

Anthropology in Kierkegaard and Kant: The Synthesis of Facticity and Ideality vs. Moral Character

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Abstract

This article deals with how moral freedom relates to historicity and contingency by comparing Kierkegaard's theory of the anthropological synthesis to Kant's concept of moral character. The comparison indicates that there are more Kantian elements in Kierkegaard's anthropology than shown by earlier scholarship. More specifically, both Kant and Kierkegaard see a true change in the way one lives as involving not only a revolution in the way one thinks, but also that one takes over—and tries to reform—both oneself and human society. Also, Kierkegaard relies on the ideality of ethics and the doctrines of moral rigorism and radical evil. However, Kierkegaard can be seen as trying to find a more systematic role for historicity and contingency than Kant by developing the concept of facticity and by analyzing the so-called “despair of possibility.”

1. Introductory Remarks: The Standard View and Thesis

Kierkegaard's anthropological theory, as well as the closely related idea of choosing oneself in the ethicist writings, is one of Kierkegaard's most important and influential contributions to modern thinking.¹ How-

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1 Notably, Arne Grøn has claimed that the idea of choosing oneself is one of Kierkegaard's most important contributions to modern thinking in general and existentialism in particular. Arne Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety in Søren Kierkegaard*, Macon: Mercer University Press 2008, p. xiv. Regarding Kierkegaard's theory of the anthropological synthesis, see Michael Theunissen, “Einleitung: Kierkegaards Werk und Wirkung,” in *Materialien zur Philosophie Søren Kierkegaards*, ed. by Michael Theunissen and Wilfried Greve, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1979, pp. 9–104, especially pp. 67f.; Helmut Fahrenbach,

ever, several commentators have briefly pointed to similarities between the choice of oneself in the ethicist and the revolution in way of thinking (*Denkungsart*) in Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Bare Reason*.² In this article I want to compare Kierkegaard's theory of the anthropological synthesis and the choice of oneself to Kant in greater detail than has been done in previous scholarship, and I will do so by drawing on recent research on Kant's anthropology. This research indicates that the analysis of the revolution in *Religion* is part of Kant's larger analysis of moral character (which earlier literature on Kant and Kierkegaard fails to make clear).³ This is an analysis Kant deals with in *Religion*, as well as *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, *Lectures on Pedagogy*, and *Lectures on Anthropology*. The present article represents the first attempt to use *Anthropology*, *Lectures on Anthropology*, and *Lectures on Pedagogy* in order to describe the relation between Kant and Kierkegaard. I will argue that the standard view of this relation is incomplete, and somewhat misleading, since it leaves out significant parts of Kant's theory and tends to exaggerate the differences between Kant and Kierkegaard.⁴

“Kierkegaards ethische Existenzanalyse (als Korrektiv der Kantish-idealistischen Moralphilosophie),” in *Materialien zur Philosophie Søren Kierkegaards*, pp. 216–240, pp. 216–232; Michael Theunissen, *Der Begriff ERNST bei Søren Kierkegaard*, Freiburg: Alber 1982, especially pp. 21–51.

2. Fahrenbach presents the revolution in *Denkungsart* as a presupposition and critical point of contact (*Anknüpfungspunkt*) for the choice of oneself found in the ethicist. (“Kierkegaards ethische Existenzanalyse,” p. 218, cf. pp. 216f.). C. Stephen Evans says that the choice of oneself in the ethicist is “analogous to the ‘fundamental resolution’ that Kant believes marks the beginning of the ethical life.” C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard's Ethics of Love*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006, p. 56. When discussing Kant's revolution and the ethicist's choice of oneself, Christoph Schulte claims that the full consequences of the Kantian insight into the necessity of a moral disposition as the presupposition of moral action is first shown with Kierkegaard's insistence upon the choice between the aesthetic and the ethical. Christoph Schulte, *Radikal böse*, Munich: Fink 1991, pp. 278f., cf. p. 119 note.
3. Regarding the analysis of moral character, see Felicitas Munzel, *Kant's Conception of Moral Character*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1999. For more references, see below.
4. Although some commentators have dealt with Kant's anthropological theory in Book 1 of *Religion*, especially the doctrine of radical evil, they have not dealt with the other anthropological writings. Even Fahrenbach and Schulte, who actually deal with the revolution whereby one becomes moral, focus on *Religion* and therefore do not deal with the other anthropological writings, writings that

This paper makes the case that there is greater similarity and overlap between the anthropological theories of Kant and Kierkegaard than indicated in previous scholarship. In particular, it is maintained that the Kantian elements in Kierkegaard's anthropology involve not only (1) the frequently mentioned ideality of ethics but also the following claims: (2) Moral rigorism. (3) Man is infinitely guilty. (4) The help of others cannot provide more than an occasion for one to change oneself. (5) A true change in way of living involves the following tripartite structure: first, a rebirth or *revolution* in way of thinking, then a *taking over* of oneself and society, and—finally—an attempt to *reform* oneself and society. I argue that Kant's analysis of the revolution in which moral character is founded to a large extent anticipates and overlaps with Kierkegaard's analysis of the anthropological synthesis of finitude and infinitude, facticity and ideality. Although Kant's analysis of culture, civilization, and morality comes close to Kierkegaard's analysis of taking over facticity (finitude, necessity), I conclude that Kant lacks the rich notion of facticity found in Kierkegaard, as well as an analysis of the "despair of possibility." This is significant, since the concept of facticity has been one of the most important terms in the development of 20th century continental philosophy from Heidegger to Sartre and Habermas.⁵

make it clear that this revolution consists in the establishment of moral character (Fahrenbach, "Kierkegaards etische Existenzanalyse," pp. 217f.; Schulte, *Radikal böse*, part 1, especially pp. 112–119). Kant's anthropology was not only central to his immediate successors in Germany and Denmark, but it has also gained renewed interest today—although this is hardly reflected in the existing literature on the relation between Kant and Kierkegaard. Cf. Anders Thuborg, *Den Kantiske periode i dansk filosofi 1790–1800*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1951; Carl Henrik Koch, *Dansk oplysningsfilosofi 1700–1800*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 2003; John Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2002; Robert Loudon, "The Second Part of Morals," in *Essays on Kant's Anthropology*, ed. by Brian Jacobs and Patrick Kain, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003, pp. 60–84, pp. 64–67; Ulrich Knappe, *Theory and Practice in Kant and Kierkegaard*, Berlin: de Gruyter 2004, p. 6 (*Kierkegaard Studies Monograph Series*, vol. 9); Ronald Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant*, Albany: University of New York Press 1992.

- 5 Cf. François Raffoul and Eric Nelson (eds.), *Rethinking Facticity*, Albany: State University of New York Press 2008, especially Raffoul and Nelson's "Introduction," pp. 1–22, pp. 2–5 and Theodore Kisiel, "On the Genesis of Heidegger's Formally Indicative Hermeneutics of Facticity," pp. 41–68 (on Fichte, Lask, and Heidegger). Regarding Kierkegaard and Heidegger, see Theunissen, "Einleitung: Kierkegaards Werk und Wirkung," pp. 67f.

Rather than claiming that Kierkegaard was influenced by Kant, I claim that one body of thought is in agreement with another body of thought. Thus, I want to show the extent to which the two different frameworks are internally or conceptually related. However, since Kierkegaard was familiar with *Religion* and its analysis of the revolution in *Denkungsart* it is nevertheless possible that he was influenced by Kant on this point, although this is very hard to prove.⁶

The existing literature on Kant and Kierkegaard has pointed to Kantian elements in Kierkegaard's ethicist⁷ as well as claimed that Kierkegaard's view of the ideality of ethics is Kantian or even influenced by Kant.⁸ One of the German scholars, Helmut Fahrenbach, presents (1) the ideality of ethics, that is, the unconditional nature and universal bindingness (*Allgemeinverbindlichkeit*) of the ethical requirement, as one of three aspects of Kantian moral philosophy that form presuppositions and critical points of contact (*Anknüpfungspunkte*) for Kierkegaard's ethical stage. The two other aspects are (2) that man's vocation (*Bestimmung*) as such makes up the central point of view, and (3) that ethical self-understanding is presented as based upon a fundamental act of

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- 6 If Kant's moral anthropology *did* influence Kierkegaard, he is likely to have drawn on contemporary secondary sources. Kierkegaard owned at least one book dealing explicitly with Kant's moral anthropology, *Sinnesart* (mode of sense) and *Denkungsart*, good character and evil character, namely, Carl Schmid, *Wörterbuch zum leichtern Gebrauch der kantischen Schriften*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1980, reprint of 4th ed. [Jena: Cröker 1798], pp. 62f., pp. 146f., pp. 306–308, pp. 129–131, respectively; cf. Herman Peter Rohde, *Auktionsprotokol over Søren Kierkegaards Bogsamling*, Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Bibliotek 1967, catalogue number 770. Regarding Schmid, see Robert Loudon, *Kant's Impure Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002, p. 74, p. 203 note 36; Loudon, "The Second Part of Morals," p. 65.
- 7 Regarding Kantian elements in the ethicist in general, see, for example, Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant*, p. 221, pp. 92–97; George Connell, "Judge William's Theonomous Ethics," *Foundations of Kierkegaard's Vision of Community*, ed. by C. Stephen Evans and George Connell, London: Humanities Press International 1992, pp. 56–70, pp. 56–63, p. 67.
- 8 Green claims that Kant's influence on Kierkegaard finds expression in his repeated affirmation of the ideality of ethics and the connection between ethics and the awareness of sin. Ronald Green, "Kant: A Debt both Obscure and Enormous," in *Kierkegaard and his German Contemporaries*, Tome I, *Philosophy*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Aldershot: Ashgate 2007 (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 6), pp. 179–210, pp. 189f. (refers to SKS 4, 324 / CA, 16f.).

