage point, it emerges that both Climacus and Silentio have been concerned with lesser offences.[13] Anti-Climacus speaks of the continual *possibility* of offence,[14] emphasising that the essential offence is not a singular epistemological event, or a unique broach of public mores. Instead, the offence has to do with the constant struggle of man's *will* to obey God or not to obey God. Sin is properly understood as disobedience, a matter of the will and not of the understanding.[15] The God-Man presents man not with a problem to solve, but a command to obey. The location of the offence is thus shifted, and it is not defined in relation to the intellect, but instead to the ethical existence of the individual. *Sickness unto Death* emphasises that the possibility of offence is always before man, because all of man's decisions are made *before God.*[16] Linking the essential offence to sin, and sin to the will, is the most significant development in *Sickness unto Death* and it leads to Anti-Climacus's treatment of the offence in *Practice in Christianity.*

In that book, the continual possibility of offence before God is kept alive through the idea of *contemporaneity.*[17] For anyone standing contemporaneously with Christ, his demand for obedience will always be keenly felt. Anti-Climacus describes Christ as the *sign of contradiction*[18] that gives rise to the two forms of *essential offence.*[19] These two forms are the ethical aversion faced when a lowly man claims to be God, and when God claims to be a lowly man.[20] Only the one who is contemporaneous with Christ will face the possibility of offence. Only by facing the offence can authentic faith result.[21] From this pinnacle comes the necessity for the contemporary disciple to act as a sign of offence himself, a suggestion that Anti-Climacus makes but downplays,[22] setting the stage for Kierkegaard's final committed attack.

In his last work Kierkegaard spells out the practical implications of Christ's offensive nature for those followers of Christ who, contemporaneously, imitate Christ in their society. First, Kierkegaard identifies his attack on Christendom with Christ's attack on the religious culture of his day.[23] From there, Kierkegaard is able to take the offence where Anti-Climacus did not dare to go, and he appropriates Christ's 'mode' of offensive

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[13] For Anti-Climacus judgement on the 'Silentio' type, see: *Sickness unto Death*, pp. 83, 89, 94 and *Practice in Christianity*, p. 111; On the type of thought Climacus represents, Cf. *Sickness*, pp. 83, 95, 130-31 and *Practice*, pp. 106, 136.
[14] On offence as *possibility*, Cf. *Sickness*, pp. 83-87, *Practice* pp. 139-44.
[15] *Sickness* pp. 87-96.
[16] *Sickness*, pp. 85-87.
[17] *Practice*, pp. 62-66, 99-108, 144.
[18] *Practice*, pp.124-28, 132, 134-36, 141.
[19] *Practice*, p. 121.
[20] In *Practice* Anti-Climacus calls the first an offence of 'loftiness', pp. 94-101; the second is the offence of 'lowliness', pp. 102 –121.
[21] *Practice*, pp. 94, 101, 106, 136.
[22] *Practice*, pp. 85, 86, 91.
[23] *Moment and Other Late Writings*, pp. 5, 43, 58, 129-37, 164, 292, 299.

existence for his own life.[24] It emerges in *Attack* that followers of Christ are not merely different from the world – in their very essence authentic Christians are *actively opposed* to the world.[25] Christendom's culture is a "sophisticated villainy"[26] against which is necessarily set the offensive barbarity of authentic Christianity.[27] Ultimately, the presence of authentic Christianity in Christendom is as potentially offensive as the presence of the divine is in a human being.

Silentio, Offence and Social Morality

It is with Silentio, the pseudonym that straddles the aesthetic and the religious stages,[28] that offence begins to take on shades of positive importance. Here, it moves from the generalised offence of common parlance, to *the* offence particularly situated in matters of faith. Although the actual word does not come up very much in the text (Silentio uses the Greek σχάνδάλον),[29] the paradox of faith can be seen to be offensive in that it is "appalling" (*FT* 19), "shocking" (*FT* 30) and "horrifying" (*FT* 52). Thus, in common with the later pseudonyms, Silentio recognises that offence is a necessary component related to faith. However, it is argued that unlike Climacus and Anti-Climacus, for whom offence provides the opportunity for individuals to come *to* faith, Silentio's offence occurs only *after* faith has taken hold in the individual. Along with his society, Silentio remains offended at what a person is led to do once he has faith. Thus for Silentio offence is not a necessary prerequisite of faith. We find that for Silentio the locus of offence lies in the demand that God makes upon an individual as a test of faith. That demand is constituted by the 'teleological suspension of the ethical'.[30] In other words, it is only when ethics, which Silentio identifies as "social morality" (*FT* 55) is suspended and an individual is set against the universal that offence arises.[31] It is significant to note here that Silentio does not differentiate himself from his society on this point. The offence of *Fear and Trembling* is an affront to the public and its code of ethics. Silentio's repulsion is Christendom's repulsion.[32]

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[24] *Moment*, pp. 4-18, 23, 100, 136, 160, 217-20.
[25] *Moment*, pp. 143, 168-69, 170, 188, 206, 321, 332.
[26] *Moment*, p. 351. Cf. pp. 32, 42, 110, 194-96, 248, 256, 335.
[27] *Moment*, pp. 114, 126, 136, 168-69, 206.
[28] Cf. Climacus's assessment in the 'Glance at Danish Literature' in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, pp. 259-62; and also Kierkegaard's view in *Point Of View*, p. 37.
[29] In his translator's introduction, Howard Hong claims that of the key phrases in Silentio's lexicon, 'offence' occurs least often. *Fear and Trembling*, p.xxxi.
[30] *FT*, pp. 54-67, esp. 59-60. Cf. Ch. 2 'Leap'
[31] *FT*, pp. 55, 60-61, 66.
[32] Wanda Berry makes this connection in "Finally Forgiveness: Kierkegaard as 'Springboard' for a Feminist Theology of Reform," *Foundations of Kierkegaard's Vision of Community*, eds. George B Connell and C. Stephen Evans. (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1992), p.202.

Silentio's main goal in *Fear and Trembling* is to understand faith, and possibly even to acquire it for himself.[33] To that end, he is concerned with gaining a proper sense of what faith is, and what it is not, so that he and others in his society might properly recognise it when (or if) they ever find it. Offence serves his purpose in that it acts as an indication of the presence of authentic faith. Where the offence of the individual over the universal is, there faith will be also.[34] One of the biggest problems that Silentio notices about his society is that by assuming everyone should 'go beyond' faith, they have reduced it's true value.[35] To protect faith then, he needs to keep a keen sense of what faith is in the mind of his readers. For Silentio, it is the offence that accompanies faith that stops faith from becoming a mundane commodity. Abraham is, of course, Silentio's model Knight of Faith, and offence dogs Abraham every step of the way. "Let us then either cancel out Abraham or learn to be horrified by the prodigious paradox that is the meaning of his life, so that we may understand that our age... can rejoice if it has faith." (*FT* 52-53) That Abraham is often considered to be socially acceptable is a problem for Silentio. Wherever Abraham is praised unreservedly, it means that no one recognises the moral difficulties surrounding true faith. Silentio chastises Hegel and his followers for upholding a denuded version of Abraham's faith:

> But Hegel is wrong about faith; he is wrong in not protesting loudly and clearly against Abraham's enjoying honour and glory as a father of faith when he ought to be sent back to a lower court and shown up as a murderer. (*FT* 55)

It is in this tension that Silentio finds one aspect of the problem of faith, calling to mind the "prodigious paradox" that "makes murder into a holy and God-pleasing act". (*FT* 53) Silentio always keeps Abraham-as-murderer alongside Abraham-as-Knight-of-Faith, and his orations in praise of Abraham are tempered by the sobering thought that, humanly speaking, Abraham was quite an awful man.

> The ethical expression for what Abraham did is that he meant to murder Isaac; the religious expression is that he meant to sacrifice Isaac – but precisely in this contradiction is the anxiety that can make a person sleepless, and yet without this anxiety Abraham is not who he is. (*FT* 30)

Silentio realises that his harsh view of the demands of faith will repulse many people, but then again, faith should not be changed merely to enable easier acquisition. If Silentio can get people at the very least to admit that they do not have faith, then that is no small success on his part.[36] The opposite of the cultured smug citizen of Christendom who

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[33] *FT*, pp. 47-48. See also *FT*, pp. 33, 51.
[34] Cf. *FT*, pp. 55.
[35] Cf. *FT*, pp. 121-22.
[36] Cf. *FT*, p. 56.

assumes he has faith is the fanatic. However, in Silentio's opinion this is no better. The fanatic listens to the preacher expounding on Abraham as the father of faith and then attempts literally to emulate the teaching by 'sacrificing' his own son.[37] Silentio recognises that there is a hypothetical danger that his writing might encourage such a murderous act, but then promptly assumes that there is no one in his age who is capable of having even that much passion.[38] In any case to move away from such a misinterpretation, Silentio makes it very clear that it is faith he is promoting, and not killing. "It is only by faith that one achieves any resemblance to Abraham, not by murder." (*FT* 31)

Silentio prevents any one particular act becoming normative for faith by individualising the demands of faith. Abraham's (attempted) sacrifice of Isaac is *Abraham's* test of faith, it is not the picture for *all* faith.[39] Silentio is not equating the offence of faith simply with the horror of murder. Faith is a matter that concerns God and each individual, and so the demands of faith will change according to each person.[40] Of course Abraham's actions are offensive, but Silentio generalises the offence of faith by going behind the singular act of murder. The acts may change, but what remains is the offence of the teleological suspension of the ethical. For Silentio it is always offensive when an individual is set against the universal, the individual agent placed higher than the rest of society. This is what Silentio means by the teleological suspension, and he deals with this aspect of the demand of faith in the first of three *problemata* in *Fear and Trembling*. In *Problema* I he states that "the ethical is the universal"(*FT* 54), and then that "Faith is namely this paradox that the single individual is higher than the universal". (*FT* 55) Finally, Silentio comes back to ethics, rounding out his definition when he explicitly identifies the ethical/universal with "social morality".(*FT* 55) Thus, when an individual is set against the universal, what happens for that individual is effectively a suspension of the moral glue that holds society together. For the person with faith, there is no higher law than God, a fact that should make any society uncomfortable. It is this hard teaching that Silentio recognises will repulse so many people, and in his opinion, rightly so.[41] It is not his intention to make faith palatable or easy.

The offence of *Fear and Trembling* is felt as an offence against public morality and the 'right thinking' of the community. However, Silentio does not expect that his Knights of Faith will actively make their offensive ways known to the public. That the Knight lives above social morality, and hence is socially repugnant, does not at the same

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[37] *FT*, pp. 28-29.
[38] *FT*, p. 31.
[39] Cf. *FT*, pp. 59-60.
[40] See *FT*, *'Problema* I' pp. 54-67. Cf. Ch. 3 'Indirect Communication'.
[41] *FT*, p. 56.

time make him an activist or a social rebel. This is demonstrated by the way Silentio makes fun of those 'assistant professors' (his common term of abuse for the academic and clerical chattering classes that plagued Danish society) who assume that anything of value must be publicly debated and judged by the result.[42] They expect that any hero of faith worth his salt will shout confidently to his contemporaries, thus justifying his existence. (*FT* 62) Instead, we see that the Knight does not go about forcing society to be offended at him. He is culturally invisible like the humble 'tax-collector' who goes about his daily business secure in his faith,[43] and like Abraham, who hides his shocking relationship with God by remaining silent.[44] For Silentio this silence of Abraham is offensive in its own right, both ethically and aesthetically. Ethically, the act of remaining silent throughout the ordeal is insulting to Sarah and Isaac, an offence because it "bypassed" what was for Abraham the highest expression of the ethical – family life.[45] Aesthetically, the silence ruins the beautiful poetic tragedy that Abraham could have enjoyed if he were a mere Tragic Hero rather than a Knight of Faith. Not being able to explain his trial to others means that Abraham cannot attract any empathy or universal sympathy.[46] Note that even here, the offence of Abraham's silence, like the more general offence of the ethically suspended Knight of Faith, is primarily directed 'outwardly', its effects not felt by the Knight but by the people around him.

In *Fear and Trembling,* the Knight may not actively court social comment, but nonetheless his very existence stands in opposition to social morality. When Silentio reflects on Abraham, he encounters the paradoxical tension that signifies the presence of authentic faith. "Although Abraham arouses my admiration, he also appals me." (*FT* 60) Yet Silentio is not himself a Knight, he cannot make the double movement of faith and resignation.[47] As a result, Silentio does not stand apart from the rest of Christendom. He is, at best, a more accurate observer than are the others; but like the assistant professors that he criticises, Silentio is condemned to dwell on a phenomenon that he personally knows nothing of. It is Climacus, with his notions of the Absolute Paradox and the offence against reason, who is able to improve on Silentio's blind groping.

Climacus, Offence and Reason

For Silentio, offence against the public order turns out to be a consequence of an individual's faith. There is no indication that for Silentio, offence at the faithful person was of a different class than the sort of moral indignation that anyone in civilised

[42] *FT*, pp. 62-63.
[43] Cf. *FT*, pp. 38ff.
[44] Cf. *FT*, pp. 82ff.
[45] *FT*, p. 112.
[46] *FT*, pp. 112-114. Abraham's silence as indirect communication will be considered in the following chapter.

Christendom would feel when their cultural sensibilities had been thwarted. This is not the case with Climacus. He is not a Christian, but gives as his stated aim the subjective quest to discover how he might become a Christian.[48] At this stage in the ascent, Kierkegaard allows Climacus to come closer than Silentio did to personally appropriating authentic Christianity. As a result, Climacus also apprehends more clearly the true nature of offence. He is not offended at the outward consequences of faith, rather he is offended at the *object* of faith. As a result, we will see that Climacus goes part way to discovering the 'inward' implications of the offence for the individual.

It is with Climacus that we are introduced to the Absolute Paradox, which is the problem of the God-Man.[49] Climacus is not concerned overmuch with the actual earthly life of the God-Man, and he is vague about the details: "I shall merely trace [the idea] in a few lines without reference to whether it was historical or not." (*Fragments* 45) Instead, Climacus devotes his time to the "idea about the different". (*Fragments* 45) He interested in the intellectual challenge that the paradox of the 'known' coexisting with the 'unknown' offers to human reason.[50] For someone like Climacus, it seems that the apparently insurmountable barrier that stands between himself and Christianity is the vast qualitative difference that exists between these two concepts. In *Fragments*, Climacus indulges in some metaphysical psychology.[51] Climacus describes the understanding as suicidally searching for its own downfall, surmising that reason always wants to "discover something that thought itself cannot think." (*Fragments* 37) As a result, thought is always due for a collision with the ultimate Unknown, which Climacus also calls *the god*.[52] At the same time reason gropes blindly, attempting to understand what cannot be understood and mistaking what it finds with what it already knows. Climacus describes this situation as reason confounding like with unlike, and he gives as an example the idea of a devout worshipper who can't help but wonder if what he is praying to is a construct of his own imagination.[53] Stumbling reason eventually crashes into a terrible conundrum that Climacus dubs the 'Absolute Paradox':

> ...the same paradox has the duplexity by which it manifests itself as the absolute – negatively, by bringing into prominence the absolute difference of sin and, positively, by wanting to annul this absolute difference in the absolute equality. (*Fragments* 47)

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[47] *FT*, p. 48.
[48] *CUP*, p.17.
[49] Cf. *Fragments* Ch.III. pp. 37-48.
[50] *Fragments*, pp. 39, 44-45, 46.
[51] *Fragments*, pp. 37-39.
[52] *Fragments*, p. 39. Emphasising his connection to Platonic-Socratic thought patterns, and his attempt to separate the essential ideas from their Christian 'clothing', Climacus usually speaks of 'the god' using *Guden*, a noun with a definite article, as opposed to the more common Christian appellation 'God' (*Gud*) Within the authorship, this usage is unique to Climacus. See *Fragments*, p. 278 n.13.
[53] *Fragments*, p. 45.

It is these two functions, the negative and the positive, that Climacus finds so appalling. "Thus the paradox becomes even more terrible". (*Fragments* 47)

The Absolute Paradox is, for Climacus, an explicit offence to reason, seeking reason's downfall.[54] Climacus, agreeing with the "Socratic principle", identifies sin with ignorance and error.[55] It is sin that is the cause of the absolute unlikeness, and also the cause of the confusion between like and unlike.[56] We see that sin, conceived of as misunderstanding, shadows every step that human reason takes. Sin is integrated with the understanding to the point where the paradox's challenge to sin is felt as a challenge to reason itself.[57] Faith will only occur when there is a "happy encounter" between reason and the paradox. (*Fragments* 59) Climacus is clear that this happens only when reason "steps aside", allowing the paradox to reign in the mental life of the individual. (*Fragments* 59) If reason does not rescind the throne, then the relationship with the paradox will be unhappy. Climacus has already named this event. "If the encounter is not in mutual understanding, then the relation is unhappy...we could more specifically term [this] *offence*." (*Fragments* 49 original emphasis)

It is in the Appendix to Chapter III of *Fragments* entitled 'Offence at the Paradox (An Acoustical Illusion)' that Climacus fully expounds on the relationship between offence and the paradoxical object of faith.[58] Here offence in the face of the paradox may take the form of mockery, denial or dumb suffering,[59] but all forms share one common factor: "Offence does not understand itself, but is understood by the paradox." (*Fragments* 50) To elaborate on what this means, Climacus develops his idea of the *acoustical illusion*.[60] Like an echo, or a mirror image in a funhouse, human reason can only respond to the original impulse imparted by the paradox. In a passage that bears a striking resemblance to Socrates's description of the cave dweller confused by the juxtaposition of light and shadow,[61] Climacus tells how reason *thinks* that when it pontificates about the Unknown its judgements are original, but this is only an illusion, for all judgements have been made first by the Unknown itself.

> The one offended does not speak according to his own nature but according to the nature of the paradox, just as someone caricaturing another person does not originate anything himself but only copies the other in the wrong way. (*Fragments* 51)

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[54] *Fragments*, p. 47.
[55] *Fragments*, p. 50. Climacus here refers to Xenophon, *Memorabilia* III, 9, 5.
[56] *Fragments*, p. 47.
[57] *Fragments*, pp. 47-48.
[58] *Fragments*, pp. 49-54.
[59] *Fragments*, p. 50.
[60] *Fragments*, p. 49.
[61] Cf. *Republic*, 515b.

Reason crashes up against the Absolute Unknown, the paradox of like with unlike, and declares that it is absurd.[62] But the paradox has pre-empted these observations. According to Climacus, whatever human reason says about itself and about the paradox, the paradox has already discovered and claimed as its own.[63] Everything the offended understanding says about the paradox, it has actually learned from the paradox, "even though, making use of an acoustical illusion, [offended understanding] insists that it itself has originated the paradox." (*Fragments* 53) It is in this way that Climacus can understand the presence of offence as the paradox's proof. "[offence] can be regarded as indirect testing of the correctness of the Paradox..." (*Fragments* 51)

Silentio's offence was a human invention, born of social morality. Climacus asserts that it is false when human reason "insists that it itself has originated the paradox". (*Fragments* 51) Instead the offence is much more integral to the object of faith than the previous pseudonym supposed: "No, the offence *comes into existence* with the paradox." (*Fragments* 51 original emphasis) Climacus describes the *coming into existence* as 'the moment'.[64] The moment is the time of decision when faced with the demands of the paradox.

> *The moment* is actually the decision of eternity! If the god does not provide the condition to understand this, how will it ever occur to the learner? ...without this we come no further but go back to Socrates. (*Fragments* 58 original emphasis)

The moment is non-Socratic because it does not involve any immanent knowledge that resides within the individual. As a teacher, Socrates was the "occasion" who dealt with the type of knowledge that required only that the teacher unlock the student's latent potential.[65] Here, Climacus's moment represents an altogether new form of teaching, that of the transcendent Teacher who makes proposals that the learner would have had no way of discovering on his own. "If the god does not provide the condition to understand this, how will it ever occur to the learner?" (*Fragments* 58) The moment marks the point in time when one apprehends the paradox. "If the moment is posited, the paradox is there, for in its most abbreviated form the paradox can be called the moment." (*Fragments* 51) In the moment, we can see that the paradox goes on the offensive. The paradox turns reason into absurdity.[66] It attacks human understanding, turning everything on its head. Through the moment the learner becomes untruth, he who knows himself becomes confused, and self-knowledge becomes the consciousness of sin.[67] However, to describe

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[62] *Fragments*, p. 52.
[63] *Fragments*, pp. 52, 53.
[64] *Fragments*, p. 58.
[65] Cf. *Fragments*, pp. 11, 58.
[66] *Fragments*, p. 52.
[67] *Fragments*, p. 51.

the many possible shades of offence is not Climacus's aim. He sums them all up by maintaining that "all offence is *in its essence a misunderstanding* of the moment, since it is indeed offence at the paradox, and the paradox in turn is the moment." (*Fragments* 51 emphasis added)

Here Kierkegaard has once again led one of his characters into a trap. Silentio claimed to understand faith.[68] Yet because he does not *have* faith Silentio does not end up truly understanding faith after all. Likewise, Climacus is a self-proclaimed "outsider"[69] who is mistaken in his belief that he understands Christianity. In *Postscript*, Climacus rightly points out that it is only the individual of Religiousness B who can recognise the true offence,[70] but Kierkegaard, the "master of irony"[71], does not let Climacus fully understand what that offence is. It will take Anti-Climacus to demonstrate the connection between authentic Christianity and the essential offence.[72] We can see that Climacus is a character who still inhabits the state of Religiousness A, although he has some awareness of Religiousness B. Despite Climacus's disparagement of speculative philosophy,[73] he has not himself left speculation's thought patterns of immanence behind. Although the upshot of *Fragments* and *Postscript* seems to be a set of works that is written against speculative thought and the pride of reason, whatever content Climacus imbues in the moment and the offence, he does so largely only by defining them in reference to the intellectual realm of the understanding. An acoustical illusion of sorts affects Climacus, for he is so concerned with combating speculative philosophy that he does not see that he himself is trapped in the same realm. Climacus makes light of those preachers and assistant professors who use apologetic arguments to 'prove' the truth of Christianity, or otherwise promote its relevance to systematic thought.[74] Yet in identifying sin with *error*,[75] repulsion with *proof* for the presence of the paradox[76] and offence with *misunderstanding*,[77] Climacus does not really come any nearer to the true locus of Christian faith and its offensive nature.

For the non-Christian Climacus, offence (along with despair) makes up the "Cerberus pair who guard the gates to becoming a Christian." (*CUP* 372) Rejecting offence is a 'one time only' epistemological event that defines and begins a life of faith.

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[68] *FT*, pp. 69, 119. See also the 'Epilogue', pp. 121-23.
[69] *CUP*, p. 16.
[70] *CUP*, p. 585.
[71] Kierkegaard's MA thesis was later published as *The Concept of Irony* (non-pseudonymous 1841) Trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). Occasionally, with his own tongue in cheek, he referred to himself as a master of irony. See *Point Of View*, pp. 66-67.
[72] See below. Cf. *Practice*, pp. 94, 101, 106, 136.
[73] Cf. *Fragments*, pp. 10, 43, 73, 109-10, and esp. *CUP*, pp. 14-15, 50-57, 215-59.
[74] For example *Fragments*, p. 43; *CUP*, p. 14.
[75] *Fragments*, pp. 50, 293.
[76] *Fragments*, p. 51.
[77] *Fragments*, p. 51.

Later in *Postscript,* Climacus writes that "the narrow gate to the hard way of faith is offence, and the terrible resistance against the *beginning* of faith is offence". (*CUP* 585 emphasis added) He sees the offence as the initial, cataclysmic *moment* in which the understanding is defeated by the paradox. It has been shown how Climacus identifies the moment as the paradox, and *the* paradox as the Absolute Paradox of the God-Man, a historical point upon which everything else turns.[78] Yet compared to the 'clothing' that Anti-Climacus will put on all of this, Climacus's 'point in history' is strangely devoid of much substantive content. God is always 'the god', the 'God-Man' is never named as Jesus Christ, and the moment is abstracted away from any recognisable historical event. We see from Climacus's emphasis on the intellectual concept of offence that he is indeed concerned mostly with the paradox in its most abbreviated form. Climacus is more interested in talking of a moment in which reason collides with the paradox, than of the real life that is lived in 'lowliness' and 'loftiness' that Anti-Climacus will bring to the category of offence. The picture that Climacus leaves the reader with is, for the most part, a moment of metaphysical and conceptual difficulties (i.e. the 'known' with the 'unknown'[79]), a doctrine that understanding cannot get into its head.[80] It is not 'timeless', but it is bereft of any *specific* temporal reference point that this moment could be anchored to. Only towards the end of *Fragments*, and in certain points in *Postscript* is there some suggestion of providing earthly/historical content.[81] Here, Climacus writes about the god in human form who was born, grew up, had disciples and was a servant etc. Significantly, however, it is not the facts of a concrete human life that give rise to the offence as they will for Anti-Climacus.[82] Instead Kierkegaard leaves Climacus just shy of the full ascent, stuck at the stage of discursive reason, offended at the paradox as a thought that thought cannot think.

