

## The Emergence of the Concept of Existence: Schelling and Kierkegaard

ZOLTÁN GYENGE, Institute of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,  
University of Szeged, Szeged, Hungary

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In philosophy, the term *ὑποκείμενον* literally means “underlying thing,” which in Latin is “*subiectus*,” but in fact it means something which can predicate other things but cannot be a predicate of others, which in German philosophy corresponds to Schelling’s “*Unbedingtes*.” Contrary to the opinion of many interpreters, there is a very close link between German idealism and twentieth-century existentialism. Kierkegaard attended Schelling’s lectures in Berlin in 1841 – 1842, where he became familiar with Schelling’s late philosophy in detail, and from this he developed his own concept of existentialism. The paper will show how, by transcending the notions of *ὑποκείμενον* and the subject, an existential philosophy emerges that will become a dominant feature of European culture in the twentieth century.

**Keywords:** existence – *ὑποκείμενον* – German Idealism – subjectivity – existentialism

### Introduction

Although the “ism” ending in its name refers to a 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy that was both a philosophical current and a cultural movement, the real century of existentialism was in fact the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even if the term itself was only sporadically used at that time (with the possible exception of Schelling and Kierkegaard). Let us start by examining the duality of the general (system) and the individual, on the one hand, and the genesis of the concept of existence, on the other hand. Where and when did the concept of existence appear in the history of philosophy?

## I. Subject

The Ancient Greeks, especially Aristotle, used the term *hypokeimenon* (ὑποκείμενον). In our modern terms (in the Hegelian sense), it means “essence” or the “foundation upon which existence is built.” This is the sense in which Schelling used the term *Grund* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the *Freiheitsschrift* or the *Freedom Essay*.

The concept of ὑποκείμενον is, therefore, the underlying thing, i.e., the ontological basis for things that exist. According to Aristotle, it is linked to the concept of οὐσία, which makes the ὑποκείμενον somewhat blurred. Aristotle was in disagreement with Plato, and it is because of this disagreement that he introduced the Greek concept of ὑποκείμενον. But if being a ὑποκείμενον is of paramount importance for the exposition by Aristotle of his anti-Platonic view of substance in his logical works, at least to the extent that we do not understand being a ὑποκείμενον, we cannot understand what Aristotle is trying to tell us about what it is to be an οὐσία, or substance (Shatalov 2020, 227).

Aristotle explains that substance is what “exists independently” and cannot be defined as existing in something else. Consequently, ὑποκείμενον is the carrier of the existent (Aristotle 1924, 1029a), what exists “under something” (ὑποκείμενον) in itself, and is not included in something else. The concept ὑποκείμενον cannot be interpreted without taking into account the sense of οὐσία (substance), i.e., the primary form (form, εἶδος) and the secondary substance ὕλη (substance). Thus, ὑποκείμενον means potentiality (δύναμις), which carries with it the possibility of becoming real (ἐνέργεια) (Aristotle 1924, 1049a-b). As Hauser points out, there are several possible interpretations (Hauser 2024, 30), but the point is that the concept of substance eclipses the concept of ὑποκείμενον. However, if ὑποκείμενον is an underlying thing, then it is fully consistent with the concept of a *sub-iectus*. An “underlying” thing contrasts with the objectum (*obiectus* = what is opposed to, i.e., already known or perceived).

We will see the same approach both in modern philosophy, where the *subject* becomes the only dominant term after the Greek period, and later in German Idealism, where the subject-object dichotomy becomes completely “preponderate.”

Scholastic philosophy is perhaps the only exception to the dominant use of the concept of subject because it is fundamentally different from the above-mentioned philosophical eras. Saint Thomas Aquinas made a distinction between the concepts of *esse* (to be or to exist) and *essentia* (essence). The distinction between existence and essence influenced later thinkers such as Capreolus.

Following Aquinas, Capreolus defends the real distinction between essence (what a thing is) and existence (that a thing is) in all finite beings. At the same time, some scholars have pointed out that the interpretation of Capreolus was problematic. Such is the case in one of Robertson's writings:

Thomistic studies in the twentieth century have been largely dominated by a desire to recover the authentic sense of St. Thomas by focusing on his doctrine of the real distinction of essence and existence. The great Thomistic commentators, such as John Capreolus, Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, etc., according to this project, have obscured the meaning of this distinction by adopting terminology not found in the writings of St. Thomas (Robertson 2014, 837).