choice.⁹ However, Fahrenbach makes it clear that Kierkegaard conceives of the significance of these aspects differently than Kant does, since Kierkegaard not only tries to provide a corrective to Kantian philosophy but also has his own agenda. In this connection Fahrenbach and later Arne Grøn claim that Kierkegaard breaks with Kant's dualism between rationality and sensuousness, freedom and nature.¹⁰ In the following I will try to show that Fahrenbach and Grøn misconstrue Kantian dualism and how Kierkegaard relates to it. Also, we will see that Kant's revolution

9 Fahrenbach, "Kierkegaards etiske Eksistenzanalyse," p. 218, cf. pp. 216f. As mentioned, Schulte and Evans make claims similar to Fahrenbach's last point. I agree that the existential task of choosing oneself (or establishing the anthropological synthesis) corresponds to a large extent with Kant's claim that man must realize his vocation (*Bestimmung*) by establishing moral character (cf. Kant, *Gesammelten Schriften*, vol. 25: *Vorlesungen über Anthropologie*, Berlin: de Gruyter 1997, p. 1199). The ethicist clearly understands man's vocation (*Bestemmelse*) as the task of choosing oneself and living ethically. In this context he even relies on the postulation of the immortality of the soul in the second *Critique* (cf. *SKS* 3, 265, 257 / *EO2*, 279, 270; Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999, p. 246, p. 243; Kant, *Gesammelten Schriften*, vol. 5: *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft. Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Berlin: de Gruyter 1968, p. 132, p. 128; Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant*, p. 20). However, Kierkegaard himself is less explicit about what man's vocation consists of, often speaking of man's *telos* instead. Regarding the concept of vocation in Kant, see Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*, pp. 164–170; George di Giovanni, *Freedom and Religion in Kant and His Immediate Successors: The Vocation of Mankind, 1774–1800*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2005, pp. 7–10, pp. 30f. Regarding man's *telos*, see Roe Fremstedal, "The Concept of the Highest Good in Kierkegaard and Kant," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 69, 2011, pp. 155–171. When English translations of Kant are available, I refer first to the pagination in the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997ff.) and then to the pagination in the Akademieausgabe of Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelten Schriften* (Berlin: de Gruyter 1902ff.), the sole exception being the *Critique of Pure Reason* where references are to the A and B editions (not volume 3 of the Akademieausgabe). For an overview of the Akademieausgabe, see <http://www.manchester.edu/kant/helps/AcadEd.htm> (accessed 2011/6/25). For an electronic edition of volumes 1–23, see <http://www.korpora.org/Kant/> (accessed 2011/6/14).

10 Fahrenbach, "Kierkegaards etiske Eksistenzanalyse," pp. 217f., pp. 230f., p. 237; Arne Grøn, *Subjektivitet og negativitet*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1997, p. 181. Also, commentators have contrasted facticity with Kant (Grøn also does this, although he uses the term "determined" (*bestemt*) instead of facticity). See "Introduction" in Raffoul and Nelson, *Rethinking Facticity*, p. 9; Dag Østerberg, "Innledning," in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Erfaringer med de andre*, Oslo: Gyldendal 1994, pp. 7–46, p. 11.

is different from the choice of oneself found in the ethicist (the pseudonym Judge William), since the revolution in Kant presupposes moral rigorism and the doctrine of radical evil, something the ethical choice does not. In this respect, Kierkegaard's Christian existence actually comes closer to Kant's analysis of moral character than the ethicist does, since Christian existence presupposes rigorism and infinite guilt. Nevertheless, as Fahrenbach (and Michael Theunissen) shows, both the ethicist and Christian existence rely on the same anthropological synthesis, namely the synthesis of finitude and infinitude, necessity and freedom, facticity and ideality.¹¹ In the following I will focus on comparing the anthropological synthesis to Kant's concept of moral character.

Throughout the paper I refer to the pseudonymous writings as well as the writings Kierkegaard published under his own name in order to show that these writings overlap when it comes to the anthropological synthesis (finitude and infinitude, facticity and ideality, necessity and freedom, etc.). I do not deny that there are important differences between the different pseudonyms and Kierkegaard, but I focus on significant areas in which they present essentially the same view or supplement each other. My argument only requires that there is some overlap or agreement between the different books in Kierkegaard's authorship, not that the different pseudonyms should all be taken to represent the same voice or perspective.¹²

11 Fahrenbach, "Kierkegaards etische Existenzanalyse," especially p. 220; Theunissen, *Der Begriff ERNST bei Søren Kierkegaard*, pp. 118–126. Fahrenbach and Theunissen rightly stress that the so-called religious stage is ethically determined (*bestimmt*). Fahrenbach deals with necessity and finitude but strangely leaves out facticity. Kisiel points out that Fahrenbach's article "Faktizität" leaves out Kierkegaard, mistakenly claiming that facticity entered the philosophical tradition by way of Heidegger. Kisiel, "On the Genesis of Heidegger's Formally Indicative Hermeneutics of Facticity," pp. 41 f., p. 64 note 2. Fahrenbach, "Faktizität," *Historische Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vols. 1–13, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1971–2007, vol. 2, p. 886.

12 My interpretation of the anthropological synthesis is in line with work of Theunissen and Fahrenbach, except I emphasize the concept of facticity. Even though Kierkegaard follows the ethicist in using the concept of double existence (*SKS* 8, 49 / *TA*, 49f.), he (as well as Haufniensis, Climacus, and Anti-Climacus) talks elsewhere about the synthesis, rather than using the ethicist's terminology of choosing oneself. Unfortunately, the reason for the difference in terminology is not clear. Fahrenbach and Theunissen both deal with double existence as simply a variant of the more general synthesis structure, something which seems plausible.

II. Facticity and Anthropology

Kierkegaard's ethicist stresses that rather than creating oneself, one chooses, or receives, oneself as a particular self that is always already situated in a particular historical and social context.¹³ The ethicist claims that he who tries to create himself fails to realize that he is a finite, historical, and social being who has to relate to something which is always already given. Since man is necessarily confronted with something that is not created by himself, the ethicist says, the task is to appropriate what is given.¹⁴ This formal analysis involves a reciprocal relation, or an interplay, between what is given and what is chosen. One does not receive the given in a purely passive manner. It is required that one be critical towards *parts* of what is given and try to change those parts. But it is impossible to change the *whole* as such. This can be interpreted as saying that one chooses by virtue of an already given horizon.

The key concept for understanding this topic is the concept of *facticity* (Danish, *Facticitet*; cf. German, *Faktizität*). This is the concept Kierkegaard develops in order to describe the historical and social context as non-circumventable.¹⁵ Facticity entails always already being situated in a particular situation. One is always already a particular human being with a specific history; one is born into and entangled in a particular tradition and a particular community. As such, facticity refers to the very limits of human freedom.¹⁶

Kierkegaard describes facticity as a gift (*Gave*) that is given as a task (*Opgave*).¹⁷ Later he (the pseudonyms Climacus and Anti-Climacus) interprets this task in terms of establishing the synthesis of *necessity* and *freedom* and *finitude* and *infinite*, respectively.¹⁸ Elsewhere, the elements making up the anthropological synthesis are described as *factic-*

13 SKS 3, 207, 172 / EO2, 215f., 176. Although it has not received much attention, Kierkegaard makes essentially the same point in writings he published under his own name (cf. SKS 5, 167 / EUD, 168. SKS 8, 49 / TA, 49f. SKS 8, 219ff. / UD, 117ff.).

14 Cf. SKS 3, 98 / EO2, 95.

15 Cf. SKS 8, 75, 91 / TA, 77f., 96. SKS 20, 90, NB:129 / JP 5, 5975.

16 Cf. SKS 1, 316 / CI, 28. SKS 11, 152 / SUD, 36.

17 SKS 1, 312 / CI, 276.

18 Cf. SKS 7, 356 / CUPI, 391. SKS 11, 151 / SUD, 35.

ity and *ideality* or *reality* and *ideality*.¹⁹ Here reality appears to be taken in the sense of a given historical reality.²⁰

Kierkegaard and the ethicist both use the concept “*double existence*” in order to emphasize the duality that lies in the interplay between the given and the chosen.²¹ On the one hand, the individual *has* a history; on the other hand, the individual must make this history its own by *appropriating* it. The ethicist says that one chooses oneself by appropriating the given with inwardness (*inderlighed*) and by taking it over on one’s own responsibility.²²

Just as double existence implies that man is not fully himself before choosing, the anthropological synthesis is something that must be actively posited. Because of this, man is always confronted with the task of becoming himself. Double existence, or the anthropological synthesis, implies that we are moral agents whether we want to be or not. We do not constitute ourselves as agents; our agency, or selfhood, is something that is given to each of us as a task. The aesthete, on the other hand, wants to be a spectator rather than a responsible agent. But this is a choice on the part of the aesthete—at least, that is what the ethicist argues.

Like the anthropological synthesis, double existence involves a dialectic between the *particular* (i. e., a particular past with contingent features) and the *universal* (i. e., universal concepts and ethical ideals).²³ William emphasizes that the individual should not try to get rid of particularity and contingency; rather, he should *take over* and improve (*forædle*) particularity by *reforming* it (something which presupposes that one chooses oneself). And so both individuality and the universally human, both the particularity and the universality, should be kept. The ethicist says that the goal is to keep one’s individuality or particularity (*eiendommelighed*) while becoming the universal man. The ethicist also says that the individ-

19 SKS 20, 90, NB:129 / JP 5, 5975. SKS 1, 258 / CI, 213. See Fahrenbach “Kierkegaards ethische Existenzanalyse,” pp. 222f., p. 239 note 12.