Anti-Climacus and the *Essential* Offence

With the offence of Anti-Climacus, not only is a development from the previous pseudonyms evident, but from one Anti-Climacus book to the next the idea takes firmer shape as well. *Sickness unto Death* marks a midway point between Climacus and the full development of the essential offence in *Practice in Christianity*. As in *Fragments*, offence in *Sickness* is mainly dealt with in asides to the main work.[83] However, unlike the intellectual content of Climacus's offence (or of Silentio's concern with civic morality for that matter), in *Sickness* Anti-Climacus's offence tends to focus on the attendant problems

[78] *Fragments*, pp. 51, 58.
[79] *Fragments*, pp. 39, 44-45, 46.
[80] *Fragments*, pp. 45, 53.
[81] For example *Fragments,* p. 93 and *CUP*, p. 217.
[82] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 94-121.

of man's *will*, and his desire to hold onto his sin.[84] As such, the offence becomes directed more towards God than towards public morality or individual reason, and it is given a deep ethical content that is absent from both Silentio's and Climacus's understanding.[85] *Sickness* identifies three levels of this offence ('lowest', 'middle' and 'highest'),[86] all of which are fundamentally sins of defiance undertaken *before God.*[87] The notion of continually existing in the presence of God, and of the offence as involving wilful disobedience is expanded in *Practice in Christianity.* The possibility of the essential offence becomes the central motif that runs throughout the whole book, intimately connected as it is with *contemporaneity.*[88] Anti-Climacus finds the highest concentration of the offence to revolve around what is most important for authentic Christianity – the person of Jesus Christ. Only the person who is contemporaneous with Christ will face the possibility of offence at the instance of a lowly man who claims to be God.[89] Only the person who faces this possibility and chooses to obey Christ's invitation to "come to me"[90] rather than be offended at him can be said to have authentic faith.[91]

It has already been shown how the secondary scholarship tends to ignore the *particular* use that each pseudonym makes of certain concepts in favour of producing a unified 'Kierkegaardian' view.[92] Indicative of this trend specifically regarding the 'offence' is the fact that it has yet to be noted how Climacus and Anti-Climacus differ in their syntax when discussing the offence. Throughout his writings, Climacus talks only of an unqualified 'offence'. Conversely, Anti-Climacus almost exclusively speaks of the '*possibility* of offence'. The discrepancy is important for it underlies the fundamentally different approaches that the two pseudonyms take towards the offence. For Climacus, the offence is a singular event,[93] while for Anti-Climacus, it is a live option at all times, and the possibility of offence must always be maintained.[94] The 'singular event' compared to the ongoing 'possibility' also reveals the different places where the two characters find the locus of the offence. It is proposed that Climacus represents the type of individual who does not recognise the offensiveness of the lived life of an *actual individual man* who is God. It has been shown that for Climacus the offence occurs only with reference to reason and to the comprehension (or not as the case may be) of an

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[83] *Sickness*, 'Appendix' pp. 83-87; pp. 113-131.
[84] *Sickness*, pp. 87-100.
[85] *Sickness*, pp. 83, 85-87 89, 94-95; *Practice*, pp. 111, 120-21, 126, 128, 132.
[86] *Sickness*, pp. 129-31.
[87] *Sickness*, pp. 85-87.
[88] *Practice*, pp. 62-66, 99-108, 144.
[89] *Practice*, pp. 94-101, 102 –121.
[90] Cf. Mtt 11:28; *Practice* No.1 pp. 3-69.
[91] *Practice*, pp. 94, 101, 106, 136.
[92] See 'Thesis Introduction' and Ch. 1 'Leap'.
[93] Cf. *Fragments*, pp. 51, 58; *CUP*, pp. 372, 585.
[94] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 110, 139.

intellectual puzzle. Anti-Climacus, on the other hand, will come to find the core offence in the propensity of sinful man to take umbrage at the ethical implications of a *person* who is God, or a God who is *a* person.[95]

Although his 'offence' is centred on the ethical, it is not the case that Anti-Climacus here returns to Silentio's offence of civic morality. The great offence for Anti-Climacus occurs ethically for the individual subject who faces the possibility of perfect holiness bound by the suffering of utter lowliness.[96] Silentio located the offence in the place where the faithful Knight transgresses against social morality.[97] Upon inspection it emerges that Anti-Climacus is not concerned with the 'do's' and don'ts' of mere public mores that make up Silentio's 'morality', but rather with the deeper realm of what is perhaps best termed 'ethics'. The distinction between *morality* and *ethics* is not one that Kierkegaard or any of his pseudonyms makes explicit, and for that reason it is acknowledged that employing such a distinction can prove to be problematic. Nevertheless, that there *is* a difference is apparent from the alternate uses that the pseudonyms make of the same words. Silentio's 'ethical' refers to a social morality that is vastly different from Anti-Climacus's 'ethical'. Without inventing a new term or using a consistently recognisable phrase, Anti-Climacus nevertheless alludes to the different levels of 'ethical' throughout his books. In *Sickness unto Death* for example, the 'Christian ethicist' apprehends a higher ethics than other thinkers, because the Christian begins with the presupposition of sin.[98] Anti-Climacus later refers to men who have an inkling of ethics and the religious, but who frame their thoughts according to metaphysics and aesthetics.[99] To dwell on such topics Anti-Climacus says is a distraction away from the *truly* ethical.[100] From this can be inferred a renewed interest in *properly*[101] understanding the 'ethical' that is now separated from the 'universal' concerns of the previous philosophers and ethicists. The Christian way "reshapes all ethical concepts and gives them one additional range." (*Sickness* 83) In *Practice*, Anti-Climacus applies this higher understanding of ethics directly to the offence. He disparages "natural man" who, endeavouring "to attain a certain civic justice", has merely a "provisional category" for the offence. (*Practice* 111) Only with Christianity, he says, will the real possibility of offence arise.[102] Both the 'moral indignation' of the respectable citizen like Silentio, and the 'intellectual challenge' faced by Climacus, pale in comparison with the possibility for

[95] *Practice* pp. 94-101; pp. 102-121.
[96] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 120-21, 126, 128, 132.
[97] Cf. *FT*, pp. 55, 60-61, 66.
[98] *Sickness*, p. 89.
[99] *Sickness*, p. 94.
[100] *Sickness*, p. 94.
[101] For Anti-Climacus, 'properly' means 'Christianly' and 'individually'. See *Sickness*, pp. 83 and 85.
[102] *Practice*, p. 111.

deep-seated repulsion that Anti-Climacus claims Christ is courting when he says "Blessed is he who is not offended at me."[103]

Offence in *Sickness unto Death*

The possibility of offence in *Sickness* suggests an ever-present factor, lived out everyday. Climacus was concerned with the incomprehensible concept of the God-Man composite.[104] Anti-Climacus focuses on the offence that has ethical significance for a *whole* life, i.e. a life comprising the mundane choices of daily living as well as the singular epiphanies of reflection. By doing so he effectively shifts from *a* moment to the continual possibility of many moments. When Anti-Climacus writes that the offence is "Christianity's weapon against all speculation", (*Sickness* 83) we are not being invited to view this conflict in the same way that Climacus does. For Climacus, the battle consists in the moment of opposition between comprehension and faith. Those who choose to enthrone reason cannot have a happy *understanding* with the Absolute Paradox and so are offended.[105] Climacus does not himself claim to be offended, however, but continues to live at the place where the paradox remains incomprehensible and the understanding refrains from making a decision.[106] Anti-Climacus will have none of this, for from his perspective, withholding judgement is also a form of offence, and people like Climacus are as offensive as the 'speculators' he is attempting to write against. To see that this is so, we must consider Anti-Climacus's three types of offence. In the final chapter of *Sickness,* Anti-Climacus details "three forms of the offence" which are fundamentally related to the paradox.[107] The lowest form is that of the person who negatively states that he has no opinion, who does not believe and who does not care about Christ.[108] The highest is a 'positive' form of offence: the active denial and denunciation of Christ, his work, his message and his existence.[109] The middle offence is the "negative but passive form". (*Sickness* 130) Although he does not state so openly, it can be argued that here we find Anti-Climacus's judgement on the mistaken position of his younger brother. Of the middle form of offence Anti-Climacus writes:

> It definitely feels that it cannot ignore Christ, is not capable of leaving Christ in abeyance and then otherwise leading a busy life. But neither can it believe; it continues to stare fixedly and exclusively... at the paradox. (*Sickness* 130-31)

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[103] *Practice*, p. 70, quoting Matthew 11:6.
[104] *Fragments*, pp. 39, 44-45, 46.
[105] *Fragments*, pp. 49, 59.
[106] Cf. *CUP*, pp. 617-23.
[107] *Sickness*, pp. 129-131. Note that in contrast with Climacus (cf. *Fragments* Ch. III), Anti-Climacus always readily identifies true religion with Christianity and names the Absolute Paradox as Christ. See for example *Sickness*, p. 126.
[108] *Sickness*, pp. 129-30.
[109] *Sickness*, p. 131.

Refraining from making a decision is no less offensive to God than apathetic ignorance or active opposition, not matter how much interest and respect one claims to have for the 'paradox'.

Anti-Climacus imbues all three 'levels' of his offence with an ethical quality that Climacus does not recognise. Climacus claims that offence is the 'unhappy understanding' between the paradox and reason.[110] Anti-Climacus refers instead to these offences as variations of "unhappy admiration", an envy directed towards God that grows from man's sinful aversion to holiness.[111] Both pseudonyms have problems with speculative philosophy, but it is Anti-Climacus who most clearly understands the inappropriateness of it for true Christianity, because he presupposes the sinful corruption of man's reason.[112] Speculative philosophy "universalises individual human beings imaginatively into the race." (*Sickness* 83) In other words, the corruption that comes from this pattern of thought is to subsume into the 'herd' what should be experienced individually. It has clouded the fact that individuals make their choices "before God"[113] and has reverted to paganism, essentially by making a 'god' out of humanity in general.[114] To emphasise the continuing possibility of offence is to remember that all moments occur before God, and indeed, all offences are committed against God. The individual man cannot hide in the crowd and so avoid his responsibility for sin, for it is only an *individual's* offence against God that "actually makes sin into sin". (*Sickness* 87) Sin, for Anti-Climacus, consists in the fact that each man *wills* not to understand what is right, not merely that he does not understand it, or is part of a culture that has not taught him properly.[115] In *Fragments*, sin was error and misunderstanding.[116] In *Sickness*, "interpreted Christianly, sin has its roots in willing, not in knowing, and this corruption of willing embraces the individual's consciousness." (*Sickness* 95) The location of the offence thus makes an 'Augustinian' shift, and it is not defined in relation to reason's understanding, but instead to the ethical existence of the individual.[117]

> Thus offence is related to the single individual. And with this, Christianity [makes] every man a single individual, an individual sinner; and here everything

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[110] *Fragments*, p. 49.
[111] *Sickness*, pp. 85-86.
[112] *Sickness*, p. 83. Cf. In his examination of 'sin' in *Sickness*, Ricoeur refers to the "psychology of evil". "Kierkegaard and Evil," *Modern Critical Views: Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Pub., 1989), pp. 49-59.
[113] Cf. *Sickness*, pp. 85-87.
[114] A common theme. See *Sickness*, p. 87, and especially pp. 116-17. Also *Practice*, pp. 81-82.
[115] Cf. *Sickness*, pp. 90, 93, 95
[116] *Fragments*, p. 50.
[117] In the *Confessions*, Augustine asks, "'What is iniquity?'... It is the perversity of the will, twisting away from the supreme substance, yourself, O God...." *The Confessions of St. Augustine* trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Image Books, 1960), VII.16 (p. 175). See also VII-VIII.

> that heaven and earth can muster regarding the possibility of offence... is concentrated – and this is Christianity. (*Sickness* 122)

Offence in *Practice in Christianity*

With its discussion of sin and offence, *Sickness* lays the foundations for Anti-Climacus's specifically Christian understanding of offence in his most important book. Like an underground stream that bursts into the open in full flow, the offence that until now has only been seen in appendices is taken up by Anti-Climacus in his next book as its central theme. In *Practice in Christianity*, the possibility of offence is "present at every moment" (*Practice* 139) and is not, as Climacus sees it, a singular moment that only happens at the beginning of the Christian life.[118] More so even than *Sickness,* what is most striking about the offence in *Practice* is that it is 'ethical', not epistemological. In *Practice* Anti-Climacus emphasises the 'lowliness' and 'loftiness' of the God-man.[119] For Anti-Climacus, the Incarnation as an historical event involving an actual life lived on earth is far more offensive than the reason-confounding concept of the Absolute Paradox. Thus, Anti-Climacus's offence is an offence of the *truly* ethical[120] informed by his vision of authentic Christianity. It is not an offence of Climacus's intellect, or of Silentio's lesser moral slight. We have seen that Climacus, obsessed with the moment when the understanding encounters the Unknown, has concluded that the offence lies with the inability of reason to comprehend the incomprehensible, and its stubborn refusal to bow to the mystery of the paradox.[121] Anti-Climacus thinks that the intellectual categories of 'doubting' and 'understanding' are too shallow when it comes to the heart of the matter.[122] He moves beyond trying to comprehend the God-man composition, saying that those who try to fête its profundity are merely performing tricks.[123] The real essence of the offence is not in trying (or failing) to understand the composite; it is the composite itself.

> the *situation* belongs with the God-man, the situation that an individual human being who is standing beside you is the God-man. The God-man is not the union of God and man - such terminology is a profound optical illusion. The God-man is the unity of God and an individual human being. That the human race is or is supposed to be in kinship with God is ancient paganism; but *that* an individual human being is God is Christianity... (*Practice* 81-82 original emphasis)

Concurrent with the theme of offence is the theme of contemporaneity, where by metaphorically crossing the span of centuries, the would-be believer is removed from the

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[118] *Fragments*, pp. 49, 51, 58-59; *CUP*, p. 372, 585.
[119] *Practice*, pp. 94-102; 102-121.
[120] Cf. *Sickness*, pp. 83, 85, 94.
[121] *Fragments*, pp. 49-54.
[122] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 81-83.
[123] *Practice*, p. 81.

'present age' and places him or herself next to Christ.[124] Climacus has discussed this at some length already,[125] but it is Anti-Climacus who draws out the significance of contemporaneity for the possibility of offence. With true Christianity, there can be no case of the so-called 'second-hand disciple'. "If you cannot bear contemporaneity... then you are not *essentially* Christian". (*Practice* 65, original emphasis) It is now that Anti-Climacus is able to add the most content to the category of offence. This content was certainly missing from Silentio and Climacus. It is not even apparent in *Sickness*. It is in *Practice* that Anti-Climacus introduces the possibility of the essential offence as *only* occurring for those who see Christ as a contemporary,[126] that is for people who are able to apprehend that the challenge of the God-Man applies to them personally in inwardness and immediacy. Relegating Jesus to a point where he only exists historically does not make him 'actual', that is, his demands do not impinge on anyone's immediate life.[127] Only that which is contemporary (that which is "for you"), is 'actual' for an individual.

> The qualification that is lacking – which is the qualification of truth (which is inwardness) and of all religiousness is – **for you**. The past is not actuality – for me. Only the contemporary is actuality for me. That with which you are living simultaneously is actuality – for you." (*Practice* 64, original bold emphasis)

In *Practice* Anti-Climacus finds that the possibility offence occurs in two forms - that of loftiness and that of lowliness. With the 'offence of loftiness' the individual must face the opportunity for moral indignation that *this* man (i.e. Jesus Christ) is, or is claiming to be, God.[128] With the offence of lowliness, the problem comes when one considers that God in all his majesty is *this* man.[129] Anti-Climacus identifies both as "forms of essential offence". (*Practice* 121) Significantly, both forms of offence can only occur for the one contemporaneous with Christ the God-Man.

The possibility for the 'essential offence of loftiness' centres on the possibility that this individual man should be God, or when this man "speaks and acts as if he were God, declares himself to be God". (*Practice* 94) The possibility for the 'offence of lowliness' comes when the "one who passes himself off as God proves to be the lowly, poor, suffering, and finally powerless human being." (*Practice* 102) We can see that both forms of offence presuppose three things about the individual approaching the Christian faith. First, they presuppose that the individual is standing in a contemporaneous relation to Christ. Secondly that the individual has an awareness of the majesty of God, and

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[124] For example *Practice*, pp. 63 and 144. Cf. Ch. 2 'Leap'.
[125] Cf. *Fragments* Ch. IV 'The Situation of the Contemporary Follower'.
[126] *Practice*, pp. 106-107.
[127] *Practice*, pp. 63-64.
[128] *Practice*, pp. 94-102.
[129] *Practice*, pp. 102-21.

thirdly that the individual apprehends the qualitative gap between the life of God and the life of an individual man, an apprehension that itself presupposes an awareness of sin.

Anti-Climacus does not define either of these categories of essential offence in relation to reason. Indeed, Anti-Climacus insists that it is to Christendom's shame that the preachers have turned Jesus' life and actions into a logical 'proof' for his divinity, for by taking away the possibility of offence at this lowly man who claims to be God, they have taken Christ away as well.[130] Christendom thinks (as a delusion) that the God-man is directly visible.[131] The preachers point to miracles as evidence, forgetting that the Biblical accounts have Jesus himself putting no great stock in the persuasive effects of his actions.[132] For example, the gospels tell how when Jesus recounted a litany of his own healing miracles to John the Baptist's disciples, he ended the account by stating that the man who does not take offence on account of Christ will be blessed.[133] It is significant to Anti-Climacus that these demonstrations do not lead to faith, as if faith was a matter of proof and reasons, but that they instead lead to the possibility of offence.[134] "In order to believe," writes Anti-Climacus, "the person who believes must have passed through the possibility of offence." (*Practice* 101) At first glance this seems to echo Climacus's sentiments, but in actuality, Anti-Climacus's offence is so different from that of Climacus, that, in this respect, the two are almost opposites. The one who is potentially offended at the loftiness of *this* man being God can only do so if he or she is not looking at Christianity as set of religious propositions, but instead at Christ as a contemporary, and thus is already closer than Climacus is to authentic Christianity. Anti-Climacus's offence is not a blow to conceptual reasoning but instead a gut reaction to an affront, a repulsion at something that produces ethical unease. When discussing the impossibility of direct communication, Anti-Climacus talks of how Christ can only be a *sign of contradiction.*[135]

> If someone says directly: I am God; the Father and I are one, this is direct communication. But if the person who says it, the communicator, is this individual human being, an individual human being just like others, then this communication is not entirely direct, because it is not entirely direct that an individual human being should be God... (*Practice* 134)

When a particular lowly man invokes the divine by saying "Believe in me"[136], there is a direct statement coming from an *incognito* source, and it is this disjunction between the

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[130] *Practice*, p. 94.
[131] *Practice*, p. 95.
[132] *Practice*, pp. 95-97.
[133] Mtt. 11: 6.
[134] *Practice*, p. 95.
[135] *Practice*, pp. 133-36. See also the following chapter, 'Indirect Communication'.
[136] Mk. 9: 42.

saying and the person saying it that produces the possibility of offence. One would not be offended if a being who was *obviously* God claimed to be God. For Anti-Climacus, the contradiction does not produce mental turmoil, as if it involved understanding proofs and propositions. Of this idea he says:

> What abominable, sentimental frivolity! No, one does not manage to become a Christian at such a cheap price! He [Christ] is the sign of contradiction, and by the direct statement he attaches himself to you only so that you must first face the offence of the contradiction, and the thoughts *of your heart* are disclosed as you choose whether you will believe of not. (*Practice* 136, emphasis added)

Climacus claims to understand that Christianity is not about doctrines,[137] yet his relation to Christianity hints at the fact that 'doctrine' is the most accurate category for describing Climacus's approach to the offence. Climacus seems to think of Christianity as *essentially* a 'doctrinal' position that one can either accept or reject. He says in *Postscript*: "Although an outsider, I have at least understood this much, that the only unforgivable high treason against Christianity is the single individual's taking his relation to it for granted." (*CUP* 16) M. Hartshorne points out that here once again Climacus fundamentally misunderstands the Christian view; the true Christian (according to Anti-Climacus) would be concerned with *Christ*, the offensive God-man, not with *Christianity*. "Christianity in its authentic form it does not propose *itself* as a condition of salvation That would be idolatrous."[138]

The discussion on the offence of lowliness provides Anti-Climacus the opportunity to answer Climacus on this point, and to develop the notion of the essential offence as relating to a person's 'lived' life, a notion that will become central in Kierkegaard's *Attack*.[139]

> Christianity is no doctrine; all talk of offence with regard to it as a doctrine is a misunderstanding, is an enervation of the thrust of the collision of offence, as when one speaks of offence with respect to the *doctrine* of the God-man, the *doctrine* of Atonement. No, offence is related either to Christ or to being a Christian oneself. (*Practice* 106 original emphasis)

The concrete, day-to-day existence of an individual cannot be ignored. To be a Christian is to imitate Christ, which means, in the eyes of the world, to suffer every kind of evil, mockery and insult, and finally to be punished as a criminal. This, says Anti-Climacus, is part of the possibility of the offence of lowliness, that God should be abased in this way.[140] The possibility of offence is linked to a continuing life. It is present at

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[137] *CUP*, pp. 379-81, 570.
[138] M.H. Hartshorne *Kierkegaard Godly Deceiver* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 36.
[139] See below. Cf. *Moment*, pp. 114, 143, 168-69, 170, 188, 206, 332.
[140] *Practice*, p.106.

every moment.[141] It is expressly not a point devoid of real physical and ethical content, to be mentally struggled over at an abstract early stage in an individual's process towards belief. Instead, Anti-Climacus talks of the sacrifice in life and blood that is made in order truly to be a Christian.[142] The real Christian offence, writes Anti-Climacus, is the remedy for all the petty and provisional offences that plague "natural man". (*Practice* 111) Climacus speaks only of reason; Anti-Climacus barely mentions it at all. Because he is standing in the presence of the source of the light, Anti-Climacus is able to differentiate between the lesser and the essential offences, a skill that Climacus does not share.

The argument that Kierkegaard ascribes to blind faith over reason is commonplace amongst the secondary literature.[143] Karen Carr argues that Kierkegaard is an "anti-rationalist" and that, for Kierkegaard, Christianity is *always* a battle with reason.[144] Gordon Kaufman accuses Kierkegaard of "unqualified fideism".[145] Alastair MacIntyre paints a picture of a Kierkegaard who was trapped in an inescapable dilemma of basing truth on subjective passion.[146] Yet each of these accusations is based on a reading of 'Kierkegaard' that does not take into account the pseudonymous context, or which does so only in a cursory way. *Only* if Kierkegaard saw Christianity the way that Silentio or Climacus sees it would he have a faith that exists *only* in opposition to reason. For Anti-Climacus, however, it seems that the opposite of offence is not 'faith' as such, but obedience to the lowly man who says "Come to me".[147] Obviously, there is an element of faith involved in obeying someone, but the focus is shifted from the battle of the intellect to a battle of the will. The fideist must constantly define faith in opposition to reason. Anti-Climacus takes a different position in which the concerns of reason are transcended. The true Christian is not one who exists because of, or *in spite of*, reason alone, but one who exists in a life of willed obedience to Christ.

Whether there is such a Christian at all is a question that lies behind Kierkegaard's last writings and his final *Attack*, where he finds the ultimate sign of obedience to be imitation of Christ.[148] Anti-Climacus provides hints of what that imitation might look like. At the beginning of the 'Exposition' in *Practice*, Anti-Climacus sketches out a third type of offence in addition to that of loftiness and

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[141] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 110, 139.
[142] *Practice*, p. 144.
[143] This is the conclusion for many who ascribe to Kierkegaard a 'leap of faith'. See Ch. 1 'Leap' for examples.
[144] Karen L. Carr, "The Offence of Reason and the Passion of Faith: Kierkegaard and Anti-Rationalism," *Faith and Philosophy* 13 (1996), p. 241.
[145] Gordon Kaufman, "Mystery, Critical Consciousness and Faith," *The Rationality of Religious Belief.* Ed. William J. Abraham (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) p. 57.
[146] Alistair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 39-43.
[147] Cf. Mtt 11:28; *Practice* pp. 3-69, 94, 101, 106, 136.
[148] For example see *Moment*, pp. 31, 42, 135, 148, 182, 292.

lowliness.[149] This third offence is not related to the notion of the God-man as such, and Anti-Climacus does not dwell on it. Refusing to call it a form of *essential* offence, throughout the brief section Anti-Climacus continually downplays this type of offence at the expense of the more important 'lofty' and 'lowly' expressions, and it does not appear in the summation at the end of the chapter.[150] It is significant that Kierkegaard has Anti-Climacus talk about this offence at all, for it contains an apt description of the kind of criticism Kierkegaard would make under his own name in the next few years of his life. Anti-Climacus speaks of this offence is that of the man who collides with the established order.[151] Every time an authentic witness transforms truth into inwardness, he says, then the established order will be offended at him.[152] The offence appears to be that the individual is making himself higher than the herd, but this in fact is another acoustical illusion.[153] It is the established order that has said to itself that it is divine - and it is offended by the challenge to this divinity by the individual who stands apart.[154] Again it is significant that throughout the exposition, although this form of offence is 'in theory' open to anyone,[155] Anti-Climacus names only Jesus Christ as an example of the anti-establishment offender. It is not Anti-Climacus who will take the next step of descent to public engagement.

Thus *Practice* brings us to the penultimate stage in the development of the offence in Kierkegaard's thought. Silentio remains firmly in 'pagan' Christendom, offended at faith's assault on civic culture. Climacus at least recognises the importance of inward appropriation, but his offence is also misguided, as he remains more interested in thinking about Christianity as a religion than in obeying Christ as a person. In *Practice*, Anti-Climacus identifies three offences, two of which are concerned with the actual life of the individual man who said he was God, and thus relate to the essential core of Christianity, one of which is the offence that arises when any individual sets himself against the establishment. Anti-Climacus suggests, but does not make explicit, the connection between this lesser offence and the later two forms of *essential* offence. Anti-Climacus uses Christ as his example of a man who offends the established order, but he only hints at the possibility that this sort of offence could be enacted by someone else. It will be Kierkegaard himself who cements the connection, descending back to the 'cave' with his *Attack*. There, the practical implications of the offence are worked out as a literal imitation of Christ's essential offensiveness.

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[149] *Practice*, pp. 85-94.
[150] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 85, 87, 93, 94, 120-21.
[151] *Practice*, p. 85.
[152] *Practice*, p. 86.
[153] *Practice*, p. 88.
[154] *Practice*, pp. 86-88.
[155] *Practice*, p. 85.

