

# Kant and Kierkegaard on the Failure of the Unity of the Self

Ulrich Knappe

It is well known that Søren Kierkegaard's thinking emerged from an engagement with the philosophical systems of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. Furthermore, it is a fact that these German idealists themselves have their origin in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant.<sup>1</sup> With this background it is striking that researchers have not really been interested in Kierkegaard's relation to Kant<sup>2</sup> since it will be difficult, if not impossible, to grasp his standpoint vis-à-vis German idealism without seriously taking into account the kind of thinking from which it stems. However, Kierkegaard's relation to Kant is also interesting in its own right.

In this paper I focus on just one aspect of this relation. I investigate Kierkegaard's understanding of »double-mindedness«<sup>3</sup> in an apparent non-philosophical and upbuilding discourse of his (*An Occasional Discourse*, known as *Purity of Heart*) and its relation to Kant's conception of non-moral conduct as presented in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.<sup>4</sup> Double-mindedness denotes what I call the failure of the self's unity.<sup>5</sup> This should be understood as a failure of the self's moral/religious commitment. I claim that the *structure* of this failure is one and the same in Kant and Kierkegaard. This does not mean that dealing with one of the thinkers absolves us from dealing with the other. Rather, *each* sheds light on different aspects of one and the same phenomenon. Together they can be seen as providing us with a well-grounded analysis of what a failure of the unity of subjectivity consists in. In other words: I want not only to provide evidence that the Kantian reasoning illuminates Kierkegaard's view of that failure, but also suggest that Kierkegaard contributes original insights about this phenomenon.

Kant and Kierkegaard agree upon the negative claim that the self cannot find its full unity or destination insofar as it investigates nature.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, both Kant and Kierkegaard contend that being a moral/religious agent has primacy over any theoretical investigation. To be a moral/religious agent involves the use of one's will and the performance of a moral/religious action. Moral and religious attitudes of this sort denote the realm of the practical in the strict sense. In a broader sense the realm of the practical concerns *any* kind of will and its corresponding action. According to this broader construal of the practical »the will is nothing but practical reason« (G 412). Practical reason shows itself by »the power to act according to [one's] representation of laws, i.e., according to principles« (G 412). In other words: insofar as a human being's will is determined by principles (rules), she is determined practically. Now it is clear that not every practical determination of the will according to this broad definition is a moral/religious determination and hence denotes a unified self.

Whether or not the will lacks unity (is a non-moral/non-religious will) depends on *what kinds of* laws or principles human beings draw upon. For Kant as well as for Kierkegaard, there are two main kinds of principles which determine the will. Accordingly, there are two essentially different ways in which human beings can exist. In the *Groundwork* Kant describes the general situation of a human being's will in the following way: »the will stands as it were, at a crossroads between its *a priori* principle, which is formal, and its *a posteriori* incentive, which is material« (G 400). The human situation can be described as involving the choice between two distinctly different possibilities since the will can either be rooted in principles of morality or in principles that are governed by »natural« incentives. This is what Kant means by saying that the will is standing at a crossroads. Kierkegaard makes extensive use of the metaphor of a crossroads. In *Purity of Heart* he emphasizes repeatedly that one basically »stands at a crossroads« (UD 56, cf. 41, 49, 63; SV1 8, 160, cf. 148, 154, 166). For Kierkegaard, as well as for Kant, the will *either* is determined *a posteriori* or is determined by (a) conception(s) of the morally good.<sup>7</sup> The will can either be determined by its *a posteriori* incentives or the will can be determined by moral/religious principles. The dichotomy at the level of the will is thoroughly Kantian as well as Kierkegaardian.

With these distinctions in mind, I would like to summarize the main points I discuss in this paper. First (1), I argue that double-mindedness exhibits the structure of what Kant calls a hypothetical imperative. Second (2), I contend further that double-mindedness exemplifies more

specifically one species of hypothetical imperative, namely that which aims at happiness and which Kant calls a precept of prudence. With this analogy in view, I then point to some features of Kierkegaard's account which I claim enrich the basic Kantian conception. Third (3), having demonstrated the structural similarities between double-mindedness and Kant's account of a will governed by hypothetical imperatives, I close with a discussion of why both Kant and Kierkegaard think that a self which possesses this kind of structure fails to be unified. I show that for both of them, this lack of unity depends on the self's rootedness in time.

