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Empathy and divine union in Kierkegaard: solving the faith/history problem in *Philosophical Fragments*

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Abstract: Søren Kierkegaard's account of faith in *Philosophical Fragments* claims that the historical Incarnation is necessary for faith, but that historical evidence for the Incarnation is neither necessary nor sufficient for faith. It has been argued that the defence of these two claims gives rise to a faith/history problem for Kierkegaard and that it is incoherent to defend an account of faith which affirms both the necessity of the historical Incarnation and rejects the necessity and sufficiency of the historical evidence for the Incarnation. I argue that this problem can be solved by applying Eleonore Stump's (2013) account of divine-human union. I argue that the Incarnation is necessary because it allows us to enjoy a kind of mutual empathy with Christ which is the basis of divine-human union and that the historical evidence is neither necessary nor sufficient since faith is grounded in a second-person experience of Christ. I claim that this solves the faith/history problem and offers a way of defending Kierkegaard's account of faith as coherent.

Introduction

In *Philosophical Fragments* (1844/1985), Søren Kierkegaard, writing under the pseudonym 'Johannes Climacus', introduces an account of Christian faith which claims that historical evidence is neither necessary nor sufficient to acquire faith; however, at the same time on his view, the historical event of God entering history, that is, the Incarnation, is necessary.¹ It has been argued that these two conditions produce an 'internal tension' (Evans (1990), 471) in Climacus's account of faith and have led some to postulate that there is a 'faith/history problem' (Ferreira (1987), 337) for it.² In this article, I present a novel solution to this alleged 'tension' in Climacus's account. I do this by making use of Eleonore Stump's (2013) analysis of the nature of the union of persons and of

God's omnipresence to describe one way of reading Climacus's account of the divine-human union which avoids this 'tension'. On this reading, the historical Incarnation is necessary for union to occur since, without the Incarnation, mutual empathy between human beings and God would not be possible, but historical evidence of this Incarnation is neither necessary nor sufficient for Christian faith since faith, on Climacus's view, is grounded in a second-person experience of Christ, or so I argue. Thus, it is possible, I maintain, to affirm both of Climacus's conditions and make sense of his account of faith.

The article proceeds as follows. First, I describe Climacus's account of faith and history in *Philosophical Fragments*. Second, I discuss the faith/history problem that arises for this account of faith. Third, I discuss the relation between union and empathy and apply Stump's (2013) account of knowledge of persons to Climacus's account of faith in order to remove the seeming tension between the claim that the historical Incarnation is necessary for faith and the claim that historical evidence is neither necessary nor sufficient for faith. Fourth, and finally, I respond to a potential objection from Linda Zagzebski's (2008; 2013) analysis of God's 'omnisubjectivity' (2008, 231), according to which God knows what it is like to be every conscious being, a property Zagzebski claims can be derived from God's omniscience and omnipresence. For if God does indeed have this property of being omnisubjective, it might seem that God can be in union with persons through a kind of 'total empathy' with them without the need for the Incarnation; so, if God is omnisubjective, then it might seem that my solution fails. I reply to this objection by arguing that whilst omnisubjectivity can explain how God can empathize with us, it cannot explain how we can empathize with God. Therefore, I conclude, an account of omnisubjectivity does not provide a fatal objection to my proposed solution.

Faith and history in *Philosophical Fragments*

The title page of *Philosophical Fragments* begins by asking: 'Can a historical point of departure be given for an eternal consciousness; how can such a point of departure be of more than historical interest; can an eternal happiness be built on historical knowledge?' (PF, 1). In what follows, Climacus gives an account of Christian faith (loosely disguised as a hypothetical thought project) which places decisive importance on a historical event (the Incarnation) but then goes on to claim that historical evidence is not crucial for the individual coming to faith.³ As such, he introduces an account of faith which attempts to emphasize a historical *point of departure* without describing *eternal happiness* as based on *historical knowledge*. In this section, I discuss two aspects of this account. First, I discuss the claim that a historical event is somehow necessary for faith, and, second, I discuss the claim that historical knowledge or evidence is not required and might even be detrimental to faith. In the following section, I go on to discuss whether these aspects of Climacus's account of faith are in tension.

According to the account of faith Climacus presents, human beings are in a state of ‘untruth’ or ‘sin’ (PF, 15), and they are not able to recollect or discover ‘the truth’ (PF, 9). Throughout *Philosophical Fragments*, Climacus refers to ‘the truth’ rather than ‘truth’; Climacus is not concerned with truth in general here, but with what Merold Westphal describes as a kind of ‘essential knowing’ (Westphal (2014), 125–126), namely, the truths that are essential for Christian faith. For Climacus, then, humans are not able to arrive at the truths that are required for Christian faith independently of external intervention. Rather, the learner (as Climacus calls him) must come to faith through a revelation of God, in which he receives both ‘the truth’ and ‘the condition’ for receiving the truth directly from God (PF, 18). That is, there must be a kind of ‘rebirth’ (PF, 18), such that the learner’s cognitive faculties are entirely transformed: faith occurs when God is revealed to the individual and he undergoes a cognitive and moral transformation from a state of sin to a state of union with God.⁴

God’s purpose in bringing the truth to the individual is a kind of union, Climacus thinks, which is motivated by love. Since God cannot be motivated by need (PF, 24), his motivation can only be a kind of love for the learner in which he tries to ‘win him’ in order to achieve equality (PF, 25). This is because, according to Climacus, ‘only in equality or in unity is there understanding’ (PF, 25). It becomes evident here that Climacus is not merely concerned with the learner coming to know some important propositional truths; rather, he raises the question of how union with an eternal God is possible for an imperfect human learner.

The issue that arises for Climacus is that, since the learner is in a state of *untruth*, there appears to be an insurmountable gap between God and humanity preventing any kind of union from occurring. Climacus thus proposes a story (or a ‘poetical venture’ (PF, 26) as he describes it) to help explain how this gap might be closed. He imagines that there is a powerful king who falls in love with a poor maiden. The king considers whether the maiden could be forced into marrying him; however, the king fears, if this occurred the maiden would be happier to remain in poverty, loved by an equal rather than being forced to change her entire life (PF, 26–27). The problem, as Climacus describes it, is that even if the girl agreed to the relationship, because of the vast difference between them, mutual understanding would be impossible (PF, 27–28).

Climacus maintains that the king’s predicament raises a similar problem for his account of faith: the learner is in *untruth* yet he is the ‘object of the god’s love’ (PF, 28). There appears to be a problem here: how can the learner in his state of *untruth* and a God who is perfect ever expect to understand, and so be in union with, one another? If there is an insurmountable epistemic distance between a king and a maiden, the difference between God and humanity must be vast. Thus, Climacus takes upon himself the ‘poet’s task’ (PF, 28) of finding a solution to this problem.