Kierkegaard and the Offence against Christendom

Attack does what Anti-Climacus did not dare to do. It takes the mode of being a sign of offence that formerly applied only to Christ and proposes it as a human possibility. Kierkegaard does not shy away from bringing Christ in on his side, often openly identifying his mission with Christ's mission.[156] As a result, Kierkegaard in *Attack* actively encourages the idea that *he himself* is a sign of offence, adopting the 'Christ-mode' that Anti-Climacus had avoided applying to anyone other than the God-Man.[157] In a further move tracing the critical implications of Anti-Climacus's vision in *Practice*, *Attack* takes up the essential offence of the individual man who is God and extends that to *all* Christians by stressing the qualitative difference between Christendom and Christianity.[158] If Christendom is sophistication and civilisation,[159] then Christians are counter-cultural barbarians, actively opposed to all that Christendom stands for.[160] In the final analysis, Kierkegaard was not laying out a general program of social rebellion that can be divorced from Christian concerns. It is *only* the one contemporaneous with Christ who will be able to stand as the sign of *essential* offence in his society, a stand taken in imitation of the way that Christ was offensive to his society.[161] Thus, the 'leap as contemporaneity'[162] is bound up with the final development of the offence in *Attack*. In fact, the offence acts as a bridge between the leap and the key theme of the following chapter. It is by adopting Christ's mode of 'being the offence' that Kierkegaard also adopts Christ's mode of indirect communication.[163]

In *Attack,* Christ is unashamedly brought in to the fray on Kierkegaard's side. Responding to a call for him to cease 'setting fire' to the establishment, Kierkegaard writes: "According to the New Testament Christianity is incendarism – Christ himself says, 'I came to cast a fire upon the earth.'"[164] In a marked contrast from the tone set by Anti-Climacus, Kierkegaard's Christ does not wait for people to come to him so much as he goes out looking for trouble.[165] Kierkegaard highlights the polemical potential in Christ's question, "Will the Son of Man, when he comes again, find faith upon the earth?"[166] "Consequently Christ sees a possibility that the situation at his second-coming

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[156] *Moment*, pp. 5, 43, 58, 129-37, 164, 292, 299.
[157] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 85-94; *Moment*, pp. 4-18, 23, 100, 136, 160, 217-20.
[158] *Moment*, pp. 143, 168-69, 170, 188, 206, 321, 332.
[159] *Moment*, pp. 32, 42, 110, 194-96, 248, 256, 335, 351.
[160] *Moment*, pp. 114, 126, 136, 168-69, 206.
[161] Contra. Bruce Kirmmse, *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) and others, see below. Cf. *Moment*, pp. 206, 299, 321-22.
[162] Cf. Ch. 1 'Leap'.
[163] Cf. Ch. 3 'Indirect Communication'.
[164] *Moment*, p. 5, quoting Luke 12:49.
[165] Compare *Practice* section No. 1, pp. 3-69 with *Moment* pp. 43, 58, 129-37.
[166] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 43, 58, quoting Luke 18:18.

may be such that Christianity does not exist at all." (*Moment* 58) In an important pamphlet entitled "What Christ Judges about Official Christianity"[167] here again Kierkegaard intentionally links the concerns of his attack with those of Christ's. Christ pronounced woe onto the Pharisees who built monuments to the prophets killed by their own ancestors,[168] and Kierkegaard makes a direct connection to the official clergy of Christendom who preach in churches built to commemorate authentic Christians that the clergy themselves would have persecuted. "Christ's judgement is pronounced: this is hypocrisy, is blood-guilt" (*Moment* 135)

The emphasis on Christ the Judge reveals Kierkegaard's personal identification of the 'Christ-mode' of offensiveness with himself. In *Attack*, Christ the Judge becomes a more prominent figure than in any of the previous pseudonymous texts. Yet Kierkegaard retains Anti-Climacus's essential offence of the lowly with the lofty, and the judge is not cast in glorious colours. "The judge is the abased one, the one mocked and spat upon, the crucified one, who taught 'Follow me,' 'My kingdom is not of this world.'"[169] Christ the suffering judge is described as the prototype.[170] "What Christianity wants is: imitation. What the human being does not want is to suffer, least of all the kind of suffering that is authentically Christian, to suffer at the hands of people." (*Moment* 135) *Attack* represents the fulfilment of Kierkegaard's imitation of Christ-offensiveness. "In my books I have pursued my task, and with *my being and my authorship* I am a continual attack on the whole Mynsterian proclamation of Christianity..." (*Moment* 15 emphasis added)

Significantly, Kierkegaard repeatedly maintains that he is *not* a Christian, for under Christendom that term has become meaningless.[171] By saying this, Kierkegaard does two things. First he sets himself up as a judge-figure who, Christ-like, *gives* offence to all the cultured members of society who assume they are favoured followers of God. Second, by removing himself from under the all-encompassing umbrella of the social construct that Christendom has called 'Christianity', Kierkegaard opens himself up to *receiving* offence and persecution at the hands of the public. Christ was disreputable, and suffered for his rootless status, walking in lowliness and abasement with nowhere to lay his head.[172] Identifying his own situation with that of Christ, Kierkegaard finds it "quite in order" when people are angry and offended at him. (*Moment* 160) Kierkegaard is not a 'Christian', so he, like Christ, is a judge who does not enjoy respectability.

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[167] *Moment*, pp. 129-37.
[168] Cf. Mtt. 23:29-33 and Luke 11: 47-48.
[169] *Moment*, p. 21 alluding to Mtt. 19:21; John 18:36. See also *Moment*, p. 299.
[170] *Moment*, p. 292. See also *Moment*, pp. 31, 42, 135, 148, 182.
[171] *Moment*, pp. 46-49, 143, 212-13, and especially pp. 340-43.
[172] Cf. *Moment*, p. 299, alluding to Mtt. 8:20.

For Anti-Climacus, Christ stands as a sign of offence because of the chasmic gap that exists between God and Man.[173] *Attack* retains this sense of offence, but it traces the implications that Christ's essential offence has for society, spelling out the effect of this offence on Christendom as a whole. It was discussed in the previous chapter how in *Attack* a mark of true Christianity is that it is qualitatively different from the surrounding culture.[174] Turning to the offence, an emphasis in *Attack* is the 'barbaric' nature of authentic Christianity.[175] We see that true Christianity kicks against the cultured accoutrements of Christendom; just as Christ appeared to be a crude upstart by acting and speaking as God, so too the presence of Christianity appears as an offence to Christendom's sophistication. Christianity's relationship to Christendom is analogous to Christ's divine relationship with humanity – the presence of one with the other cannot help but result in the possibility of offence. This may seem at first to be merely a return to Silentio's offence against civic morality.[176] However, Silentio's concern was with the radically personal (and socially incomprehensible) demands that a distant God may make on each individual.[177] This is not Kierkegaard's worry. At this stage in his authorship Kierkegaard is writing from a position informed by the literal and practical imitation of Christ, an imitation which is open to all who aspire to be an authentic Christian. Furthermore, Kierkegaard considers the content of this imitation to be easily understood by anyone who reads the New Testament without the help of 'interpretation' from the official clergy.[178]

Contemporaneous Christianity is offensive because it does not sit well with the sophistication that Christendom has developed for itself over the past few thousand years. Kierkegaard's comments suggest that in fact Christendom has developed as it has *precisely* so that its citizens can avoid the essential offence that Christ and his followers continually present. Christendom "is the means by which one protects oneself against all sorts of trouble and inconvenience in life". (*Moment* 32) Christendom does not conceive that Christianity is about suffering - in this 'Christian' culture, Christianity is the enjoyment of life.[179] True Christianity is a renunciation of all gold, prestige, power, comfort etc. It "shuns them more passionately than the earthly mind hankers after them." (*Moment* 114) To protect itself against this, society has evolved a "highly respected social class: the pastors."[180] The pastors 'officially' interpret the New Testament so that the people never have to, the clergy defending their employers against any uncultured

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[173] Cf. *Practice* pp. 94-102; 102-21.
[174] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 17, 20, 26, 99-100, 214-15, 248, 257, 316; Ch. 1 'Leap'.
[175] *Moment*, pp. 114, 126, 136, 168-69, 206.
[176] Cf. *FT*, pp. 52-53, 55-56, 60-61, 66.
[177] Cf *FT*, pp. 54-67.
[178] For example see *Moment* p. 132.
[179] *Moment*, p. 42.

reminders of renunciation. The pastors make Christianity undemanding and socially acceptable, in fact, if a preacher were to actually live the message of the New Testament with which he is entrusted, his congregation would think it extremely bad manners, and would thrust themselves away.[181] All in all, officially sanctioned Christianity can be seen to be quite a successful invention of civilisation, if one is to judge the advancement of a culture by its ability to avoid hardship and embrace convenience. As a mark of sophistication, Kierkegaard likens cultural Christianity to the advancement of having water available on tap.[182] Like drawing from well, working hard on one's knees in prayer is for the "uncultured ages of ignorance". (*Moment* 110) Ultimately, Christendom's cultural pretensions are more than merely different from Christianity, they are Christ's enemy. Kierkegaard refers to the investiture of 'official' Christians as "sophisticated villainy" – sophistication that mocks God by turning sin into holiness. (*Moment* 351)

Offensive Christians are in good company if they blunder over the mores of civilised Christendom:

> But God in heaven is so totally lacking in sagacity, especially high statecraft. He is a poor wretch of the old school... He has no intimation of what the secret of statecraft is, how much faster it goes when one gives up such tomfoolery and then earnestly gets busy so that there are millions of Christians in a jiffy with the help of teachers who are not Christians. (*Moment* 126)

Likewise Christ's words against the hypocrites and leaders is shocking and uncultured:

> they certainly are words one never hears in the mouth of a cultured person; and to have him repeat them several times – it is so terribly vulgar, and to make Christ into a person who uses force! (*Moment* 136)

In his *Attack*, Kierkegaard adopts for himself the offensive nature of Christ in Christendom.[183] The first overt noises of his attack took the shape as an assault on the good name of the recently deceased Bishop Mynster,[184] a break with social convention that sparked a predictable public outcry.[185] The incumbent Bishop Martensen spoke up on behalf of "public morals" about the offensiveness of Kierkegaard's latest step.[186] Fully aware of the offence that his pamphlets would occasion, Kierkegaard did not even try to defend himself against every accusation and attack from society.[187] Instead, he welcomed it, gleefully supposing that his polemic activity will result in "everything that goes by the name of unrest, revolt and catastrophe". (*Moment* 15) Kierkegaard did not complain that

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[180] *Moment*, p. 248. See also *Moment*, pp. 256. 335.
[181] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 194-96.
[182] *Moment* p. 110.
[183] See also Ch. 3 'Indirect Communication'.
[184] See especially *Moment*, pp. 4-18.
[185] Cf. Kierkegaard's caricature of these voices spluttering with rage in *Moment*, p. 100.
[186] *Moment*, p. 9.

his personal commitment to the fight had aroused so much scandalous indignation (*Forargelige*), "no, [my attack] has not yet aroused enough indignation". (*Moment* 23)

In an important passage entitled 'What does the Fire Chief Say?'[188] Kierkegaard likens himself to a fireman with a clear job to do. Normally, he says, the chief is a cultured man, but when there is a fire, he becomes coarse-mouthed. If the well-meaning, polite people around him get upset at his brusque manner, he bellows, "Where in hell are the police?... Get rid of these damned people...and if they won't go with kindness, then tan their hides so that we can get rid of them – and get going." (*Moment* 217) During a fire, in order to do his job, the fire chief must do away with manners, and will become offensive by necessity. It is this posture that Kierkegaard adopts for himself, finding in the New Testament figure of Christ ample support for becoming, with his attack, a sign of offence against his society: a rough, coarse unsophisticated barbarian.[189] In this respect we can see that is not just in his own eyes that Kierkegaard was successful. As Bishop Martensen wrote in his memoir after Kierkegaard's death:

> One would hardly expected a man of Kierkegaard's spirituality and intellectual gifts to have thus degraded himself to the level of pen men of the common and the lowest kind. Yet both here and in other places he did descend to this kind of thing. Sibbern made a most pertinent remark when he said that Kierkegaard had shown himself a Philistine, i.e. an 'outsider'.[190]

The Leap chapter emphasised Kierkegaard's conception of the absolute difference between Christendom and Christianity, as qualitative a difference as exists between circles and squares, or birds and fish.[191] But for Kierkegaard, Christianity is more than just *different* from Christendom. In *Attack*, Kierkegaard extends his personal appropriation of offence to all followers of Christ. It emerges that Christians, properly speaking, must also be *actively opposed* to their surrounding society. A life lived as an authentic follower of Christ will necessarily be a life lived 'counter-culturally'. "Original Christianity," writes Kierkegaard, "relates itself ... militantly to this world". (*Moment* 206) The idea emerges in *Attack* that Christianity can only exist as a minority religion, as a counter corrective to the wider world. As soon as it becomes the norm, it stops being Christian.

> Because the concept 'Christian' is a polemical concept, one can be a Christian only in contradistinction or by way of contrast...As soon as the

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[187] *Moment*, pp. 105ff.
[188] *Moment*, pp. 217-20.
[189] Cf. *Moment*, p. 136 and its allusion to Christ violently clearing the temple in John 2:15.
[190] H. Martensen, *Af mit Levnet* III, translated by T. H.Croxall *Kierkegaard Commentary* (London: James Nisbet, 1956), p. 241.
[191] Cf. *Moment* pp. 11, 65, 183; Ch. 1 'Leap'.

> contradistinction is taken away, being a Christian is blather – as it is in 'Christendom'... (*Moment* 143)

Thus, offence is not an accidental by-product, but instead part of the fabric of being a follower of Christ. God, says Kierkegaard, built offence into Christianity "because, according to his thought, to be a Christian was precisely the category of discord, the discord of the 'single individual' with the 'race'". (*Moment* 188) New Testament Christianity is "based on the thought that one is a Christian in *relation of contrast*... [Christianity is] precisely what natural man is opposed to, is to him an offence".[192] Like Christ, Christians stand as a sign of offence in the world, by the their very existence giving offence to whatever 'host' culture Christianity happens to inhere. The flip side of this giving is that the wider culture, understandably, will respond in kind. For Christians, as for Christ, offence at the receiving end takes the form of suffering. "The Christianity of the NT is to love God in a relation of opposition to people, to *suffer* one's *faith* at the hands of people..." (*Moment* 332 original emphasis) "Christianity is the suffering truth because it is the truth and is in this world." (*Moment* 321)

It is important to note that Kierkegaard does not concern himself with a generic concept of 'truth'. In the parlance of *Attack*, 'truth' means Christian truth. Thus, the offence that a 'truth-witness' represents cannot be separated from the offence that necessarily flows from Christianity. Kierkegaard is not interested in laying out a general program of social rebellion. It is the Christ-like offence that constitutes *the* offence, the category is not open to just anyone who shakes their fist at the establishment, or to anyone who suffers as a result of their actions against society. It is a weakness of some secondary literature that in an effort to make relevant Kierkegaard's message for a modern, 'post-Christian' age, the central plank of Christianity has been removed from the Kierkegaardian platform.[193] Thus, even those authors who are committed to taking *Attack* seriously as an important part of Kierkegaard's corpus can inadvertently turn *Attack* into an aberration. For example, Bruce Kirmmse does this when he argues in his book that: "*Attack* on Christendom can only be understood intelligently, not as an aberration, but as a response to the social and political developments of Kierkegaard's time."[194]

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[192] *Moment*, p. 168-69 original emphasis. See also *Moment*, p. 170.

[193] Some examples are Kirmmse, *Golden Age*; Roger Poole, *Kierkegaard: The Indirect Communication* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993); Jørgen Bukdahl, *Søren Kierkegaard and the Common Man* trans. B. Kirmmse (Grand Rapids: W.B Eerdmans, 2001); In an excellent and ground-breaking study, Martin Matuštík brings together critical theory and existential philosophy in order to critique nationalist movements in his *Postnational Identity: Critical Theory and Existential Philosophy in Habermas, Kierkegaard, and Havel* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993). However, he steers clear of Kierkegaard's Christianity, in this following other critical theorists such as Theodor Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic* trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

[194] Kirmmse, *Golden Age*, p. 4.

Kirmmse chooses to read the final work as a social and governmental critique, explicitly downplaying the Christian aspect.[195] He attempts to make the case that Kierkegaard was essentially making a secular, not religious, attack.[196] Although he rejects the 'aberration' hypothesis, by focussing solely on the political current of *Attack*, Kirmmse makes the final work into something that has little connection to what has come before. The pseudonymous authorship represents the ascent through the stages towards Kierkegaard's account of authentic Christianity, with *Attack* acting as the practical implication of such a vision: the descent to the level of public encounter. None of the previous works show any interest in developing a project of offence-as-political-sedition as an end in itself, and Anti-Climacus especially emphasise that it is only people with a lesser understanding of what it is to truly follow Christ who are worried with the merely civic realm.[197] Instead, *Attack* fulfils what has been developing through the pseudonyms; an offence that is *essentially* bound up with Christianity and for this reason only accidentally concerned with a critique of any one particular form of government. The offence that Christ represents works itself out in *any* culture where there are followers who, in contemporaneity, imitate Christ; Kierkegaard is not agitating for one system of social existence over and against another.

The offence acts as a bridge between the three key themes. Just as the leap could not be discussed without reference to the offence, so too, offence cannot long be discussed without moving into the sphere of indirect communication. This is because the development of indirect communication that culminates in *Attack* is one where Kierkegaard reduplicates Christ's sign of contradiction, namely, that mode of being which fundamentally relies on causing offence in order to communicate its message.[198]

Conclusion

Those scholars who criticised Kierkegaard for his fideistic 'Leap of Faith' could only do so if they stopped reading Kierkegaard after finishing Silentio's *Fear and Trembling*. Likewise, Carr,[199] Kaufman,[200] MacIntyre[201] and others can only accuse Kierkegaard of 'blind faith' if *Climacus's* views of the offensive nature of faith against reason are taken as *Kierkegaard's* last and best words on the subject. But Kierkegaard does not find the essential offence to be in the Paradox's assault on the understanding. Anti-Climacus's possibility of essential offence transcends reason, moving the frontlines

[195] Kirmmse, *Golden Age*, p. 467.
[196] Kirmmse, *Golden Age*, p. 459.
[197] For example *Sickness*, pp. 83, 89, 94 and *Practice*, p. 111.
[198] Cf. Ch. 3 'Indirect Communication'; Cf. *Practice*, pp. 94-101, 102-121, 122, 136.
[199] Cf. Carr, "The Offence of Reason", p. 241.
[200] Cf. Kaufman, "Mystery, Critical Consciousness and Faith", p. 57.
[201] Cf. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 39-43.

so that the battle is fought *ethically* and not *intellectually*. One does not need to rely exclusively on Kierkegaard's journals or *Point of View* to demonstrate his affinity with Anti-Climacus's Christianity. With his *Attack* Kierkegaard lives out the implications of Anti-Climacus's pure vision, in the process becoming himself a sign of offence against his society. The problem of misunderstanding Kierkegaard's Christianity runs deep in the secondary literature. Kirmmse,[202] Poole,[203] and Matuštík[204] stand as examples of a trend that seeks to separate Christianity from Kierkegaard's supposed 'essential' message. Here, the offence against the establishment that is found in *Attack* is extended to any political dissident who stands against the powers-that-be. Yet commentators can only do this because they do not recognise the relationship between Kierkegaard's assault and Anti-Climacus's offence. In *Attack*, Kierkegaard is explicitly finishing what Anti-Climacus began in *Practice in Christianity*, bringing home to Christendom the offensive implications of the God-Man. These scholars betray themselves as people who are concerned with the 'lesser' offence against social morality. Although this may be well and good for 'modern' critics in a 'post-Christian' world, it is dubious at best to apply this to Kierkegaard without looking at the fundamental Christian reasons that lie behind his *Attack*. Here, the 'moderns' stand in line with Kierkegaard's contemporaries. Bishop Martensen thought that calling Kierkegaard a 'Philistine' was a fitting insult[205] - a move that he could not have made if he had read and understood Climacus's judgement of Silentio and then Anti-Climacus's judgement of both. By assuming that going against cultural common sense marked the highest point of offence, Martensen too betrayed himself as someone who had possibly not even entered Religiousness A, let alone Religiousness B. Being offensive is the mark of contemporaneity, which in turn is the mark of authentic Christianity. For this reason, when critics like Henning Fenger choose to ignore Kierkegaard's role as "persecuted martyr in the market town of Copenhagen",[206] they are choosing to ignore what is most important about Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard's offensiveness brings to fruition the theme worked through the pseudonyms, and it is by 'being an offence' that Kierkegaard acts as his own indirect communication, the next theme to which we must now turn.

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[202] Cf. Kirmmse, *Golden Age*.
[203] Cf. Poole, *Indirect Communication*.
[204] Cf. Matuštík, *Postnational Identity*. See also M. Matuštík, "Kierkegaard's Radical Existential Praxis, or: Why the Individual Defies Liberal Communitarian and Postmodern Categories" *Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity* eds. M. Matuštík and M. Westphal (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 239-264.
[205] Martensen, *Af mit Levnet* III, p. 241.
[206] Henning Fenger, *Kierkegaard: The Myths and Their Origins* trans. George Schoolfield (London: Yale University Press, 1980), p. xi.

CHAPTER 3 – INDIRECT COMMUNICATION

Introduction

The form and function of communication in Kierkegaard's key pseudonymous writings develops as Kierkegaard moves closer to the position that he will take in *Attack upon Christendom*. Before looking at the use that each pseudonym makes of indirect communication in particular, we will first briefly consider the general definition of the concept found in the works.

The literature divides communication into two categories, *direct* and *indirect*.[1] Silentio does not specifically dwell on the definitions, but both Climacus and Anti-Climacus understand *direct communication* as the imparting of knowledge by a legitimate authority, and *indirect communication* as the communication of capability, in other words, the bringing of each individual to the point where they can make a decision for themselves and in themselves.[2] 'Direct communication' does not require the collusion of the listening subject in order to be successful. Either the communicating authority is right in what he or she says, or the authority is wrong. As Climacus says in *Postscript*, "Objective thinking is completely indifferent to subjectivity and thereby to inwardness and appropriation; its communication is therefore direct."[3] For all of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous and non-pseudonymous writing, issues of faith and Christianity cannot be dealt with in such a high-handed manner. There is no human authority that can impart knowledge on the true state of religion, and there are no 'second-hand' disciples.[4] The demands of faith for Silentio, and later, the demands of Christianity for Climacus and the demands of Christ for Anti-Climacus, must be appropriated by each individual as he or she stands before God.[5] The best that can be done is to bring each individual to the point where they know that they must subjectively choose *either* God *or* the offence of unbelief and disobedience. 'Indirect communication' is the form of communication that 'repels' people at the same time as clarifying the issue at hand.[6] That is, it makes it difficult for individuals to follow other individuals based on outward factors such as charisma or convincing rhetoric. Instead the listeners are thrust back onto themselves; the responsibility for making a stark decision lies with each person alone. The communicator does not adopt a position of authority, but instead attempts to bring each listener to the

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[1] For example see the story of the king who tries to communicate his love to a peasant girl in *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 26-32; *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, pp. 72-80, 242-50; *Practice in Christianity*, pp. 127-36.
[2] Cf. *CUP*, p. 75; *Practice*, p. 142.
[3] *CUP*, p. 75. See also pp. 73ff.
[4] Cf. *Fragments*, pp. 89-110, *Practice*, p. 65.
[5] Cf. *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 54-67, 79-81; *Fragments*, pp. 37-39, 49-54, *CUP*, pp. 15-17, 77-79, 365-69, 576-79, 587-92; *Sickness unto Death*, pp. 85-87, *Practice*, pp. 53, 94, 101, 106, 136, 249-50.
[6] Cf. *CUP*, p. 79; *Practice*, pp. 123, 133-39.

point of making the decision individually.[7] This does not mean that the communicator does not desire a certain choice above others, but only that they will not force the result. There are, of course, many things in the world for which direct communication is useful and necessary, and Kierkegaard does not disparage this mode as a whole. However, we see that because issues of faith and Christianity involve inward appropriation, none of Kierkegaard's books have any time for preachers, 'paragraph communicators' or 'assistant professors' who attempt to express directly what can only be appropriated inwardly.[8]

It will be shown how the development seen throughout the pseudonymous writings brings Kierkegaard to the point where he is able to make his public attack on Christendom without also abandoning his precious indirect communication. Indeed, by the time indirect communication reaches its full development, *public expression is seen to be a necessary component of indirect communication.* To see how this could be so, we need to trace the movements that the pseudonyms make as they reflect on the importance of communicating indirectly. We will consider the indirect communication of the key pseudonyms in the usual order. For Silentio, true to his name, indirect communication happens through 'silence',[9] for Climacus through 'double reflection'[10] and for Anti-Climacus through 'reduplication'.[11] With the self-penned *Attack* the possibility of indirect communication as reduplication is extended from a unique mode available only to Christ, to a form of communication embodied by Kierkegaard when he becomes an offensive sign of contradiction to his native culture.[12]

Three times Silentio attempts to speak, and each time he must fall silent.[13] Kierkegaard intentionally leads Silentio to a point where he cannot find out what he needs to find out thanks to Abraham's reticence and the Knight's invisibility, another form of silence as indirect communication which forces the listener back onto his own resources. As well as revealing Silentio's silence, *Fear and Trembling* expounds on the relationship between Abraham's silence and his faith.[14] Although silence is supposed to bring individuals indirectly to a point of decision, ultimately we find that the silence of *Fear* cannot do what Silentio wants it to do, because he does not know what Christianity is.

This leads to Climacus, higher on the ascent and thus with a more useful definition of indirect communication. Important for Climacus is the idea of 'double

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[7] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 126, 135; *Moment and Other Late Writings*, pp. 73, 236.
[8] See especially *FT*, pp. 8-9, 62-63; *CUP*, pp. 84, 202, 231-32, 299, 609.
[9] Cf. *FT*, pp. 14, 23, 38-41, 53, 82-120.
[10] Cf. *CUP*, pp. 72-118, 251-300.
[11] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 123-27, 131-32, 133-36.
[12] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 15, 20-25, 38, 42, 46, 60, 74, 78, 83-84, 135, 180-82, 197, 213, 290, 311-12, 316, 321, 324, 333, 329-54.
[13] *FT*, pp. 9-14, 15-23, 27-53.
[14] *FT*, pp. 82-120.

reflection', whereby the communicator and the listener are kept apart, yet at the same time both parties can reflect on a common communication kept at a common distance.[15] Climacus finds double reflection throughout the authorship and concludes that contrary to authoritative didactic presentations, it is only by doubling and looping over the same subject again and again that the important truths pertaining to Christianity will emerge.[16] Kierkegaard originally intended his communication to end with Climacus and *Postscript*, and we will briefly consider the effect that the savage mockery from the satirical magazine *The Corsair* had on Kierkegaard's project.