## I

In *Purity of Heart* Kierkegaard essentially aims at an understanding of the sentence »Purity of Heart Is To Will One Thing« (UD 24; SV1 8, 133). He intends to »come to an understanding of this theme« by that which these »words (...) are opposing: *double-mindedness*« (UD 24; SV1 8, 134). A double-minded will is of such a nature that it shows the unconnectedness and dissociation of the self, because it has fallen away from the good will and its unifying force. Typically, Kierkegaard is not so much concerned with the general structure of this kind of imperative since he addresses his readers in a more concrete and immediate way, in those situations in which they find themselves in everyday life. But while this allows him to have a deeper »psychological« insight into such a person and the double-mindedness of her will, this difference rather concerns the surface of what Kierkegaard says and claims. To get clearer about the deeper structure of Kierkegaard's conception of double-mindedness, I think a comparison with Kant's conception of a hypothetical imperative proves illuminating. In the following I will therefore analyze the general structure of a hypothetical imperative (i.e. that type of maxim which is incapable of realizing morality or unity of the self according to Kant), and return to a discussion of Kierkegaard's conception of double-mindedness.

Hypothetical imperatives, »represent the practical necessity of a possible action as a means to achieving something else that one wills (or that it is at least possible for one to will)« (G 414). Accordingly, »the imperative is conditional, namely: if or because one wills this object, one ought to act in such or such a way« (G 444). These quotations highlight two basic and inseparable characteristics of hypothetical imperatives. The first alludes to the fact that the act of will underlying an action is distinct

from the act of will which seeks a certain aim. The willing of the action is a means, so that another act of will, the will to realize the aim, can be achieved. The distinction lies simply in this otherness of the willing. Corresponding to the fact that the will to act has the status of a means only, the kind of commitment to do the action is only a relative commitment. It is a commitment which is so to speak set by (willing) the aim or willing a certain object. Accordingly, the second quote emphasizes that the action to be done is dependent upon a presupposition, namely the act of willing the object. Thereby the conditionality of the commitment is expressed sharply. The commitment is not unconditional – you do not do the action irrespective of any other concern, but only if you will the object, that is, have another concern. The disunity of the will expressed by hypothetical imperatives is a result of the fact that one has such other concerns. The will and its underlying action is not immediately determined by a principle for which no other concern exists and so which is unconditional. Rather it serves as a means to something else that one wants. The disunity consists in having two heterogeneous wills, a will to do an action and a will which wants an aim which is not already set by the uppermost effort to will the action. The aim is not conditional upon the will to act, but itself conditions the will. Whereas a unified (moral/religious) will sets its aim itself, a non-unified will is set by an aim and thereby dependent upon it.

Now, it is important to see that hand in hand with hypothetical imperatives is the fact that the action to be done is determined as »good«: »if you want y, then it is good to do x« or »x is a good action if it realizes y.« Hypothetical imperatives naturally imply a certain meaning and usage of the word »good« as a designation for the respective action: »if the action would be good merely as a means to something else the imperative is *hypothetical* (...)« (G 414), and »the hypothetical imperative says only that the action is good for some (...) purpose« (G 414–415). In other words, the action is good, but only in a relative, not an absolute, way: the goodness of the action is dependent and conditional upon a certain aim which one intends to achieve. That this aim should be pursued or that it is morally good to pursue it is not of concern for such reasoning. Whether the aim is morally good is not ever raised as a question. Hence the goodness of the action only is concerned with relative ends, because it does not involve the goodness of the relevant aim at the same time.