First, he considers whether union can be brought about by a kind of ‘ascent’ (PF, 29) in which ‘god would then draw up the learner toward himself, exalt him, divert

him with joy lasting a thousand years' (PF, 29). Likewise, the king might appear before the maiden, revealing his love for her and presenting his own status and wealth in order to win her. The problem for this kind of ascent is that, although it might have resulted in the girl's happiness, it could never make the king happy, since 'he did not want his own glorification but the girl's, and his sorrow would be very grievous because she would not understand him' (PF, 29). Analogously for God, any revelation through a kind of ascent would remove the possibility of union (PF, 30).

Therefore, union must be brought about by a kind of 'descent' in which God becomes 'the equal of the lowliest of persons' (PF, 31). To win the heart of the maiden, the king must descend to her level: present himself as a peasant to avoid the distractions of wealth and hope that the maiden will love him freely. Climacus thinks that God must do the same: in taking on the 'form of a servant' (PF, 31), God descends to the level of the learner in order to make understanding possible. For union to be made possible, God must become a servant and win the heart of the learner, bringing him both the condition for the truth and the truth itself.⁵

The Incarnation is his solution to the problem of union and is the only way to bridge the gap between a learner in the state of *untruth* and a perfect God motivated by love. This somehow enables a kind of mutual understanding between God and the learner so that faith can occur. Yet, this is not a kind of deception, as with the king, since God does not merely imitate a servant to force a union with humanity; rather, he actually takes on human form. The story of the king and the maiden provides us with a parallel which gives us an insight into Climacus's perspective on the relationship between God and humanity and helps us to see how central the Incarnation is to his account of faith. However, Climacus's venture is *poetical* in nature and does not provide a clear account of how or why the Incarnation makes union possible. In this article I endeavour to make this account clearer and in doing so defend Climacus's account of faith. Before I go on to do this, I will discuss Climacus's claim that historical knowledge is an inadequate basis for faith.

The result of Climacus's account is that the only way of acquiring the truth is from some kind of direct revelatory encounter of God. Climacus goes on to describe the implications of this position for our understanding of the relation between history and faith. He argues that for a contemporary follower who witnessed the miracles and listened to the teachings of Christ, it is possible not to stand in the correct relation to God despite being in historical proximity to Christ. In other words, it is possible to experience the historical Christ and lack the condition requisite for faith.

In such a case, we clearly see that what is necessary for faith is not any sort of historical belief but rather, the receiving of 'the condition', which signifies a transformation from sinfulness to standing in the proper relation to the truth. It follows, Climacus thinks, that both the contemporary followers and the later follows are in the same position (PF, 104–105), namely, both must receive the condition directly

from God and not from any historical source. The result of this is Climacus's startling claim that:

Even if the contemporary generation had not left anything behind except these words, 'We have believed in such and such a year the god appeared in the humble form of a servant, lived and taught among us, and then died' – this is more than enough. (PF, 104)

Climacus is concerned with two issues here, according to C. Stephen Evans. First, 'the attainment of the Truth must somehow be equally available to people of every generation' (Evans (1990), 473), since, according to Climacus, there would be an injustice if the accident of the date of one's birth impacted on one's ability to gain the truth; thus, historical evidence cannot be a necessary requirement for faith, he thinks. Second, Evans contends, Climacus is concerned with 'the incommensurability between authentic religious commitment and matters of intellectual evidence' (*ibid.*), a theme which is developed in more detail in the *Postscript*. Faith is passionate and decisive, whereas objective evidence is approximate and dispassionate, according to Climacus (CUP, 23–49). The general concern here is to resist reducing faith to a question of academic scholarship.⁶

Nevertheless, regardless of Climacus's motives, he maintains that historical evidence is not necessary for faith, and '[o]nly the person who personally receives the condition from the god . . . believes' (PF, 103). On the face of it, there appears to be a tension or even a pragmatic contradiction between these two conditions. On the one hand, if the historical event of God entering history in the Incarnation is necessary for faith, then it is difficult to see why historical evidence is not more significant than it is in Climacus's account of faith. On the other hand, if historical evidence is insignificant for faith, as it seems to be in Climacus's account, then it is difficult to see why or how the historical event of God entering history in the Incarnation is necessary for faith. In the next section I discuss the apparent conflict between these two conditions in more detail before going on to suggest a way to resolve it.

The faith/history problem

As we have noted, there appears to be some kind of tension in Climacus's account of faith: on the one hand, a historical event plays a crucial role for the learner's union with God (I call this 'the event condition'), yet on the other hand, her historical knowledge of this event seems to be insignificant (I call this 'the evidence condition'). We might think that there is a kind of pragmatic contradiction here such that the learner has to claim both that the historical event of God's entering history is essential for her belief, but that the evidence supporting this event is not essential. This would require her to hold two conditions which cannot be sensibly asserted together.⁷ We might also think, as the two philosophers I go on to discuss do, that Climacus's account would be more coherent if we rejected either the evidence condition or the event condition.

This tension (or perhaps, pragmatic contradiction) has generated a great deal of discussion, especially in the past thirty years. One way of understanding this problem is to ask why the historical event is necessary at all, in other words, to reject the event condition. For instance, on this problem, Michael P. Levine asks rhetorically, '[W]hy would God have had to exist in time at all in order for man to enter into such a relationship with God?' (Levine (1982), 171). Levine argues that it is really the belief in the proposition that God has made an appearance in time rather than the belief in the historical event of God actually entering into time that is necessary for Climacian faith. Since Climacus argues that a scrap of paper with the words "We have believed in such and such a year the god appeared in the humble form of a servant, lived and taught among us, and then died" . . . is more than enough' (PF, 104) for faith to occur, it is difficult to see why the historical event is necessary at all, according to Levine.

Levine argues that although the historical event is supposed to be necessary, it is unclear how the relation between the event and the belief is supposed to work (Levine (1982), 173–174); thus, Climacus's 'claim for [the] centrality of' the Incarnation 'does not seem to . . . be adequately reconcilable with his concept of faith or "truth" as subjectivity' (*ibid.*, 174).⁸ Levine's concern is that Climacus has not fully explained the relationship between the historical event and the subsequent belief, and, since such a strong emphasis is placed on religious beliefs as 'subjective' and independent of historical evidence by Climacus, we can reject the event condition without significantly changing Climacus's account.