20 SKS 1, 312 / CI, 276.

21 SKS 3, 171 / EO2, 175. SKS 8, 49 / TA, 49f. Existence comes from the Latin *ex-* “out of” and *sisto* “stands” (SKS K2–3, 236). Thus, existence originally means “standing out(side),” suggesting *transcendence*. Kierkegaard (Haufniensis) says that existence demands that one catch up with oneself (cf. SKS 4, 341, 407 / CA, 35, 105). In order to exist (authentically) it is required that one establishes the synthesis of finitude and infinitude (cf. SKS 7, 220, 229f., 351, 356, 382, 412 / CUPI, 242, 253f., 385f., 391, 420, 453. SKS 12, 133 / PC, 129).

22 SKS 3, 239 / EO2, 250f.

23 SKS 3, 170ff., 244, 248f. / EO2, 174ff., 255f., 261f.

ual can do this by doing *his* duty. He says that while duty as such is something universal, one's duty denotes the particular duty one has by virtue of being an individual in a particular situation.²⁴

As early as in his 1833–34 lecture notes, Kierkegaard refers to Kant's analysis of the rebirth, whereby one puts on a new man.²⁵ This is a reference to the revolution whereby one changes one's supreme maxim so that sensuousness or self-interest is subsumed under morality, something which amounts to the founding of moral character. Of the many late texts in which Kant analyzes this revolution, Kierkegaard is likely to have been familiar with *Religion*.²⁶

In a key passage about moral character in *Anthropology*, a passage to which we shall return later, Kant says: "The human being who is conscious of having character in his way of thinking [*Denkungsart*] does not have it by nature; he must always have acquired it."²⁷ Kant continues by saying that the grounding of character is like a kind of rebirth. Here and in *Religion*,²⁸ Kant refers to what Kierkegaard would have described as double existence (or the anthropological synthesis) when he alludes to the distinction between being born and reborn in the Christian tradition. In Kant being reborn means that man as a *free rational* being establishes moral character by performing a revolution in *Denkungsart*. According to Allen Wood, this revolution involves *taking over* natural aptitude (*Naturell*) and temperament (*Temperament*) and transforming it through freedom into character,²⁹ a view which is continuous with William's idea

24 SKS 3, 248f., 251, 276f., 285 / EO2, 261–264, 292f., 302.

25 SKS 19, 57, Not1:7.

26 This is very strongly suggested by Kierkegaard's remarks on rigorism and radical evil. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant*, p. xiv, pp. 17f., pp. 156–166; Roe Fremstedal, "Original Sin and Radical Evil: Kierkegaard and Kant," forthcoming in *Kantian Review*.

27 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009, p. 392; Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 7: *Der Streit der Fakultäten. Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, Berlin: de Gruyter 1968, p. 294, cf. Kant, *Vorlesungen über Anthropologie*, vol. 25, pp. 1384–1392. Character itself is understood as "the aptitude [*Fertigkeit*] of acting according to maxims" and "the use of our power of choice [*Willkür*] to act according to rules and principles" (*Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 469; Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 9: *Logik, Physische Geographie, Pädagogik*. Berlin: de Gruyter 1968, p. 481; *Vorlesungen über Anthropologie*, vol. 25, p. 630).

28 Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001, vol. 6, p. 47.

29 Allen Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999, pp. 205f. Wood refers to *Anthropology* (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7,

of taking over individuality or particularity. According to William, the choice of oneself involves appropriating the given (facticity) and transforming it from necessity into freedom.³⁰

On Kant's account, the establishment of character involves that as a *free rational* being, one takes over oneself as a *natural* or *sensuous* being; that is, one takes over what Kant describes as one's natural aptitude (*Naturell*) or natural predisposition (*Naturanlage*) as well as one's mode of sense (*Sinnesart*) or temperament (*Temperament*).³¹ Kant says that *Naturanlage* and *Temperament* together make up the "physical character" or "what *nature* makes of man"; "*character* as such [*schlechthin*], or mode of thought [*Denkungsart*]," on the other hand, it concerns "what *he* [the human being] as a free-acting being makes of himself, or can and should make of himself."³² Kant deals with these two perspectives in what he calls anthropology from a physiological and pragmatic point of view, respectively.³³ Kant's definition of pragmatic anthropology includes not only what man in fact *does* (i.e., the subjective principles he acts on) and the *possibilities* man in fact has, it also includes what man as a free rational being *ought* to do.

Kierkegaard's anthropological theory conceives of freedom as the ability to transcend facticity; indeed, the limitations of facticity provide the background against which freedom is possible. Kant, on the other hand, conceives of freedom as the ability to establish an absolutely new beginning.³⁴ However, establishing a new beginning need not imply that

pp. 29–295) and *Vorlesungen über Anthropologie* (Akademieausgabe, vol. 25, p. 1156, p. 1384, p. 1530) and translates *Naturell* "individual nature."

30 *SKS* 3, 239, 170 / *EO2*, 250f., 174.

31 Cf. Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 384 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 285); *Vorlesungen über Anthropologie*, vol. 25, pp. 1367f. *Sinnesart* or "empirical character" belongs to the phenomenal realm and is the sensual signs (*sinnliche Zeichen*) of man's "intelligible character," his noumenal *Denkungsart*. Reiner Wimmer, *Kants kritische Religionsphilosophie*, Berlin: de Gruyter 1990 (*Kantstudien-Ergänzungshefte*, 124), p. 101, p. 130, pp. 151f., p. 188; cf. Munzel, *Kant's Conception of Moral Character*, p. 75, pp. 91–93, p. 98, p. 123, p. 155.

32 Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 231, p. 384, pp. 389f. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 119, p. 285, p. 292); *Vorlesungen über Anthropologie*, vol. 25, pp. 1125f.

33 Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, pp. 231f. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, pp. 119f.).

34 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007, p. 485; Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Hamburg: Meiner 1990,

there are no limits to one's freedom. Neither need it deny that freedom is restricted by facticity. Indeed, one of the main concerns of Kant's pragmatic anthropology is what man can do, that is, his real possibilities. The concept of facticity might prove useful in this connection because it denotes the very limits of our freedom. Rather than using the concept of facticity, Kant uses the concept *physical character* (*Naturanlage* and *Temperament*) in the *Anthropology*. However, this is a narrow, physiological, medical, and biological concept, one with a focus more on heredity rather than on environment.³⁵ The closest Kant seems to get to a concept of (physical) environment are the concepts of climate (the conditions of the soil), nutrition, and physical geography, which belong to Kant's theory of race, his natural history, and physical geography.³⁶

Kant frequently takes the view that the differences between the sexes, races, and peoples (*Völker*) are due to heredity (and climate) rather than social and cultural factors.³⁷ In these instances, Kant tends to misinterpret certain contingent features of particular social and historical practices as simply biological and physical facts. This can explain some—but not all—of the many prejudices about sex, race, people, and the deaf that we find in Kant.³⁸ For instance, it is stated that while the national peculiarities of the English and French for the most part can be derived from their different types of culture, the peculiarities of the other European peoples (Spaniards, Italians, etc.) result from the mixture of originally different

A445/B473. This conception gets contrasted with facticity in Raffoul and Nelson, "Introduction," p. 9.

- 35 Claudia Schmidt says that Kant seems to be identifying "physiology" as a biological discipline in *Anthropology* (but not in the first and third *Critiques*). Claudia Schmidt, "Kant's Transcendental, Empirical, Pragmatic, and Moral Anthropology," *Kant-Studien*, vol. 98, 2007, pp. 156–182, pp. 167f.
- 36 Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 86, p. 89, pp. 91–97, pp. 157–159, pp. 202–204, pp. 208f., cf. pp. 408f.; Kant, *Gesammelten Schriften*, vol. 2: *Vorkritische Schriften II*, Berlin: de Gruyter 1968, p. 431, p. 434, p. 436, pp. 438–443; Kant, *Gesammelten Schriften*, vol. 8: *Abhandlungen nach 1781*, Berlin: de Gruyter 1968, pp. 104f., pp. 167f., pp. 173f., cf. Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 313.
- 37 In the context of Kant's view on sex and gender, Loudon (*Kant's Impure Ethics*, p. 83) says that Kant does not always bother to stop and ask whether what he sees as a natural difference is perhaps only a contingent, socially constructed one.
- 38 Cf. Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, pp. 399–416, p. 271 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, pp. 303–321, pp. 159f.).

tribes.³⁹ Of the latter he says that “the question here is about the innate, natural character [*angeborenen, natürlichen Charakter*] which, so to speak, lies in the blood mixture [*Blutmischung*] of the human being, not characteristics of nations that are acquired and *artificial* (or spoiled by too much artifice) [*erworbenen, künstlichen (oder verkünstelten)*].”⁴⁰ Kant suggests that the differences among *Völker*, sexes, and races are the result of having freely taken over particular physiological and geographical differences.⁴¹ Insofar as these differences are due to physiological and biological facts that cannot be changed, these individuals could not have chosen differently.