With Kant's account of hypothetical imperatives in view, we can now return to Kierkegaard's account of double-mindedness. On a deep-

er level, the person whom he again and again describes as being »double-minded« in *Purity of Heart* can best be understood as someone who bases his fundamental attitudes and principles on hypothetical imperatives. The principle of the will is hypothetical, i.e. it consists in a principle which is suitable to attain a certain end as described above. Let me illustrate this claim by some quotes from *Purity of Heart*. Here Kierkegaard writes,

*the person who wills the good only out of fear of punishment does not will one thing but is double minded. (...) The good is one thing, punishment something else. Therefore the double-minded person does not will one thing when he wills the good on the condition of thereby avoiding punishment. The condition thereby indicates precisely the double-mindedness (...) (UD 44; SV1 8, 151).*

And yet he does not will the good; he wills it only out of fear of punishment. So-if there were no punishment! In this 'if' lurks the double-mindedness. If there were no punishment!! In this 'if' hisses the double-mindedness (UD 47, cf. 48; SV1 8, 153, cf. 154).

To will the good only out of fear of punishment is the other side of coveting reward, in essence therefore the same as willing the good for the same reward (UD 44; SV1 8, 151).

Accordingly, Kierkegaard says of a person of the latter kind:

The good is one thing; the reward is something else.<sup>8</sup> (...) If, then, he wills the good for the sake of reward, he is not willing one thing but something double. It is now apparent that in this way he will not go very far on the path of the good, because it is really the same as if a person, instead of doing what is natural, using both eyes to look at one thing, were to use one eye to look to the one side and the other to look to the other side-it will not work, it only confuses the vision (UD 37; SV1 8, 144-145).

As we have seen, a will which is based upon hypothetical imperatives can be understood as good in some sense. Such a person is good not in an absolute way, but only in a relative way. However, it is precisely this relativity of the goodness of the will which prevents such a person from

»willing one thing.« The »purity of heart« is impossible in this case, because the respective actions as well as the will which underlies them are conditional – only *if* you want the end, is it good to do the action. But to want the end in the first place as a condition of doing the action makes the goodness of the action conditional and hence posits the self outside a possible unity of the self (cf. *UD* 141-142; *SV1* 8, 231). The self does not want to do the good unconditionally, but only under a condition. And as already mentioned, Kierkegaard characteristically and appropriately determines such attitude as being »double minded.«

## II

The three main parts of *Purity of Heart* analyze what it means to will one thing and what it means to be double-minded in an increasingly more concrete way. To this end, Kierkegaard focuses his discussion of double-mindedness on the concept of sagacity or prudence, by which he enriches the Kantian framework. Before illustrating this, however, I think we should return to Kant and consider his analysis of prudence. In his discussion of hypothetical imperatives, Kant distinguishes two different kinds of ends. These correspond to two different kinds of means or hypotheses determining the will by which each end may be realized. The first kind of hypothetical imperative aims at an end which any human being may or may not have. These imperatives are called »problematical imperatives,« »imperatives of skill,« »technical imperatives« (*G* 414-416) or »technically practical principles« (*CJ* 172). The second kind of hypothetical imperative aims at an end which every human being, according to Kant, actually (not possibly) has: happiness. He calls these imperatives »assertoric« and »pragmatic« imperatives as well as »precepts of prudence« (*G* 415-416). Hypothetical imperatives understood in this latter way can be described as regulations which provide a means in order to attain happiness. »(...) skill in the choice of means to one's own greatest well-being can be called *prudence* in the narrowest sense« (*G* 416). It is Kant's conviction that »all people have already, of themselves, the strongest and deepest inclination towards happiness, because it is just in this idea that all inclinations unite in one sum« (*G* 399).

It is difficult to decide in what way this goal of happiness comes into the mind of each individual. It seems that Kant is making an empirical claim by saying that the goal of happiness is present in human beings as a matter of fact. However, does he think that as a matter of fact human

beings cannot fail to take into account their own happiness in *each* of their actions or does he say that human beings cannot fail to consider happiness as an outcome of a certain number or sum of actions? Despite the indefiniteness of Kant's account, it is clear that although human beings strive towards happiness, its attainment is difficult, insecure and not really possible to control, because the concept of happiness and hence its end is based on *a posteriori* grounds.