Another way of understanding this problem is discussed by M. J. Ferreira (1987), who thinks that we need to reject the evidence condition in order to make sense of Climacus's account. She claims that:

The problem facing Kierkegaard would be that a historical fact that 'something in particular' happened cannot be distinguished from other events if we have *absolutely* no historical information as to its character. That is, the possibility of faith requires a characterizable historical event, yet historical information about the event is not allowed by him to be crucial. (*ibid.*, 341; emphasis in the original)

The issue that Ferreira raises is that without any historical knowledge of the Incarnation, beliefs about the Incarnation cannot meaningfully refer to the historical event. If Christian belief depends on the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, then, Ferreira thinks, we need some accurate information about this historical figure in order to know that our beliefs refer to him. However, this seems to be ruled out by the evidence condition, and so it is difficult to make sense of this account. Ferreira's solution to this problem is to argue that Climacus includes an *a priori* proof of the Incarnation in his claim that no human being could possibly invent such a hypothesis as the Incarnation (*ibid.*, 342). This *a priori* proof, Ferreira thinks, removes the faith/history problem since Climacus demonstrates the truth of the historical Incarnation. Without such a proof, Ferreira argues, Climacus 'is left with an insoluble conflict between ontological historical

decisiveness and epistemological indifference of the historical, but with such a strategy he undermines his own understanding of the passion and risk of faith' (Ferreira (1987), 345).

Ferreira's response is the opposite of Levine's: whereas Levine thinks that we should reject the event condition, Ferreira claims that we should reject the evidence condition since Climacus employs a kind of proof of the Incarnation. Neither Levine nor Ferreira thinks that it is possible to defend both conditions without resulting in some kind of tension.

Evans has attempted to provide a defence of Climacus's account and these two conditions. First, in response to Ferreira's argument, that we should reject the evidence condition because of a problem of reference, Evans argues that we do not need to adopt an *a priori* proof in order to defend Climacus's account. Rather, we should understand Climacian faith as 'epistemologically basic' (Evans (1990), 475).⁹ A basic belief is a belief which is not held on the basis of evidence that is propositional in character or on the basis of a deductive argument. In the case of properly basic perceptual beliefs, for instance, I can know that there is a cup of coffee in front of me just in virtue having a certain kind of experience; furthermore, this experience grounds my belief in the coffee cup. Under Evans's reading of Climacus's account, an encounter with Christ acts as the 'grounds of faith' (*ibid.*), meaning that faith does not rest on the historical evidence of the truth of the Incarnation. That is, it is not the case that this encounter with Christ provides historical evidence for his existence, but rather, the experience grounds my belief in the same way that my experience of the coffee cup grounds my perceptual belief.¹⁰

Evans claims that the implicit motivation for Climacus's account is that 'Jesus is no mere dead historical figure, but a living person who can still be experienced by individuals' (*ibid.*, 476). However, in order for this belief to be 'meaningful', Evans thinks, we must have some true historical beliefs about this Jesus, but this can be achieved without rejecting the evidence condition. This can be done, Evans maintains, by claiming that 'objectivity in the content of one's beliefs is compatible with subjectivity in the grounds' (*ibid.*); it is perfectly plausible, Evans thinks, that we could come to know historical truths about the Incarnation as a result of a direct, experiential encounter with Christ. 'What is required', he claims,

is that this encounter be an experience of Jesus in which true knowledge is given. The situation is analogous to a case of ordinary sense perception in which I come to believe that there is a flower before me because I directly perceive the flower. In such a case I do not normally regard the existence of the flower as something that I infer or conclude on the basis of evidence. (*ibid.*)

Although arrived at because of certain experiences, these beliefs would count as historical beliefs which were grounded in a first person experience of Christ and so would not be 'groundless' or 'arbitrary', according to Evans. Thus, we can keep hold of the evidence condition whilst still referring successfully to the historical event.

On the one hand, Evans's solution appears to provide a plausible response to Ferreira, and offers a clear example of how beliefs can meaningfully refer to historical events even if they are not grounded in historical evidence. Evans's reply to Levine, on the other hand, is less successful. Evans's suggestion for why the event condition matters is that 'it is the actual historicity of the incarnation that makes possible a revelation that can confront and correct my deep-rooted assumptions about God and myself . . . [t]he incarnation makes Christianity what is termed in *Postscript* a religion of "transcendence"' (*ibid.*, 474). Without a transcendent God who speaks to us from outside, Evans argues, 'we humans will manufacture God in our own image' (*ibid.*). Evans thinks that if we reject the event condition, then we cannot defend Climacus's account of the learner coming to the truth externally (as opposed to through her own means). The Incarnation is necessary because it makes cognitive transformation possible.

Whilst this is clearly Climacus's concern regarding the event condition, the question still remains, however, of why God needs to go to all the bother of actually becoming human, when a scrap of paper with 'God has made an appearance in time' would seem to do the job just as well. Levine claims that this scrap of paper could still provide the belief that God has entered time, which he takes to be the crucial component of Climacian faith. Taking this claim further, it is even plausible to think that God could achieve the same ends of cognitive transformation and mutual understanding through the scrap of paper without, as Evans worries, 'transform[ing] Christianity into a "Socratic" view' (*ibid.*). The miraculous scrap of paper could produce subjective, infinitely interested disciples who depended entirely on a transcendent, external truth revealed by God himself. The question raised by Levine still remains: 'Why bother with the Incarnation at all?'. The event condition appears to be superfluous to Climacus's account, and, since a more mundane, less theologically complex event (such as the revelation of some scrap of paper, for example) would achieve the same ends, we are no closer to responding to Levine's objection.¹¹

In the next section, I go on to discuss how an application of Stump's (2013) work on second-person experience and divine-human union can provide a response to this problem, offering a reading of Climacus's account of union modelled on Stump's account of empathy, and apply this to the faith/history problem. I claim that we can accept both the event condition and the evidence condition once we have a clearer account of union.

Empathy and divine union

In this section, I argue that we can resolve the alleged tension in Climacus's account by categorizing his account of union as a kind of mutual empathy with God. The kind of mutual empathy I describe requires God to have a human body, thereby making the Incarnation necessary for union to occur. Furthermore, for mutual empathy to occur, the agent needs to have a second-person experience of

God, thereby making historical evidence for the Incarnation an inadequate basis for Climacian faith. This proposed solution allows us to defend both the event condition and the evidence condition and to remove the apparent tension in Climacus's account. To argue for this, first, I discuss the concept of empathy more broadly; second, I discuss Stump's (2013) application of empathy to divine union and apply this to Climacian faith; and, third, I consider an alternative account of divine empathy from Zagzebski (2008; 2013) which provides an objection to my position.