Interestingly, Kant’s remarks on the French and the English may entail that the French and English would have to take over cultural artifacts in their respective countries.⁴² Kant’s view is that human culture is based on the use of hypothetical imperatives (do Y in order to reach purpose X), something that means that culture is made up of contingent ends as well as skills that make us capable of achieving these ends. Civilization, on the other hand, consists in prudence or the use of assertoric imperatives (do Y in order to become happy).⁴³ One way of interpreting this is to say that taking part in a culture involves not only using hypothetical imperatives but also assuming the ends and appropriating the skills that make up culture. Kant’s examples of the latter are reading, writing, and

39 Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 411, cf. pp. 408–410 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 315, cf. pp. 313f.).

40 Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, pp. 414f. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 319); cf. *Vorlesungen über Anthropologie*, vol. 25, pp. 654f.

41 Wood, *Kant’s Ethical Thought*, pp. 205f. Louden (“The Second Part of Morals,” p. 79) claims that Kant’s prejudices about gender, nationality, race, religion, and the deaf involve false empirical data.

42 According to Schmidt, Foucault argued that “Kant implicitly extends the domain of his critical philosophy in the *Anthropology* by recognizing the finitude and historicity of the human transcendental subject, especially in his discussion of temporality and language.” “Kant’s Transcendental, Empirical, Pragmatic, and Moral Anthropology,” p. 166. Cf. Michel Foucault, “Introduction to Kant’s *Anthropology* from a pragmatic point of view,” 2006, <http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpoucault1.htm> (accessed 10/6/2011).

43 Cf. Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, pp. 448f., p. 473, pp. 440f., pp. 418f. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 9, p. 455, p. 486, pp. 449f.; Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, pp. 323f.); Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006, p. 299 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 5, pp. 431f.).

making music.⁴⁴ Analogously, taking part in a civilization involves not merely using assertoric imperatives but also assuming prudential strategies developed by others, including manners and good behavior.⁴⁵ Allen Wood takes Kant to say that

[I]n domestic society human beings must pass on their perfected capacities from one generation to another through *education*....The pragmatic predisposition would then correspond to...that of *educating* the species and transmitting learned behavior through historical traditions.... “Cultivation” is the historical development of our *technical* predisposition to devise means to our ends.... “civilization” is the historical development of our *pragmatic* predisposition to pursue our total well-being or happiness through modes of life involving other people that can be transmitted from each generation to the next through tradition and education....⁴⁶

If Wood is correct, Kant’s analyses of culture and civilization require that we must take over contingent features of human society and history. Indeed, Kant seems to be quite conscious of the problem of not acknowledging contingent features of society when he talks about “the society in which nature has placed him [man].”⁴⁷ Discussing grief over a misfortune, Kant says: “[W]hat cannot be changed must be driven from the mind [*aus dem Sinn geschlagen werden*]: because it would be nonsense [*Unsinn*] to make what happened into what has not happened. To better oneself is good and also a duty; but to want to improve on what is already beyond my power is absurd [*ungereimt*].”⁴⁸

Also, Kant’s doctrine of radical evil can be seen as addressing evil that is part of facticity.⁴⁹ Kant claims that we have all chosen evil by putting sensuousness above the Moral Law. This choice leads to a propensity

44 Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 444 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 9, p. 449).

45 Cf. Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 444 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 9, p. 450).

46 Allen Wood, “Kant and the Problem of Human Nature,” in *Essays on Kant’s Anthropology*, pp. 38–59, pp. 52f.

47 Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 424 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 329).

48 Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 339 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 236); cf. Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, p. 216, pp. 218f. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 5, p. 94, pp. 97f.).

49 This is in line with the roots of the concept of facticity found in Augustine’s concept of *facticius*. Augustine contrasts *facticius*—that which is unnatural, artificial, and made by man—with *nativus*, that which is natural and created by God. See Giorgio Agamben, “The Passion of Facticity,” in *Rethinking Facticity*, pp. 89–112, p. 93.

(*Hang*) towards evil in mankind and makes it possible to commit evil acts.⁵⁰ Because of radical evil, the most that man is capable of is to progress from a bad to a better state.⁵¹ However, Kant hardly says anything about whether this progress involves taking over or appropriating facticity.

In some passages Kant presupposes that it is possible to conceive of rational choice (or freedom) without facticity or constraints—something Kierkegaard would deny. In the context of “starting life all over again” (on hedonistic grounds), Kant asks: “[F]or who would start life anew... according to a new and self-designed plan.”⁵² Kant’s question involves a contrafactual situation—a *neutral starting point* where one is capable of choosing rationally. He holds that we would not have wanted such a hedonistic life-plan even if it were possible, because in such a case the value of life would be less than zero. Elsewhere, Kant says: “Assume a human being...who allows himself to think (as he can hardly avoid doing) what sort of world he would *create*, were this in his power.”⁵³

I conclude that Kant does not have a concept that corresponds to Kierkegaard’s concept of facticity and that he does not analyze facticity as such, at least not explicitly. Nevertheless, Kant uses several different concepts to cover central aspects of facticity. Whereas heredity gets analyzed in terms of physical character, race, and *Völk*, environment gets analyzed in terms of culture and civilization as well as climate and physical geography. Also, Kant’s analysis of radical evil can be said to deal with evil which is found in facticity. However, it seems clear that the sum of these different concepts does not exhaust facticity. For example, cultural (human) geography appears to be left out. More importantly,

50 The present article is undecided when it comes to the question of whether the doctrine of radical evil relies on a transcendental (Allison) or an anthropological (Wood) claim. However, I agree with Marina (and Allison) that “the propensity to evil is the result, and not the ground, of our having adopted a fundamentally evil maxim.” Jacqueline Marina, “Kant on Grace: A Reply to his Critics,” *Religious Studies*, vol. 33, 1997, pp. 379–400, pp. 395ff.; Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, pp. 76f., p. 73; Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 6: *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft. Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, Berlin: de Gruyter 1968, p. 29, p. 24.

51 Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, pp. 94f. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, pp. 50f.); *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 420 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 324).

52 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, p. 301 note (Akademieausgabe, vol. 5, p. 434 note).

53 Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 59 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, p. 5).

Kant is not very clear or explicit when it comes to the need for taking over and appropriating social and historical aspects of facticity, something that leaves his analysis of the contingent features of our existence somewhat incomplete or unclear.⁵⁴ Historicity and contingency tends to play a somewhat unclear and unsettled role in Kant's anthropology, and Kierkegaard can be seen as trying to find a more systematic role for historicity and contingency by developing the concept of facticity. At this point Kierkegaard's analyses of facticity and the "despair of possibility" can be seen as corrections to the Kantian framework. However, since facticity cannot be reduced to ideality, facticity may be at odds with Kant's idealist framework, according to which phenomena (e.g. physical character, *Sinnesart*) have their ground in noumena.⁵⁵

III. Not Acknowledging Facticity: "despair of possibility"

Kierkegaard's (Anti-Climacus') analysis of despair can be interpreted as disclosing ways in which one fails to choose oneself or fails to establish the anthropological synthesis. The "despair of possibility" consists of lacking necessity, while the "despair of infinity" consists of lacking finitude.⁵⁶ In other words, one lacks facticity or constraints within which one can be positively free. This can mean either that one does not want to acknowledge what one has done, *or* it can mean that one does not want to acknowledge those aspects of facticity that are not a result of one's own free choice. Either way, these two types of despair imply that one wants to create oneself in order to get rid of the constraints of the present situation. Kierkegaard argues that this implies not wanting to be oneself, not wanting to be (positively) free, and that the agent is therefore double-minded or in despair. This makes sense if we keep in mind that one's possibilities only reside within the specific individual one is and in the particular situation one finds oneself in.

The solution to the problems posed by these two types of despair lies in appropriating facticity. The ethicist says that one gets continuity in

54 For a claim to the effect that Kant bans the anthropological contingencies, see Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*, p. 298, pp. 225f.

55 Regarding facticity and idealism, see Østerberg, "Innledning," p. 11. Regarding Kant, cf. Patrick Frierson, *Freedom and Anthropology in Kant's Moral Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003, Chapter 1.

56 *SKS* 11, 151–153, 146–148 / *SUD*, 35–37, 30–33.

one's existence (*Tilværelse*) by appropriating one's history. He stresses that one's history is not solely a product of one's own free acts,⁵⁷ but something closely related to the history of mankind as a whole. Hence, one's history can only have continuity if one sees that one stands in relation to other human beings, both the living and the dead.⁵⁸ When one sees reality as something one has appropriated, one sees oneself and one's surroundings in a *historical* and *social* perspective. In this context the ethicist stresses that the self is socially mediated: “[T]he self that is the objective [*Formaalet*]...is a concrete self in living interaction [*Vexelvirkning*] with these specific surroundings, the life conditions, this order of things. The self that is the objective is not only a personal self but a social, a civic [*borgerligt*] self.”⁵⁹ The ethicist says that the task is to function in society or to contribute to society and thereby to cultivate (Danish, *danne*; cf. German, *bilden*) oneself.⁶⁰ Kant makes a similar point, but differentiates more between different levels, when he says that “The human being is destined [*bestimmt*] by his reason to live in a society with human beings and to *cultivate* himself, to *civilize* himself, and to *moralize* himself.”⁶¹

The ethicist's analysis of choosing oneself leads to the problem of whether acknowledging facticity involves being responsible for what one has not done. The ethicist stresses that when one's own history is dependent on the history of society, this means that one has responsibility for acknowledging history and for trying to improve society:

[T]he person who chooses himself ethically chooses himself concretely as this specific [*bestemte*] individual, and he achieves this concretion because this choice is identical with the repentance, which ratifies the choice. The individual, then, becomes conscious [*bliver sig bevidst*] as this specific individual with these capacities, these inclinations, these drives, these passions, influenced by this spe-