Kierkegaard does not refer explicitly to hypothetical imperatives as principles which aim at the realization of a possible end. However, he is extremely interested in the other kind of hypothetical imperative which aims at the realization of an actual end: happiness. While it is true that the exact status of the will to happiness remains, as in Kant's account, unclear in the relevant passages of *Purity of Heart*, there is no doubt that from Kierkegaard's point of view human beings do have the strongest inclination towards happiness to such a degree that this end must be seen as an »actual« end in every human being. Therefore it is not at all astonishing that the concept of prudence or the respective principle upon which it is based is of greatest significance in *Purity of Heart*.<sup>9</sup> What is stated by Kant succinctly and abstractly is broadened and brilliantly deepened by Kierkegaard. Prudence which »is misused *outwardly*« (UD 87; SV1 8, 186) is in accordance with what Kant describes as »worldly wisdom.« It is »a human being's skill in influencing others so as to use them for his own purposes« (G 416, footnote). This conception follows the general pattern of hypothetical imperatives »if you want y, then do x.« Thereby the aim of one's own happiness which is intended to be realized through a certain attitude or through conduct of another person is not made transparent or obvious to the other person. To relate to others in order to increase my own happiness typically involves misusing them in a way which is not obvious to them. Hence it is understandable that the misuse of applying the principle of this kind of prudence is called »deception« by Kierkegaard (cf. UD 87; SV1 8, 186) or as »going around a little on the side« (UD 87; SV1 8, 187, p. 87). Outward prudence typically involves deceiving the other person.<sup>10</sup> This connects with what Kierkegaard means by the »secret of the deception« and the corresponding meaning of the word »good,« typical of hypothetical imperatives:

But the secret of the deception to which all manifestations of it can be traced in one way or another is this: that it is not human beings after all, who stand in need of the good, but the good that stands in

need of human beings. Therefore they must be won, because the good is a poor beggar who is in need, rather than human beings who stand in need of the good (...) (UD 87; SV1 8, 186).<sup>11</sup>

The statement that »the good (...) stands in need of human beings« again reveals the conditionality of the action (and the underlying will) and at the same time the limited use of the concept »good« which is so typical of hypothetical imperatives and more specifically of a prudential attitude. Human beings are used so that some good, namely one's own happiness, is attained. The other is used in a way that is good for me since it increases my happiness. In other words: the good is a poor beggar, because it is not in and of itself capable of being realized, but is conditional upon taking the other as a means. On the contrary, to say that human beings are in need of the good gives expression to the claim that they deserve to be treated as ends in themselves as Kant would put it. Insofar as I treat the other as an end in itself, my will is an unconditional good will. It is not conditional upon any other goal, not even the goal I always have somehow – my happiness.

Part of the reason why Kierkegaard is in a position to discuss the nature of prudence in a more fully-fledged way has to do with the fact that he describes it from two different angles: not to do x unconditionally, that is, to be prudential, can not only be described as (a) aiming at a goal different from the goal of the good will but can also be described as (b) aiming at a goal which simply is achieved by leaving out being decisive.<sup>12</sup> However, to aim at a goal different from that of a good will includes leaving out decisiveness and simply to leave out decisiveness includes aiming at a goal different from that of a good will on principle. The description of prudence which focuses on leaving out decisiveness is characterized by Kierkegaard as an inward use of prudence to which Kant does not refer explicitly. Here and in the following I can only give a vague impression about the richness of Kierkegaard's analysis:

*Inwardly a person uses sagacity in a pernicious way to prevent himself from stepping out into decision. It can be misused in countless ways, but in order again not to proliferate the unimportant and thereby draw attention away from what is important, we shall again describe this misuse with one definite phrase: to seek evasion (UD 82; SV1 8, 182).*



The other means by which Kierkegaard gives a more differentiated picture of the facets of the phenomenon of prudence have to do with the fact that he, unlike Kant, distinguishes an active will – a »will to do« (UD 78; SV1 8, 179) – from a more passive will – a »will to suffer« (UD 78; SV1 8, 179). He accordingly distinguishes a second kind of inward prudence. Although in his practical philosophy Kant does not refer to the passivity of the will, the general structure of his basic conception of the principle of prudence is not left behind. Kierkegaard's distinction between an active and a passive will must therefore be seen as an elaboration of the Kantian account rather than simply not at all Kantian. The passivity of the will comes to the fore in terms of suffering: »At this point, sagacity is misused internally, since for the person who suffers essentially it is not easy to misuse it outwardly« (UD 112; SV1 8, 207). The general pattern of prudential conduct was, to stress it once more, »if you want y, then do x.« Insofar as the will is a suffering will, y resembles a state of affairs in which the sufferings have ceased to exist which themselves can be described as being directed towards happiness. X does not resemble an outward action, which according to the above quote is impossible, but, so to speak, an inward action. This inward action can be described as both leaving out decisiveness (cf. UD 111–112; SV1 8, 207) and as aiming at a goal different from that of the good will. Hence it formally shares the decisive features of prudence in its active markedness. Although such a will is incapable of influencing the outward world directly or actively, it nevertheless is related to this world. This happens to be the case in the case of hope as a characteristic way of (passively) aiming at or hoping for a goal different from the good will. The existence of the sufferer who misuses prudence internally is characterized by a kind of hope, seen as a means of getting rid of her sufferings.