As we have seen, for Climacus, faith arises when the learner and God achieve a kind of mutual understanding or union. The learner's relation to God is not a third-personal relation in which the learner acquires knowledge *about* God but rather a second-person relation in which the learner acquires knowledge *of* God in the 'God-relationship' (CUP, 244) as Climacus describes it.¹² This relation can be understood as a kind of empathy, I think. As Peter Goldie and Amy Coplan describe it, empathy is important because it allows us to 'gain a grasp of the content of other people's minds' and respond in an 'ethically appropriate way' to the suffering of others (Goldie & Coplan (2011), ix). Understanding empathy, then, is important for our understanding of how human agents relate to one another. Furthermore, as I will argue, since Climacus's account of human-divine union relies on mutual understanding between the human learner and God in human form, we can categorize the relation between God and the human learner as a kind of empathy.

However, one problem with this line of argument is that there isn't one agreed model of empathy in the current philosophical and psychological literature. According to a 'theory theory' account of empathy, we understand another's mental states in virtue of our theory of mind and infer certain mental states from certain behavioural traits.¹³ For example, when we see someone performing a certain action, we apply our maxim (perhaps tacitly) that 'when x performs action y , they are in mental state t ', and then we come to believe certain things about x 's mental states. This can be contrasted with a 'simulation theory' of empathy which categorizes empathy as aiming to simulate the minds of others by imagining ourselves from their perspective.¹⁴ According to the simulation theory, I do not need to employ any theory to discover your mental states; I only need to imagine myself in the particular circumstance that you are in. Our account of empathy gets broader still, when we consider the human ability to perceive emotions in other agents in a basic and non-inferential manner. Thus, for instance, I sometimes appear to be able to see that you are angry without applying any theory of mind or attempting to place myself in your shoes.¹⁵ This non-inferential experience, which is often described as a kind of 'mindreading', has been discussed in detail with reference to the recent neuroscientific discovery of 'mirror neurons', that is, neurons in the brain which fire both (i) when I am in a certain mental state and (ii) when I see another person in that same mental state, thus allowing for a kind of 'mirroring' experience in which I directly perceive the mental states of others.¹⁶

Clearly, then, there are many kinds of empathy, or at least many understandings of empathy, and so the question arises: how should we interpret the kind of empathy, or understanding of empathy, which is important for Climacus's account? The key features of Climacus's account as I have described previously are:

- (1) There is an epistemic distance between God and humans which is a result of their difference in status or kind (PF, 25–27).
- (2) God resolves this distance through the historical event of the Incarnation (PF, 29–31).
- (3) In order to enjoy union with God, the human agent needs to become contemporary with the person of Christ rather than merely learning the historical fact of his existence (PF, 104–105).¹⁷

I argue that Stump's (2013) account of mutual empathy with God can provide a contemporary defence of these three claims which resolves the apparent tension between the evidence condition and the event condition. I then consider whether this position is defensible. First, I discuss Stump's position in more detail.

Stump's account of union and (omni)presence

In order to explain the notion that God is 'maximally present' (*ibid.*, 63), that is, omnipresent, Stump employs a version of the mirror-neuron account of empathy.¹⁸ To do this, first, she discusses the concept of personal presence more generally by noting that there can be cases in which a human individual is present at a time and in a space, but there is an absence of personal presence, for example: 'She read the paper all through dinner and was never present to any of the rest of us' (*ibid.*, 64). What is lacking in this case is a kind of 'second-personal psychological connection' (*ibid.*), according to Stump. This connection is what is required to have a personal presence 'with or presence to another person' (*ibid.*; emphasis in the original). Second, in order to have a mutual personal presence, the individuals involved must experience what Stump describes as a kind of 'shared or joint attention' (*ibid.*, 69).¹⁹ To put it simply, this is the kind of experience in which there is a mutual awareness of one another as well as an awareness of each other's awareness (*ibid.*). Stump argues that between human beings, presence does not require individuals actually to share attention, but merely the 'availability of joint attention' (*ibid.*, 70; emphasis in the original). When we say that Paula is present in the room, we mean that she is available to share attention with us. Third, in addition to this minimal kind of personal presence, a richer kind of presence is possible between humans, Stump thinks (*ibid.*, 71). This she describes as a kind of 'mind-reading' or 'empathy' (*ibid.*) in which one individual can know the intentions or emotions of another in an immediate way.

Stump argues that the mirror-neuron system makes mind-reading possible since it has been observed that there exist certain neurons in the brain which 'fire both when one does some action oneself *and also* when one sees that same

action or emotion in someone else' (*ibid.*, 73). Thus, for example, when Paula witnesses Jerome cutting himself with a knife, 'Paula's mirror neuron system produces in Paula an affective state that has at least some of the characteristics of the pain Jerome is experiencing' (*ibid.*). Whilst Paula does not actually experience the physical pain which Jerome feels, she does experience some kind of feeling of pain, according to Stump. This can be extended to cases in which, for example, Paula experiences Jerome's intentions or feelings through a kind of mind-reading (*ibid.*, 75).²⁰ In human mind-reading, she argues, human beings are able to read intentions or thoughts in an immediate way and the mirror-neuron system makes possible a kind of 'intermingling of minds' (*ibid.*). The most intimate kind of presence, according to Stump, occurs when two persons are 'united in love' (*ibid.*). This occurs when two individuals 'are mutually mind-reading each other in intense shared attention' (*ibid.*).

This intimate kind of second-personal presence is how we ought to understand the orthodox Christian views of omnipresence and omniscience, Stump claims (*ibid.*, 76). First, she notes, to describe God as omniscient is at least to describe him as having maximal propositional knowledge and this includes maximal propositional knowledge of all human mental states (*ibid.*). Thus, because God is omniscient, God knows that Jerome intends to hit Paula, for example (*ibid.*, 77). This omniscience also extends to the kind of knowledge that Paula has of Jerome's intentions when she mind-reads him.

However, there is a problem in trying to explain divine-human union in the language of second-personal presence since there are some key differences between God and an ordinary human individual. It is typically assumed, Stump claims, that, because God has the attribute of impassibility, he cannot have bodily sensations or feelings as Paula does (*ibid.*, 76). Thus, whilst God can know *that* Jerome intends to hit Paula, mind-reading Jerome seems to be excluded for God, since '[a]n immaterial God cannot form an intention to move his arm to hit . . . because he has no arm to move' (*ibid.*, 77). Thus, a problem materializes for Stump's account of empathy: since there is such a difference between a human and divine mind, God cannot empathize with human beings in the way that the mirror-neuron system allows. Therefore, she concludes, 'the sharing and the presence that is the hallmark of the knowledge of persons is ruled out for God' (*ibid.*).