He writes, referring to Dewan (1997, 83):

In other words, Capreolus's interpretation of St. Thomas is such that the latter's doctrine on the real distinction between essence and existence is approximated to the doctrine of Henry of Ghent. Capreolus thus introduced the notion of the being of essence (*essentiae*) into the Thomistic tradition, betraying the thought of the master by obscuring the true meaning of existence (Robertson 2014, 839).

This will not be discussed further in this study.<sup>1</sup> The question, however, is not how Aristotle, St. Thomas or Capreolus viewed these concepts, but how the subject-object pair became the sole determinant concept in German Idealism, especially in the philosophies of Hegel and Schelling. Kant's philosophy puts the subject/object relationship in an epistemological perspective. The relationship between the cognisant subject (S) and the object (P) is radically transformed by Kant:

Up to now, it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects; but all attempts to find out something about them *a priori* through concepts that would extend our cognition have, on this presupposition, come to nothing. Hence, let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition, which would agree better with the requested possibility of an *a priori* cognition of them, which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us (Kant 1998, 110).

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<sup>1</sup> For excellent reading on the subject, see Étienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (1961), Owens (1978), Clarke (2001), Copleston (1955).

And he writes: This would be just like the first thoughts of Copernicus (Kant 1998, 12). At one point, however, Kant clearly exploits the meaning of “subiectus” as a reference to ὑποκείμενον. He writes the following in the Chapter of Transcendental Aesthetic (Second Section): “Time is a necessary representation that *grounds* all intuitions” (Kant 1998, 162). Let us have a look at this in the original (German) version: “*Die Zeit ist eine notwendige Vorstellung, die allen Anschauungen zum Grunde liegt*” (Kant 1968, 85, my emphasis). The English translation does not reflect the exact meaning of the sentence. The expression “*zum Grunde liegen*” (in English simply: grounds) includes the term “*liegen*” (lying). In other words, it would be more accurate to translate it as “on the underlying (time).” Kant consciously uses the term “*zum Grunde liegen*” because it is the same as the meaning of ὑποκείμενον. “That is, time is not an object, because it does not pass objectively, and not an empirical concept that is somehow drawn from an experience, not *a posteriori*, but “time is no discursive or, as one call it, general concept, but a pure form of sensible intuition” (Kant 1998, 162). In the original text: “*Die Zeit ist ... eine Form der sinnlichen Anschauung*” (Kant 1968, 58). *Eine reine Form der sinnlichen Anschauung* is a definition (which means “a pure form of sensible intuition”). Kant makes it clear that the subject is bound to cognition, but, on the other hand, it will never be able to know the object (*Ding, thing*) in its private sense (*an sich, in-itself*) since it cannot be independent from time and space. It is so because νοούμενον is something postulated to exist independently from human cognition and to be independent from space and time. In other words, there is an insurmountable barrier between the phenomenon (*phaenomenon, Erscheinung*) and the thing in itself (*noumenon, Ding an sich*) that cannot be overcome by pure theoretical reason.

The situation is fundamentally different with Hegel. He quite clearly expresses the relationship of substance and subject: “In my view, which must be justified by the exposition of the system itself, everything hangs on grasping and expressing the true not just as substance but just as much as subject” (Hegel 2018, 12). What this means will be explained below. Let us think of the famous phrase by Hegel: “The true is the whole” (Hegel 2018, 13). The “whole” is nothing other than the identity of subject-object, which then appears as the end point of the phenomenological stages and as absolute knowledge. “Human beings are characterized by ‘Spirit,’ and every sphere of their lives is permeated,” as Jon Stewart writes (Stewart 2013, 80). And when the subject realizes that knowledge is self-knowledge, this knowledge becomes a kind of self-reflection. As summarized by Hegel: “The two extremes, the one of the