Alas, in the long run we really come to see what sagacity and earthly hope are! Yet to sagacity it seems very sagacious not foolishly to give up an earthly hope for a possible fantastic healing-in order to win the eternal. To sagacity it seems very sagacious not to say farewell to the world decisively; after all, one still does not know what possibly could happen (...) and then one would regret – having allowed oneself to be healed by the eternal (UD 112–113; SV1 8, 208).

Such suffering is not the kind of suffering in which the good will of the sufferer is required to »will (...) everything for the good« and in which he

decisively »will[s] to be and to remain with the good« (UD 99; SV1 8, 196). On the contrary, he has not yet known decisive suffering and its respective unconditional willing.<sup>13</sup>

### III

Given the structural similarities between double-mindedness and Kant's account of those wills that act in accordance with hypothetical imperatives, I now want to turn to a discussion of *why* both Kant and Kierkegaard think that a self which possesses this kind of structure fails to be unified. First I will reconstruct Kant's discussion of the temporal underpinnings of hypothetical imperatives and hence of the prudential attitude, and then I will close with a final look at Kierkegaard's own account. I want to show that according to Kierkegaard as well, prudence is rooted in time. This will bring into view something that could be called the temporality of prudence.

According to Kant, the objects with which a theoretical cognition are concerned are received through sense perception, whereby we give them a point in space and time. The objects with which a practical cognition (in the strict sense of a moral cognition) are concerned are not of such a kind. The moral will, according to Kant (and Kierkegaard), is not an entity which is based upon sense perception and hence, it is not situated in space and time. Simply because the objects of theoretical and practical philosophy are thus originally distinct, they require different kinds of principles as conditions of their possibility. However, it is important to notice that this clear distinction can only be made insofar as the practical is defined in the strict sense, that is, as a determination of what counts as morally significant. But as we have seen in the very beginning of this paper, Kant also has a wider definition of that what belongs to the practical – where the realm of the practical is designated simply insofar as the will is concerned and rests on principles. Hence although principles may stem from concepts of nature, they can be called practical principles since they would determine the will. These kinds of principles must be hypothetical principles since they are not unconditional moral principles.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, it is Kant's conviction that »technically practical principles« (CJ 172), that is, hypothetical imperatives, aim at »producing an effect that is possible according to concepts of nature about causes and effects« (CJ 173). We can thus begin to see more clearly how such a practical attitude is founded in a theoretical understanding

of nature. We know nature by relating causes and effects with each other. Knowledge of nature itself can basically be determined as follows: each time  $x$  is the case,  $y$  is also the case. Whenever, for example, a stone (of a certain kind and a certain acceleration) hits a window, then the window breaks. So if the intended end of my action is to break a window, then it follows that I have to throw a stone (of a certain kind and with a certain acceleration) at it. Hence the theoretical proposition »if  $x$ , then  $y$ « is the basis of the practical proposition »if you want  $y$ , then do  $x$ .«

The foundation in concepts of nature does not apply only to technically practical principles, but also to precepts of prudence. As mentioned at the beginning of (2) technically practical principles belong to that kind of imperative for which it is characteristic that they are supposed to realize a possible end whereas precepts of prudence are supposed to realize an end we definitely have (happiness). However, what both kinds of imperatives clearly share is the pursuit of such an end that belongs to the realm of the natural world (world of the senses). Therefore, the state of affairs or effect at which such an end attempts to arrive can on principle be arrived at by a natural cause, whereby we conceive of cause and effect conceptually, that is, in terms of concepts of nature. Hence precepts of prudence are founded in concepts of nature as well as technically practical principles.

