
Analysis of John Climacus' Views on God's Existence

Climacus is not attempting to persuade readers to accept another thought system different from their own, especially one reflecting his beliefs. His goals are for the reader to distance oneself away from the dependency on others' opinions to allow for a margin of own opinion. Through examining the truth, one can direct own opinions towards faith.

In respects to Christian faith, Climacus does so by introducing the possibility of an offense, through the absurdity of the paradox. Climacus believes that it is not possible for God's existence to be proven. He wants readers to use their own opinions to form beliefs on faith, but suggests that in proving the existence of God, it is imperative to remember that all proofs require act of faith. In substantiating God's existence, one assumes exactly what one is intending to be prove. If God indeed exists, then proving His existence could be considered foolish, but if He does not exist, it would be impossible to prove His existence. If speaking of proving the existence of God in the context of proving the unknown (God), which exists, then one is expressing poorly as there already is a presupposition that he exists. If one already believes otherwise, there would be no search for proof.

The thought of His existence as false would prove to be contradictory to ones' own beliefs of His unfeasible existence. This commits a fallacy of begging the question when attempting to prove God's existence. To beg a question means to assume the truth of the point in contention, and in this case, the point in contention being that God exists. When attempting to prove God's existence, it is only made possible because one already upholds this presupposition. This is because only a conception is developed, rather than the desired proof of existence. Climacus argues that it is difficult to prove that anything exists, as the demonstration can alter into something different; "an expanded concluding development of what one concludes from having presupposed that the object of investigation exists".

Consequently, he avoids reasoning towards existence, alternatively, he reasons from existence itself. He provides the analogy of a court to emphasize this point. The course of law does not prove that a criminal exists; instead, they prove that the accused individual whose existence is given, is a criminal. He adds on to the point of how difficult it is to prove existence by discussing the greatest contention that doubt will persist regardless of whether God's existence can be proven. An analogy for Cartesian dolls can accentuate this point. If one lets go of the doll, then it stands on its head. As soon as one lets go, they let it go. Same thing can be applied to proof. If proof is held, then existence does not come out. However, if proof is let go, existence remains, and a brief moment of "leap" occurs. This leap of faith can be applied to one's attempts to proving the existence of God. The lack of objective knowledge of whether He exists, causes one

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to remain stagnant in current existing proof of non-belief. If no proof can be discovered, then one can let go of efforts in proving, and believe.

Climacus believes that it is impossible to prove the existence of God. He provides the example of Napoleon's existence. Napoleon's existence can be demonstrated if one assumes that Napoleon's works are his works, and if there already is a pre-existing assumption that Napoleon exists. Without this prior assumption present, then the only substantial proof proven is that the works were completed by someone. This will not suffice in proving Napoleon's existence. This point can be paralleled into God and his works. God's existence cannot be inferred from His works, since "they do not appear directly and immediately"; hence, similar to the example of Napoleon, God's existence can only be demonstrated from His works if there is a presupposing notion that they already belong to him.

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