purely inner, the other of the inner gazing into the purely inner, have now merged together, and just as they have vanished as extremes, the mediating middle, as something other than these extremes, has also vanished" (Hegel 2018, 101). That is, the "purely inner" and the other "inner" are the same, i.e., the objectification of the subject, as he explains very clearly: "It turns out that behind the so-called curtain, which is supposed to hide what is inner, there is nothing to be seen if we ourselves do not go behind it, and one can see something behind the curtain only if there is something behind the curtain to be seen" (Hegel 2018, 101). And the "so-called curtain" is nothing other than the one that Kant put up between the *phenomenon* and the *noumenon* (φαινόμενον and νοούμενον), and that Hegel now simply tears down. The world can be known in its totality, so he concluded: the other aspect of the coming of spirit, of history, is self-discovery — spirit in time. It is what historical knowledge represents and makes real in memory. "However, that inwardizing re-collection (*Er-Innerung*) has preserved that experience; it is what is inner, and it is in fact the higher form of substance" (Hegel 2018, 13; Hegel 1986, 591).

## **II. *Existentia***

As we have seen, St. Thomas Aquinas used a negative analogy to describe God's essence as being. This is the basis of existential theology and leads to what Étienne Gilson calls the first and only existential philosophy. "A true metaphysical revolution was achieved when somebody began to translate all the problems concerning being from the language of essences into that of existences" (Gilson 2002, 67).

The first thinker who made this transition in European philosophical thinking was F. W. J. Schelling. Schelling's work can be divided into periods as follows: 1) Transition from Fichte's philosophy to a more objective conception of nature (an advance to *Naturphilosophie*); 2) Formulation of the identical, indifferent, absolute substratum of both nature and spirit (*Identitätsphilosophie*); 3) Opposition of negative and positive philosophy, which was the theme of his Berlin lectures, though the concepts can be traced back to 1804. The third period, also known as Schelling's late philosophy, is of interest to us from the point of view of the topic of this article. The most important works of this period include *Die Weltalter* (*The Ages of the World*), the main lectures (Munich, Erlangen, Berlin), as well as the posthumous works based on them (*Introduction*

to the *Philosophy of Mythology*, 1856; *Philosophy of Mythology*, 1857; and *Philosophy of Revelation*, 1858).

However, it is a matter of debate as to when the beginning of his late philosophy can be situated. Where is the turning point in his philosophy? Which of his works represents it? There are differing opinions regarding this question. It is not possible to determine exactly when this turning point occurs, and the literature on the subject tends to be rather heterogeneous. (Kasper 1956, 87; Fischer 1902, 759; Fuhrmanns 1954, 177). Without resigning his official position in Munich, Schelling was a lecturer for a short time in Stuttgart (*Stuttgart Seminars, Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*, 1810), and then in Erlangen (1820 – 1827). In 1809, just as his beloved wife Karoline died, he published his *Philosophical Investigation into the Essence of Human Freedom and Matters Connected (Freedom Essay)*. This was the last book that he published during his lifetime. *Freedom Essay* and *Stuttgart Seminar* are two very important pieces of work, but the latter is especially outstanding. Schelling gave lectures following the invitation received from a group of non-philosophers (lawyers, doctors and civil servants, etc.). His lectures survived in various manuscripts as they were not published.<sup>2</sup>

In the first part of his lectures, Schelling primarily seeks to clarify his relationship with the Cartesian tradition, presenting a philosophy based on logical concepts and drawing on the systems of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz and Kant. Notably, he begins the exposition of his own philosophy with an overview of more recent philosophy, in which the Cartesian tradition is characterised by substantial causes. In this first half, Schelling also introduces the most important concept of his later philosophy: a system that challenges the entirety of German philosophy — a topic that also preoccupied Kant.

To what extent is a system ever possible? I would answer that long before man decided to create a system, there already existed one, that of the cosmos [*System der Welt*]. Hence our proper task consists in discovering that system. The true system can never be created but only uncovered as one that is already inherent in itself; that is, in the divine understanding (Schelling 1994, 197).