As I have argued, every kind of hypothetical imperative is based upon concepts of nature. This means that these kinds of imperatives have their origin in knowledge of nature or knowledge of the type »if  $x$ , then  $y$ .« Now, this knowledge is of such a kind that it establishes a relation between  $x$  and  $y$  in time and hence is time-dependent. Knowledge of nature can basically be understood as a relation between two incidents (cause and effect) in time. We can understand the rootedness of knowledge of nature in yet another way. Such knowledge is derived from empirical objects. Any such object being presented in empirical consciousness is presented in time. Objects have to be given in time and hence are always structured through time. Therefore the will's foundation in knowledge of nature is necessarily time-dependent or is founded in such time-dependent relations between cause and effect.

We can now begin to see why a will which has its origin in such a kind of principle cannot provide the self's unity. Hypothetical imperatives have the structure »if you want  $y$ , then do  $x$ .« In order to realize  $y$  (happiness) I have to do (and will) an  $x$  that has the capacity to be a cause of  $y$ . That  $x$  has such a capacity is an issue that belongs to and is

founded in the way nature is. In particular it is an issue whether we can discern a relation between the cause *x* and the effect *y* in time. Our prudential attitude is conditional upon realizing happiness. The possibility of realizing happiness is rooted in knowledge of its possible cause. Such knowledge consists in a chronological relation. Therefore it is always thus understood time which is at the heart of the disunity of the self. Any attempt to ground the will in such a way and not in morality is doomed to fail to achieve the will's unity. The will as being founded in time is incapable of providing the unity of the subject.

Although Kierkegaard does not claim the time-dependency of the prudential attitude in such a formal way as Kant does, this seems to be the core or the general idea which lies behind his account of the failure of the unity of the self. In the first few pages of the Preface of *Purity of Heart* (*UD* 7-12; *SV1* 8, 120-124), although Kierkegaard does not yet analyse the prudential attitude explicitly, he is already concerned with the problem of time when he begins to give his account of inauthentic subjectivity. Kierkegaard calls the corresponding life-view the »wisdom of the years« (*UD* 10; *SV1* 8, 122) or »worldly wisdom« (*UD* 12; *SV1* 8, 123). This life-view emphasizes that incidents and attitudes in human beings occur at certain stages of life. It is a life-view which takes for granted that »[e]verything has its time« (*UD* 8ff.; *SV1* 120ff.), which means that a human being's life primarily consists in a chronological order of various contents. It is time which is at the heart of human beings« striving. What one is supposed to do has its basis in time and what other people think has to be done at certain times. The »do this now, that then and that afterwards,« already gives account of the pursuit of one's happiness from an outer or »sociological« perspective. Thereby it is already suggested that a life view or a conception of the nature of human beings which thus emphasizes that everything has its time and thereby is divided by time cannot really provide a unitary foundation of the will. Against this background, it is not astonishing that Kierkegaard understands the principle of prudence as belonging to the realm of the finite, changeable world in time as opposed to the realm of the eternal or good will. By investigating something which can be called the »temporality of prudence,« he finally arrives at insights into the time-dependency of a disunified, untruthful and deceptive human existence. In order to show this time-dependency, I will refer to Kierkegaard's analysis of outward prudence which he contrasts with being decisive.<sup>15</sup> The rootedness in time comes to the fore in an »existential« way in *Purity of Heart*. Kierkegaard's

analysis can in some sense be understood as being complementary to the abstract Kantian account. In this connection I can only allude to the richness of the Dane's analysis of temporality and show its fundamental agreement with Kant.

Let us once again remember what outward prudence consists in. Outward prudence (deceitfully) takes other people as a means with the aim of increasing one's own happiness. How can we succeed in realizing this state of affairs by means of what we do? We conceive of them as being a (caused) cause for this state of our mind as its effect. The more we know how people react to what we do, the better we will succeed in realizing the »sum total« of the satisfaction of our *a posteriori* incentives. The more the individual bases her principles on »knowledge of nature« of human beings, the better she realizes her happiness. Again we can see how the practical attitude of prudential conduct is founded in knowledge of nature of the type »if x, then y.« As we learned from Kant's analysis, the relation between x and y is a relation of two incidents in time. Hence the corresponding practical attitude involves time as a condition of its possibility.