It is proposed that the primary result was the invention of Anti-Climacus and a new category of indirect communication – namely 'reduplication'.[17] No longer was it desirable to keep communicator, listener and communication apart. Now, with Anti-Climacus and reduplication, the messenger *is* the message, and he draws all men to himself.[18] This is not a return to direct communication however, for although Christ may say straightforward and open things, by the very fact that he is God *incognito* as man, the communication remains indirect.[19] Anti-Climacus hints at, but does not develop, the idea that normal humans can embody messages the way that Christ embodies his.[20]

It is in *Attack* that Kierkegaard extends to himself and others the possibility of becoming a sign of contradiction, an act of reduplication that Anti-Climacus finds only in Christ. Because it is a straightforward, non-pseudonymous polemic, the received wisdom of the secondary literature is that *Attack* is Kierkegaard's direct communication.[21] Intentionally or not, such an assumption makes *Attack* an anomalous aberration from Kierkegaard's previous commitment to pseudonymous indirection. However, in opposition to this assumption, it is proposed that *Attack* is indirect communication for three reasons. First, *Attack* is a corrective, part of a dialectic whose meaning is not 'self-contained'.[22] Secondly, *Attack* is not a reformation manifesto, calling for followers, but instead actively repels people in order to make them aware of the honest choice they have to make regarding Christianity in Christendom.[23] Thirdly *Attack* is not direct communication because it is an example of Kierkegaardian reduplication.[24] Although he is forthright in his own name, because of who Kierkegaard *is*, his communication is rendered indirect. Like Christ, Kierkegaard stands as a sign of offence, embodying his

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[15] *CUP*, pp. 72-80.
[16] *Fragments*, p. 37, *CUP*, pp. 251-300.
[17] *Practice*, pp. 131-36.
[18] *Practice*, pp. 3-68, 123-24.
[19] *Practice*, pp. 95-98, 134-36.
[20] *Practice*, pp. 129-31.
[21] See the discussion below. See also 'Thesis Introduction'.
[22] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 12, 24, 34, 40-41, 51, 67, 99-100, 106-107, 130, 143, 211, 217-20, 226, 335.
[23] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 13, 29, 33-34, 40, 46, 48-49, 73-74, 76, 97, 101, 110, 130, 197, 212, 236, 336-37, 340-47.
[24] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 15, 20, 23, 25, 38, 42, 46, 60, 74, 78, 83-84, 135, 180-82, 197, 213, 290, 311-12, 316, 321, 324, 333, 329-54.

own message and thus his audience is faced with an *either/or* decision. By following the development of the theme through the authorship, it is apparent that the final *Attack* is the culmination of Kierkegaard's project, the practical working out of Anti-Climacus's pure vision of reduplication and the fulfilment of authentic Christian indirect communication.

Silentio and Silence

When looking at Kierkegaard on communication, it is good to look at *Fear and Trembling*, if for no other reason than that it is purported to be by 'Johannes de Silentio'. Before we read even one word of his book, we know that John of Silence[25] is essentially concerned with the problem of communication – or the lack thereof.[26] There are two levels to the silence in *Fear and Trembling*. The character of Silentio is himself led into silence on a number of occasions in the book, an 'unconscious' silence that represents a failure on his part, due to the fact that he is still in the cave and cannot see his subject clearly enough to talk about it.[27] The next level of silence is Silentio's reflections on the reticence of the Knight of Faith, and the role that he thinks silence plays in matters of faith.[28] It is proposed that silence at this level is Silentio's 'indirect communication' because it meets the two crucial criteria for that form of communication. Silence *protects* the issue at hand by repelling followers. Faced with silence, the would-be disciple is forced to consider the issue of faith for reasons other than admiration, imitation or empathy, reasons that Silentio says lead only to a "cheap edition" of faith.[29] As a result, silence also *prompts* individuals to have to make the decision for themselves, bringing them to a place of awareness without resorting to the direct didacticism which would destroy the conditions necessary for the acquisition of subjective faith.[30] Silentio as a character reveals the problems inherent for people at the level he represents. His unintended silence means that he is an unreliable guide who is not to be followed, and it indirectly points towards the need for the next stage of ascent. Silentio's 'conscious' reflections on silence reveal the form that 'indirect communication' takes when not informed by the light of authentic Christianity – a mode of communication that is indirect but ultimately useless for expressing the object of true faith. It is at this point that Climacus comes in, able to more adequately provide authentic content while at the same time retaining indirect communication.

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[25] Or 'John *about* Silence', either way it does not affect the overall purpose of the pseudonym. Louis Mackey *Points of View: Readings of Kierkegaard* (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1986), p. 41.
[26] Louis Pojman considers this Kierkegaard's most indirect work. *The Logic of Subjectivity: Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1984), p. 148; Howard Hong emphasises the indirectness of the book in his translator's introduction. *FT*, p. x, xxvi-xxx.
[27] *FT*, pp. 14, 23, 33, 53.
[28] *FT*, pp. 38-41, 82-120.
[29] *FT*, p. 53, see also *FT*, pp. 54-67, 115.
[30] Cf. *FT*, pp. 79-81.

For all its discussions on resignation, faith, leaping and the rest, at the same time and above all, *Fear and Trembling* is an extended, wordy, 'silence'. Kierkegaard makes Silentio say quite a lot for someone who reminds us throughout the book that he must remain quiet.[31] As such, the work seems to be intentionally an exercise in failure. It is this failure to understand and explain faith that marks the first level of silence in *Fear and Trembling*. The book opens with a quote from Hamann: "What Tarquinius Superbus said in the garden by means of the poppies, the son understood but the messenger did not".[32] The son had asked for advice on how to consolidate his power over the people of Gabii. Tarquinius, not trusting the messenger, instead took his son for a walk in a nearby field, lopping off the heads of the tallest poppies as they walked. By this, the son understood he was to remove the most eminent men of the city, while the nearby messenger remained unaware of what had passed between the two men.[33] There is a hidden message here against Silentio himself, for it is proposed that Kierkegaard is setting up Silentio to fail. Silentio is the messenger who does not fully understand what he witnesses, and so cannot communicate it successfully, if at all. *Fear* does not come to conclusions. It is instead a series of abortive attempts at understanding and exhortation, with Silentio adopting various voices in order to communicate what he does not grasp. In the end the messenger must fall silent, inadvertently acting as indirect communication because the listener is thrust back on to his own resources.

Silentio assumes three different guises in his attempt to communicate Abraham's faith.[34] His first attempt is as a storyteller.[35] He begins thus:

> Once upon a time there was a man who as a child had heard that beautiful story of how God tempted Abraham and of how Abraham withstood the temptation, kept the faith, and, contrary to expectation, got a son a second time. (*FT* 9)

What follows are four attempts, or 'Exordiums', whereby Silentio imagines himself hearing again the story of the binding of Isaac. Each version of the *aqedah* – the 'binding of Isaac'- emphasises the different viewpoints of Abraham, Isaac and Sarah, imagining the different ways that the main characters could receive the events. Yet the end result is not a clearer picture of the story for the listener, but more confusion. Silentio ends the section by recognising the impossibility of exhausting the mystery by means of dramatic presentation:

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[31] *FT*, pp. 14, 23, 33.
[32] FT, p. 4: Was *Tarquinius Superbus in seinem Garten mit den Mohnköpfen sprach, verstand der Sohn, aber nicht der Bote.*
[33] Walter Lowrie, translator's introduction, *Fear and Trembling*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 12.
[34] I am here following the three-fold pattern discerned by Louis Mackey in *Points of View*, pp. 43-50.
[35] *FT*, pp. 9-14.

> Thus and in many similar ways did the man of whom we speak ponder this event. Every time [he considered the story] he sank down wearily, folded his hands and said, 'No one was as great as Abraham. Who is able to understand him?' (*FT* 14)

Silentio's imagination has failed him in his quest to communicate the meaning of the *aqedah*, and so next he tries his hand at oration, turning from 'drama' to a "hymn of praise".[36] This too, will turn out to be a second false start in attempting to understand, and then to express, the faith of Abraham. The panegyric waxes lyrical on the quality of Abraham's faith, but in the end, Silentio grows self-conscious. "Venerable father Abraham... you do not need a eulogy to comfort you... you have no need of a late lover to snatch your memory from the power of oblivion..." (*FT* 23) Abraham does not need Silentio's praise because he has something greater that the messenger does not understand. Silentio senses that he is missing something and begs forgiveness for speaking praise but not doing it properly.[37] By the end of this section, Silentio's praises splutter out, and he once again lives up to his name.

The third guise is that of a dialectician. Here, Silentio identifies the main problems surrounding faith, and attempts systematically to think through the ramifications of their various aspects.[38] In this third portion of the book Silentio is again ambivalent about the merits of communicating the mystery of faith. In the 'Preliminary Expectoration' he spends much time detailing how dangerous it is for the speaker who doesn't know when to keep his mouth shut.[39] Considering the possibility of a faithful churchgoer who hears the story of Isaac being preached and then 'obeys' the message by killing his own son, Silentio concludes that speakers have a responsibility for the thoughts that result from their words, and should consider the possibility of remaining silent.[40] He questions whether the story of Abraham can be talked of at all, but then concludes that it can, for "whatever is great can never do damage when it is understood in its greatness." (*FT* 31)

Thus Silentio the dialectician embarks on his quest to understand that greatness, but at the same time he recognises the limits of his 'expectoration'. Because of the problem of the murderous churchgoer, Silentio needs to relate the reality of the *situation* at hand in order to avoid provoking misguided emulation of Abraham. He does this by reflecting on the contours of the binding story. Silentio relates the love that the father had for his son.[41] He describes the long plodding journey up the mountain.[42] Silentio does not flinch from expounding on the moral awfulness of murder, of the moment when the

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[36] *FT*, pp. 15-23. Cf .Mackey *Points of View*, p.44.
[37] *FT*, p. 23.
[38] *FT*, 27-120.
[39] *FT*, pp. 27-53.
[40] *FT*, pp. 28-31.
[41] *FT*, pp. 31-32, 35.

"knife gleamed".[43] But there are some things that Silentio now knows he cannot talk about. Of Abraham himself, his faith and the paradox of his life, Silentio is wary when it comes to further communication:

> Thinking about Abraham is another matter, however, then I am shattered. I am constantly aware of the prodigious paradox that is the content of Abraham's life, I am constantly repelled... my thought cannot penetrate it...I stretch every muscle to get a perspective, and at the very same instant I become paralysed. (*FT* 33)

The dialectician needs to know his limits, and Silentio decides to stick to the only communication that is appropriate for philosophers:

> I cannot think myself into Abraham: when I reach that eminence, I sink down, for what is offered me is a paradox. I by no means conclude that faith is something inferior but rather that it is the highest, also that it is dishonest of philosophy to give something else in its place and to disparage faith. Philosophy cannot and must not give faith, but it must understand itself and know what it offers and take nothing away, least of all trick men out of something by pretending that it is nothing. (*FT* 33)

Thus, at the end of the 'Expectoration' Silentio continues to speak about what is physically, ethically and metaphysically entailed in the Abraham story, but his justification for doing so is muted, and another communicative failure is implied. He does not provide an understanding of Abraham's faith, only a discussion of the swirl of factors surrounding that faith. Before moving onto the final section with its three *Problemata* which draw out the "dialectical aspects implicit in the story", Silentio is confident of his ability to do away with a "cheap edition" of Abraham, i.e. a version based on sentimental and false reasons.[44] Of the paradox of faith itself, however, "no thought can grasp". (*FT* 53)

Silentio, the chastened dialectician, examines the essential issues raised by the binding of Isaac in three *Problemata*. It is here that are found discussions on the 'teleological suspension of the ethical', and on the possibility of an 'absolute duty towards God'.[45] The third problem considers whether it was "ethically defensible" for Abraham to conceal his undertaking from Sarah and Isaac,[46] and it is on this final problem of 'silence' that we will focus attention. It is doubly useful to look at Problem III in that by exploring Abraham's communication difficulties we also provide an explanation for why Silentio has had such a hard time with *his* communication. It is proposed that it is because of the Knight's reticence that Silentio faces the problems that he does.

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[42] *FT*, pp. 35-36, 52
[43] *FT*, pp. 36, 53.
[44] *FT*, p. 53.
[45] "Is there a Teological Suspension of the Ethical?" *Problema* I, pp. 54-67; "Is there an Absolute Duty Towards God?" *Problema* II, pp. 68-81.

Silentio's 'intentional' examination of how silence relates to the enigmatic Knight of Faith is the second level of silence in *Fear and Trembling*. The Knight is first introduced in the 'Preliminary Expectoration' as a generalised archetype,[47] and is then instantiated in Abraham in the *Problemata*. Silentio imagines the Knight of Faith as a sort of sublime pedestrian who is most notable for his outward ordinariness. "Good Lord, is this the man, is this really the one – he looks just like a tax collector!" (*FT* 39) Silentio describes the solid Knight as living his life more like a bookkeeper than a tempestuous poet or genius. There is nothing about him that demonstrates his inward faith, or that would teach or attract followers. In short, the Knight of Faith does not communicate what it is that sets him apart from the crowd. "He is continually making the movement [of faith] and no one ever suspects anything else." (*FT* 41) In Abraham, Silentio finds an embodied Knight, because in resigning his son and at the same time having faith that God's promises would be fulfilled, Abraham stands as a prime example of the Knight who performs the double movement without faltering.[48]

Problem III explains the silent nature of the Knight through its treatment of the patriarch. The question asks whether Abraham was ethically justified in remaining quiet about his ordeal.[49] Silentio considers a number of examples of Tragic Heroes[50] whose stories can be clearly communicated.[51] Their heroic acts of resignation my lead them to break off romances, kill loved ones or live in permanent misery, but ultimately, the reasons for these acts are "intelligible not only to the hero but also to all and [do] not eventuate in any private relation to the divine." (*FT*, p. 93) With a single word, or an easy phrase, Tragic Heroes are able to explain themselves and appeal to universal sympathy, or, if like Agamemnon who sacrificed his daughter for the greater good, they choose not to speak, at least their stories can be easily told and understood after the fact.[52] In contrast to them, Abraham cannot speak, and he cannot be explained.[53] He does not express his motives or methods to his wife or son.[54] He remains practically silent for the three long, plodding days up the mountainside. Silentio comments that the one time Abraham does say something it is in answer to Isaac's question about where the offering will come from: "Just one word from him has been preserved, his only reply to Isaac... and Abraham said: God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering my son.'" (*FT* 115-16) Even with this answer in mind, Silentio can claim that Abraham did not speak, for his answer to

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[46] *Problema* III, pp. 82-120.
[47] *FT*, pp. 38-41.
[48] Cf. *FT*, p. 49.
[49] *FT*, p. 82.
[50] I.e. men who have resigned everything, but who do not have faith. Cf. Ch. 1 'Leap'.
[51] *FT*, pp. 86-112.
[52] See *FT*, pp. 57, 114-15.
[53] Cf. *FT*, pp. 112, 113, 114, 115, 118, 119.
[54] *FT*, p. 112.

Isaac was gnomic, leaving the essential silence intact. "His response to Isaac is in the form of irony, for it is always irony when I say something and still do not say anything." (*FT* 118) Instead of straightforward clarity, Abraham's answer reveals the 'double movement'[55] of paradoxical faith that cannot be communicated.

Silentio sees a problem with the spirit of his age in that it assumes that faith is a 'lower' form of existence than the universal.[56] Silentio frequently complains that everyone is trying to go beyond faith, but no one really knows what faith is.[57] Thus, the purpose of the book is to communicate the reality of a faith situation, but to do so in such a way that does not remove those conditions that are necessary for the existence of authentic faith. Silence in *Fear and Trembling* serves the two-fold function of marking the boundaries true faith, which in turn results in an indirect communication to make a decision. Firstly from the text we see that the silence of Abraham *protects*.[58] Secondly, we can infer from Silentio's silence that it *prompts* a decision.

Silence protects by preventing anyone from acquiring a watered-down or cheap version of what Silentio understands as authentic faith. From his treatment of silence we can see how important language and communication is to Silentio's project of attacking the notion that one can 'go beyond' faith.[59] The passing reference to the culturally 'invisible' Knight of Faith in the 'Preliminary Expectoration' comes, by Problem III, to be a crucial component of the truly faithful. For Silentio language is the medium of the universal, and to speak is to be subject to its categories.[60] But Silentio does not place 'faith' at the universal, and thus communicative, level. Faith is not universal because the shared human experience of emotions, feelings and moods do not explain Abraham. It is not universal because it is not a product of ethics (i.e. social morals[61]), and is not explicable in terms of cultural references. Silence serves to mark Abraham's situation as separate, protecting it from the totalising effect of that which is universal. The *aqedah* contains something more than, or incommensurable with, an ethic that claims universality as its hallmark.[62] The incommensurable is the incommunicable.

The Tragic Hero is able to appeal to universal principles, allowing everyone who hears his story to empathise with the tragedy of losing something precious for the sake of overarching ethical demands. As a Knight of Faith, Abraham's ordeal is not universal, but uniquely individual. In the paradox of faith, according to Silentio, the demands upon the

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[55] Cf. Ch. 1 'Leap'.
[56] Cf. *FT*, pp.54-56. 61-63.
[57] *FT*, pp. 5, 7, 32-33, 69, 122-23.
[58] Cf. *FT*, pp. 54-67, 79-81,115.
[59] Cf. *FT*, pp. 7-8, 121-23.
[60] Robert Perkins "Abraham's Silence Aesthetically Considered" *Kierkegaard on Art and Communication* ed. George Pattison (London: St Martin's Press, 1992), p.106.
[61] *FT*, p. 55.
[62] Perkins "Abraham's Silence", p.104.

individual subject are elevated above the morally understandable and normally required universal demands. For the person standing before God there can be a 'teleological suspension of the ethical' whereby God suspends universal morality for the purpose of making a faith demand upon an individual.[63] In faith, the individual is an "emigrant from the sphere of the universal" (*FT* 115) his situation cannot be understood by anyone else, it is unique only to him.

> Abraham *cannot* speak, because he cannot say that which would explain everything (that is, so that it is understandable): that is an ordeal such that, please note, the ethical is the temptation. (*FT* 115 original emphasis)

For the Knight of Faith to speak about his ordeal would be an attempt to garner moral justification through appeal to the universal. The ethical is a temptation, for it would be a sin to turn away from the suspended ethical relationship that God has demanded. The upshot is that the Knight's silence protects true faith from the merely universal. If the demands of faith are made to mesh with the demands of the moral, then the acquisition of faith will become systematised, and the Knight will become a teacher, or worse yet, a sectarian preacher.[64] But true faith, following Silentio, is radically individual, and incommensurable with universal systems.

> The Knight of Faith is assigned solely to himself: he feels the pain of being unable to make himself understandable to others, but he has no vain desire to instruct others...insofar as another individual is to go the same path he must become the single individual in the very same way and then does not require anyone's advice... (*FT* 80)

No one can become a Knight by following another Knight. The truly faithful will flee the scene before being considered an authority.

With no one to instruct them how to be Knights, people will be prompted to find individual means. With quarry such as the silent Abraham, we can see why Silentio has faced such difficulties trying to write his book. By the end of *Fear and Trembling*, Silentio is only partially successful in his project. True, he has managed to consider dialectically the difficulties inherent in the condition of faith – the paradox of the double movement that resigns and believes at the same time. On the other hand, Silentio has not come any closer to understanding the content of faith, or the people who have it. He begins and ends his book with the certain knowledge that he will not be able to think himself into Abraham, and must fall silent on that front.[65] Yet the drive to communicate *something* still seems to be strong for Silentio. Abraham's silence might protect against

[63] *FT*, pp. 54-67.
[64] Cf. *FT*, pp. 79-81.
[65] Cf. *FT*, pp. 14, 117-20.

what Silentio calls a "cheap edition" of faith (*FT* 53), but it does not dampen the felt need to acquire the genuine article. By denying them any obvious means to find an actual Knight, Silentio's alternative is to prompt a decision in his readers without resorting to trickery or false hero worship. In this way, silence acts as indirect communication; it brings the reader to a place where a choice must be made, but without attempting to give direct content to that choice.

We see that Silentio ends up with a picture of a faithful person that reflects his (not Kierkegaard's!) own particular brand of fideism. Just as faith in *Fear and Trembling* "begins precisely where thought stops" (*FT* 53) the law of inverse proportionality works for communication too. The correctness of the belief seems to be confirmed by the lack of expressive evidence. As Mackey rightfully complains, "the sole criterion by which to tell a genuine Knight of Faith is by his silence and his secrecy." This, he says, is the most futile of all criteria, for the knight can be recognised only by the fact that he cannot be recognised![66] By radically individualising the demands of faith, Silentio effectively cuts the strings tying faith to any recognisable category, and Mackey's criticism holds true. By suggesting only that a 'faith demand' exists, but at the same time withholding any meaningful way to recognise, let alone meet, that demand, Silentio's indirect communication is a practical failure. Fortunately, Silentio's faltering communication is not Kierkegaard's last or best word on the subject.[67] The next development in the authorship leads to a new form of communication. Although he will retain the all-important category of 'indirectness', Climacus comes alongside the reader in a way that Silentio's silence does not allow. Through Climacus, Kierkegaard begins the process of providing Christian content to the demands of faith.

Climacus and Double Reflection

In an essay entitled 'Keeping silent through speaking' Jan Rogan implies that it is with silence that Kierkegaard was most concerned in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Rogan reads the praise of Lessing who "closed himself off in the isolation of subjectivity." (*CUP* 65) as representing Kierkegaard's own idealistic vision of silence.[68] This reading is misleading for two reasons. First, it is not Kierkegaard who is praising Lessing in *Postscript*, but Climacus, and the particular concerns of that character need to be taken into account if one is to place the oration in praise of Lessing in its proper context. Secondly, and more importantly, it is not 'silence' that is being praised here at

[66] Mackey *Points of View*, p.59.
[67] This would be the unfortunate conclusion if we followed the assumptions of those secondary commentators who hold up *Fear and Trembling* as representative of Kierkegaard's thought. See Ch. 1 'Leap'.
[68] Jan Rogan "Keeping Silent Through Speaking" *Kierkegaard on Art and Communication* ed. George Pattison (London: St Martin's Press, 1992), p. 89.

all, but instead the demonstration of a very different communicative approach. Silentio's communicative ideal is found in Abraham, while Climacus upholds Lessing. But Climacus does not see in Lessing the same sort of silence that Silentio sees in Abraham. With Climacus we are introduced to a new, and deeper, form of indirect communication that previous pseudonyms have not yet wholly appreciated. It is a vision of indirect communication informed by the light of authentic Christianity, still dimly perceived.

In his 'Expression of Gratitude to Lessing',[69] Climacus says of the German thinker that his chief merit lay in the fact that he prevented admirers from gaining any "immediate relation" to him; instead, Lessing "closed himself off in the isolation of subjectivity." (*CUP* 65) We have seen how Silentio failed to follow Abraham because the patriarch had to remain silent about the faith demand that was unique to him alone. Lessing also avoids followers by shutting himself off, but in this case, his relation is to Christianity, not bald 'faith' as such. Here, Christianity is seen as the religion that is appropriated only subjectively by individuals, but at the same time, the demands of the Christian religion are *not* uniquely tailored for each individual. Thus, Lessing has something to speak *about* and he does not fall silent. His is a form of indirect communication that, like Abraham's, forces the would-be follower back onto himself and his subjective relation to God. Unlike Abraham, however, the relation is now understood to be under the aegis of 'the religious', or Christianity, and not set adrift in a sea of radically individualistic faith with as many different demands as there are people. As Climacus says about Lessing, "he understood... that the religious pertained to Lessing and to Lessing alone, just as it pertains to every human being *in the same way*, understood that he had infinitely to do with God, but nothing, nothing to do directly with any human being." (*CUP* 65 emphasis added) Climacus's highest praise of Lessing comes from his ability to continue to communicate religiously (to use 'faith talk') without at the same time attracting disciples or followers. Climacus speaks glowingly of the fact that he cannot tell if Lessing accepted or rejected Christianity, if he is defending or attacking it. "Wonderful Lessing!" he exclaims.[70] Lessing has enough religious sense to discern the category of the religious in that he talks about it, but not didactically. He prompts readers to decide for themselves, but in Lessing himself "there is not the slightest trace of any result". (*CUP* 65) This process of understanding, subjective appropriation, and indirect expression is a further development on Silentio's indirect communication via silence. Climacus calls it *double reflection.*[71]

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[69] *CUP*, pp. 63-71.
[70] *CUP*, p. 65.
[71] *CUP*, pp. 72-73.

Although in Kierkegaard's writings 'doubling' (*fordoblelse*) and 'double reflection' (*dobbelt reflexion*) are not strictly unique to Climacus, it can still be argued that Climacus makes these categories his own. It is Climacus who examines the idea, and it is he who, in the *Postcript,* highlights how central double reflection is to his particular apprehension of Christianity.[72] Furthermore, in the *Postscript* section entitled 'A Glance at Danish literature' – which is in reality a review of the pseudonymous and signed works by Kierkegaard – Climacus retroactively finds double reflection in books even where the stated authors did not explicitly acknowledge such a device.[73] For this reason, the bulk of our attention will be focussed on the few key sections of *Postscript* where Climacus explicitly lays out the groundwork for his double reflection; the 'Glance' and part 2, section 1, chapter 2.[74] We will see that double reflection is difficult to define, due in part to the history of the English translation. However, there are three aspects that can be identified in order to provide a picture of the whole. In its *outward* manifestation, double reflection places barriers between the communicator and the listener, working to keep the communication indirect by preventing followers.[75] In its second aspect, double reflection turns *inward*, describing the process of internal meditation and personal appropriation and the double movement of 'thinking' and 'existing'.[76] Finally, double reflection produces indirect communication through the 'doubling' effect that Climacus finds in the previous pseudonymous literature. With double reflection as indirect communication, truth emerges not didactically, but only in the constant going over the same ground from different points of view.[77]

Even though double reflection hovers behind everything that Climacus says about the subjective appropriation and communication of Christianity, it is difficult to provide a straightforward definition for this elusive idea. Part of the problem surrounding 'double reflection', at least for English readers of Kierkegaard, stems from Walter Lowrie's translation. His edition of *Postscript*, the only English translation available for many years until the 1992 Hong version, often translates *fordoblelse* or *dobbelt reflexion* as 'reduplication'.[78] It seems that for aesthetic reasons, in order to avoid constantly repeating 'double reflection' in the text, Lowrie occasionally inserted the apparently innocuous alternative word 'reduplication'. If there were no other example of 'blunt' reading infecting the scholarship except this particular case, it would be enough to

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[72] Cf. *CUP*, pp. 72-118.
[73] *CUP*, pp. 251-300.
[74] *CUP*, pp. 72-118.
[75] *Fragments* Ch. V pp. 89-110, *CUP*, pp. 72-80 (esp. pp. 74, 75, 79).
[76] *CUP*, pp. 72-80 (esp. pp. 73, 75, 77, 79). 254, 260.
[77] *Fragments*, p. 37, *CUP*, pp. 251-300 (esp. pp. 251-52, 254, 259-60, 263-64, 300).
[78] Roger Poole draws attention to this problem in his *Kierkegaard: The Indirect Communication* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), p.157. Cf. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

demonstrate how unfortunate it can be when interpreters fail to respect their texts. Not only is a literal translation of 'doubling' or 'double reflection' linguistically unproblematic, there are also important theoretical consequences. Just as 'double reflection' belongs to Climacus, 'reduplication' belongs to Anti-Climacus, the next pseudonym in the series.[79] Kierkegaard explicitly avoided using 'reduplication' (*redupplikation*) in a structural way in the works by Climacus.[80] Yet it seems that his efforts were wasted on Lowrie, who consistently conflates carefully constructed differences, apparently assuming that all the pseudonyms speak with one voice. The process of double reflection presupposes a triad of 'communication', 'communicator' and 'listener', in which the goal is to maintain a strict distance between each element, for reasons explained below. Conversely, the term 'reduplication' for Anti-Climacus, has to do with indirect communication by *embodiment* of the teaching, whereby the communicator *is* the communication; an obvious advancement on Climacus's understanding. Reduplication is a concept that Climacus only hints at but is not allowed to fully comprehend, and so to ascribe 'reduplication' to Climacus is to flatten out a nuance that is crucial to the development of Kierkegaard's indirect communication.