57 SKS 3, 171 / EO2, 175.

58 SKS 3, 239 / EO2, 250f.

59 SKS 3, 250 / EO2, 262.

60 SKS 3, 249f., 261 / EO2, 262f., 274f.

61 Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 420 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, pp. 324f.); *Practical Philosophy*, pp. 586–588, pp. 584f. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, pp. 471–473, p. 469); *Vorlesungen über Anthropologie*, vol. 25, p. 369, p. 847, p. 897, p. 1198, p. 1426; Kant, “Reflexionen zur Anthropologie,” in Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 15: *Kant's handschriftlicher Nachlaß*, Berlin: de Gruyter 1923, p. 897, *reflexion* 1524. These three levels correspond to hypothetical, assertoric, and categorical imperatives or the skilfulness, prudence, and wisdom found in man's technical, pragmatic, and moral predispositions, respectively. Holly Wilson, *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology*, Albany: State University of New York Press 2006, Chapter 4.

cific social milieu [*Omgivelse*], as this specific product of a specific environment [*Omverden*]. But as he becomes aware of all this, he takes upon himself [*overtager han*] responsibility for it all.⁶²

The ethicist thinks that man can only choose himself by “sinking himself into the root by which he is bound up with the whole.” This means that “He can give up nothing of all this, not the most painful, not the hardest [*Tungeste*], and yet the expression for this struggle, for this acquiring, is—repentance. He repents himself back into himself, back into the family, back into the race [*Slægten*]....”⁶³ Why, in this account, is repentance supposed to be necessary—is it because I must have done something wrong? Well, it is because he who chooses himself is only the person he is through the history of mankind—a history that contains painful things.⁶⁴ The ethicist’s claim about the necessity of repentance clearly suggests that the painful things refer to evil in our history. This is why the ethicist can say that the son must repent because of the father’s wrongdoings.⁶⁵ However, the ethicist is somewhat unclear about whether the father’s wrongdoings make the son guilty.

At this point, Habermas’ analysis, which is influenced by the ethicist, is clearer than the ethicist’s analysis. In his contribution to the *Historikerstreit*, Habermas claims that all Germans, including the so-called *Nachgeborenen* (those born after the war), have a common responsibility for what the Third Reich did.⁶⁶ This can be interpreted as the statement that everybody, including the *Nachgeborenen*, must acknowledge the situation and the history behind it. Additionally, everybody has a responsibility for trying to rectify historical injustice. The reason for this seems to be that the only possibilities the agent has lie in the particular situation he is situated in. He can only choose himself if he deals with the particular problems or wrongdoings in his situation. However, while Habermas stresses that Germans must take responsibility for what the Third Reich did, the ethicist claims that the right context of choice and repentance is provided by the history of mankind as a whole.⁶⁷ Although Habermas accepts that we are responsible for what our forefathers did, he

62 SKS 3, 239 / EO2, 250f.

63 SKS 3, 207 / EO2, 216.

64 SKS 3, 207 / EO2, 216.

65 SKS 3, 208f. / EO2, 217f.

66 Jürgen Habermas, “Historical Consciousness and the Post-Traditional Identity: The Federal Republic’s Orientation to the West,” in his *The New Conservatism*, Cambridge: Polity 1989, Chapter 10, part IV.

67 Cf. SKS 3, 207 / EO2, 216.

would not accept that guilt is inherited or that we are guilty because of what our forefathers did. Put differently, we must answer for what our forefathers did, but this does not mean that we are to blame for it.

Kant is clear that moral guilt cannot be inherited, something which may be at odds with the ethicist's analysis of repentance. For me to be guilty I would have to have done something wrong. I cannot be guilty because of what Adam or anyone else has done.⁶⁸ At this point Kierkegaard (Haufniensis) breaks with Augustine and follows Kant.⁶⁹ While Augustine's doctrine of original sin implies that only Adam had the possibility of not sinning (Latin, *posse non peccare*) both Kant and Kierkegaard (Haufniensis) stress that we must all have had the possibility of not sinning. Whereas Augustine believes that sin is inherited, Kierkegaard (Haufniensis) follows Kant in holding that man is only evil (guilty and sinful) because of what he himself has done.

The ethicist stresses that taking responsibility for oneself entails taking responsibility for a situation one did not bring about. Does Kant accept the responsibility like Habermas does? If the above analysis is sound, it is not impossible that he does since the *Anthropology* may be read as saying that we have to *take over* our physical character and probably also our culture and civilization. As we have seen, Kant even suggests that the differences among sexes, *Völker*, and races are the result of having freely taken over particular physiological and geographical differences.⁷⁰

IV. Not having Faith in Progress: “despair of necessity”

The so-called “*despair of necessity*” consists of a lack of possibility or freedom. The corresponding “*despair of finitude*” consists of a lack of infinity.⁷¹ Both these types of despair consist of believing that one is

68 Cf. Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 175 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 8, p. 123); *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 86, pp. 132f., p. 155 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, p. 40, pp. 97f., p. 126).

69 Cf. *SKS* 4, 333, 337, 339, 342–344 / *CA*, 26, 31, 33, 35–38. See also Fremstedal, “Original Sin and Radical Evil.”

70 Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, pp. 205f. Kant's prejudices about gender, nationality, race, religion, and the deaf can be considered false empirical data in his anthropology. Louden, “The Second Part of Morals,” p. 79.

71 *SKS* 11, 153–157, 149–151 / *SUD*, 37–42, 33–35.

not capable of transcending facticity, or that one is not capable of breaking with an evil past.

Although Kant hardly thematizes what Kierkegaard calls “despair of possibility,” he is clearly concerned about what is called “despair of necessity”:

[O]ne who has always found himself unable to stand fast by his often repeated resolutions [*Vorsatze*] to be good but has always relapsed into evil, or who...has gone from bad to worse, slipping even further down as though on a slope: [such a one] can reasonably entertain no hope of improving...for, from all indications, he would have to regard the corruption as rooted in his disposition.⁷²

[I]f he [the human being] courageously makes the resolution from now on to choose a new and better life, he must tell himself: “Nothing will come of it anyway. You have often (due to procrastination) made this promise to yourself, but you have always broken it under the pretext of making an exception just this once.” Thus the expectation of similar cases is a bleak state of affairs [*trostloser Zustand*].⁷³

According to Kierkegaard, the solution to the problem of “despair of necessity” lies in hoping and believing that the future can transcend the past. However, Kierkegaard insists that the latter is a specifically Christian solution. Kierkegaard’s religious thought provides a radically different answer to the question of how we should relate to evil than the ethicist’s does, since the latter is confined to what is humanly possible and what is consistent with human understanding. Contra the ethicist, Kierkegaard would insist that the evil one has committed can only be overcome if divine grace is allowed. Although he would not go as far as Kierkegaard, Kant states: “[E]vil is radical, since it corrupts the grounds of all maxims; as a natural propensity, it is also not to be extirpated through human forces, for this could happen only through good maxims—something that cannot take place if the subjective supreme ground of all maxims is presupposed to be corrupted.”⁷⁴ However, Kant insists that man knows (for practical purposes) that he should do his duty. Hence, it is also possible for man to do his duty. This approach to the problem

72 Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 110, cf. pp. 116f., pp. 201f. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, pp. 68f., cf. p. 77, pp. 184f.).

73 Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 295 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 186); cf. Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001, p. 392; Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 27: *Vorlesungen über Moralphilosophie*, Berlin: de Gruyter 1974–79, pp. 656f.

74 Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 83, cf. p. 90 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, p. 37, cf. pp. 44f.).

amounts to “cutting the knot (by means of a practical maxim) instead of disentangling it (theoretically).”⁷⁵

Kierkegaard agrees with Kant’s view that evil is “not to be extirpated through human forces,” but rather than following Kant in “cutting the knot,” Kierkegaard adds that the only solution lies in divine grace as it is found in the Christian revelation. As opposed to Kant, Kierkegaard says that man’s sinfulness and infinite guilt have the consequence that his natural capacities are completely inadequate for fulfilling the ethical task.

Even if the twin roles of revelation and sin in Kierkegaard break with Kant, this does not prevent the “despair of finitude” from relying on Kantian premises. First, Kierkegaard (as well as Climacus and Haufniensis) subscribes to what Kant calls moral rigorism, a doctrine that basically says that unless you are morally perfect, you are infinitely guilty.⁷⁶ Second, Kierkegaard seems to approve of Kant’s doctrine of radical evil,⁷⁷ or at the very least holds all humans to be infinitely guilty and sinful.⁷⁸ If man’s natural capacities are inadequate due to sin, these two points indicate that *nobody can avoid the “despair of necessity.”* In this strong form, the “despair of necessity” relies on the doctrines of moral rigorism and radical evil (or corresponding claims about infinite guilt and sin). Insofar as the “despair of necessity” is unavoidable and one is not aware of it, one is in inauthentic (non-conscious) despair. This important point may help reconstruct the much-discussed claims about inauthentic despair in *The Sickness unto Death*.⁷⁹

75 Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 149 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, p. 119).

76 Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, pp. 71–74, p. 113 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, pp. 22–25, p. 72). Cf. Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, p. 92 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 27, p. 302). SKS 7, 383 / CUP1, 420f. SKS 4, 342 / CA, 36. SKS K4, 401. SKS 24, 390, NB 24:112 / JP 1, 998. I agree with Green’s thesis that Kierkegaard (as well as Climacus and Haufniensis) endorsed moral rigorism. Cf. Ronald Green, “The Limits of the Ethical in Kierkegaard’s *The Concept of Anxiety* and Kant’s *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*,” in *The Concept of Anxiety*, ed. by Robert Perkins, Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press 1985 (*International Kierkegaard Commentary*, vol. 8), pp. 63–87, pp. 70f.