Now, according to Kierkegaard, the prudential attitude fundamentally involves being determined and absorbed by time: »(...) the more the striving person is allied to temporality instead of willing the eternal or the morally good, the more he accomplishes in the temporal sense« (UD 90; SV1 8, 188). To base the principles of our will on knowledge of nature brings our very selves into an essential affinity with the way we conceive of nature. We become an ally to the temporality of nature. Being such a kind of ally is a key in order to »understand oneself and life with regard to what it means to accomplish so extraordinarily much« (UD 89; SV1 8, 188). This meaning involves the peculiar kind of effectiveness or accomplishment of the prudential attitude. According to Kierkegaard, this meaning does not primarily concern the question as to if, or how effective, these principles are as a matter of fact. It rather concerns their *essential* effectiveness or accomplishment, i.e., the way in which they *allow* an action to be effective. What is the meaning of such an accomplishment? Formally, the meaning is of the same kind as in Kant's conception. The precept of prudence presupposes an understanding of the time dependent relation or rule »if x, then y.« Hence it presupposes a certain understanding of time as it is characteristic of natural objects. Kierkegaard refers to this kind of understanding as »temporality (...) understood (...) as it is a fact recognizable in actuality« (UD 89;

SVI 8, 188). Every actual prudential attitude presupposes this kind of temporality as a condition of its possibility. The meaning of accomplishment of the prudential self as being an ally to temporality is thus dependent upon a conception of time in which time is understood in the same way in which it structures the occurrence of incidents in the natural world. The accomplishment of the prudential attitude is also characterized by Kierkegaard as »the view of the moment«: »The view of the moment is the estimate that according to an earthly and busy understanding decides whether a person is accomplishing something or not« (UD 91; SVI 8, 189). This momentary view stems from an understanding of time that corresponds to the time of natural incidents being causally connected. It is this understanding of time which must be seen as the condition of the possibility of the prudential attitude. And it is this understanding of time, this alliance with time in which the disunity of the self has its origin. Finally it is time in the Gestalt of dividing the way in which we conceive of the world, that is, in terms of now this, »now this« and »now this« (...) which is responsible for the failure of the unity of the self as inauthentic subjectivity.

The meaning of the accomplishment of prudential conduct can also be described in terms of its impact on that possibility which it fails to realize. Remember that according to Kant and Kierkegaard, the self is fundamentally standing at a crossroads and can only be determined *either* by non-moral *or* moral/religious principles. In this respect the meaning of prudential conduct simply lies in its break with the eternal moral/religious principle. Thereby the temporality of the prudent self »is the *refraction* of the eternal.« This makes the category »to accomplish« less direct (UD 90; SVI 8, 188). Indeed, as we have seen, it is characteristic of the (outward) prudential attitude to use the other as a means in order to attain happiness and hence to be indirect. And we can now say that it is the peculiar time-dependency of prudence from which this indirection in accomplishment stems. On the contrary, the specific effectiveness characteristic of a moral/religious attitude does not contain indirection. It directly and immediately contains »the *uniform* transparency of the eternal« (UD 89; SVI 8, 188). The eternal is transparent because the corresponding attitude is not conditional upon an end to be realized. It is not, accordingly, rooted in knowledge of nature as a chronological relation between two incidents. On the contrary, the eternal stems from an unconditional principle. Its goodness is not dependent upon the aim to realize happiness, but is unconditionally good and hence the essence of a

morally good will. Only such a good will can provide the unity of the self since there is no other concern except its own. Not only Kant, but also Kierkegaard (at least the Kierkegaard of *Purity of Heart*) claims that he thereby refers to what morality/religiousness fundamentally consists in, namely to do the good simply because it is the good. This is the kind of eternity upon which we should base our life and only then may the disunity of the self be ruled out according to Kierkegaard. However, unlike Kant, Kierkegaard has much more to say about how the thus understood eternal relates to our existence in time whereby it »make[s] time *its own*« (UD 11; SV1 8, 123), an issue that cannot be discussed here.<sup>16</sup>