Double reflection is best described, to use Climacean language, as the "reflection of inwardness" (*CUP* 73) which itself is later described as the "tension of contrasting forms". (*CUP* 260) To see what this means in practice we will identify three aspects or 'strands' that can be found in *Postscript*'s treatment of double reflection. Climacus himself does not make this threefold definition, and indeed the different aspects of double reflection often appear together in the text. Nevertheless, it is worth teasing the strands apart in order to gain a clearer picture. The basis for the first two strands are found in the section entitled 'The subjective existing thinker is aware of the dialectic of communication'.[81] The third aspect of double reflection is found in Climacus's 'Glance at Danish literature'.[82]

Outward Double Reflection

The first strand of tension between contrasting forms relates to the *outward* barriers that are put in place by the communicator in order to repel the receiver. All of the pseudonyms place value on individual appropriation of faith or Christianity.[83] For Climacus (and Anti-Climacus after him) the nature of Christianity is that each individual

[79] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 123-24, 133-36.
[80] Poole, *Indirect Communication*, p.13.
[81] *CUP*, pp. 72-80.
[82] *CUP*, pp. 251-300.
[83] Cf. *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 54-67, 79-81; *Fragments*, pp. 37-39, 49-54, *CUP*, pp. 15-17, 77-79, 365-69, 576-79, 587-92; *Sickness unto Death*, pp. 85-87, *Practice*, pp. 53, 94, 101, 106, 136, 249-50.

must relate subjectively to God, with no disciples at second hand.[84] Thus there is 'doubleness' in that in that there are two separate subjects (the communicator and his listener) pursuing the same path, and there is 'reflection' in the sense that each subject meditates on the content of Christian propositions and the demands that flow from those propositions.

Climacus considers Lessing to be the prime example of one who can communicate while at the same time place a barrier between himself and his reader. Climacus speaks of the art of communication that is double reflection:

> Just as the subjective existing thinker has set himself free by the duplexity, so the secret of communication specifically hinges on setting the other free, and for that very reason he must not communicate himself directly; indeed it is even irreligious to do so. (*CUP* 74)

The subjective religious thinker who has comprehended the "duplexity of existence" perceives that direct communication of the religious (i.e. of Christianity) is a fraud.[85] It is fraudulent towards God because it denies God the worship that is due to him by each person. It is a fraud against others because it promotes only a 'relative God-relationship' that happens via the communicator. Lastly, says Climacus, it is a fraud against the communicator himself, because it supposes that he himself had "ceased to be an existing person". (*CUP* 75) In other words, the truly religious person recognises that the constant demands of faith that arise when an individual stands before God (his 'existence') are never over. Thus, there must be two simultaneous reflections going on, that of the communicator and that of the reader. Separately they are engaged in the reflection on a common subject – the demands of the Christian God. Climacus says that wherever the subjective is "of importance in knowledge and appropriation" then communication is "doubly reflected" (*CUP* 79). If the communicator, like Lessing, recognises that the truly religious (Christianity) only exists in the life of interested subjects, then he understands that for his own sake as well as others, "the *subjective individuals must be held devoutly apart from one another* and must not run coagulatingly together in objectivity." (*CUP* 79 emphasis added) Thus indirect communication is used as an outward barrier, composed of the double reflection of separate individuals subjectively meditating on the common ground provided by the Christian religion. The internal process of subjective meditation for each individual makes up the second strand of double reflection.

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[84] Cf. *Fragments,* Ch. V; *Practice,* pp. 62-66. See 'contemporaneity' in Chs. 1 'Leap' and 2 'Offence'.
[85] *CUP*, pp. 74-75.

Inward Double Reflection

The second strand is found in this *inward* process of meditation itself. Like Mary who hid the words of the angelic messenger in her heart, "inwardness is the resonance in which what is said disappears". (*CUP* 260) The personal appropriation of an idea or belief involves a double reflection that Climacus identifies as the two-pronged 'thinking' and 'existing'.[86] Thus double reflection takes place in the inward life of each subject:

> The reflection of inwardness is the subjective thinker's double reflection. In thinking, he thinks the universal, but, as existing in his thinking, as acquiring this in his inwardness, he becomes more and more subjectively isolated. (*CUP* 73)

The category of the universally recognisable does not have the same stigma for Climacus as it does for Silentio, who considers the appeal to the universal a temptation to sin against the radically individual demands of faith.[87] Climacus, by concerning himself with the Christian religious content of faith, demonstrates that he is dealing with something that is universally understandable. 'Christianity' is a religion that incorporates a set of propositions recognisable to others and, unlike Silentio's Knight of Faith, is not culturally invisible. But the truth of Christianity necessarily involves personal decision and appropriation.[88] Doubleness occurs as the subject reflects on general ideas that apply to him as an individual; it is the inward adoption of a universal proposition. That there is a universal element to the religious does not consequently make Christianity an 'objective' concern. "Objective thinking is completely indifferent to subjectivity and thereby to inwardness and appropriation; its communication is therefore direct." (*CUP* 75) The meddling busyness of a third person betrays a lack of inwardness, writes Climacus, and demonstrates the absence of a true apprehension of the "God-relationship of the individual human being". (*CUP* 77) According to Climacus, the double reflection that occurs in inwardness is a secret because it cannot be communicated directly.[89] What is essential in the knowledge of Christianity is the appropriation itself and so it remains a secret only for anyone who is not "himself doubly reflected in the same way." (*CUP* 79) Even a secret is not much use if it cannot ever be communicated to anyone whatsoever. Again, it emerges that indirect communication for Climacus does not mean silence. Besides Lessing, Climacus finds concrete examples of double reflection as indirect communication in a gaggle of recent Danish authors, all of whom are, of course,

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[86] Cf. *CUP*, pp. 73, 254, 260.
[87] Cf. *FT*, p. 115.
[88] Cf. *CUP*, pp. 77-79, 260, 365-69, 587-92.
[89] *CUP*, p. 79.

Kierkegaard himself. It is in the 'Glance at Danish literature' that we must turn in order to find the third strand of double reflection.

Double Reflection by Repetition

The third aspect that double reflection takes is in relation to *repetition*, the constant 'going over' of problems, the truth of which arises for the individual precisely in the reflection or mirroring of the multiple aspects of that problem. In *Fragments* Climacus describes this process as a 'metaphysical caprice' or 'crotchet',[90] and in *Postscript* the notion is extended to the whole of the pseudonymous output.[91] Here, the review of recent literature contained in an appendix to *Postscript* offers much more than its title suggests. The 'Glance' is, in fact, an extended examination of indirect communication. By reviewing the pseudonymous books alongside Kierkegaard's various signed articles which make up the *Upbuilding Discourses*, Climacus places his own project within the context of the wider "contemporary effort in Danish literature". (*CUP* 251) What emerges, according to Climacus, is a collective body of work that amounts to an elaborate experiment in indirect communication via double reflection, writings, "which to the very last have honestly refrained from didacticizing". (*CUP* 300)

The idea behind the 'metaphysical crotchet' is that the truth emerges by doubling. In going over the same ground again and again, but always from different perspectives, the seeker finds truth where it could not be found from one, straightforward and didactic source. In *Postscript* Climacus does not explicitly refer to the 'crotchet' effect, but nonetheless he finds in his pseudonymous colleagues a similar weaving, looping and doubling around the central idea of Christianity. Climacus is happy to find that, wittingly or not, the previous authors have not adopted voices of authority. "I am pleased that the pseudonymous authors, presumably aware of the relation of indirect communication to truth as inwardness, have themselves not said anything or misused a preface to take an official position..." (*CUP* 252) Instead the authors demonstrate Climacus's favourite category of double reflection. "There is no didacticising but this does not mean that there is no thought-content; to think is one thing, and to exist in what has been thought is something else." (*CUP* 254) Climacus thinks that when it comes to inwardness and the subjective appropriation of the God-relationship it is always appropriate to "say the same thing in another way". (*CUP* 259) The faulty, didactic attempt to communicate inwardness outwardly is likened to a foolish man who wants to explore the depths of

[90] *Fragments*, p. 37. Lowrie translates it as a metaphysical *crotchet*. Either way, the emotive meaning of the phrase remains the same.
[91] Cf. *CUP*, pp. 251-52, 254, 259-60, 263-64, 300.

erotic love by marrying seven Danish girls, then seven French, seven Italian and so on.[92] In fact, says Climacus, the truth of love, as of religion, arises only when the *same* subject is approached again and again, so that it "continually flowers anew in mood an exuberance – which, when applied to communication is the inexhaustible renewal and fertility of expression." (*CUP* 260)

It is here that Climacus's 'crotchet' appears as it arises in the mind of the individual who exposes him or herself to other individuals (i.e. the pseudonyms) who are also pursuing the same goal. Although he does not name it as such, we find an example of the crotchet effect in Climacus's treatment of the pseudonym Constantine Constantius' book *Repetition*.[93] Referring to the 'imaginary construction' or 'psychological experiment' which opens Constantine's book, Climacus claims that this is in fact double reflection, for the imaginary construction "establishes a chasmic gap between reader and author and fixes the separation of inwardness between them, so that a direct understanding is made impossible." (*CUP* 263) Here the significance of this gap comes into its own and is given a name. "The *being-in-between* [*Mellemværende*] of the imaginary construction encourages the inwardness of the two *away from each other in inwardness*". (*CUP* 264 original emphasis) Here the third strand of double reflection binds up the other two. The truth of inwardness, which is the only form that Christian truth can take, is obtained in the 'being-in-between' of multiple subjects reflecting on the same problem. For there to be multiple individuals at all, the separateness of each subject must be preserved through an 'external' barrier between persons. Each individual then reflects on the problems and propositions that are apprehended universally but only appropriated inwardly. The three aspects of this phenomenon singly and corporately take the name 'double reflection' in *Postscript*.

Indirect communication as double reflection serves to meet the particular needs that Climacus has for his project. His stated aim is to find out "how I might become a Christian."[94] The nature of this claim shares with Silentio's concerns in that he recognises the necessity for individual appropriation of the desired goal. Yet where Silentio fruitlessly circled around a 'faith' whose content could never be shared or explained,[95] Climacus's subjective quest still allows for shared information. Silentio is worried about understanding faith – and he fails. In this way, Lessing is a more useful ideal subject than Abraham, because 'Christianity', rather than 'faith', can be talked about in universally recognisable and concrete ways. That is why Climacus says of *Postscript* that it was

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[92] *CUP*, p. 259.
[93] Søren Kierkegaard *Repetition* (published with *Fear and Trembling*) Trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna. H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).
[94] Cf. *CUP*, pp. 15, 17, 617.
[95] Cf. *FT*, pp. 14, 23, 33, 38-41, 53, 82-120.

supposed in part to be the book that "clothes the issue [i.e. the paradox of the God-Man in *Fragments*] in its historical costume". (*CUP* 284) Climacus is concerned with 'faith' only in that it is related to becoming a true Christian.[96] Within the world of Climacus, the problem is how to communicate something (Christianity) whose 'clothes' can be discussed universally but whose truth can only be appropriated subjectively.

It is important to reiterate that all of Climacus's concerns reside in the category of the intellect. In *Fragments* the central offence of the God-Man paradox is that it is an assault on reason, and a thought that thought itself cannot think.[97] Christianity for Climacus means primarily the proposition of the Absolute Paradox, which one's reason attempts to understand. Failing understanding, the individual seeker is left with a choice to accept the propositions regardless, or to take offence.[98] For Climacus, the decision involves the dethronement of the reason from pride of place, and the setting up of Christianity instead.[99] The communication of the set of intellectually oriented propositions that make up Christianity will, for Climacus, necessarily emphasise the intellect as the main force to be reckoned with as well. Thus, it is unsurprising that in *Postscript* for Climacus it is the mental process of double reflection that forms the essence of his indirect communication. In the works by Climacus, the separation between persons, the reflection on universality and inwardness, and the truth that adheres in the state of 'being-in-between' all take place in the realm of ideas, propositions and reason.

Anti-Climacus will come to promote a different mode of indirect communication, one that develops beyond Climacus's intellectual emphasis. Anti-Climacus's prime category is 'reduplication', an embodiment of the message that amounts to total obedience in the life of the communicator: intellectually but also morally and physically. We have already seen how the categories of double reflection and reduplication are merged in some translations. The categories are, in fact, very different and it is significant that the idea of 'indirect communication as reduplication' is properly attributed only to Anti-Climacus, the pseudonym with the purest vision informed by the light of authentic Christianity.

The Affair of *The Corsair*

Between Climacus and Anti-Climacus, however, stands a crucial event in Kierkegaard's life, an event upon which everything else hinges. Before 'double reflection' became 'reduplication', Kierkegaard first faced the might of the satirical

[96] Whether Climacus, still in the cave, is successful or not at winkling out authentic Christianity is another question. Cf. Chs. 1 'Leap' and 2 'Offence'.
[97] Cf. *Fragments*, p. 37.
[98] Cf. *Fragments*, p. 49.
[99] See Chs. 1 'Leap' and 2 'Offence'.

magazine, *The Corsair*.[100] *The Corsair* was a gossipy, libellous rag, written anonymously and devoted to public mockery of leading figures in society. It should be no surprise that it was also the most popular periodical of the masses, and more feared by the intelligentsia than any of the serious journals. The time at the height of its popularity between 1840 and 1846 was known as "*The Corsair's* reign of terror".[101]

In 1845, Kierkegaard issued a public challenge to the men behind *The Corsair*, P.L. Møller and Meier Goldschmidt, in an attempt to highlight the poisonous effect that the magazine had on public life. They responded with an assault on Kierkegaard that was unrivalled in vehemence than any satire the magazine had attempted before. Kierkegaard had expected that other Danish luminaries would come to his aid, but in the end he was left to face the mockery alone.[102] For two years, Kierkegaard was subjected to attacks both on his writing and on his personal appearance. Caricatures picked up on his stooped back and uneven legs, and a connection was made between the ridiculous-looking human author and the production of his serious, pseudonymous books.[103] Children, whom Kierkegaard described as "the rabble, the apprentices, the butcher boys, the schoolboys" (*COR* 217) would run into the street and openly taunt him as he passed by. His name became a popular moniker for fools in both serious and comedic plays.[104] Throughout Scandinavia, parents did not name their new-born boys 'Søren' owing to the association with the shamed Danish philosopher.[105]

There are usually two approaches to considering *The Corsair*'s effect on Kierkegaard's writing project. Some scholars attempt to minimise the effect of the public mockery. Lowrie effectively downplays the event in Kierkegaard's life by trying to demonstrate that a direct, straightforward, evangelistic project continued unabated in Kierkegaard's writings and his pseudonyms after *The Corsair*'s attack.[106] Although he acknowledges the events recorded above, Lowrie maintains that the affair was "outwardly so uneventful but inwardly so intense."[107] John Elrod claims that Kierkegaard was "delighted" by the attacks, and saw them as a way to strengthen the pseudonyms.[108] The lower Kierkegaard sinks, runs the logic, the better for the all-important distance between his voice and that of his characters. This type of view is not entirely unfounded, as *Point*

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[100] The articles relating to the event have been collected and published in *The Corsair Affair* eds. Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). See also *The International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Corsair Affair* ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1990).
[101] *The Corsair Affair*, p.ix.
[102] See Poole, *The Indirect Communication*, p. 222.
[103] The *Corsair Affair* has reprinted many of the original caricatures, pp 109-37. Poole gives an excellent analysis of the caricatures and their effects in *Indirect Communication*, pp. 188-99.
[104] Cf. *The Corsair Affair*, p.238.
[105] Walter Lowrie *A Short Life of Kierkegaard* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), p.149; *Kierkegaard* Vol. II (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962) pp. 354-55
[106] Cf, Lowrie, *Short Life*, pp. 145-54; *Kierkegaard* Vol. II, pp. 362-63.
[107] Lowrie, *Short Life*, p. 145.
[108] John Elrod *Kierkegaard and Christendom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p.266.

of View seems to hint that Kierkegaard recognised the need for a new direction for indirect communication even before *The Corsair* began its lampooning, suggesting that it was not such a drastic event in his writing life.[109] It is possible that even as Kierkegaard was attempting to conclude the authorship he sensed that double reflection would not be enough for indirect communication to succeed. More than intellectual reflection would be needed, and Kierkegaard was beginning to sound out a more personally engaged form of indirect communication. In *Point of View*, Kierkegaard relates how he recognised the change that would come after *Postscript*, and the need to "alter my personal existing in accordance with my transition to setting forth the religious issues."(*POV* 65) Joakim Garff describes this stage of Kierkegaard's career as a time when he increasingly perceived the old indirect communication arrangement as an evasion of the demand for "existential duplication".[110]

Not all critics are as charitable in their interpretation, however, making up the second type of approach to *The Corsair* incident. Henning Fenger, cynical of any attempt to demonstrate a coherent Christian direction in Kierkegaard's works, explicitly accuses Kierkegaard of falsifying history in his journals and *Point of View*,[111] implying that the blow from *The Corsair* was so great that Kierkegaard's entire philosophy was shattered and he had to rescue what he could of his life's work. Thus, the journals and *Point of View* are only retrospective attempts to justify in hindsight the mockery and the 'martyrdom' that befell Kierkegaard in his last years. Any claim that Kierkegaard knew in advance what direction his writing would take is dismissed.[112]

It does seem that the events were more disruptive than helpful. For example, it is *The Corsair*'s revelations of Kierkegaard's role in the authorship that best explain the curious ending to *Postscript*, where Kierkegaard injects his own voice into the proceedings. In the 'First and Last Explanation'[113] Kierkegaard 'comes clean' about his relationship to the mysterious pseudonyms. He is, he admits, 'responsible' for the publication of the string of books beginning with *Either/Or* leading up to *Postscript*. But this is 'responsibility' only in the most technical and mundane meaning of the term. Instead, Kierkegaard implores his readers to think of his contribution as that of a prompter who brings out of the various actor/authors what they needed to say for themselves.[114] But why this explanation at all? Is it not perverse to construct an elaborate indirect

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[109] Cf. *POV*, pp. 65-66.
[110] Joakim Garff "To Produce was my Life: Problems and Perspectives Within the Kierkegaardian Biography" *Kierkegaard Revisited* eds. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn and Jon Stewart (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), p.87.
[111] Henning Fenger *Kierkegaard: The Myths and Their Origins* trans. George C. Schoolfield (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 20.
[112] Cf. Fenger, *Myths*, pp. 19-20.
[113] *CUP*, pp. 625-30.
[114] *CUP*, pp. 625-26.

communication consisting of pseudonyms and double reflection which spans multiple books over many years, only to beg the question by admitting creative responsibility for the production? The answer lies in the fact that with his 'Explanation' in *Postscript*, Kierkegaard was not revealing something new to the reading public. Here, Fenger is correct not to underestimate the effect of *The Corsair*. Significantly, the satirical magazine began its attack a month before the publication of *Postscript*, marking the start of the unravelling of Kierkegaard's indirect communication at this time. Thus it seems that Kierkegaard was attempting to salvage what he could of his double reflection, and the 'Explanation' is in fact damage control. Here in this section Kierkegaard makes a final plea to preserve what he can of indirect communication. To the end, he maintains the distance between himself and his pseudonyms:

> Therefore, if it should occur to anyone to quote a particular passage from the books, it is my wish, my prayer, that he will do me the kindness of citing the respective pseudonymous author's name, not mine – that is, of separating us in such a way that [the passage] belongs to the pseudonymous author, the responsibility civilly to me. (*CUP* 627)

In direct opposition to any theory that *The Corsair* helped Kierkegaard's project, it seems that the primary effect of the magazine was to destroy the careful indirect communication that Kierkegaard had built up to this point. What Kierkegaard had tried to produce was a body of work that prompted the reader to wrestle subjectively with the issues, and not with the personality of the author.[115] But now, serious religious discussion had been brought down to the level of cartoons mocking Kierkegaard's trousers, and indirect communication as double reflection was done away with. The consequences for Kierkegaard were immense, both in his public life as a citizen and in his role as a religious dialectician.

The Corsair publicly linked Kierkegaard to all of his constructed characters, making it impossible for him to maintain the ironic distance that was so important for double reflection.[116] The public exposé meant that Kierkegaard as a private person could no longer keep an ironic distance from what the pseudonyms said and what he himself was supposed to think. In short, he could no longer stand 'higher' than his characters, leading them into, and out of, the various metaphysical blind alleys contained in the authorship. It is true that after *The Corsair*, Kierkegaard did not abandon the use of pseudonyms, but his relationship to them changed drastically. It has already been noted that regarding Christianity, Anti-Climacus is an ideal character who stands not only above

[115] Cf. *POV*, Ch. II, "The Dissimilarity of My Personal Existing Corresponding to the Dissimilar Nature of the Writing", pp. 57-70.
[116] One *Corsair* cartoon depicted Kierkegaard handing down *Postscript* to a public already staggering under the load of previous pseudonymous tomes. See *The Corsair Affair* p. 132.

Climacus, but in some ways also Kierkegaard, when it comes to the purity of vision.[117] Where before the author used to be superior to his pseudonyms, now it is a pseudonym that stands in judgement over him. Anti-Climacus represents a new earnestness in Kierkegaard's writing - without recourse to irony, the works after *The Corsair* are more strident and polemic than ever before.

However, it is equally mistaken to overestimate the effect of *The Corsair*. It was Kierkegaard who picked the fight after-all. One need not take Kierkegaard's unreliable diary entries or the suspect *Point of View* at face value in order to maintain a belief in a coherent direction to his writing.[118] As Roger Poole points out, just because a plan changes, that does not mean that there was no plan at all.[119] Even taking into account the damage limitation that exists in *Postscript* there is textual support in the published works for supposing that Kierkegaard did have a further stage in mind for his project. It is possible to disagree with the approach taken by Lowrie and Elrod without at the same time embracing Fenger's scepticism, for the future direction of indirect communication is not only evident in the unpublished writings such as *Point of View*. A new mode of indirect communication as reduplication can be seen to be brewing even in Climacus's works, to which *The Corsair* will then act as the catalyst. In *Postscript*, Climacus, unaware of the full import of what he is saying, hints at what is to come. Relatively early on in *Postscript*, Climacus suggests that there is a form of reflection "which bears upon the *intrinsic relation* of the communication to the communicator...". (*CUP* 76 emphasis added) In this passage Climacus goes on to develop his idea of inward appropriation, betraying the fact that for Climacus, the 'intrinsic relation' is intellectual.[120] Yet the seed is sown, and by the time Climacus is made to review the previous pseudonyms in the 'Glance', more suggestions are made that a higher form of indirect communication might be possible. Talking about the imaginary constructed stories found in the 'recent Danish literature', Climacus makes fun of those people who assume that the best actress is the one who wears the most costumes, and therefore "the actress playing chiefly the parts in which she acts in her own clothes is considered to be the poorest actress." (*CUP* 290) Is this comment a warning aimed at Kierkegaard's readers? Perhaps a preparation for the 'embodiment' of the message that is to come? That this could be so is revealed in the next passage, where it is suggested that the "imaginatively constructed character discovers and makes manifest the higher – higher not in the direction of understanding and thinking but in the direction of inwardness." (*CUP* 291) It is not Climacus however, who takes

[117] Cf. *POV*, p. 15; *JP* VI, 6431, 6433, 6501. Cf. 'Thesis Introduction'
[118] Cf. 'Thesis Introduction'.
[119] Poole *Indirect Communication*, p. 21.
[120] "such a form of communication corresponds to... the existing subject's own relation to the idea." *CUP*, p. 80.

authentic inwardness 'higher' than thinking and understanding. That task is left to the next imaginative character, Anti-Climacus.