77 SKS 20, 88f., NB:125 / JP 3, 3089. For more details, see Fremstedal, “Original Sin and Radical Evil.”

78 Cf. SKS 7, 242f., 383 / CUP1, 266f., 420f. SKS 4, 459f. / CA, 161.

79 Cf. Michael Theunissen, *Der Begriff Verzweigung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1993, pp. 22f., pp. 41f., p. 56; Grøn, *Subjektivitet og Negativitet*, pp. 125–132.

Kant claims that every individual needs to be reborn because of radical evil. This means that establishing moral character is not just about being moral; it is also about fighting evil. Presumably, that is why Kant analyzes the rebirth or revolution in *Religion*,⁸⁰ a work which begins with a discussion of evil. If Kant's analysis of moral character presupposes the doctrine of radical evil, this means that moral character corresponds to Christian existence rather than the ethical stage.⁸¹ In contradistinction to religiousness (A and B), Kierkegaard's ethical stage presupposes neither moral rigorism nor radical evil.⁸² Kierkegaard is clear that only Christianity can help us overcome despair. However, it is less clear whether the basic assumptions of Kierkegaard's anthropology are Christian in the sense of relying on the authority of revelation. To name but two important examples: It has been claimed that the concept of infinitude is theological (rather than something there is phenomenological evidence for)⁸³ and that *The Sickness unto Death* presupposes that man is created by God. First, it is not clear that the concept of infinitude needs to be theological, since it is taken in the sense of the unlimited (Greek, *ápeiron*).⁸⁴ Moreover, infinitude is but one element in the synthesis structure, an element which is dialectically dependent upon finitude. For this reason, attempts to abstract infinitude from finitude lead to the despair of infinitude. In the anthropological theory, infinitude mainly seems to represent our ability to transcend finitude (facticity). Second, the first part of *The Sickness unto Death* merely assumes that the phenomenon of desperately wanting to be oneself indicates that the self does not constitute itself normatively. This type of despair suggests that the self is not normatively self-sufficient, something which can be seen either as undermining relativism (Lübcke) or ethics of autonomy (Kosch).⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the description of facticity as a gift (instead of merely being something given) found in *The Concept of Irony* (and repeated later in the upbuilding writings) belongs to Christian faith rather

80 Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 92 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, pp. 47f.).

81 This appears to have gone unnoticed. E.g. Fahrenbach, "Kierkegaards etische Existenzanalyse," pp. 217f.

82 Cf. SKS 3, 170f., 173 / EO2, 174f., 178. Schulte, *Radikal böse*, pp. 279f.; cf. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant*, p. 221.

83 See Theunissen "Einleitung: Kierkegaards Werk und Wirkung," pp. 67f.

84 SKS 11, 151 / SUD, 35.

85 Poul Lübcke, "At 'have sat sig selv, eller være sat ved et Andet,'" *Filosofiske studier*, vol. 8, 2007, pp. 1–12; Michelle Kosch, *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006, p. 209.

than philosophy. On Kierkegaard's account, only Christian faith makes it possible to affirm existence in its entirety as a "good and perfect gift."⁸⁶

It should be noted that the possibility of overcoming evil does not necessarily prevent one from lapsing back into evil. Kierkegaard (and Climacus) holds that it is perfectly possible to become evil again after a rebirth.⁸⁷ The lapsed Christian's sin is in a sense worse than the sin of an ordinary human being, since the Christian is responsible for abrogating his own salvation.⁸⁸ Although Kant speaks at one point about a person who has adopted the good maxim needing to guard against a relapse,⁸⁹ he has been interpreted by J.E. Hare as saying that after the revolution of the will, the new maxim is unchangeable. This reading implies that after one has established moral character, it is impossible to subsume morality under sensuousness (self-interest) and become evil again.⁹⁰ But in the relevant passage—a passage we will quote *in extenso* later—Kant merely writes *if* (wenn) by an "unalterable decision a human being reverses the supreme ground of his maxims by which he was an evil human being (and thereby puts on a "new man"), he is to this extent, by principle and attitude of mind [*Denkungsart*], a subject receptive to the good; but he is a good human being only in incessant laboring and becoming...."⁹¹ Rather than claiming that the new maxim is unchangeable, Kant merely says that *if* there is an unalterable decision, *then* man is receptive to the good. Since Kant only makes a conditional claim, he can allow the possibility of real (and not just apparent) relapse, something which can be understood in the atemporal perspective as a change of *Denkungsart*. If being moral is a continual task (from the temporal perspective) and virtue always starts afresh like Kant claims,⁹² then it seems that Kant cannot deny the possibility of moral regression. Also,

86 George Pattison, *The Philosophy of Kierkegaard*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press 2005, p. 144, cf. p. 143, p. 145.

87 SKS 4, 226, 228 / PF, 17–20. SKS 10, 24 / CD, 12.

88 At this point I am indebted to a discussion with David Possen.

89 Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, pp. 116f. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, p. 77).

90 Cf. John Hare, *The Moral Gap*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 2002, p. 94. Hare refers to *Religion* (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, p. 47), but I cannot see that Kant says what Hare wants him to say here. Nevertheless, there is one passage where Kant is reported to have said that "an upright and honourable man cannot become vicious...because his principles have already become firmly rooted in him." Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, p. 216 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 27, p. 464).

91 Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 92 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, pp. 47f.).

92 Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, p. 537 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, p. 409).

in his writings on history, Kant explicitly states that decline is possible and that progress (towards the highest good) can be interrupted.⁹³

The past is not something finished or completed that can be appropriated once and for all. Furthermore, it is a never-ending task to reform facticity so that it conforms to ideality. Hence, it is an ongoing task to choose oneself, or to posit the anthropological synthesis. This central point is repeated time and time again by Kierkegaard and the pseudonyms (William, Climacus, Haufniensis, and Anti-Climacus). Nevertheless, Kant appears to think differently. In the key passage about character, Kant writes: “Perhaps there are only a few who have attempted this revolution before the age of thirty, and fewer still who have firmly established it before they are forty [*sie vor dem 40sten fest gegründet haben*].”⁹⁴ Kant also says that the age when the human being reaches the full use of reason in respect to prudence (i.e., the pragmatic predisposition) is around the fortieth year and in respect to wisdom (i.e., the moral predisposition) around the sixtieth year.⁹⁵

However, it is only when we see moral acts from the atemporal, intelligible perspective that we can say that the character is firmly established through a rebirth or a revolution. The revolution concerns life *as a whole*. But this rebirth need not correspond to a revolution at any *specific* point in time. In the temporal perspective we must see the progress from evil to good as a constant task, that is, as a *reform* that is never completed in time.⁹⁶ Hence we must constantly posit the Moral Law as superior to

93 Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 300 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 83); *Practical Philosophy*, pp. 305f. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 8, pp. 308f.).

94 Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 392 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 294); cf. *Vorlesungen über Anthropologie*, vol. 25, p. 654; “Reflexionen zur Anthropologie,” vol. 15, p. 769, *reflexion* 1497.

95 Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 308 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 201).

96 Sharon Anderson-Gold, “God and Community: An Inquiry into the Religious Implications of the Highest Good,” in *Kant’s Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, ed. by Philip Rossi and Michael Wreen, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1991, pp. 113–131, p. 122. In the context of the revolution, Frierson explains: “One does not become less evil by subordinating the moral law less often, or to stronger inclinations only. Only a complete shift, such that the moral law assumes absolute priority, constitutes genuine moral improvement on Kant’s account.” Frierson, *Freedom and Anthropology in Kant’s Moral Philosophy*, p. 122.

other motives.⁹⁷ Virtue always starts afresh and there is no peaceful or idle condition.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Kant speaks of a changed *Denkungsart* not only in a noumenal or timeless sense but also in a phenomenal or temporal sense as if it was subject to a *choice*. This makes it possible to speak as if one establishes character at forty and to prescribe that one begins with a change in *Denkungsart*, not with an improvement of mores.⁹⁹

We meet basically the same difficulty in Kierkegaard. Like Kant, Kierkegaard takes human freedom to involve something both temporal and atemporal. Kierkegaard appears to interpret temporality and change as a feature of the human as a natural being.¹⁰⁰ Eternity on the other hand is supposed to involve personal immortality *and* to be something present and accessible at every point in time.¹⁰¹ The place where eternity and temporality meet is described as consciousness, spirit, and the moment (*Øieblikket*).¹⁰²

Kierkegaard is not clear about whether the choice of oneself, or a rebirth, occurs at a specific point in time. Indeed, speaking of it as a choice suggests that it is an occurrence in time. But the choice nevertheless concerns one's whole life and one's most fundamental principles, something that seems to transcend temporality, given Kierkegaard's understanding of it. Kierkegaard writes that "the art [*Kunsten*]" is "to be changed in the deepest ground of one's being [*sit Væsens dybeste Grund*]" and to "change the outer" gradually.¹⁰³ The example he uses to elucidate this point is that it is better for a drunkard to have a glass and a bottle in front of him without drinking than to throw them out the window. Elsewhere, Kierkegaard opposes character formation and inwardness with a focus on outward changes.¹⁰⁴ Put in Kantian terms, this suggests a duality whereby one changes one's supreme maxim (*Lebens-*

97 Cf. Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 92, pp. 108f., p. 152 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, pp. 47f., pp. 66f., p. 122).

98 Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, p. 537 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, p. 409); cf. *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 338 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, pp. 234f.).