## Notes

1. How deeply each of the German Idealists starts from Kant's critical thinking is shown by probably the best book on this issue, namely, Rolf-Peter Horstmann, *Die Grenzen der Vernunft*, Frankfurt am Main, Anton Hain, 1991.
2. An early work on this issue is published by Ronald M. Green, *The Hidden Debt*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1992. Recently D.Z. Phillips and Timothy Tessin have edited an interesting investigation, *Kant and Kierkegaard on Religion*, London, MacMillan Press, 2000.
3. The analysis of double-mindedness will provide us with the fundamental features characteristic of the so-called *aesthetic* stage of Kierkegaard's theory of existential stages.
4. The references to Kierkegaard's works in the body of the text correspond to the following editions: *UD*, »An Occasional Discourse« in *Upbuilding Discourses of Various Spirits*, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993; and *SV1*, Søren Kierkegaard's *Samlede Værker*, edited by A.B. Drachmann, J.L. Heiberg & H.O. Lange, vol. 1-14, Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, Copenhagen 1901-1906. The references to Kant's works correspond to the following editions: *CJ*, *Critique of Judgment*, translated with an introduction by Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company, 1987; *G*, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997. The page numbers I have given correspond to the pages of the critical German Edition which are listed in the margins of the translations.
5. With respect to a moral attitude, Kant does not use the concept of »unity« or a »unified self.« However, a moral will is based on the principle of the categorical imperative which gives the self a true point of orientation. With the phrase »unity of the self« I am referring to such an orientation.
6. In respect of theoretical knowledge Kant and Kierkegaard have ultimately quite different opinions with respect to the self's capacity to be unified. Kant argues in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that we have to assume an original transcendental unity of consciousness which gives the final condition of the possibility of objective knowledge. Kierkegaard implicitly makes clear in the *Postscript* that such a unity is metaphysically and existentially suspect and argues that objective knowledge in the strict sense (as *a priori* knowledge about nature) is, accordingly, impossible.
7. This basic *either/or*« is characteristic of Kierkegaard's thinking on the whole. However, Kierkegaard would not agree with the view that there is only one principle which is independent of *a posteriori* incentives. According to Kierkegaard – as opposed to Kant's view – the ethical stage of existence is only *one* way of determining the will such that it is independent of *a posteriori* incentives. The will may also be determined according to the paradigms of so-called religiousness A or religiousness B.
8. As we have seen, Kant's definition of hypothetical imperatives is even in respect of the wording very similar (G 414).
9. This is valid of numerous other, especially later writings of Kierkegaard like the *Postscript*, *Works of Love* or *Two Ages*.
10. We can discern here the prototype of *inauthentic communication* as Kierkegaard no less than Kant conceives of it, which implies such kind of deception characteristic of, for example, the so called »seducer« in *Either/Or I*. The self in relation to others is generally emphasised in *Two Ages*, not only in its inauthentic, but also in its authentic mode.



11. In an analogous passage Kierkegaard says: »This was the secret of the deception—that it is the good that stands in need of people; the sagacious person«s secret is that he cannot be totally satisfied with the good«s meager reward but must earn a little on the side—by going around a little on the side« (UD 87; SV1 8, 186–187).
12. Although decisiveness is not a genuinely Kantian term, it involves a conception of morality which is in conformity with Kant’s basic claim in the first section of *Groundwork*, namely that a good will corresponds to self-legislation in terms of »do x unconditionally.«
13. This is the viewpoint from which to understand Kierkegaard’s saying : »A person may have suffered a whole lifetime without its being possible in any way to say truthfully of him that he has willed to suffer all for the good« (UD 99; SV1 8, 196).
14. Remember that the will ist »standing at a crossroads« according to both, Kant and Kierkegaard. It either is determined by (unconditional) principles of the morally good or by non-moral conditional or hypothetical principles.
15. The temporality of outward (misuse of) prudence is discussed in a more detailed way than both forms of (misuses of) inward prudence. Since all kinds of prudence are of the same type as shown above, the implicit understanding of temporality is of the same type as well despite the different emphasis on the *specific* character of means and their ends.
16. I would like to thank Paul Muench for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.