Anti-Climacus and Reduplication

The Corsair may have destroyed the possibility of double reflection, but it did not deter Kierkegaard from pursuing indirect communication. After the *Corsair* debacle, Kierkegaard was led to a deeper understanding of the indirect communication of Christianity. His suspicions were confirmed that there might be a potential need to go further than double reflection. Now, through Anti-Climacus, Kierkegaard sought to embody that potential. Thanks to the wildly popular satirical rag, the distance between the messenger and the message could no longer be maintained, so Kierkegaard made a virtue out of a necessity, and 'indirect communication as reduplication' was born. 'Reduplication' does not represent a radical break from the previous understanding of indirect communication and neither does it merely repeat what previous pseudonyms said. In reduplication we find an instance of clear development of an idea that will eventually come to fruition during the last phase of Kierkegaard's life. At this point, however, it is necessary first to focus on the shape that indirect communication takes for Anti-Climacus. Pre-empting Marshal McLuhan by a century, Anti-Climacus explores what happens when the messenger *is* the message.[121] Anti-Climacus retains the all-important offensive 'repelling' factor that is necessary for indirect communication. Even when the teacher exists as his teaching, there is a barrier put in the way of accumulating followers too easily, as there is a contradiction between the message and the person saying it.[122] Anti-Climacus builds on Climacus's double reflection to introduce his new category of reduplication.[123] Reduplication describes what is happening in the situation when mere double reflection is not enough. Specifically, Anti-Climacus finds that it is in the person of Christ that reduplication is displayed.[124] The process of double reflection required that the communicator and the listener each relate to the communication. Yet with Christ, the person of the teacher not only *is* the teaching, he is more important than any words that go into making up the message.[125] Christ calls people to himself, offering divine peace. Yet because he is a man contradictorily speaking as God, his direct statements are rendered indirect, and the listeners are once again faced with an either/or choice.[126] At this high point in the ascent, it is argued that Anti-Climacus finds Christ as the only legitimate example of reduplication. It will take Kierkegaard's *Attack* to extend the possibility of

[121] *Practice*, pp. 123-24.
[122] *Practice*, pp. 124-27, 131-32.
[123] *Practice*, pp. 133-36.
[124] *Practice*, pp. 123-24, 134-35, 36.
[125] *Practice*, p 124.

embodying the message to other people, specifically to himself when he becomes "human honesty" for the sake of drawing out the *either/or* choice that is facing the citizens of Christendom.[127]

Communication, to be indirect, must 'repel' the listener to some extent. Silentio's silence repelled would-be followers, forcing them to face God on their own. Climacus's double reflection repelled followers by forcing them away from the communicator, separating the message from the one giving it. With reduplication, Anti-Climacus presents a new level of indirect communication that also repels listeners, but in a very different way than the previous, non-Christian pseudonyms were repelled. For the religious-ethical Silentio, and the religious-intellectual Climacus, what repelled one was never anything intrinsic to the person who was doing the communicating. The ideal figures of Abraham and Lessing were not men who where fundamentally repellent *in themselves*. At all times, the otherwise attractive men had to use either silence or double reflection to divert would-be disciples. What repels listeners in the books by Silentio and Climacus is not Abraham or Lessing, but the radically individual demands of faith, and the incomprehensible and intellectually offensive claims of Christianity. But Anti-Climacus is not concerned with 'faith', or even so much with the religion that is labelled 'Christianity'. Anti-Climacus is overwhelmingly concerned with Christ. Climacus focussed on the God-Man as the Absolute Paradox that stymies all attempts at understanding. Anti-Climacus looks at the moral, emotional and physical consequences of the God-Man as a person living amongst persons. In *Practice in Christianity*, Anti-Climacus complains that the God-Man has been made into "speculative unity" or turned into "that no-where-to-be-found medium of pure being" instead of seeing that "the God-Man is the unity of God and an individual human being in a historically accurate situation." (*Practice* 123)

Even worse for Anti-Climacus however, is the way that Christ's words have been separated from his personal existence, and he is treated like an anonymous writer: "the teaching is [considered to be] the principle thing, it is everything. This is why people delude themselves into thinking that Christianity is nothing but *direct* communication." (*Practice* 123 original emphasis) For Anti-Climacus, it is Christ who embodies the Christian communication. He is the message. Anti-Climacus defines reduplication as the teacher existing in the teaching,[128] and what is more:

> Wherever it is the case that the teacher is an essential component, there is reduplication, the communication is not completely direct paragraph-

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[126] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 127, 133-39.
[127] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 29, 46, 48, 49, 74, 97, 236.
[128] *Practice*, p. 123.

> communication or professor communication... And now, when the teacher, who is inseparable from and more essential than the teaching, is a paradox, then all direct communication is impossible...[and] Christ is infinitely more important than his teaching. (*Practice* 123-24)

What is potentially repellent for Anti-Climacus is not any idea or demand that Christ communicates. It is Christ himself who 'repels' because he exists as a *sign of contradiction.*[129] A sign of contradiction "is a sign that intrinsically contains a qualitative contradiction in itself." (*Practice* 124) Thus Christ, as the God-Man is offensive because he represents the qualitative contradiction of the perfect, almighty God existing as an individual, lowly human.[130] Unlike the ideal figures of Abraham or Lessing, the God-Man repels not by avoiding disciples – but by calling them to himself. Only the God-Man can do this: "it draws attention to itself and then represents a contradiction." (*Practice* 126) For such a figure, direct communication is shown to be an impossibility.[131] This is because even straightforward invitations like "believe in me",[132] are obscured by the intrinsic contradiction inherent in who it is who is doing the speaking. For Christ, God in perfect *incognito* as Man, there can only be indirect communication, because direct expression involves directly recognising what the communicator essentially *is*, an act impossible with the God-Man who is in profound disguise.[133]

Having established that for Christ, direct communication is impossible, Anti-Climacus turns to reflect on the opposite possibility, that of indirect communication.[134] This, he says, can be produced in two ways. The first way is that of doubling, where the "art consists in making oneself, the communicator into a nobody...and then continually placing the qualitative opposites in a unity." (*Practice* 133) This of course, is the double reflection of Climacus, whom Anti-Climacus refers to in this text merely as a "pseudonymous author".[135] Here Anti-Climacus also obliquely alludes to Lessing, when he presents as an example of the first type of indirect communication a man who talks about Christianity in such a way that by removing himself completely from the communication, it cannot be determined whether he is making an attack or a defence.[136] Anti-Climacus's original contribution to indirect communication is the second way that he presents, the way of *reduplication.*[137] Earlier, Anti-Climacus has already introduced the idea of reduplication in relation to the teacher existing in, and more important than,

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[129] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 124-28, 132, 134-36, 141.
[130] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 94-121. Ch. 2 'Offence'.
[131] *Practice*, pp. 127, 133-39.
[132] Cf. *Practice*, p. 135 quoting John 14:1
[133] *Practice*, pp. 131-32.
[134] *Practice*, pp. 133-36.
[135] *Practice*, p. 133.
[136] *Practice*, p. 133.
[137] *Practice*, p. 134.

the message.[138] Now he elaborates specifically on reduplication as indirect communication:

> But indirect communication can also appear in another way, through the relation between the communication and the communicator. The communicator is present here, whereas in the first instance [i.e. double reflection] he was left out...Any communication concerning existence requires a communicator; in other words, the communicator is the reduplication of the communication; to exist in what one understands is to reduplicate. (*Practice* 134)

By dealing chiefly with the relation between the communicator and the communication, as opposed to the communicator and the listener, Anti-Climacus recognises a further nuance to indirect communication that Climacus briefly touched on but did not understand.[139] This new addition of reduplication, coupled with the subsequent emphasis Anti-Climacus puts on Christ as the core of the message rather than on Christianity *per se* supplants double reflection as the form of indirect communication necessary for Christian religious expression.

There is perhaps no other passage that more clearly represents the developing direction of 'indirect communication' than does this section in *Practice*, incorporating as it does not only a new theory of communication but also the content of that communication. Whether it was deliberately planned in its totality from the start, whether the new direction is a reaction to events outside of his control, or whether this section was born of a combination of the two is not of the most importance. What is more interesting is to note that, for whatever reason, the idea *has* developed, and into a shape that would come to have lasting consequences for Kierkegaard's *Attack*. No longer can indirect communication, and by association everything that is being communicated, be something that the communicator is able to hide behind. With Anti-Climacus' reduplication, the total identification with the messenger and the message is required.

Despite the importance of this new development of indirect communication, commentators often gloss over the change that occurs here between Climacus and Anti-Climacus, or they miss it altogether. A clear example comes from Patrick Goold, who specifically says of the *Practice* passage noted above that it represents a time when Climacus and Anti-Climacus are in "clear agreement" about indirect communication.[140] As is common in the secondary literature, Poul Lübcke reads each different pseudonym as representing *Kierkegaard's* total theory of indirect communication.[141] Thus, Lübcke recognises that *Practice* makes an addition to the theory of indirect communication, but

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[138] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 123-24.
[139] Cf. *CUP*, pp. 76, 290, 291.
[140] Patrick Goold "Reading Kierkegaard: Two Pitfalls and a Strategy for Avoiding Them" *Faith and Philosophy* Vol 7 (1990), p.312.
[141] Poul Lübcke "Kierkegaard and Indirect Communication" *History of European Ideas* vol. 12 (1990): 31-40.

he skates over the significance that this has to a particularly Climacean position. He paints Anti-Climacus and Climacus as being essentially in agreement, and *Postscript* and *Practice* as representing two straightforward treatments of the same issue.[142] In opposition to this point of view, it is suggested that what we now have is Anti-Climacus's deeper appreciation for what is involved in communicating Christianity in intentional contrast with Climacus's 'outsider' understanding of Christianity. With reduplication comes a new wrinkle to the old problem, for it seems that the one in perfect *incognito*, the teacher who embodies the teaching, can talk very directly yet at the same time engage in indirect communication.

Neither Silentio nor Climacus were able to conceive of a communicator who spoke directly without also betraying indirect communication. Abraham's great temptation was to explain himself in a straightforward manner.[143] Lessing would have been no better than a "barker of inwardness" or a ridiculous street husker if he had taken to speaking directly about Christianity.[144] The Knight of Faith and the doubly reflected communicator at least had the *option* of directly communicating. True, once they spoke their minds, or justified themselves, their message would become futile, but there was nothing in the persons themselves that prevented direct communication from occurring. This is not the case with reduplication. From the point of view of a teacher who has embodied the teaching, any communication must by necessity be indirect, not because of the subject matter, but because of who (or what) the teacher is. In addition, with reduplication, direct expression is not only possible, it is an essential component of the message. The discrepancy between the lofty message and the lowly messenger does not matter for double reflection. For reduplication that discrepancy *is* the message. The teacher *incognito* tells people very directly what it is he or she wants to say. Yet indirect *communication* (as opposed to mere expression) is preserved because the listeners now have to make a choice for themselves regarding the teacher, who by his or her very being stands as a contradiction to the message that is being spoken. Here lies the Kierkegaardian 'either / or'. *Either* one believes the teacher, *or* one is offended. The truth content of the teaching itself is still considered to be important, but unlike double reflection, the teaching is secondary in relation to the teacher: "for Christ is a person and is the teacher who is more important than the teaching." (*Practice* 124) To reiterate a point: where Silentio and Climacus are concerned with faith and Christianity, Anti-Climacus is concerned with Christ. The three main sections of *Practice* are in fact extended expositions of three Biblical passages relating to Christ's person and message;

[142] See especially Lübcke, "Kierkegaard", pp. 33 and 37.
[143] *FT*, p. 115, Cf. 79-81.
[144] *CUP*, p. 77.

"Come unto me and I will give you rest",[145] "Blessed is he who is not offended at me",[146] "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to myself."[147] The choice to focus on these sayings reflects Anti-Climacus's assertion that Christ as the Teacher is the example *par excellence* of indirect communication by reduplication. In fact, as will be shown below, it is doubtful that for Anti-Climacus there could be any other reduplicators at all.

Reduplication and Christ

Christ is reduplication because he exists as his message. In effect, that message is "I am God", taking the discrepancy between message and messenger to its extreme:

> If someone says directly: 'I am God, the Father and I are one,' this is direct communication. But if the person who says it, the communicator, is this individual human being, an individual human being just like others, then this communication is not quite entirely direct... Because of the communicator, the communication contains a contradiction, it becomes indirect communication... (*Practice* 134)

Christ makes a direct invitation: "come here, all you who labour,"[148] promising a divine peace. Yet it is a lowly human, an individual with tangled hair and bad breath, who is making the claim. Thus, the communication is indirect, for who the communicator essentially *is* (in this case, God), is hidden, and Jesus stands in the world only as a sign of contradiction. Anti-Climacus complains of preachers who use the miracle stories to 'prove' how obvious it is that Jesus was God in human flesh.[149] This runs counter to the way that Jesus himself is reported to have treated his miracles. It is immediately after demonstrating power to John the Baptist's disciples in Matthew 11 (the lame walk, the blind see, the dead are raised etc.) that Jesus pronounces blessed anyone who does not take offence at him. The miraculous demonstrations, says Anti-Climacus, remain ambiguous.[150] Christ, precisely because of what he is, simply cannot give a direct communication:

> the single direct statement, like the miracle, can serve only to make aware in order that the person who has been made aware, facing the offence of the contradiction, can choose whether he will believe or not. (*Practice* 136)

In comparison to Silentio and Climacus, who found practitioners of their versions of indirect communication in philosophy, myth and Biblical history, without insinuating that

[145] *Practice*, Section 1, pp. 3-68; Mtt. 11:28.
[146] *Practice*, Section 2, pp. 69-144; Mtt 11:6.
[147] *Practice*, Section 3, pp. 145-262; John 12:32.
[148] Mtt. 11:28
[149] *Practice*, pp. 95-98.
[150] *Practice*, p. 96.

these examples were unique, Anti-Climacus's discussion on reduplication focuses overwhelmingly on Christ. True, Anti-Climacus does produce a few hypothetical examples of potential cases of normal human reduplication.[151] He speaks of unnamed lovers, rulers and other men who, "for some reason or another" adopt a disguise in order to bring out of their intended audience the desired reaction. (*Pratice* 130) It is significant, however, that in each case, Anti-Climacus refrains from giving concrete expression to the motives or messages of his examples, and in each case doubt is raised whether the human reduplicators would even be able to succeed. The one and only instance of successful indirect communication as reduplication that Anti-Climacus positively finds and names is that of the God-Man, and proportionally far more page space is devoted to Christ than to any human possibility of reduplication.[152]

In a self-described effort to find more "modern" uses for reduplication, Roger Poole attempts to distance reduplication from Christ.[153] Throughout his book, Poole tries to show that the teacher who embodies and lives out his message is an idea that Kierkegaard always intended to be broadly applicable. Poole does this by making the link between reduplication and another important Kierkegaardian phenomenon – the 'truth witness'.[154] Reduplication represents the value of the message that is lived existentially, and the 'witness' seems to fit the bill perfectly. As Anti-Climacus says: "Every time a witness to the truth transforms truth into inwardness (for this is the essential activity of the witness to the truth)... then the established order will in fact be offended at him." (*Practice* 87) Poole reads this as a general statement about *any* communicator who causes offence. He says that Anti-Climacus is inclined to regard *anyone* who challenges the established order as a witness to the truth,[155] and he explicitly wants to generalise Christ as one historical figure among many that shook their fists at the establishment.[156]

There are three points that can be made in opposition to Poole's argument. First, for Anti-Climacus Christ is not merely just another person who causes generic offence. As is discussed in the previous chapter, by the time 'offence' makes an appearance in the works of Anti-Climacus, any secondary and trivial understanding of the offence has been abandoned. Anti-Climacus is not concerned with offence in general, but *the* offence of the God-Man in particular.[157] Secondly, opposing the establishment is not the necessary condition for the category of 'witness' to obtain; transforming the truth into inwardness is

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[151] *Practice*, pp. 129-31.
[152] Compare the overwhelming Christ focus of *Practice*, pp. 3-68 (see esp. 36), 69-144 (esp. 123-24, 134-35), 145-262 with the unnamed normal human examples in pp. 129-31.
[153] Poole, *Indirect Communication*, p.26.
[154] Poole, *Indirect Communication*, pp. 250-51.
[155] Cf. Poole, *Indirect Communication*, pp. 25 and 250.
[156] Poole, *Indirect Communication*, p. 253. Note that Bruce Kirmmse makes a similar 'generalising' argument regarding the political uses of *Attack*. See below and Ch. 2 'Offence'.
[157] Cf. *Sickness*, pp. 83, 89, 94, 95, 130-31; *Practice*, pp. 106, 111, 136.

that condition.[158] All rebels challenge the establishment, but not all rebels are 'witnesses to the truth'. That Kierkegaard will not tolerate this phrase to be lightly bandied about becomes clear when its flippant usage acts as the spark that sets off *Attack upon Christendom*.[159] Thirdly, at this stage in Kierkegaard's writing career, the witness is not a witness to any truth *qua* truth, and the *witness is not necessarily an example of reduplication.* Transforming truth into inwardness happens through double reflection, what is being reflected on is the Christian truth that concerned Climacus. The witness is the one who indirectly communicates Christ via double reflection, but it is *only* Christ who indirectly communicates via reduplication. The communication of the witness leads to an attitude of contemporaneity with Christ, but it is not until *Attack* that the effect of contemporaneity leads to the possibility of reduplication for normal humans. Kierkegaard, by adopting reduplication himself, thus supplants double reflection as the primary mode of indirect communication.[160]

We have seen how one problem in interpretation stems from a failure to distinguish between Anti-Climacus's ideas and the views of previous pseudonyms. Another problem comes when critics such as Poole read Anti-Climacus with too much of an eye to the future. For Anti-Climacus, reduplication does not apply to just any human, but only to Christ. The reduplication that Kierkegaard will extend to himself and others in his polemic against Christendom is yet to be fully developed in the Anti-Climacean literature. Poole is correct to see the connection between the reduplication of *Practice* and the existential commitment of Kierkegaard's final attack against Christendom, but by attempting to generalise too quickly, he does damage to the specific concerns of Anti-Climacus, and thus to an understanding of Kierkegaard's work as a whole. At this point in the authorship, reduplication does not apply to the 'witness', nor does it practically apply to anyone except Christ. The *imitatio Christi*, the move from human witness to reduplication, does not occur with any pseudonym, but only with Kierkegaard himself. Even then, with *Attack* it is not just *any* truth that the reduplicator witnesses to, but only Christian truth. It is by maintaining Anti-Climacus's vision of reduplication however, that allows Kierkegaard to preserve the precious indirect communication necessary for Christianity, even while descending to a direct war with the established order.

Attack as Indirect Communication

It is false simply to assume that it is pseudonyms alone that constitute the whole of what it means for Kierkegaard to communicate 'indirectly'. Significantly for our

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[158] Cf. *Practice*, p. 87.
[159] See the opening salvos of the *Moment*, pp. 3-8, 9-15,16-18, 19-24, 25-27.
[160] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 20, 29, 46, 48, 49, 74, 97, 135, 180-82, 236, 292, 316, 324.

argument, many commentators do hold that when Kierkegaard is writing or speaking out in his own name, the communication is automatically 'direct'.[161] This assumption is extremely widespread in the secondary literature, apparently without there being seen a need to craft an argument to back up this assumption. Instead it seems to be simply taken for granted that if Kierkegaard is using his own name, then of course he must be communicating directly. Thus, even for those scholars who take *Attack* seriously, the final phase of Kierkegaard's life is turned into an anomaly, as it is assumed that here he suddenly abandoned his carefully cultivated sense of the importance of indirect communication. Paul Sponheim speaks with the voice of received wisdom when he maintains that "there is a shift towards a more direct communication in the final period of the authorship."[162] Once again, the roots of this problem for English scholars can be traced back to Walter Lowrie's translator notes and biographies. Of this final period, Lowrie says that it "amounts to a retraction of the pseudonyms and the whole elaborate apparatus of 'indirect communication'."[163] The idea that signed works *must* be direct continues to be promulgated in the most recent scholarly editions of Kierkegaard's works, as seen in the Hong's introduction to their translation of *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*,[164] and in their introduction to *Fear and Trembling* where 'indirection' is equated with pseudonymity.[165] The assumption that Kierkegaard's own voice equals direct communication colours the interpretation of much of Kierkegaard's private journals and later literature. An example of this is found in John Elrod where he unquestioningly links Kierkegaard's non-pseudonymous works with a supposed "transition to direct discourse."[166]

In opposition to this type of approach, it is proposed that Kierkegaard's *Attack* is not an example of direct communication. By drawing attention to his own life and his own inadequacies as an ideal Christian, and by the very polemical and corrective tone of the writings which make up *Attack*, Kierkegaard shows us that he is not offering up a

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[161] Examples are legion. Besides the commentators listed above in the body of the text, others include: George E. Arbaugh, and George B. Arbaugh, *Kierkegaard's Authorship* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968); Christopher Brookfield, "What was Kierkegaard's Task? A Frontier to be Explored" *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* Vol. 18 (1962): 23-35; Stephen Dunning, "Who sets the Task? Kierkegaard on Authority" *Foundations of Kierkegaard's Vision of Community*. Eds. George Connell and C. Stephen Evans (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1992) pp. 18-33; David McCracken, *The Scandal of the Gospels* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Louis P. Pojman, *The Logic of Subjectivity* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1984).

[162] Paul Sponheim, *Kierkegaard on Christ and Christian Coherence* (London: SCM Press, 1968), p. 33.

[163] Lowrie *A Short Life*, p. 187. In the same book see also pp. 172, 175, 176, 198. On Kierkegaard's frankness of speech as his supposed aversion to indirect communication, see the translator's introductions to *Attack upon Christendom*, pp.xv; *Sickness unto Death*, p. 138; *Point of View*, p. xxiv. See also *Kierkegaard* Vols. I, pp. 271-80 (esp. 277), 286-90; *Kierkegaard* Vol. II, pp. 467.

[164] Hong and Hong, translator's introduction, *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. xi. The Hong's also include the Anti-Climacus works *Sickness* and *Practice* amongst the number of self-penned, and therefore in their opinion directly communicated, works.

[165] Hong and Hong, translator's introduction, *FT*, p. x.

[166] Elrod, *Christendom*, p. 270.

wholesale version of his views, as if he were a serving boy presenting 'Christianity' on a silver platter. Instead, *Attack* carries on the precedent set by the previous pseudonymous authors, indirectly communicating an awareness of honest Christianity that relies on the responsibility of the listeners to personally appropriate the message.

> If you imagine that I am a waiter, then you have never been my reader; if you actually are my reader, then you will understand that I can even regard it as my duty to you that you will be strained a little... (*Moment* 106)

There are three reasons why the final works should not be interpreted as an abandonment of indirect communication. First, the critique is indirect because it is a *corrective*, and does not represent a point of view that is independent of other views.[167] Direct communication does not require the co-operation of the listener, nor an interaction with any other messages in the public domain, in order to be true.[168] This is not the case with *Attack*, which intentionally adopts an extreme polemic in order to counter-balance the opposite extreme of comfortable Christendom, and whose truth emerges only in conjunction with the faulty message to which *Attack* is a dialectical partner. Secondly, *Attack* is indirect because Kierkegaard eschews followers, actively working to repel would-be pupils.[169] Instead, he seeks to *make people aware* of the choice that is facing them and impress upon them the responsibility that they have to make an honest decision for themselves. The communication is not delivered with complete disregard for the individual (ie. 'objectively'[170]), but instead the ultimate fulfilment of the message is found only in the individual's new awareness of the stark difference between authentic Christianity and Christendom, and the decision that they must make as result of this awareness. Thirdly, and most importantly, *Attack* is indirect for in his writing and in his life, Kierkegaard himself *reduplicates* his message, adopting for himself the Christ-mode as the sign of contradiction.[171] Jesus Christ's existence as God and man is the message that contains the possibility of offence, his invitation prompting a choice that can only be either faith or disobedience[172] So too Kierkegaard calls attention to his life and his own inadequacies in relation to his message. He himself cannot be the model of ideal Christianity that he espouses in his writings. For this reason, Kierkegaard's message in *Attack* is not "follow me", but "make a decision", and his very existence as an offensive, ridiculous and potentially hypocritical fool forces the reader to have to make a choice about Christianity that is not based on any direct proof of Kierkegaard's life. We will

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[167] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 12, 24, 34, 40-41, 51, 67, 99-100, 106-107, 130, 143, 211, 217-20, 226, 335.
[168] Cf. *CUP*, pp. 73ff.
[169] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 13, 29, 33-34, 40, 46, 48-49, 73-74, 76, 97, 101, 110, 130, 197, 212, 236, 336-37, 340-47.
[170] Cf. *CUP*, p. 75.
[171] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 15, 20, 23, 25, 38, 42, 46, 60, 74, 78, 83-84, 135, 180-82, 197, 213, 290, 311-12, 316, 321, 324, 333, 329-54.
[172] Cf. *Practice* pp. 35-36, 75-83, 94, 119, 102-103, 121.

consider the indirect nature of *Attack* as a corrective; as the making aware of responsibility; and as reduplication below.

Attack as Corrective

The final developments of the leap and of offence themes in *Attack* led to the conclusion that not only is Christianity qualitatively different from the world, it is also, by necessity, actively opposed to it.[173] In terms of indirect communication, this development can be seen in *Attack* as a corrective polemic. Although it may seem at first that a polemic can only be direct, in line with the strictures set by the pseudonyms, it is possible to speak forthrightly without thereby also communicating directly.[174] This is the case for *Attack*, which is not an exercise in didactic preaching, but rather dialectic engagement. The extreme of his side of the message is set against the extreme of Christendom's message, and Kierkegaard does not wish his polemic to be taken as anything other than a corrective. "Take an emetic!" he cries, offering for his part a picture emphasising the suffering of true Christianity in order to wake people from their comfortable delusions.[175] Kierkegaard is not a waiter,[176] but a surgeon,[177] a fireman,[178] and a detective,[179] all of whom must deal with what is harmful or unsavoury in the service of the greater good. Of the inevitable fallout from his attack on Christendom, Kierkegaard says "everything must burst so that in this nightmare individuals who are able to bear New Testament Christianity might come again into existence." (*Moment* 34)

Christendom, writes Kierkegaard, has stopped Christianity from being a necessary corrective at any given time and place.[180] With his polemic, Kierkegaard is redressing the balance of what has been lost. In *Attack*, Kierkegaard purposely steers clear of even-handed arguments. At one point he sarcastically alludes to the academic ideal of being able to talk objectively about Christianity without actually having to live by it.[181] The assistant professors look down on people who are so 'one-sided' that they actually practice what they teach. In opposition to these professors, Kierkegaard says that this sort of one-sidedness is exactly what is needed.[182] It is only by being one-sided that Christianity will attain its dialectical purpose as a corrective to *Christendom's* one-sidedness, which Kierkegaard identifies as its claims of sophisticated superiority over

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[173] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 17, 20, 39, 109, 143, 149, 162, 168-69, 170, 188, 206, 222, 226, 257, 321, 332, 334.
[174] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 134-36.
[175] *Moment*, pp. 99-100, also p. 211.
[176] *Moment*, p. 106.
[177] *Moment*, pp. 12, 24.
[178] *Moment*, pp. 217-20.
[179] *Moment*, pp. 40, 130, 226.
[180] *Moment*, p. 41.
[181] *Moment*, p. 194.
[182] *Moment*, p.67.

every other previous culture.[183] 'Christian' for Kierkegaard is a "polemical concept" and thus "one can be a Christian only in contradistinction or by way of contrast." (*Moment* 143) As a result, he perceives that his task to communicate Christianity in an ostensibly Christian land must be approached indirectly. In an important section apparently overlooked by those who assume that *Attack* must be direct as a matter of course, Kierkegaard provides hints towards his own project of one-sided indirect correction:

> When Christianity entered the world, the task was to proclaim Christianity directly... *In Christendom the relation is different*... If Christianity is to be introduced here, then first and foremost the illusion must be removed...[The task] is directed to what can be done to clear up people's concepts, to instruct them, to stir them by means of the ideals, through pathos to bring them into an impassioned state, *to rouse them up with the gadfly sting*... (*Moment* 107 emphasis added)

Ultimately, the purpose of the surgeon's scalpel, or the sting of the gadfly, is to create pain in order to spark a reaction in an otherwise unresponsive person. In a variation of his 'fire-chief' analogy, Kierkegaard claims that strictly speaking he is not the one ringing the alarm, but the one starting the fire.[184] With his drastic and unbalanced attack, Kierkegaard is not directly conveying knowledge that his public can take or leave as if it were a self-contained package of Christian information. The information imparted by direct communication does not rely on individual appropriation, or on extenuating circumstances, for it to be true. The corrective message of *Attack* however, requires both an extreme state of affairs to which it runs counter, and the co-operative response of its readers, in order to be successful. It is as a corrective that *Attack* promotes the coming to awareness of individual responsibility. It is this 'awareness' factor which leads to the second aspect of *Attack*'s indirect communication. Kierkegaard's dialectic serves to make individuals aware of the discrepancy between Christendom and Christianity, and once they *are* aware it is they who are responsible for making a decision about what they will do about it.