99 Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 92 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, p. 48); Wimmer, *Kants kritische Religionsphilosophie*, p. 151.

100 *SKS* 8, 125f. / *UD*, 9f.

101 *SKS* 8, 124–126 / *UD*, 9f. On this point I am indebted to Patrick Stokes. Kierkegaard's approach here seems Platonic-Christian rather than specifically Kantian.

102 *SKS* 8, 292 / *UD*, 195. *SKS* 4, 392f., 389f. / *CA*, 89f., 86f.

103 *Pap.* VII-2, B235, pp. 187f. / *BA*, 101.

104 *SKS* 24, 524, NB25:110 / *JP* 3, 3201.

regel) and then attempts to reform the outer, or facticity, in the light of this maxim. Kierkegaard understands the former as a revolution where one's most fundamental principle gets changed, for instance by going from evil to good (something which cannot be a gradual process, given rigorism). Thus it seems that Kant and Kierkegaard share the view that a true change in the way one lives involves both a revolution in the way one thinks (*Denkungsart*) and a reform of the outer. Kant writes:

[A] revolution is necessary in the mode of thought [*Denkungsart*] but a gradual reformation in the mode of sense [*Sinnesart*] (which places obstacles in the way of the former)... If [*wenn*]¹⁰⁵ by a single and unalterable decision a human being reverses the supreme ground of his maxims by which he was an evil human being (and thereby puts on a “new man”), he is to this extent, by principle and attitude of mind [*Denkungsart*], a subject receptive to the good; but he is a good human being only in incessant laboring [*Wirken*] and becoming i.e. he can hope—in view of the purity of the principle which he has adopted as supreme maxim of his power of choice [*Willkür*], and in view of the stability [*Festigkeit*] of this principle—to find oneself upon the good (though narrow) path of constant *progress* from bad [*Schlechten*] to better. For him who penetrates the intelligible ground of the hearth (the ground of all the maxims of the power of choice), for him to whom this endless progress is a unity, i.e. for God, this is the same as actually being a good human being...and to this extent the change can be considered a revolution. For the judgment of human beings, however, who can assess [*schätzen*] themselves and the strength of their maxims only by the upper hand they gain over the senses [*Sinnlichkeit*] in time, the change is to be regarded only as an ever-continuing striving for the better, hence as a gradual reform of the propensity to evil, of the perverted attitude of mind [*verkehrter Denkungsart*].¹⁰⁶

Although radical evil entails that man has corrupted his supreme maxim, man can and should progress towards good. In order to make these claims consistent we must assume a revolution in *Denkungsart*, and a gradual reform of *Sinnesart*.¹⁰⁷ Due to radical evil, the maximum of what man is capable of is to a progression from a bad to a better state.¹⁰⁸ Although the individual has reversed the supreme ground of his maxims by which

105 This is the “*wenn*” discussed above.

106 Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 92, cf. p. 152, p. 79 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, pp. 47f., cf. p. 122, p. 31).

107 Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 92 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, p. 47); cf. *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 420 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 324).

108 Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 94 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, pp. 50f.); *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 420 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 324).

he was an evil human being, he will still have the residual effects of his prior decision to deal with.¹⁰⁹

For Kant, a gradual reform of *Sinnesart* appears to include a development of inclinations so that they become more consistent with the Moral Law: “[V]irtue cannot be *taught* merely by concepts of duty or by exhortations (by *paraenesis*), but must instead [be] *exercised* and cultivated by efforts to combat the inner enemy within the human being.”¹¹⁰ Although Kant—like Kierkegaard—believes that habits can be a barrier to freedom and independence, he does speak of having “acquired a *habitus* in virtue.”¹¹¹ He also mentions that one’s principles of action can become “second nature.”¹¹² Habit itself belongs to the phenomenal realm and is described as “a mechanism of the mode of sense [*Sinnesart*].”¹¹³ Although Kant can allow that one should try to cultivate and reform *Sinnesart*, he cannot demand success. His comment that *Sinnesart* places obstacles in the way of *Denkungsart* suggests this reform is not a smooth process. Ultimately, the reason why *Sinnesart* places obstacles in the way of *Denkungsart* seems to be related to his claim that the laws and order of nature are different from freedom and the laws of morality.¹¹⁴

V. Anthropology and Ethics

In the key passage about moral character, Kant says:

[T]he grounding of character...is absolute unity of the inner principle of conduct as such [*des Lebenswandels überhaupt*]...to have this [character] is the minimum that one can demand of a reasonable human being, but at the same time [it is] also the maximum of inner worth (of human dignity), then to be a man of principles [*Grundsätzen*] (to have a determinate [*bestimmten*] character) must be possible for the most common [*gemeinsten*] human reason and yet, according to its dignity [*Würde*], be superior to the greatest talent.¹¹⁵

109 Marina, “Kant on Grace: A Reply to his Critics,” p. 397.

110 Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, p. 591 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, p. 477).

111 Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, p. 446 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 27, p. 725).

112 Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 440 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 9, p. 445).

113 Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, p. 593 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, p. 479).

114 Cf. Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, p. 256, p. 231 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 5, p. 145, p. 113); *Lectures on Ethics*, p. 306 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 27, p. 549); *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, pp. 317f. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 5, p. 452).

115 Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, pp. 392f. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 295).

If establishing character constitutes both the maximum and the minimum of what is demanded of us, then the establishment of character represents a goal and ability common to all humans. It is not because I am talented, intelligent, healthy, and so on that I can have a character; on the contrary, I can establish character simply by virtue of my being a rational being with a sensuous nature. Kierkegaard and William, on the other hand, stress that the most valuable is as available to the simpleton (*den enfoldige*) as to the one who is very gifted (*den udmærkede*). William says that human *dignity* lies in our capacity for having history, and for being able to give this history continuity by choosing ourselves.¹¹⁶

Kierkegaard and William both stress that it is only the agent himself who can choose himself—this is an “inner deed” or choice.¹¹⁷ The help of others cannot provide more than an occasion (*Anledning*) for this choice. In the key passage about moral character Kant stresses that the absolute maximum that education (*Erziehung*), examples, and teaching (*Belehrung*) can do is to be the occasion for “an explosion which happens one time as a result of weariness [*Überdruß*] at the unstable condition of instinct.”¹¹⁸ Moral improvement cannot be learned from someone else: the teacher’s exposition is only the occasion (*Veranlassung*)¹¹⁹ for developing it out of one’s own reason.¹²⁰ Immediately after the long passage about reform and revolution quoted above, Kant concludes that moral education must begin with a revolution in *Denkungsart*, or the establishment of character, not with an improvement of mores.¹²¹ As we have seen Kierkegaard also prescribes beginning with character formation instead of outward changes. Both thinkers also rely on the concept of occasion when describing the role of others.

116 SKS 3, 239 / EO2, 250f.

117 Cf. SKS 3, 171 / EO2, 175.

118 Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 392, cf. pp. 384ff. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 294, cf. pp. 285ff.).

119 Kierkegaard’s use of the notion of occasion (*Anledning*; *Foranledning*) appears to be based on Kant’s use of the notion of occasion (*Veranlassung*). Green, “Kant: A Debt both Obscure and Enormous,” pp. 182f.; Ronald Green, “Kierkegaard’s *Philosophical Fragments*: A Kantian Commentary,” in *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, ed. by Robert Perkins, Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press 1994 (*International Kierkegaard Commentary*, vol. 7), pp. 169–202, pp. 173–175.

120 Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 263 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 37).

121 Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 92 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, p. 48), cf. *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 469 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 9, p. 481).

Kant and Kierkegaard's thought converges with the view that it is impossible to help others directly; we cannot get others to choose themselves or to establish character. This suggests that ethical education would have to be based on maieutics, something that is consistent with Kant's position that human beings are transcendently free *and* that moral anthropology is concerned with external (empirical) influences on moral development.¹²² Kant's theory of transcendental freedom clearly means that there must be limits to how far one can go in allowing for morally significant empirical influences. Although maieutics may be thought to be the logical consequence of Kant's ethics, pedagogy, and anthropology, Kant did not develop this topic as much as Kierkegaard (especially Climacus). However, Kant is reported to have said:

A person may be compelled to duty by others, and even in that case, may act freely. That happens when the other, having a right to do so, confronts the subject with his duty, i.e., the moral law by which he ought to act. If this confrontation [*Vorstellung*] makes an impression on the agent, he determines his will by an Idea of reason, creates through his reason that conception of duty which already lay previously within him, and is only quickened by the other, and determines himself according to the moral law.¹²³

"[T]o have a character," writes Kant, "signifies the property of the will by which the subject binds himself to definite practical principles that he has prescribed for himself irrevocably by his own reason."¹²⁴ If the agent has established moral character one can expect him to follow the Moral Law.¹²⁵ Moral character means that the agent's subjective principle (his maxim) realizes the objective principle of practical reason.¹²⁶ Performing the revolution in *Denkungsart* involves going from subsuming morality under sensuousness (self-interest) to subsuming sensuousness under morality. Thus, sensuousness (and happiness) goes from having first priority to being something conditioned and limited by the Moral Law. However, moral character does not in and of itself lead to the complete realization of the Moral Law in the world, since the laws and order of nature are dif-

122 Cf. Frierson, *Freedom and Anthropology in Kant's Moral Philosophy*, p. 2, p. 31, pp. 57–67, p. 76, pp. 95f., pp. 133–135, p. 164.

123 Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, pp. 283f. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 27, p. 521).

124 Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, pp. 389f. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 7, p. 292); cf. *Practical Philosophy*, p. 262 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 5, p. 152).