Nevertheless, the Christian tradition provides the resources to solve this problem, Stump argues. She goes on to apply the Chalcedonian formula for the incarnate Christ to solve this problem. Stump argues that since God has both a human nature and a divine nature, Christ's human mind enables God to be present with and to mind-read human persons in a human way (*ibid.*, 77-78). Furthermore, because of Christ's two natures, not only does God have the ability to mind-read and share attention as any other human might, but also, because of his divine mind, Christ can mind read 'miraculously, in a way that human persons otherwise could not do' (*ibid.*, 78). Stump argues that the Chalcedonian formula for the incarnate Christ allows us to give an account of

divine-human union in which God's knowledge of persons is achieved through the kind of empathy or mind-reading which she previously describes between two human beings.²¹

Before I go on to apply this account of union to Climacus's discussion of faith, I will attempt to respond to an initial objection to Stump's account (I go on to address what I take to be a much more substantial objection in the final section). We might argue that Stump's account of union appears to be too restrictive since it depends on a kind of human mind-reading experience. First, for instance, Stump's account of mind-reading is drawn largely from research which focuses on the cognitive impairments of autistic children. As Stump notes, autistic children lack the ability to mind-read or empathize in the same way as non-autistic children (*ibid.*, 71–72). The problem that arises from this is that if union with God depends on mind-reading, then autistic individuals appear to be excluded from this union. Furthermore, since union depends, at least in part, on Christ's human ability to mind-read, we might wonder if God can empathize with animals being tortured and, to take the objection to its extreme, we might worry that Christ's psychological make-up determines with whom God can empathize.²² For instance, as an introverted British philosopher I appear to be able to mind-read other introverted British philosophers more easily than people from different cultures, educations, and psychological dispositions. Thus, when I meet an extroverted Asian taxi driver, for example, my ability to mind-read, or empathize with, him is reduced by our respective psychologies. The problem comes for Stump when we consider Christ's psychological make-up: if Christ happened to be extroverted, or even autistic, and God's capacity for union with humans depends on Christ's human ability to mind-read, then perhaps those who are most similar to Christ, psychologically speaking, will be able to enjoy union with God more easily than those who are psychologically unlike Christ. More seriously, if Christ were autistic, then God's ability to mind-read might be significantly impaired, which may then impact greatly on his ability to empathize with, and so be in union with, human beings.

There is no straightforward response to these objections, and there will not be space here for a full defence of Stump's position.²³ However, I will briefly suggest what kind of response could be made on behalf of Stump, and this will be enough, I hope, to persuade the reader to consider this a plausible account of union. First, we should note that the kind of empathy that God is capable of far outstrips our human capacities for empathy. Since Christ has access to both divine power and human mind-reading, his ability to empathize is different not only in degree but also in kind from ours. Thus, to take an example from the Gospel according to John, Jesus is able to read Nathaniel's mind in a manner which is beyond an ordinary human capacity's ability to mind-read.²⁴ God also seems to be able to communicate in ways we cannot, for instance, in God's speech to Job, he claims to be able to communicate with the ocean and the Leviathan, an enormous beast with which human beings could not

communicate.²⁵ Furthermore, research has demonstrated that mammals (and some birds) share the human ability to empathize; thus, some degree of joint attention is possible between humans and animals.²⁶ This will go some way to alleviating the worries above, since God seems to be able to empathize with all human creatures and most animals in a way impossible for any mere human. Thus, it seems that this account of union is not overly restrictive.

It might appear that if God can empathize with non-human animals without becoming an animal, then it is not clear why God must become human in order to empathize with human beings.²⁷ As I go on to discuss in more detail in the final section, however, the motivation for Incarnation is not merely that God empathizes with us, but that there is a mutual empathy between God and human beings and that human beings are able to empathize with God. Furthermore, the kind of empathy God might have towards a non-human animal will still not amount to the kind of intimate union that is possible between God and human beings. So whilst God might be able to empathize with an animal which is in pain, this will not amount to mutual empathy, or intimate union, with God. It does not seem overly problematic to think that animals lack the capacity for intimate union with God and so even if God can have some degree of empathy with non-human animals, this need not rebut my argument.

Nevertheless, there is still a worry about God's capacity for union with autistic individuals, that is, that the account is too exclusive. To address this worry, we should, first, note that, although Stump refers to the cognitive impairments associated with autism, we do not have a full understanding of how autistic individuals relate socially and even less of an understanding of how they relate spiritually. It may be that autistic individuals are capable of mind-to-mind connection in some other way that does not require the mirror-neuron system. In fact, as Larry Culliford notes in his foreword to Olga Bogdashina's work on autism and spirituality, autistic individuals appear to be more receptive to spiritual experiences than non-autistic individuals (Bogdashina (2013), 12–13). Thus, it seems that more needs to be said to show that Stump's account of union is too exclusive. Though there is no space here for the depth of discussion that this topic requires, I think I have done enough to show that this objection is not fatal to Stump's account of union.

Having given an account of empathy and divine union, I now go on to apply this account to Climacus's discussion of the learner's relationship to God.

Empathy and divine union in *Philosophical Fragments*

Stump's account of union with God through a kind of mutual empathy can illuminate our understanding of Climacus's account, or so I argue. Since the model presented in *Fragments* is one in which God attempts to relate to humanity in love, and, since this is achieved by a kind of experiential revelation of God himself, it seems reasonable to think that Stump's account can explain this position.

Although, clearly, Climacus would not describe union in the same language as Stump, both accounts emphasize the importance of human experience of God in achieving divine union. I now consider how Stump's position can account for the three claims I argued were central to Climacus's account.

First, there is an epistemic distance between God and humans which is a result of their difference in status or kind, and this difference, as both Stump and Climacus maintain, prevents union with God. According to Climacus, the difference in status between God and humans originates from a lack of understanding between the learner and God. In the same way that the king cannot merely reveal himself to the maiden without destroying the potential of union, God cannot create union by the movement of ascent. Union by ascent might allow the king the opportunity to be closer to the maiden and for the maiden to be happy, but there is a lack of mutuality in the kind of union that ascent produces. Similarly, according to Stump, because there is a vast difference between the limited human mind and the impassable mind of God, mutual mind-reading is not possible in the straightforward manner that it is available between two humans.