Attack as Making Aware

That Kierkegaard is not leading a reform movement or asking for followers, but is instead foisting the responsibility for change back onto his listeners, is another mark of *Attack*'s indirect communication:

> As for myself, I am not... a reformer, in no way, nor am I a profound speculative intellect, a seer, a prophet – no, I have, if you please, to a rare degree I have a definite detective talent.[185]

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[183] *Moment*, p. 335.
[184] *Moment*, p.51.
[185] *Moment*, p. 40, see also p. 34.

Unlike the one leading a movement, the detective merely brings the facts to light, leaving it to others to take the necessary action suggested by the uncovered truth.[186] Even when Kierkegaard began to write in *The Moment*, his own self-published magazine, he fought to dissuade followers. Preferring the purity of the "separateness of singleness", Kierkegaard considers it his task to avert popular movements in his name. (*Moment* 76) In a subsequent edition, Kierkegaard urges his readers *not* to subscribe to his magazine, preferring that people think twice instead of acting from a misplaced and hot-headed rebellious zeal.[187] "Do believe me," he implores, "I do not involve myself with you in a finite sense at all, [I] do not seek to draw you to me in order to found a party, etc. No, I am only religiously doing my duty..." (*Moment* 197) Although he is obviously concerned with Christianity, Kierkegaard does not identify himself as one,[188] for that would propel him into the sphere of the religious reformer or evangelical revivalist. "I do not participate in changing what Christianity is in order thereby to obtain millions of Christians." (*Moment* 212)

What then, does Kierkegaard want? "Very simply – I want honesty [*Redelighed*]." (*Moment* 46) It has been a temptation of some theologically-minded readers to paint a picture of Kierkegaard in this final phase as being a champion of Christianity and a declaimer of the Christian message.[189] Besides the aberration that this makes of *Attack* regarding direct communication, it also deviates from the attitude found throughout the pseudonymous works. There, the pseudonyms agree that whatever else Christianity might be, at the very least whatever is authentic about it is not something that needs to be preached, demonstrated or defended. As Anti-Climacus says in *Sickness unto Death*:

> Therefore it is certain and true that the first one to come up with the idea of defending Christianity in Christendom is *de facto* a Judas No. 2: he too, betrays with a kiss... To defend something is always to disparage it.[190]

To assume that in *Attack* Kierkegaard takes on the role of apologist *extraordinaire* is to assign to the author a position completely at odds with anything that has come before.[191] Instead, it should always be kept in mind Kierkegaard's insistence that in *Attack* he is promoting 'honesty', not 'Christianity' as such. "I am not Christian stringency in contrast

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[186] Cf. *Moment* p. 40.
[187] *Moment*, p. 101.
[188] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 46-49, 143, 212-13, and especially pp. 340-43.
[189] For example Lowrie and Sponheim. Cf. 'Thesis Introduction'
[190] *Sickness*, p. 87. See also *Fragments*, p. 43; *CUP*, pp. 46-49; and *Practice*, p. 26-31 where Anti-Climacus calls the attempt to defend Christianity "blasphemy".
[191] Although he does not address *Attack* directly, C. Stephen Evans is an example of one who finds in Kierkegaard an apologist for Christianity. Cf. *Faith Beyond Reason: A Kierkegaardian Account* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), Cf. p. 95ff.

to a given Christian leniency. Certainly not, I am neither leniency nor stringency – I am human honesty." (*Moment* 46) Thus, Kierkegaard is not a churchman, fighting for one particular Christian denomination or interpretation over another.

> I am not saying that it is for Christianity I venture – suppose, just suppose that I become quite literally a sacrifice. I would still not become a sacrifice for Christianity but because I wanted honesty. (*Moment* 49)

Despite his consistent claims that he is not a Christian, however, it is still appropriate to speak of Kierkegaard as having a Christian direction to his work. With his abandonment of the title 'Christian' for polemical reasons, Kierkegaard was not signifying that he was no longer interested in the authentic concerns of the faith. To interpret Kierkegaard as some sort of proto-atheist by treating as direct communication his claims that he was not a Christian, is again to ignore the setting in which this particular jewel of a phrase inheres.[192] Such phrases cannot be read in isolation from the larger body of work that makes up Kierkegaard's task. It is the whole authorship and the ascent through the stages that looms in the background when we read:

> But although I do not dare say that I venture for Christianity, I remain fully and blissfully convinced that this, my venturing, is pleasing to God, has his approval. Indeed I know it; it has his approval that in a world of Christians where millions and millions call themselves Christians – that there one person expresses: I do not dare call myself a Christian; but I want honesty, and to that end I will venture.[193]

As an alternative to the millions of Christians who haven't individually faced the possibility of offence, Kierkegaard would rather open and honest rebellion against God than the hypocritical religion of Christendom.[194]

> So let there be light on this matter, let it become clear to people what the New Testament understands by being a Christian, so that everyone can choose whether he wants to be a Christian or whether he honestly, plainly, forthrightly does not want to be that. (*Moment* 97)

Attack retains as all-important the choice that the individual must make. The events and writings that make up *Attack* cannot therefore be thought of as an example of direct communication. As we have seen, direct communication does not rely on the receiver for it to have achieved its 'aim'. The direct communicator can, like a 'barker of

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[192] The idea that Kierkegaard was an aware and active non-believer, or was at least on his way to becoming one, has its roots in Kierkegaard's first biographer. Georg Brandes, friend of Nietzsche and chronicler of Kierkegaard's life, celebrated the Dane as a potential atheist 'free thinker' in his *Danmark* [Denmark] Vols. I and II of *Samlede Skrifter* [Collected Writings] (Copenhagen and Kristiania: Gyldendal, 1919); Two arguments that Kierkegaard was *never* a Christian come from Arland Usher *Journey Through Dread* (New York: Devon-Adair Co., 1955) and S.U. Zuidema *Kierkegaard* trans. D. F Freeman (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., 1960).

[193] *Moment*, p. 49. Cf. p. 33 where Kierkegaard says that to some he appears to be an atheist, but he has God on his side. See also, 'My task', in the last issue of the *Moment*, fully prepared but not published in Kierkegaard's lifetime, pp. 340-47.

subjectivity', didactically pronounce his knowledge from a street corner.[195] His message does not change whether anyone is listening or not, because his message is made up of facts and information. If, in his polemic, Kierkegaard were only promoting the existence of a particular factual version of Christianity, then he too would be a street barker. However, unlike water, which remains the same no matter whether it is drawn by tap or by well, honest Christianity is not indifferent to the way that it is obtained.[196] Kierkegaard cries for 'honesty', a goal that necessarily requires the co-operation of the listening public. The content of Kierkegaard's message in *Attack* is that Christianity is no more, and that people must face this, *either* continuing in honest and open defiance of God, *or*, in honesty, submitting themselves to the possibility of authentic faith through the possibility of offence.[197] Kierkegaard is not handing down knowledge as a guru to his disciples, but he is instead making his listeners aware of the responsibility that they have towards the faith they claim to own.

In keeping with his aversion to followers, or to being cast as a reformer, Kierkegaard repeatedly throws his audience back into their own resources. After alluding to his own authorship in general, and of the unspoken implications of *Practice* in particular, Kierkegaard says of the former head of 'official Christianity' that:

> I have not pronounced judgement upon Bishop Mynster, no, but in the hands of Governance I became the occasion for Bishop Mynster to pronounce judgement upon himself. (*Moment* 13)

Kierkegaard extends the onus of the decision onto all who attend to his message:

> This must be said; I place no one under obligation to act accordingly – for that I do not have authority. But by having heard it you are made responsible and must now act on your own responsibility as you think you can justify it before God. (*Moment* 73)

Having been made aware by the fireman, the surgeon, the detective, and the gadfly, Christendom's citizens can no longer continue remain content with the soporific herd mentality. Kierkegaard makes it personal, presenting to the individual the stark reality of their situation, a choice of submission of defiance. Taken as a whole, the pseudonymous works, the edifying discourses, the unpublished journals and the prayers and comments in *Attack* all provide ample evidence as to Kierkegaard's opinion of which choice was preferred. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard's message in *Attack* is not to choose Christ but simply to *choose*. "You yourself, then, bear and have to bear the responsibility for how

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[194] *Moment*, p. 48.
[195] Cf. *CUP*, p. 77.
[196] *Moment*, p. 110. Cf. *CUP*, p. 73-75.
[197] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 29, 48, 49, 74, 97, 236.

you act, but you have been made aware!"[198] It is only with this primary communication clearly in mind that we can turn to Kierkegaard's idea of what the responsibility of living up to the 'Christian' moniker implies. Building mostly from work done previously in *Practice*, Kierkegaard provides his opinion of what the opposite of honest defiance would look like. Having been made aware, the individual's responsibility for honest obedience follows only one pattern, "... the responsibility is this: imitation of Jesus Christ." (*Moment* 337)

Attack as Reduplication

How Kierkegaard brings about the *moment* at which the individual becomes aware of his responsibility for a decision is wrapped up with Kierkegaard's own particular imitation of Christ. In *Practice* it was seen that the process of reduplication occurred when the messenger existed as the message.[199] Anti-Climacus was keen to shift attention away from the possibility of this sort of indirect communication for normal humans, and instead focussed on Christ as the unique example of reduplication.[200] Jesus Christ effectively declares that he is God, inviting all men to "Come here...and I will give you rest";[201] yet the being saying this is a lowly human. Thus, the contemporaneous individual is faced with the moment of having to choose whether he will accept or reject the invitation as it stands. In the realm of Christian faith, there is no automatic, logically necessary conclusion. Miracles and other 'proofs' do not help, as the choice must be made by faith alone – in fact, Anti-Climacus points out that demonstrations of the divine only serve to emphasise the potential offensiveness of having the holy co-exist with the human.[202]

By the time of *Attack*, Kierkegaard personally appropriates the formerly unique Christ-mode of reduplication, making himself stand as a sign of contradiction, a sign that creates the *moment* when individuals become aware of the choice facing them. It is because of reduplication that Kierkegaard can make such direct statements under his own name, and yet the communication of his *Attack* remains indirect. It is argued that like Christ, Kierkegaard draws attention to himself effectively making the disparity that exists between him and his message *part of* the message.[203] Christ embodied the communication that people must have faith that God has appeared in human form. Kierkegaard's communication is less cosmically drastic, but no less reduplicated – "I am human honesty." (*Moment* 46) Roger Poole, in his book *Kierkegaard the Indirect*

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[198] *Moment,* p. 236. See also *Moment*, pp. 29, 74, 97, 336.
[199] *Practice*, p. 123
[200] Cf. contrast *Practice*, pp. 129-31 with pp. 36, 123-24, 134-35.
[201] Cf. Mtt 11: 28
[202] Cf. *Practice*, pp. 96-97.

Communication, makes a similar argument towards seeing Kierkegaard's embodiment as reduplication. Poole chooses to base his arguments on the events surrounding Kierkegaard's death, devoting most of his chapter on the final events of Kierkegaard's life not on the *Attack* but instead on the personal reflections of Kierkegaard's friends who were with him in the end.[204] It is Poole's intention to demonstrate that Kierkegaard imitated Christ to those around him, thanks to the marriage of irascible outspokenness and a personally meek and gentle demeanour. Poole makes much of various eye-witness accounts that Kierkegaard appeared to emanate a sort of glowing, peaceful aura at the end of his life, thus demonstrating his ability to embody contradictory messages.[205] It is curious that Poole veers off into this sort of speculation, indulging in secondary, ethereal memoirs to prove his point when there is much better information closer to hand in Kierkegaard's final writing. In a similar vein, Michael Strawser rightly argues that Kierkegaard's 'religious' works are not necessarily more direct than his 'philosophical' ones,[206] but Strawser too chooses to focus on sources other than *Attack*. In his case, Strawser argues for a more 'indirect' reading of Kierkegaard by successfully demonstrating that aesthetic and philosophical themes run throughout the early non-pseudonymous texts like the *Edifying Discourses*.[207] However, just as it is for Poole, it is a problem for Strawser's argument that he does not deal with *Attack*, Kierkegaard's most supposedly direct communication. It seems that even for those critics who question much of the received wisdom on Kierkegaard, the tradition of ignoring the *Attack* remains unchallenged.

This is a shame, for a wealth of information can be found in these final texts supporting the claim that Kierkegaard's last public pronouncements were indirect, *not despite their public nature, but because of it.* We begin with the Kierkegaard's view that there is only one requirement from Christ and the apostles: imitation.[208] This Kierkegaard explicitly identifies as 'suffering', because truth always suffers in this sinful, hypocritical, selfish world. "Christianity is the suffering truth because it is the truth and is in this world." (*Moment* 321) Christ's mode of being is thus extended to his followers, in that their existence is a suffering on the earth. "That one has faith can be demonstrated in only one way: by being willing to suffer for one's faith...". (*Moment* 324) It has already been shown in the previous chapter how in *Attack* the Christ-imitation of suffering makes up

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[203] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 23, 25, 38, 60, 74, 78, 83, 213, 290, 311-12, 333, 340.
[204] Poole, *Indirect Communication*, Ch. IX.
[205] Cf. The deathbed accounts of Kierkegaard's nephew Troels Lund and of Lund's niece Henriette, recounted in Poole, *Indirect Communication*, pp. 274-77, 277-81.
[206] Michael Strawser *Both/And: Reading Kierkegaard from Irony to Edification* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), Ch. VIII.
[207] Strawser, *Both /And*, p. 177.
[208] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 42, 135, 316.

one aspect of the final development of 'offence'.[209] But suffering also has communicative properties. Christ's followers embody the life of abasement in order to serve the particular needs of proclaiming Christianity in Christendom.[210] According to Kierkegaard, God wants Christianity to be proclaimed unconditionally to everyone, that is why the apostles were simple, ordinary people and why Christ the prototype (*Forbillede*) is in the lowly form of a servant. "All this to indicate that this extraordinary is the ordinary, is open to all..." (*Moment* 180) Christendom stopped looking at Christ as the prototype and saw him instead only as the Redeemer. "Instead of looking at him with respect to imitation, they dwelt on his good works and wished to be in the place of those to whom they were shown." (*Moment* 182)

The implication of this for the communication of Christianity in Christendom is that the 'suffering servant' *is* the message. This is because the authentic follower of Christ, by his or her very existence, provokes the opportunity to choose *either* faith *or* offence by presenting the stark difference between Christ and the comfort of culture's sophisticated trappings. It is important for Kierkegaard that it is ordinary, lowly people who imitate Christ, and consequently act, in their very humbleness, as the sign of contradiction and the possibility of offence.[211] Although himself an active member of Denmark's intellectual and artistic circles, Kierkegaard stressed his connection to ordinary folk, distancing himself from his successful sophisticated peers.

> You common man! I have not segregated my life from yours, you know that; I have lived on the street, am known by all. Furthermore, I have not become somebody... So if I belong to anyone, I must belong to you common man...[212]

In an effort to draw out Kierkegaard's political applicability, Bruce Kirmmse makes much of these times when Kierkegaard identifies himself with the proletariat.[213] Yet the passages cannot be used to support a separation of Kierkegaard's Christian concerns from his more 'modern' (i.e. secular political) ones, for the whole point of Kierkegaard's social humility is that it serves as his imitation of Christ. Kierkegaard, like Christ, draws attention to himself, but also like Christ, his very being acts as a stumbling block to the message that he is proclaiming. Following the development of indirect communication in the pseudonyms, Kierkegaard moves from his previous style, which took the form of double reflection *via* multiple characters, to the point where in *Attack* Kierkegaard does not seek to distance himself from his message. Yet Kierkegaard is not abandoning

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[209] Cf. *Moment*, p. 292. See also *Moment*, pp. 31, 42, 135, 148, 182, 321, 332 Cf. Ch. 2 'Offence'.
[210] Cf. *Moment*, p. 20.
[211] Cf. *Moment*, p.334.
[212] *Moment*, p. 346, also p. 84. Cf. Ch. 2 'Offence'.
[213] Bruce Kirmmse *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 481ff. Cf. Ch. 2 'Offence'.

indirect communication, for consistently throughout *Attack*, whenever he asks people to look at his life as if he were an example, Kierkegaard at the same time highlights his own inadequacies for the role that has been foisted upon him.[214] The failure of Kierkegaard to live up to the ideal that he himself is communicating acts as an instance of Christ-like reduplication, with the same implications applying to *his* indirect message as those that applied to Christ's. The listener is not asked to believe the message based on outward, quantifiable reasons, but is, in Kierkegaardian terms initially 'drawn in' and then 'thrust back upon himself', required to make an honest decision not clouded by attractively compelling appearances.

Over and over again, passages in *Attack* repeat a similar pattern, with Kierkegaard initially drawing attention to himself, only to quickly emphasise his own failures and inadequacies. Calling specific attention to the "circumstances of my own life" (*Moment* 213) which have made him more aware than others of authentic Christianity, Kierkegaard then immediately backs down from claiming himself as a Christian example.[215] Kierkegaard is reduplicating the message of *awareness*, not of Christianity. This fact is reinforced when he again draws attention to himself as the one who has the honour of setting forth the idea of contemporaneity which results in awareness, and then quickly reminds his readers that he did not invent the idea, the New Testament did.[216] Kierkegaard justifies his qualification to write as he does about Christianity, boasting that by his many years as an author and by his "life as a public personality" he is entitled to join in the discussion about what Christianity is. (*Moment* 311) Kierkegaard then quickly nullifies his own boast by going on to address the fact of his ongoing public mockery, reminding his readers that the name 'Søren' was being used by his enemies as a euphemism for Satan.[217] At times, Kierkegaard holds up his reputation as a famous firebrand and poet, and then says that after all he is possibly "entirely superfluous" and "something quite minor" (*Moment* 25), someone who can write about something without understanding it himself.[218] Elsewhere, Kierkegaard predicts that he will fail to be understood, and that his attack will not prevail.[219] Anyone who knows him, Kierkegaard says, knows that he is not committing himself to his attack out of skill or interest in politics.[220] As a writer and public figure, the attack is not earning him any money or prestige, a fact that is clearly evident to everyone.[221] Even when claiming for himself the

[214] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 23, 25, 38, 60, 74, 78, 83, 213, 290, 311-12, 333, 340.
[215] *Moment*, p, 213.
[216] *Moment*, p. 290.
[217] *Moment*, p. 311.
[218] *Moment*, p. 38.
[219] *Moment*, p. 23, also p. 312.
[220] *Moment*, p. 60.
[221] *Moment*, p. 74. See also especially p. 78, a section reminding readers of Kierkegaard's miserable life during the time of writing.

highest accolade of them all; that he was chosen by Governance and slowly brought up for the special task of the attack, still Kierkegaard refers to his powerlessness and impotence.[222]

We have already seen in the previous chapter how Kierkegaard takes himself out from under the protection of respectability by refusing to call himself a Christian.[223] In terms of indirect communication, Kierkegaard makes himself a stumbling block by applying the judgement of his own message to himself.[224] One cannot accuse Kierkegaard of *hypocritically* setting standards that he himself does not abide by, for he is very aware that his one thesis that there are no Christians in Christendom applies equally to him as to anyone else. Kierkegaard is complicit in Christendom, he does not claim to have the passion "that belongs to being involved with God alone in the most complete separation". (*Moment* 332) As a detective, Kierkegaard can see more clearly than others do their shared state of affairs:

> What makes me shudder is this...it occurs to no one, no one that by being human beings they are indeed subject to the same conditions as I am, that the accounting of eternity awaits them also..." (*Moment* 312)

After Kierkegaard's death, the tenth and final volume of the *Moment* was found amongst his papers, the last words he ever wrote, completed and ready for publication.[225] This volume is perhaps the most important one that there is for examining the role that reduplication as indirect communication played in Kierkegaard's life, stressing as it does Kierkegaard's reasons for not calling himself a Christian. In a section entitled "My Task", he writes:

> 'I do not call myself a Christian; I do not speak of myself as a Christian.' It is this that I must continually repeat; anyone who wants to understand my very special task must concentrate on being able to hold this firm. (*Moment* 340)

He knows that this seems a strange thing for him to continually repeat, obviously concerned as he is with Christ, yet in the world which has turned this term into blather, a stand such as his must be made.[226] Saying that he is not a Christian takes a certain respectability and power away from Kierkegaard, thus making him into the right kind of vessel for the communication that he has to make. He refers to the omnipotent power who "especially uses my powerlessness" and who would have no use for him if he changed his statement and decided to identify himself as a Christian after all. (*Moment* 340) Kierkegaard says that wants to "keep the ideal free". (*Moment* 341) For this reason:

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[222] *Moment*, p. 83.
[223] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 46-49, 143, 212-13, and especially pp. 340-43; See also Ch. 2 'Offence'.
[224] Cf. *Moment*, p. 197.
[225] Vol. 10 is printed as an appendix in *Moment*, pp. 329-54.

> I do not call myself a Christian. That this is very awkward for the sophists I understand very well, and I understand very well that they would much rather see that with kettledrums and trumpets I would proclaim myself to be the only true Christian, and I also understand very well that an attempt is being made to represent my conduct falsely in this way. (*Moment* 340-41)

Kierkegaard directly calls attention to himself, and he openly speaks his mind, yet his communication remains indirect, because it is intimately concerned with the response of his listeners. By his very being, Kierkegaard stands at odds with the picture of authentic Christianity that he conjures up in *Attack*, but it is by this discrepancy that Kierkegaard embodies his message calling people to make an honest decision. Kierkegaard is well aware that he is making a public fool of himself,[227] but this would only detract from his message if he were directly preaching Christianity. Instead, the circumstances of Kierkegaard's life serve to prevent any listener from making a choice for the wrong reasons. No one can accuse Kierkegaard of making the Christian life look appealing, or of setting himself up as some sort of charismatic popular leader. It is Kierkegaard's task to bring his readers to awareness of their own responsibility for making an honest choice about Christianity in Christendom. "In my books I have pursued my task, and with *my being and my authorship* I am a continual attack on the whole Mynsterian proclamation of Christianity". (*Moment* 15 emphasis added) Just as Christ's human life acted as the possibility of offence and the catalyst for faith, so too Kierkegaard appropriates the reduplication model, using his own life to provoke a response that can only be *either* a continued life of hypocrisy, *or* an honest appraisal of Christianity. By acting as a polemic corrective in order to make people aware of the choice facing them, and by doing this using his own life as the sign of contradiction, Kierkegaard's *Attack* is not an aberration from his previous work, but instead it represents the final development of Kierkegaard's indirect communication.

Conclusion

Commentators following Mackey and Fenger propose that the earlier Kierkegaardian literature is better representative of his thought than are his later, Christian writings.[228] If this is the case, then the scholarship will have to deal with the fact that Silentio's endeavour is an almost unmitigated failure. Silentio's 'faith' is unrecognisable by people who claim to have it, and unpalatable to those who don't. The Knights of Faith are distant or invisible, Silentio's double movement is impossible, and

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[226] *Moment*, p. 340.
[227] Cf. *Moment*, pp. 311, 333.
[228] Cf. Louis Mackey, *Kierkegaard: A Kind of Poet* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), p. xi; Fenger, *Myths*, p. 20.

his communication is unable to express the content of the phenomenon that he is examining. Unless his views are seen to belong at a particular stage for a particular purpose, Silentio proves to be a poor representative of 'Kierkegaard's thought'. Critics from this camp also run into problems when considering the effect of *The Corsair*. If it is true, as Fenger insists, that Kierkegaard had no initial plan for his pseudonyms, then it is inconsistent to claim, as Fenger does, that one cannot overestimate the effect that the satirical magazine had on Kierkegaard's writing.[229] The fact that at the end of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* Kierkegaard struggled as hard as he did to preserve what he could of indirect communication demonstrates that there was a construction that needed saving. Quite apart from *Point of View* and the journals, there is strong evidence in the published texts to suppose that the development of indirect communication is one of the most important themes running throughout Kierkegaard's works. On the other side, it is telling that many 'blunt' readers fail to apprehend the effect that *The Corsair* had on Kierkegaard's project of indirect communication. Those who find a straightforward unity in all of the texts cannot understand what was so bad about Kierkegaard being openly identified with his pseudonyms, because they regularly do it themselves as a matter of course. It is because of this fundamental error in the initial approach to interpretation that Lübcke can skate over the differences apparent in the texts[230] and Goold can say of Climacus and Anti-Climacus that they are in "clear agreement" about indirect communication.[231] The problem finds its father in Walter Lowrie, whose translations reflect the 'blunt' bias towards treating each pseudonym as a thinly veiled simulacrum of Kierkegaard himself, with every nuance between the characters ironed out.[232] Likewise, Poole misses the differences that exist between Anti-Climacus and Kierkegaard, finding in the 'truth-witness' of *Practice in Christianity* a generalised political rebel. Poole extends 'reduplication' to any social agitator, in the process misrepresenting both 'truth-witness' and 'reduplication'. In the same vein, Kirmmse[233] and Bukdahl [234] make much of Kierkegaard's identification with the 'proletariat', clouding the fact that Kierkegaard was not making a quasi-Marxist statement but instead he was attempting a visible embodiment of Christ-like indirection. The current state of most of the scholarship means that no one seems to know what to do with the 'direct' statements contained in *Attack*. It is ironic that those commentators who go so far as to take at face value Kierkegaard's claims that he is *not* a Christian commit the exact same error as those who think that with his final

[229] Cf. Fenger, *Myths*, pp. 1, 19-20, 214.
[230] Cf. Lübcke, "Kierkegaard", pp. 33, 37.
[231] Goold, "Reading Kierkegaard", p.312.
[232] Cf. the translation of 'double reflection' as 'reduplication' in Lowrie's edition of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript.*
[233] Cf. Kirmmse, "*Golden Age*", p. 481ff.

work Kierkegaard was evangelising for Christianity. Lowrie,[235] Elrod,[236] and even Brandes[237] seem to assume that with his *Attack* Kierkegaard was expressing his true, straightforward opinion of the religion. However, to assume that Kierkegaard could, or would, ever present his Christianity directly shows a remarkable lack of understanding of both Kierkegaard's vision of Christianity and of his carefully preserved theory of indirect communication. It is only by respecting the stages of the pseudonyms *and* the Christian direction of Kierkegaard's project that the fullest picture of 'Kierkegaard' can emerge.