125 Cf. Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 474 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 9, p. 487).

126 Cf. Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 92 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, pp. 47f.).

ferent from freedom and the laws of morality.¹²⁷ If moral character were to lead to the realization of the Moral Law in the world, this difference in general, and the difference between *Sinnesart* and *Denkungsart* in particular, would have to be overcome—something that ultimately would involve overcoming the very difference between facticity and ideality. In Kant's theory, establishing the unity of freedom and nature would basically amount to the realization of the highest good, understood as a commonwealth of ethical agents that are happy.¹²⁸ In contrast, moral character does not necessarily involve such a unity of nature and freedom.¹²⁹

Apart from the concept of the highest good, Kierkegaard appears to use the concept *repetition* to designate the overcoming of the difference between facticity and ideality. Repetition denotes that *ideality is realized in reality*, that universal (ethical) principles, concepts, or ideas, are realized in actuality.¹³⁰ Repetition takes on a range of meanings. It can mean everything from ideality's being fully realized in reality, to merely realizing an idea through action on the other. Similarly, Kierkegaard's concepts of doubling (*Fordobelse*) and reduplication both refer to an idea being realized in reality, that something abstract (e.g. thinking) becomes concrete through action.¹³¹ The concepts of repetition, doubling, and reduplication all imply a duality, according to which one first has an idea, or an understanding, which subsequently is realized (repeated or doubled) in action. Repetition in the strict sense, however, amounts to ideality being fully actualized in reality, an eschatological notion that coincides

127 Cf. Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, p. 256, p. 231 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 5, p. 145, p. 113); *Lectures on Ethics*, p. 306 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 27, p. 549); *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, pp. 317f. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 5, p. 452).

128 Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, pp. 243ff. (Akademieausgabe, vol. 5, pp. 127ff.); *Religion and Rational Theology*, pp. 133ff., p. 165 (Akademieausgabe, vol. 6, pp. 97ff., p. 139).

129 However, the ethicist seems to believe that the choice of oneself leads not only to happiness but also to oneself becoming part of civil society. This belief appears to rest on the assumption that the world order is rational (SKS 3, 277, 305 / EO2, 292, 323. SKS 6, 145 / SLW, 155), a quasi-Hegelian assumption neither Kierkegaard nor Kant shares.

130 Cf. Jon Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003, p. 274, p. 285, p. 296; Kjell Eyvind Johansen, *Begrepet Gjentagelse hos Søren Kierkegaard*, Oslo: Solum 1988, p. 2, pp. 6f., pp. 9ff., pp. 34f., p. 46, pp. 66ff. Regarding the highest good, see Fremstedal, "The Concept of the Highest Good in Kierkegaard and Kant."

131 Cf. SKS 12, 138 / PC, 134. SKS 7, 175f. / CUP1, 190–192. SKS 20, 119, NB:201 / JP 3, 3665. SKS 22, 364, NB 14:35 / JP 1, 982.

with the concept of the highest good. Kant's moral character corresponds to a weaker form of repetition, a form where the idea of morals is realized subjectively in the disposition of the individual agent, and in which one tries to reform *Sinnesart*.

Helmut Fahrenbach and Arne Grøn have both claimed that Kierkegaard breaks with Kant's dualism between rationality and sensuousness, freedom and nature.¹³² However, this dualism is not as absolute as presupposed by Fahrenbach and Grøn, for the following four reasons. *First*, the human will can never be only rational or merely naturally determined on Kant's account. As Kant makes clear in *Religion*, the power of choice (*Willkür*) has two different incentives (*Triebfedern*): that of morality and that of sensuousness. These two incentives reflect man's dual nature, the fact that man is a free and rational being as well as a natural and sensuous being. Since neither element can be done away with, both elements must be incorporated into one's maxim, although one has to give priority to one of them. Whereas evil takes the form of prioritizing the incentive of sensuousness over that of morality, morality takes the form of subsuming the incentive of sensuousness under that of morality. Furthermore, moral acts are never merely rational since morality is dependent upon inclinations for its material content. While the Moral Law demands law-likeness, the material content (the purpose) comes from our subjective principles or inclinations. Because it is given *a priori*, the Moral Law in

132 Describing Kant's ethics as abstract-universal, Fahrenbach ("Kierkegaards etische Existenzanalyse," pp. 217f., pp. 230f., p. 237) sees the anthropological synthesis of finitude and infinitude in Kierkegaard as overcoming the Kantian dualism between freedom and nature, reason and sensibility. Similarly, Arne Grøn (*Subjektivitet og negativitet*, pp. 180f.) claims that Kant is concerned with rational beings being in agreement with themselves (*selvoverensstemmelse*), whereas Kierkegaard is concerned with one's being in agreement with oneself as the particular being one already is. Thus, whereas Kant's ethics of autonomy concerns man as a rational being, Kierkegaard is concerned with the synthesis of finitude and infinitude, necessity and freedom. Like Fahrenbach, Grøn thereby suggests that Kierkegaard overcomes the Kantian dualism between reason and sensibility, freedom and nature. By saying this, Fahrenbach and Grøn both exaggerate the differences between Kant and Kierkegaard. Fahrenbach ("Kierkegaards etische Existenzanalyse," pp. 222f.) himself shows that, in Kierkegaard, the different elements of the synthesis (finitude and infinitude, etc.) are opposites standing in a highly tense (*höchst spannungsvolle*) relationship with each other, something which suggests that the dualism between finitude and infinitude, freedom and necessity, cannot be fully overcome in this life. Although Fahrenbach does not say so, the dualism between freedom and necessity in Kierkegaard resembles Kant's dualism between freedom and nature.

itself is a formal principle that is empty insofar as it does not set any purposes or ends. While subjective purposes are first-order principles, the Categorical Imperative (the Moral Law) works as a second-order principle that chooses or selects among the maxims of the agent.¹³³

Second, moral character in Kant involves that man as a free rational being takes over himself as a natural and sensuous being—something which comes surprisingly close to Kierkegaard. *Third*, moral character involves not merely a revolution in *Denkungsart* but also a *reform of Sinnesart*, something which also comes very close to Kierkegaard. *Finally*, in Kant the highest good represents an overcoming of the dualism of nature and freedom, whereby virtue leads to happiness. Although a similar conceptualization of the highest good can be found in Kierkegaard (especially Climacus), Kierkegaard does not appear to share Kant's idealist conviction that nature originally has its ground in noumena.

VI. Conclusion

By downplaying Kant's anthropological writings, earlier research on Kant and Kierkegaard has tended to exaggerate the differences between Kant and Kierkegaard. Although this paper does not radically change our view of the relation between Kant and Kierkegaard, it does indicate that some of Kierkegaard's most important and influential ideas (the choice of oneself and the anthropological theory) were to a large extent anticipated by Kant. Even though Kierkegaard's concept of facticity (and the "despair of possibility") goes beyond Kant, Kierkegaard's anthropological theory does not represent the clear break with Kant suggested by earlier scholarship. Both Kant and Kierkegaard see a true change in the way one lives as involving not only a revolution in the way one thinks, but also that one takes over—and tries to reform—both oneself and human society. Also, Kierkegaard relies on the ideality of ethics and the doctrines of moral rigorism and radical evil.

Although the ideality of ethics and the doctrine of radical evil may be viewed as distinctly Kantian, the other elements do not seem to be distinctly Kantian, except for some of the terminology. As Green has pointed out, Kierkegaard's use of the term *Anledning* (the occasion), appears to be based on Kant's use of the *Veranlassung*. However, even

133 This point is made by Jacqueline Marina, "Making Sense of Kant's Highest Good," *Kant-Studien*, vol. 91, 2000, pp. 329–355, pp. 343–345.

if Kierkegaard is using Kantian terminology, the reasoning behind seems maieutic in Socratic sense. The idea that a change in the way one lives involves both a revolution and a reform on the other hand resembles Christian accounts that insist that there is need both for rebirth and reform (sanctification).

Besides this interpretation of moral betterment, we find the idea of taking over oneself and society both in Kant and Kierkegaard. Although this idea is more prominent in Kierkegaard than Kant, I agree with Allen Wood that it is to be found in Kant's anthropological writings.¹³⁴ This may seem surprising, since this idea is often associated with so-called existential philosophy.¹³⁵ In Kierkegaard, this idea is connected with an analysis of historicity and contingency that seems more Hegelian and Herderian than Kantian. Nevertheless, there is considerable overlap between the anthropological theories of Kant and Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard can be seen as combining the ideality of ethics and the doctrine of radical evil not only with the duality of revolution and reform, but also with the idea of taking over oneself. Even though several of these elements may be found in other thinkers as well, the way Kierkegaard combines all these elements in his anthropological theory seems distinctly Kantian in nature. While it is commonplace to see Kierkegaard as occupied with anthropology, what is often overlooked is that Kierkegaard can also be seen as contributing to discipline founded by Kant, Platner, and Herder in the 1770s. Whereas Herder and Platner favored an empirical and biological approach to anthropology, Kant and Kierkegaard stressed not only human freedom but also the ideality of ethics and the vocation of man.¹³⁶ Thus, Kierkegaard's approach to anthropology can legitimately be understood as having strong Kantian elements, even though he departs from Kant by relying on a Lutheran understanding of sin and a post-Kantian analysis of historicity.

134 Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, pp. 205f.; "Kant and the Problem of Human Nature," pp. 52f.

135 Notably, Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Tübingen: Niemeyer 1993, p. 383.

136 Regarding Kant, Herder, and Platner, see Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*, p. 238, p. 246, pp. 221f., p. 292, p. 331.