Second, God somehow resolves this distance through the historical event of the Incarnation. For Climacus, this is described as the movement of 'descent' in which God changes himself to make union possible through a kind of mutual understanding. To flesh this out in more detail, we can apply Stump's account of empathy and union: God must become human to allow a mutual mind-reading between God and human beings. Because the intimate kind of empathy enabled by the mirror-neuron system requires a human body, God must become human to make union possible. Furthermore, whilst God could know everything there is to know about a human being without *descent* (in virtue of his omniscience), he could not enjoy the mutuality of understanding and intimacy that is required for Stump's account of union. Although Climacus (or perhaps, Kierkegaard) could not have envisaged the application of this account of empathy to our union with Christ (considering the scientific research on shared attention and mirror-neurons is a relatively recent discovery), this brings a new way of understanding why exactly the Incarnation is necessary for Climacus's account of union, even if historical knowledge of it is not. The reason that the Incarnation is not a superfluous detail for Climacus is that in order for God to enjoy deep and mutual personal union with human beings, it is necessary that he *descends* to our level, that is, that he 'appear[s] in the form of a *servant*' (PF, 31). If God did not have a human nature, if he did not in fact descend to the level of the learner and the Incarnation were merely a superfluous detail, then intimate union with God would not be possible. Whilst it might be possible for God to know our intentions or desires without descending, the difference between the divine and human minds would be too great for mutual union, as described by Stump.

Third, in order to enjoy union with God, the human agent needs to become contemporary with the person of Christ rather than merely learning the historical fact

of his existence. According to Climacus, 'there is not and cannot be any question of a follower at second hand' (PF, 102); testimony of acquaintance with Christ is not sufficient for faith. This need not be a claim about historical contemporaneity however,²⁸ rather, as the later pseudonym Anti-Climacus describes it, the believer 'must be just as contemporary with Christ's *presence* as his contemporaries were' (PC, 9; italics mine). Or, to put it more simply, an agent must have a second-person experience of Christ, rather than just knowing historical information about him. We can now see that the event condition is necessary for Climacus's account; the Incarnation is necessary for union to occur and a scrap of paper will not be sufficient to provide union with God. We can also see why the evidence condition is important: if union with God requires a kind of shared-attention experience, then no amount of historical research will result in the deep, personal union with which Climacus is concerned.²⁹ Instead, an emphasis on historical evidence takes the focus away from union altogether and makes faith something which is decided by the academically able who are knowledgeable enough to know whether some historical event is probable or not.³⁰

Stump's account of union offers us a new way of understanding Climacus's account of descent and a way of reconciling his emphasis on the event of the Incarnation whilst claiming that historical knowledge is neither necessary nor sufficient for faith. This reading offers a new solution to the faith/history problem and allows us to defend both the event condition and the evidence condition. In the next section, I go on to consider what I take to be the most important objection to this solution.

Objection: 'omnisubjectivity' and union

We now return to the question of whether another account of empathy might better explain how God relates to human beings. In this section, I consider Linda Zagzebski's (2008; 2013) explanation and defence of the divine attribute she calls 'omnisubjectivity' (2008, 231). To explain just what this attribute is meant to be, Zagzebski employs a kind of simulation theory of empathy. As I will go on to describe, Zagzebski's account of omnisubjectivity provides an alternative way of describing God's empathy for human beings and his union with them. However, because omnisubjectivity is entailed by an orthodox understanding of other divine attributes, e.g. omniscience, on Zagzebski's view, the Incarnation is not necessary for God to have a kind of empathy and union with human beings. Thus, her account, if plausible, provides a compelling objection to my solution of the faith/history problem in *Philosophical Fragments*. I will begin by discussing Zagzebski's account of omnisubjectivity in more detail, before attempting to offer a defence of my position.

Put simply, omnisubjectivity is 'the property of consciously grasping with perfect accuracy and completeness the first-person perspective of every conscious being' (2008, 231). It is entailed, Zagzebski claims, by the attribute of omniscience (2013,

31–33): if God knows everything there is to know, then he not only knows *that* I enjoy eating KitKat Chunkies, for example, he also knows what it is like for me to experience the taste of a KitKat Chunky. Zagzebski claims that subjectivity ‘is the feature of consciousness that allows us to say there is such a thing as *what it is like* to have a conscious experience of a certain kind’ (Zagzebski (2013), 10; emphasis in the original). It is commonly held, Zagzebski maintains, that no one knows exactly what it is like for me to have the experiences of the world I have. Thus, there is a certain kind of knowledge such that ‘a person must have been in a conscious state of a certain kind in order to know what it is like to be in such a state’ (*ibid.*, 13), she claims. This raises a problem for our understanding of God, Zagzebski thinks: any traditional Christian account of God maintains that God is omniscient and this entails that God has maximal propositional knowledge (and this includes facts about human mental states); however, there is more to know about his creatures than merely propositional knowledge.

Zagzebski goes on to argue that omniscience must, therefore, entail a kind of omnisubjectivity in which not only does God have maximal propositional knowledge but also he knows what it is like to be each one of his creatures. In order to explain omnisubjectivity in more detail, Zagzebski presents a model of empathy which incorporates the following five theses:

- (i) Empathy is a way of acquiring an emotion like that of another person. (Zagzebski (2008), 238)
- (ii) *A* thinks that the fact that *B* has a given emotion is a reason for her to have the same emotion. (*ibid.*)
- (iii) When *A* empathizes with *B*, *A* takes on the perspective of *B*. (*ibid.*, 239)
- (iv) When *A* empathizes with *B*, *A* is motivated from *A*’s own perspective to assume the perspective of *B*. (*ibid.*)
- (v) An empathetic emotion is consciously representational. The empathizer does not adopt the intentional object of the emotion she represents as her own intentional object. (*ibid.*, 240)

According to this account of empathy, when Paula sees Jerome in pain and feels empathy towards him, for Zagzebski, Paula attempts to place herself in Jerome’s perspective and she projects the pain that he feels. Whilst Paula’s mental state is similar to the pain state she would undergo if she were being cut, it is only an attempt to copy Jerome’s feelings; she does not feel pain herself.

Zagzebski proposes that a kind of ‘total perfect empathy with all conscious beings who have ever lived or ever will live . . . is the property . . . omnisubjectivity’ (Zagzebski (2013), 29). She contends that if God is omniscient, then he is able to empathize perfectly with every individual, since he knows not only every non-phenomenal fact, for example, that $2 + 2 = 4$, but also every phenomenal fact, for example, what it is like to see a red tomato, and so he then knows what it is like to be every conscious being in every conscious state. Zagzebski’s account of

omnisubjectivity thus describes a God who has ‘total, unmediated intellectual comprehension of us’ (*ibid.*, 51). Furthermore, since a Christian conception of God also contains the attribute of omnipresence, Zagzebski claims that God has the power to ‘enter into the consciousness of a human’ (*ibid.*, 34), resulting in a kind of divine–human union in which we can feel ‘understood, accepted, sustained, and loved’ by God (*ibid.*, 52).