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[234] Cf. Jørgen Bukdahl, *Søren Kierkegaard and the Common Man* trans. B. Kirmmse (Grand Rapids: W.B Eerdmans, 2001).
[235] Cf. Lowrie, *Kierkegaard* Vol. II, p. 487.
[236] Cf. Elrod, *Christendom*, p. 270.
[237] Cf. Brandes, *Danmark.*

CONCLUSION

Attack upon Christendom is not an aberration. According to Kierkegaard's own clearly stated intentions in his journals and in *Point Of View*, there is a distinct Christian purpose to the authorship, to which *Attack* is an appropriate conclusion. However, Kierkegaard's selective memory in his later, largely unpublished works furnish grounds for treating Kierkegaard's assessment of his own project with some caution. Fortunately, we need not take Kierkegaard's own words about the connection that his Christian concerns have with the previous works in order to maintain that there is indeed a strong relationship. The analogy of Plato's cave provides the hermeneutical template of the logic of ascent and descent; a reading of Kierkegaard's published works follows this logic, aptly demonstrating that *Attack* consistently works out the pure vision attained by the pseudonyms.

The key themes of the 'leap', the 'offence' and of 'indirect communication' develop throughout the authorship to the point where, in *Attack,* they dovetail, culminating in a natural fulfilment of Kierkegaard's project. Anyone who is surprised by *Attack* has not been reading Kierkegaard correctly, and anyone who ignores or dismisses the final work cannot claim to understand the essential Kierkegaard, either 'philosophically' or 'theologically'. By tracing the developments of each theme through the pseudonymous literature, a course of ascent to the purest vision of Christianity, consisting of the highest developments of the leap, the offence and indirect communication becomes evident, with the corollary descent to public engagement embodied by Kierkegaard himself and his *Attack.* The metaphor of the Cave enables us to see that the vision of the Good, in order for it to be authentic, necessarily involves an attempt to share that vision with others. Kierkegaard's pseudonyms represent analogously the different stages of growing enlightenment. Silentio is the well-meaning citizen of Christendom. puzzled at what he sees in the shadow play, aware that there is more but not knowing how to find it. Climacus stumbles around the cave, convinced he knows what the true light is, although he has not yet seen the source. Anti-Climacus, standing before the light itself also stands aloof in judgement over those who still remain in the dark. Finally, Kierkegaard, in his own name and person, represents the final stage of the philosopher king's descent back into the cave, presenting his colleagues with the vision, and attempting to rouse them from their delusions.

Leap

The 'leap' develops through the authorship. In *Fear and Trembling* Silentio imagines that the leap is an inherent skill that must be employed. He thinks of it as the

ability of the dancer to leap gracefully into new positions without a pause. For Silentio, true faith involves this nimble double movement of resigning everything and then believing that they will be returned. He understands faith as a leap that comes from the resources within oneself, and which is centrally concerned with the contents of resignation and acquisition. With Silentio's leap and the Knight of Faith, Kierkegaard is not presenting his last and best word on the subject of faith or leaping however, and he purposely leaves Silentio in the dark, intending his readers to recognise the pseudonym's eventual silence as a failure.

Climacus presents an altogether more elaborate view of leaping, one that attempts to solve Silentio's problem of misplaced emphasis. For Climacus, the leap is not supposed to be a product of skill, as if one could train and practice until the event happened as a matter of course. The moment of faith does not occur because of necessity, or because of a muscular manoeuvre that must bring about its intended result. One cannot lever oneself into the quality of faith using quantitative measures. The leap, in Climacus' hands, becomes a qualitative shift, a transition between incommensurable categories. Climacus brings something new to the discussion that Silentio had not considered. Silentio's state of 'faith' is an immanent state, that is, it assumes that the qualities of faith reside within the individual. Climacus introduces the distinction between this sort of religion of immanence, Religiousness A, and Religiousness B, a religion of transcendence. The transition to faith is a shift that does not have to do with *doing* the right thing as much as it does *being* the right kind of person so that the transition can happen to you – bestowed by the transcendent power that Climacus calls the Absolute Unknown. To this end, Climacus identifies three different, but related, leaps in *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*: the 'leap of letting go', the 'leap of the small step', and finally the 'leap of a qualitative transition' or 'shift in genus'.

When it comes to his turn, Anti-Climacus retains the language of these three categories, yet he does not mention the 'leap' by name. He writes as an 'insider' of Religiousness B, and judges that Climacus, too, has missed the point. Where Climacus was worried about the intellectual doctrines of Christianity, Anti-Climacus is concerned only with obeying the actual God-Man Jesus Christ. Using Climacean leap language, Anti-Climacus emphasises the moment of contemporaneity with Christ, and the live possibility of offence that arises as a result. Contemporaneity is a 'letting go' of historical demonstrations seeking to prove that Jesus was God. However, Anti-Climacus is not caught up in the intellectual ramifications of such 'proofs'. He instead urges the individual not to let glorious historical events cloud the ethical offence that God as a man represents. Contemporaneity is also couched in terms of the 'small step' or preparation

that the individual must make in order to be ready for the transition. Finally, Anti-Climacus' contemporaneity is this qualitative shift in being. Standing contemporaneous with Christ is not a gradual change that happens by degree.

Having, through his pseudonyms, ascended to the authentic vision of Christianity, Kierkegaard descends back to the realm of public discourse in his *Attack*, building on Anti-Climacus' contemporaneity. Kierkegaard often urges his readers to go back to *Practice in Christianity* in order to know the foundation of his current polemic. In *Attack*, contemporaneity, more than ever, serves as the moment of honest decision. Contemporaneity emphasises the qualitative distinction between Christianity and the world, only a 'leap' across the cultural detritus of Christendom will produce the opportunity for authentic faith. Contemporaneity is the cure for the disease of Christendom, the painful cut of the surgeon's knife that causes initial offence so that good may result. Silentio's Knight was able to make the leap and yet this was 'invisible', as in the case of Abraham who was unable to communicate this to society, or in the case of the tax-collector who was not publicly different from anyone else. Climacus thought of the shifting genus as having no real outward consequences, assuming that he could postpone the decision for as long as he wanted. Anti-Climacus shielded his attack on Christendom with language that kept the link between Christians and Christendom alive with the possibility of grace. Now, with *Attack*, contemporaneity reaches the next stage – the follower of Christ will undergo a comprehensible, visible, and socially consequential break from the world. Christians are as different to Christendom as God is to man. Kierkegaard develops a picture of the implications of contemporaneity that Anti-Climacus did not. Kierkegaard concludes that the life will be one of physical want and social isolation, just as Christ had no where to lay his head and then was crucified by his society. Suffering, for Kierkegaard in *Attack*, is the direct result of contemporaneity, and a sign of the presence of the offence.

Offence

The theme of the leap cannot, in truth, be too long separated from the theme of offence, especially when discussing the later works of Kierkegaard. Without the leap of contemporaneity, the transition from the quality of the world to the quality of imitation of Christ in Christianity, there can be no offence, and without the possibility of offence there can be no possibility for faith. The transition of faith is also the transition that causes one to face the possibility of *taking* offence at Christ, and also that of *giving* offence as one who necessarily stands counter to the world. Silentio's conception of offence is Christendom's conception. He is revolted by the awful murderous acts that the Knight of Faith may be required to do. For Silentio, having a faith existence means existing as an

individual above the universal. Civic morality, the code of ethics that applies to all and is understood by all, is purposefully, or teleologically, suspended by God for each individual that relates to him. Thus, Silentio sees the offence as that which goes against the laws of society, and as a result of faith.

Climacus reverses the relationship, introducing a greater offence that itself causes the lesser offences found in civil life. This essential offence stands as the gateway to faith, it is not a result of faith. Climacus' offence is not at the consequences of faith, but rather at the object of it. Climacus sees the essential offence as the Absolute Paradox's assault on human reason. The problem of the God-Man overshadows any lesser problem; it is this that the reason must assent to before Religiousness B can result. Climacus is not overly concerned with the actual life of the God-Man, and he takes pains in *Fragments* not to clothe the story of the Incarnation in any Christian trappings. Instead, Climacus looks at the intellectual stumbling block posed by the concept of the infinite residing in the finite, and he considers the metaphysical problem of reason coming up against a thought that thought cannot think. Climacus, following Socrates, identifies 'sin' with ignorance, and he thinks of the Absolute Paradox as going on the offensive, actively seeking the downfall of corrupt human reason. Only if reason cedes the throne to the Paradox at this time can there be a happy relationship, a situation that Climacus identifies as 'faith'. The unhappy relationship, when reason resists the Unknown and refuses to bow, is the 'offence'. However, just as he has already done with Silentio, Kierkegaard does not let Climacus the 'Christian outsider' recognise the true locus of the offence. Climacus says that he is against philosophical speculators and assistant professors, yet he proves himself not to have escaped from the same confines by his insistence on treating Christianity as essentially a set of doctrines to assent to, and the offence/faith dichotomy as fundamentally residing in the sphere of human reason.

By contrast, Anti-Climacus hardly ever alludes to the offence against reason. His is a purer vision of essential Christianity, and in *Sickness unto Death* and *Practice in Christianity* he sees the offence as a matter of obedience to Jesus Christ, not assent to the intellectual problem of the God-Man. When Christ says "Come to me", he is effectively saying he is God, the contemporaneous listener is faced with only two options: *either* believe and obey in faith, *or* refuse and become offended. As opposed to Climacus who seems to think of the offence as a 'one-off' event at the beginning of the life of faith, Anti-Climacus insists that this *possibility* of offence must be kept alive at all times, in order to assure that true faith is not being clouded by delusions of grandeur. This offence is an ethical offence that runs deeper than the affront to civic morality that Silentio represents. Anti-Climacus identifies two forms of the essential offence, the offence of loftiness and the offence of lowliness, both of which relate to the presence of divine

holiness in lowly humanness. The deep ethical aversion is faced when the individual considers that supreme goodness is presiding with human sin, or that a lowly human is claiming to be divine. Anti-Climacus is insistent that it is only these two categories that constitute the essential offence, and, as such, they belong only to Christ. But he does briefly consider the possibility of a third type of lesser offence, that of the offence against the establishment. Even here, however, Anti-Climacus is keen to emphasise that it is Jesus who best embodies this offence. However, Anti-Climacus hints at, but does not develop, the possibility for followers to imitate Christ as a sign of offence themselves.

It is, of course, Kierkegaard who takes this mantle on under his own name in *Attack*, where the pure vision of offence is developed into praxis. Kierkegaard adopts for himself the role of the offensive individual acting as a sign against all of Christendom. The offence in the *Attack* builds on Anti-Climacus's essential offence of the individual man who is God, and makes the connection between that offence and the qualitative difference between Christendom and Christianity. Only the one contemporaneous with Christ will be able to stand as the sign of offence in his society, in the same way that Christ was offensive to his. Kierkegaard unabashedly brings Christ into the fray, pointing out that Christ would be considered to be a philistine and barbarian in the cultured sophistication of Christendom. The implication for a Christ-imitator is that he or she too will be actively opposed to their surrounding culture. It emerges in *Attack* that authentic Christianity is not just different from the world; in order for it to be authentic, it *must* be a minority religion necessarily opposed to the wider 'host' society. By imitating and embodying Christ's offence, Kierkegaard moves into the realm of reduplication, using himself as a sign of contradiction, speaking directly yet, by his very offensive presence, provoking a choice from his listeners that has nothing to do with outward appearances. Thus, Kierkegaard's offence in *Attack* represents the convergence of the fully developed 'leap' of contemporaneity, and that of indirect communication.

Indirect Communication

Neither Kierkegaard nor any of his pseudonyms have any time for those people who attempt to objectify what can only be approached subjectively. The authorship differentiates between direct and indirect communication, direct communication comprising those things which can be preached from a street corner: complete parcels of information that are more fundamentally concerned with the knowledge of the communicator than with the response of the listener. Indirect communication is the presentation of a message in such a way that the listening individual must make a personal choice about the content of the communication. Kierkegaard patterns his indirect communication after Socrates' maieutic method, an approach that refrains from

didacticism and exerting influence and instead brings the learner to a place of personal appropriation. Along with his later pseudonyms, Kierkegaard concludes that in Christendom Christianity can only be communicated indirectly. Because civilised Denmark assumes that Christianity is comfortable common sense, something is needed to jolt individuals to take responsibility personally for what they say they believe, or honestly to reject the call to faith. The movement through the pseudonyms is a movement towards inwardness, subjectivity and the relation of persons, not objective knowledge and the common assumptions of the herd mentality.

Silentio recognises the value of indirect communication for matters of faith, yet true to his name, he is brought to the conclusion that silence is the only form that the indirectness can take. Silentio thinks that the Knight of Faith will be someone inwardly above, or suspended from, the morality of his surrounding culture, yet outwardly able to move invisibly through society. Silentio finds a specific example of a Knight in Abraham, and praises the patriarch's ability to stay silent without publicly explaining the demands that God had made of him. As a literary character, Silentio also represents silence itself, in that Kierkegaard intentionally brings his non-Christian, non-faithful pseudonym to numerous points where he cannot understand Abraham or explain faith. As a storyteller, a poet and a dialectician, Silentio fails in his attempt to communicate Abraham. Silence in *Fear and Trembling* is indirect communication in two ways. First, Abraham's silence *protects* him from gaining followers. Thrusting the crowds away by refusing to explain oneself is a mark of indirect communication. Secondly, Silentio's silence also serves as indirect communication because it *prompts* or compels the listeners to make a decision about faith that is not informed by any content that Silentio gives to the category. Silentio understands faith as radically individual, and thus his need to stay silent on the matter stems from the impossibility of telling someone else what their faith demands will consist of. This leads to the unfortunate conclusion that faith is completely cut off from any useful discursive category, and to the tautology that the Knight of Faith can be recognised only as far as he is not recognisable. This unsatisfactory situation begins to be rectified with Climacus, the pseudonym who ascends closer to the authentic vision.

Climacus develops indirect communication, expanding the category and increasing its importance to his version of authentic Christianity. He builds on Silentio's assessment, agreeing that faith is a matter to be individually appropriated, thus falling under the aegis of indirect communication. However, Climacus' 'faith' is directed towards *Christianity*, and as such it is possible for each individual to apprehend the same goal of faith, and for that goal to be communicated to others without the communicator ultimately having to collapse back into silence. Behind Climacus' 'indirect

communication' is the idea of 'double reflection', whereby the communicator and the listener are kept apart, yet at the same time both parties can reflect on a common communication kept at a common distance. Climacus refers to double reflection as the 'tension of contrasting forms', creating a triad relationship of communicator, listener and the message itself. Three aspects to Climacus' double reflection can be identified. First, there is an aspect focussing on the 'outward' relationship of the communicator and the listener, where, in 'doubleness', both participants are kept apart so as to be free to individually pursue their personal appropriation of the common content of the message. Secondly, the 'inward' aspect of double reflection highlights the process within each person whereby there is a tension created between the 'thinking' of something and it's 'existing'. The truth of the message arises from meditating, or reflecting, on the thought and then appropriating it for oneself in one's existence. Thirdly, there is an aspect of repetition. Climacus finds, through a glance at the previous pseudonymous authorship, that the truth emerges not from one didactic source, but instead by the constant repetition, or doubling, of the communication, each from a different point of view. Consistent with Climacus' particular 'stage' of ascent, he remains fixated on the intellectual demands of faith, seeming to locate the essence of Christianity in the realm of Reason and the Absolute Paradox's offence to the understanding. As such, it is no surprise that Climacus' indirect communication develops as the primarily mental process of double reflection. He suggests the possibility of the truth existing in other ways besides the 'existence' of intellectual appropriation – namely the possibility of an essential relationship between the messenger and the message. However, Kierkegaard does not allow Climacus to have the highest vision of Christianity, and thus, Climacus with his double reflection does not have a complete apprehension of essence of indirect communication. It is Anti-Climacus who will collapse the distance between the communicator and the communication, making the messenger the message.

Between Climacus and Anti-Climacus, however, stands the important affair of *The Corsair*, which, with its public mockery, effectively destroyed Kierkegaard's carefully constructed indirect communication at this point. It is by examining this affair and its fallout that we can see how Kierkegaard's project was a mixture of planned and reactive elements. Kierkegaard was intending to end his authorship with *Postscript*, hoping that by keeping his readers at arm's length *via* the double reflection of the pseudonyms they would indirectly be brought to the stage of having to make a decision. With his cover blown however, that all-important distance was no longer possible, and it did not seem as if the stages of communication could end by leaving the readers standing in the mouth of the cave.

The result was Anti-Climacus, a pseudonym who takes up where Climacus left off, and who claims to be a Christian of the highest sort. Anti-Climacus is an entirely new kind of pseudonym who enjoys a relationship of superiority over all the previous characters, and even over Kierkegaard himself. Anti-Climacus writes from the position of having seen the pure Christian vision. Explicitly building on double reflection, Anti-Climacus introduces his new category of indirect communication, calling it 'reduplication'. Double reflection is inadequate for expressing the core element of Christianity. Only the reduplication that exists when the messenger embodies his message can indirectly convey what is essential to authentic Christianity. As the God-Man, Jesus Christ as a human who is also divine *is* the communication of the Christian message, which is a message of choice. It is the very existence of Christ that prompts the individual to have to make a decision of acceptance or rejection. The problem that Anti-Climacus sees with Christendom is that it has sought to separate the teaching from the teacher, revelling in the glory of the gospel while forgetting the contradictory figure of Christ. But it is Christ's very being as a sign of contradiction that constitutes his message. With reduplication, the communicator exists in perfect *incognito*, able to speak out directly, yet because of who he is, able to maintain the indirect communication. This is what Christ is doing when he calls people to himself, identifying himself as God. The speech may be straightforward, but the message is rendered indirect because here it is a human being claiming divine status. The only recourse left to the listener is *either* offence, *or* obedience. Logical proofs and miraculous demonstrations are not enough to do away with this essential contradiction. Anti-Climacus introduces this new development in the category of indirect communication, but he raises doubts that mere humans will be able effectively to undertake reduplication. Ultimately, Anti-Climacus finds that it is only Christ who stands as an example of the teacher who is a sign of contradiction in relation to his teaching, who embodies by his very life the possibility of offence.

Contrary to an assumption found throughout the secondary literature, the non-pseudonymous polemics of Kierkegaard's final *Attack* are not an example of direct communication. First, *Attack* is indirect because it is intentionally a one-sided corrective, Kierkegaard intends it to be taken as a medicinal dose in order to balance the excesses of Christendom, and thus it is not a direct presentation of stand-alone knowledge. Secondly, *Attack* is indirect because its primary function is to act as the catalyst for decision, making the listeners aware of their responsibility to make a choice. As with all indirect communication, *Attack* is fundamentally concerned with the one receiving the message, and the success of the communication is bound up with the personal appropriation of it in the lives of the listener. Christendom's citizens must face honestly the choice that

Kierkegaard and his assault presents to them. *Either* they begin to live as authentic Christians, *or* they openly reject God. In a state of honesty, officially sanctioned, comfortable Christianity cannot exist. Thirdly, and most importantly, it is by furthering Anti-Climacus' category of reduplication that Kierkegaard is able to openly attack the establishment while maintaining the all- important indirect quality of his communication. With his *Attack*, Kierkegaard goes where his pseudonyms could not, adopting the mantle of reduplication that Anti-Climacus thought belonged to Christ alone. Kierkegaard embodies the sign of contradiction, drawing attention to himself with his outrageous public attack, only to thrust people away by his very inadequacy in light of his own vision of Christianity. It is manifestly true that Kierkegaard does not embody the authentic Christianity that he calls attention to, but it is this contradiction that *is* his message. In *Attack*, Kierkegaard is not communicating Christianity but honesty. Kierkegaard, by his own life and the circumstances of his *Attack*, presents the possibility of offence in that his listeners cannot follow him or take pleasure in his rhetoric. He insists on maintaining that he is not a Christian, thereby removing the veneer of respectability that such a claim bestows in Christendom. He is not a reformer, who is leading a popular movement, and he is not an apologist, who makes Christianity a matter of sophisticated arguments. Like Christ, Kierkegaard's very weakness and obvious inadequacies for the job allow him to embody his message. Christ's message was a call to faith, that one should come to him without offence. Kierkegaard's message is a call to honesty, communicating his vision of authentic Christianity and presenting the responsibility for choice that the listeners have towards this vision. By making himself personally offensive, Kierkegaard, like Christ, places a barrier in the way of those who would become false disciples, or who would choose for the wrong reasons. Kierkegaard's embodiment of his call to honesty is demonstrated by his personal involvement with his communication. As with Christ, Kierkegaard intended that his contemporaries would be unable to separate the messenger from the message. With this final development of reduplication, Kierkegaard in his own person became indirect communication.

The articles in the *Moment* and in the *Fatherland*, which together make up Kierkegaard's *Attack Upon Christendom* demonstrate that there is a connection between the themes that concern the pseudonyms and the message of the openly identified author. That there would be a general connection is, of course, not surprising, but the claim of this thesis is that the cord that binds the earlier with the later literature is stronger than is usually supposed, if it is supposed at all. It is in *Attack* that the most important philosophical and theological themes of the pseudonyms come to fruition. This culmination is not accidental or purely a product of wishful hindsight, for it was always Kierkegaard's intent that the pseudonyms would represent stages along the way to an

authentic relationship towards Christ, an intent not only displayed in the unpublished journals, but also made manifest in the works themselves. To read Silentio, Climacus or even Anti-Climacus in isolation from each other and from the final stage to with they all point, is to gain only a partial picture of Kierkegaard's 'Christianity' and his life's thought. Likewise, to assume as straightforward works that Kierkegaard intended to be indirect is to do violence to the careful polyvalence and important indirection of his project, a project that is as 'obviously' Christian as Christ is 'obviously' God. Like people who climb through the cave towards the light, each of Kierkegaard's characters demonstrates a growing awareness of the truth. The leap, the offence, and indirect communication, taken as independent ideas, develop throughout the pseudonyms until they are seen clearly in the light of authentic Christianity. Yet the vision of the Good, once attained, does not end with at an Anti-Climacian height, for the Good entails that the awareness of it be shared. Finally the key themes are bound up together in *Attack*, and put to good use in a spirited engagement with those still in the cave. *Attack* gives these important themes completion and practical significance, while the themes in turn provide the strong foundation and context for Kierkegaard's final thoughts.

The academy has not been kind to Kierkegaard. His authorship has been distorted and dissected, his final words and actions ignored or misunderstood. One school of thought seeks to downplay, neglect or explicitly deny Kierkegaard's Christianity, and hence his most Christian works. Here, Kierkegaard's assessment of his own project is severely criticised. As a result, the Christian direction of the pseudonyms is cast into doubt, along with the final *Attack* and its overtly Christian concerns. This turn of events is not in fact due to Kierkegaard himself so much as it is to those scholars who have misused his writings. Theologically minded commentators tend to be the worst offenders, attributing a facile, static and 'obvious' position to Kierkegaard, casting him as an evangelist, apologist or some other proponent of a Christian cause. However, it is not only theologians who read Kierkegaard 'bluntly', for philosophers, biographers and political scientists have also had their turn shovelling in the pit. Yet the library of pseudonymous and non-pseudonymous works are *not* a mine from which collectors can take away bucketful's of 'Kierkegaard's' thoughts. Each work is a component part of the dialectical whole and scholars cannot claim to be on the right road to correct interpretation unless they face the pseudonymous works as they are, and the final writings as *they* are. It is, perhaps, impossible to approach any book without at least some shade of a prior ideological agenda, but in the case of Kierkegaardian scholarship, often it does not seem that there has even been an attempt to suppress these presuppositions, or to prevent them from overtly influencing the interpretation of the texts. Thus, Kierkegaard's appeal to his contemporary reader can also be seen as a prophetic assessment of his future

reception and his prediction of the harm that could be done to his legacy from both ends of the interpretative spectrum. As he writes in the *Moment*:

> This is how I understand it, and now I come to what will be the consequences for you. If you have ever actually had an idea that I am serving something true – well, then I for my part will on occasion do something...so that you, if you will make the effort and take care, will be able to withstand the falsification and distortion of what I say and all the attacks upon my character – but your comfortableness, no, my dear reader, that I will not promote. If you imagine that I am a waiter, then you have never been my reader; if you actually are my reader, then you will understand that I can even regard it as my duty to you that you will be strained a little if you do not want the falsification and distortion, the lies and the slander, to wrest from you the idea that you have had about my serving something true. (*Moment* 106)

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