However, in order to defend this thesis, Zagzebski concedes that if we accept the attribute of omnisubjectivity, we must deny that God is impassable (*ibid.*, 45). She notes that the property of omnisubjectivity entails that God knows what it is like to be in pain and even if this is only a copy of the feeling of pain, ‘a perfect copy of pain is surely ruled out by impassibility’ (*ibid.*, 44). Zagzebski notes that God as omnisubjective would be affected by sensations outside himself and this would rule out the attribute of impassibility. Nevertheless, she contends, since omnisubjectivity is entailed by omniscience, we should be more ready to give up impassibility than omnisubjectivity.

It should appear obvious how this discussion is relevant to the proposed solution of the faith/history problem. If Zagzebski is correct in thinking that omnisubjectivity is entailed by omniscience, then we do not need Stump’s account to explain how God can empathize with human beings and achieve union. Rather, if God is omnisubjective then he already knows what it is like to be me, and, since he is omnipresent in every situation with the ability to enter my consciousness, the result is an account of union which does not require the Incarnation as necessary. If this is plausible, then my proposed solution fails.

First, there is clearly a disagreement between Stump and Zagzebski concerning the attribute of impassibility. The very reason Stump postulates that we need the Incarnation to understand union is because God is incapable of experiencing human sensations; it is because she wishes to defend God’s impassibility. Yet, as we have seen, Zagzebski argues that we should favour omnisubjectivity over impassibility. Nevertheless, if Stump’s account is correct, then we have a way of defending both divine attributes. Stump’s application of the Chalcedonian formula allows her to resolve this dispute by claiming that God can experience empathy in a human manner because of Christ’s human mind whilst remaining entirely impassible in his divine mind. This solution allows us to keep hold of both divine attributes, which, if possible, is surely preferable. Furthermore, Stump’s solution does not employ any extra resources beyond the Christian tradition to do this; in fact, by applying the Incarnation to this problem, Stump shows precisely why it is so important for God to become human, thereby, perhaps inadvertently, providing an answer to another difficult theological question.

Second, both Stump’s and Zagzebski’s discussions of empathy are frustratingly brief. Zagzebski discusses one understanding of empathy, namely, a kind of simulation theory for which she draws heavily on Julinna Oxley (2006), whereas, Stump’s position depends heavily on the mirror-neuron account of empathy defended by Vittorio Galese (2001; 2003; 2005). As I previously discussed, there

is a disagreement about whether we ought to understand empathy as a simulation process (as Zagzebski contends), or as a direct perception of someone's mental states (as Stump contends), and it is on this disagreement that the objection hinges. One way forward would be to defend the strong claim that empathy is dependent on embodiment, and that Zagzebski's version of simulation theory does not adequately capture all aspects of empathy.³¹ As Stump has discussed in depth, the discovery of the mirror-neuron system points to an account of empathy in which one person is able to directly perceive the mental states of others, but this depends on the ability to mirror the other person. The implications of this are that empathy requires some kind of body.³² I will not attempt to defend this ambitious claim here.

Whilst I do not here defend the strong claim that *all* instances of empathy require a body, it is mutual empathy and not merely empathy which is needed for union with God (at least according to Climacus). Whereas Zagzebski has an account of how it can be that God can empathize with us, it doesn't carry over to how we can empathize with God. Union with God is a two-way street, and as Ray S. Yeo (2014) notes in his discussion of omnisubjectivity and its relation to indwelling, on Zagzebski's account 'it is fairly clear that human minds of believers do not share in the subjective point of view of the divine mind' (*ibid.*, 218). Yeo thinks that this rules out Zagzebski's account as an explanation of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the same also applies, I think, to an account of union.³³ We need to know not only how God empathizes with us, but also how we can empathize with God.

This response to Zagzebski is very similar to Climacus's arguments concerning ascent and descent which were discussed in the first section. Zagzebski's account of union is an example of union by ascent. Whilst the king understands the maiden fully on Zagzebski's picture, the king is not an equal to be loved by the maiden and she cannot love him freely without the king worrying about her motives. Whilst Zagzebski can explain how God can empathize with human beings, she can account neither for the reciprocity of this relationship nor for how the learner will empathize with God. Zagzebski's account, therefore, fails to explain adequately how union with God is possible. Stump's account, given the Incarnation, does, and so Stump's account is required to explain how union with God is possible.

Conclusion

I have discussed in detail Climacus's assertion that the historical Incarnation is necessary for Christian faith (the event condition). Whilst initially this seemed at odds with his insistence that historical knowledge or evidence is an inadequate basis for faith (the evidence condition), with a deeper understanding of union, this tension was removed. I claimed that an application of Stump's account of union could adequately explain Climacus's emphasis on the personal aspect of Christian faith whilst explaining why the Incarnation is necessary for

this to be possible. Furthermore, this account of union also explains why the evidence condition is so important: if a second-person experience of Christ is necessary for union to occur, then historical evidence will not succeed in bringing about union. If this is plausible, then there does not appear to be a problem in defending both of Climacus's conditions. Finally, I considered whether Zagzebski's account of omnisubjectivity would undermine this conclusion, however, since Zagzebski does not account for how human beings can empathize with God, and since Stump defends both God's omnipresence and impassibility, Stump's account should be preferred. Therefore, there is no tension between Climacus's two conditions and the faith/history problem is resolved.³⁴

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Notes

1. All references to Kierkegaard's work henceforth are abbreviated as follows: *Philosophical Fragments*: PF; *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*: CUP; *Practice in Christianity*: PC.
2. I will follow Kierkegaard's request to attribute the content of these works to Climacus and not to himself (CUP, 625–630).

3. C. Stephen Evans makes the assumption that this thought-experiment 'is presented in order to illuminate the nature of Christian faith' (Evans (1990), 471). This assumption is fair, given Climacus's response to the charge that his thought-experiment is 'the shabbiest plagiarism ever to appear' (PF, 25); he makes no secret of the fact that this solution is not truly original. In fact, Climacus thinks that the hypothesis is so outrageous that no human being could ever invent such a thing (PF, 36). Given the later, more opaque descriptions of the teacher as Christ (PF, 55), it is reasonable to share Evans's assumption that what is actually at stake here is the question of how Christian faith occurs.
4. Although coming to faith requires both a cognitive and moral transformation for Climacus, I focus exclusively on the cognitive aspect of this in this article as the problem that arises from this account is an epistemic one rather than a moral one.
5. This solution clearly echoes St Paul's description of Christ,

who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. (2 Philippians 2:6–8; all biblical references are to the NRSV)
6. The relation between history and faith is discussed elsewhere by Kierkegaard under the pseudonym 'Anti-Climacus' in *Practice in Christianity*. Anti-Climacus claims that 'you do not have the remotest fellowship with him [Christ] if you have not become so contemporary with him in his abasement that you, just like his contemporaries, have had to become aware of his admonition' (PC, 37).
7. That is, Climacus could be interpreted as claiming something similar to G. E. Moore's (1944) example 'It is raining, I do not believe that it is raining'. In such a case, there is no logical contradiction, but there is a pragmatic contradiction such that the above cannot be sensibly asserted. Equally, we might think that Climacus wants to claim something like: 'historical beliefs are important; I do not believe historical beliefs are important'.
8. Louis P. Pojman (1982) also argues that Climacus's account does not place enough emphasis on historical evidence, leaving it open to potential forgery (*ibid.*, 63).
9. Evans's account draws from Alvin Plantinga's (1981) account of basic religious beliefs. For an up-to-date discussion of Kierkegaard and Plantinga see Evans (2006), 183–208.
10. It might still be the case that basic beliefs rely on a kind of private or even non-propositional evidence. However, this is not how Evans describes it and there is not space here for a detailed analysis of properly basic religious beliefs.
11. Implicit in Evans's defence of the event condition, I think, is the worry that without the Incarnation, the gulf between God and man cannot be resolved, an issue he later goes on to discuss in his book *The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith*. Evans claims that the Incarnation is required for the relationship between God and man to be restored (Evans (1996), 80). I share Evans's diagnosis of the issue here (and so would Kierkegaard, I think) and my discussion of union can strengthen Evans's claim, I think.
12. This relational aspect of Christian faith is explored by Martin Buber (1937) in his discussion of the 'I–thou' relationship (*ibid.*, 1) which is heavily influenced by Kierkegaard. Paul K. Moser and Mark L. McCreary, also maintain that, although Kierkegaard

does not disapprove of objective knowledge as such . . . he strongly warns against approaching God as an impersonal object to be studied. In his words 'God is not like something one buys in a shop, or like a piece of property' . . . Instead, God is a personal agent, a subject with definite redemptive purposes for humans . . . Merely objective knowledge about God does not entail personally knowing God via a God-relationship. (Moser & McCreary (2010), 132)
13. For instance, see Davies & Stone (1995) and Stueber (2000; 2006).
14. See, for instance, Goldman (2006).
15. See McNeill (2012b) for a defence of this position.
16. For a more detailed discussion of mirror neurons and their relation to empathy, see Galese (2001; 2003; 2005) and Goldman (2011).
17. As I later go on to explain, this should not be understood as a historical contemporaneity, but a contemporaneity with the *presence* of Christ.
18. Stump's account of empathy and mirror-neurons in relation to our experience of persons as well as God's omnipresence is discussed in much more detail in the first two parts of *Wandering in Darkness* (2010, 1–174).
19. For a more detailed account of joint attention, see Elian et al. (2005).

20. There is some disagreement about the role of mirror neurons in knowing the intentions or beliefs of others, for instance see Borg (2013) and Hickok (2014). There is not space here for a defence of Stump's application of mirror neurons, and what follows will assume that the mirror neuron system works in the way that Stump describes.
21. Hudson (2014, 136–160) discusses embodiment in relation to omnipresence and eternity. Hudson contrasts the positions of Hartshorne (1941), Swinburne (1977), Taliaferro (1994; 1997), and Wierenga (1988; 1997; 2002) in order to defend his own 'Hypertime Hypothesis' (Hudson (2014), 160). Stump avoids wading into this discussion by placing God outside time, thus: '[b]ecause of the way God is present at a place and in a time, for all persons, in whatever place and time they are, God is at once present, in power and knowledge and also in person' (Stump (2013), 71). This is a thesis she defends in more detail in chapter 4 of her *Aquinas* (2003).
22. The question whether animal suffering poses a problem for theism is explored in more detail by Doherty (2014), who argues that, broadly speaking, animal pain is a bad state of affairs which a God aiming at good states of affairs should aim to remove (*ibid.*, 30) and hence, animal pain provides a version of the problem of evil. We might think that if God cannot empathize with animals then this problem is made worse.
23. Thanks to Eleonore Stump for her helpful correspondence regarding these issues.
24. 'Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathaniel said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you"' (John 1:47–48).
25. 'who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth from the womb . . . and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, and said, "Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed"?' (Job 3:8–11), 'Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook, or press down his tongue with a cord? . . . Will he make many supplications to you? Will he speak to you soft words? Will he make a covenant with you to take him for your servant for ever? Will you play with him as with a bird' (Job 41:1, 3–5).
26. See Giacomo Rizzolatti and Laila Craighero's (2004) discussion of mirror neurons in primates, for example.
27. I would like to thank the Editor for helpfully pointing out this objection.
28. Which, as the Editor has helpfully pointed out, might commit us to defending an unorthodox argument for multiple Incarnations.
29. Climacus's rejection of historical evidence as a basis for faith is also strongly motivated by the fact that, as Georgios Patios puts it, 'Kierkegaard considers historical fact an uncertain object of cognition. To put it bluntly, we cannot achieve the same scientific accuracy in our knowledge of history as we do in the natural sciences' (Patios (2014), 28).
30. Note the similarities with this reading of Kierkegaard and Paul K Moser's account of filial knowledge of God (Moser (2008), 127).
31. A version of this claim concerning embodiment and mindreading is defended by McNeill (2012a).
32. This connection between emotions (such as empathy, if empathy is indeed an emotion) and the body is not a new one; René Descartes (1649/1989) and later William James (1884), claim that emotions are essentially tied to the body, a thesis which Jesse J. Prinz (2004) defends in more detail. The role of embodiment in our perception of others is also explored in the phenomenological tradition, particularly in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work, see, for instance, part II, chapter 4 of his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945/2002).
33. Interestingly, Yeo's account of indwelling also requires the Incarnation; he argues that 'the human life of Christ functions as the only way into the intra-Trinitarian life of God for humanity' (Yeo (2014), 232).
34. I would like to thank David Eford for his helpful feedback and advice on earlier drafts of this article as well as the members of the St. Benedict Society for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology (University of York) for their insightful comments.