It is also important to consider what God means to human beings. The personal God and man can be situated within a potential system in Schelling's philosophy and the conditions that determine their scope of action. (In his

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<sup>2</sup> Based on posthumous manuscripts, published by the renowned Schelling scholar Miklós Vető. M. Vető helped me a lot when J. Weiss and I translated the text into Hungarian: Schelling (2007).

writings from the early 1800s, the role of the human being is different to that in his Fichtean period.) In contrast to the abstract interpretation of God in pantheism, personality and individuality are of crucial importance, even in relation to God: “Contrastingly, the common pantheist view does not grant God any particular, unique, and self-centred existence; instead, it dissolves Him into a universal substance that is merely the vehicle of all things” (Schelling 1994, 210). In general, we can say that the conversational lectures in the Stuttgart Private Lectures play a very important role in Schelling’s philosophy because they demonstrate a clear shift towards the individual and existence as a problem. This establishes the distinct ontological status of existence and being. The tone differs from that of previous works, and the approach varies radically from the usual elegant, yet occasionally colourless and dispassionate formulations of German philosophy. Therefore, it is no coincidence that, in this respect, too, it represents an extremely important stage in the paradigm shift that the late philosophy would bring about. However, it is certainly noteworthy that the existing work plays such a role in a relatively early piece.

Only that whose nature constitutes its very being is also by definition free. All dependency derives only from Being. Yet that which is being [*das Seyende*], both in and of itself and by virtue of its own nature, simply cannot be determined as such by anything else (because all determination is a passivity, i.e., a nonbeing) (Schelling 1994, 224).

The most important thing to emphasize is that: “all dependency derives only from Being” (Schelling 1994, 224).

In the second section of these lectures, an explanation of the human spirit brings us closer to a better understanding of human personality, which explains why Schelling’s investigations into this subject are given a strong existential emphasis. According to Schelling, the human spirit has three different parts or potencies: (i) temperament (*Gemüt*), (ii) spirit (*Geist*), and (iii) soul (*Seele*) (Schelling 1994, 230). But what happens when the connection between them is broken? The answer is: different illnesses or conditions result in affective disorder (*Gemütskrankheit*), nonsense or stupidity (*Blödsinn*), and madness (*Wahnsinn*).

(1) Hence, if our affective continuity [*Leitung durch das Gefühl*] is disrupted, an affective disorder [*Gemütskrankheit*] will be the consequence. (2) If our cognitive continuity [*Leitung durch den Verstand*] is disrupted, we are left with nonsense. People of the latter kind often display a strong temperament,

and a particularly strong individual will; the latter, however, because it is not guided by the understanding, is harmless and usually aims only at pleasure and the like. (3) However, if communication between the understanding and the soul breaks down, the most horrible spectre, that of madness, will originate; or, rather, I should have said it emerges rather than originates (Schelling 1994, 233).

This is followed by a surprising statement:

[When asked] “what is the spirit of man?” We should answer: an existence, though one [grounded] in nonbeing; hence the understanding is grounded in the irrational [*Verstandlos*]. What, then, is the foundation [*Basis*] of the human spirit in the proper sense of the word foundation? Answer: the *irrational* (Schelling 1994, 233, my italics, brackets in the original).

That is, the human spirit is based on something that is irrational. What does irrational refer to? It does not mean anti-rational. Instead, it refers to what is not opposed to reason, but to what is *beyond* reason. In other words, it is something that transcends reason. It does not deny it but rises above it. The most irrational thing is madness. And how is madness related to reason? “In short, it is the irrational itself that constitutes the very foundation of our understanding. Consequently, madness is a necessary element, one that is not supposed to manifest itself or become an actuality. What we call the understanding, if it is to be an actual, living, and active understanding, is therefore properly nothing other than a coordinated madness” (Schelling 1994, 233).

Closely related to this coordinated madness, potentiality (δύναμις) and actuality (ἐνέργεια) are at the center of this issue. Schelling makes it clear that madness is in all of us and in all our potential (*pura potentia*). In fact, it is at this point that the focus of his analysis turns to the question of being. He writes: “Hence madness does not originate but merely surfaces when what is properly a nonbeing (i.e., the irrational) becomes an actuality and seeks to attain an essence and existence” (Schelling 1994, 233). Unfortunately, the English translation does not convey the full meaning of this sentence. The text in the original language is as follows: “*Ich hätte eigentlich nicht sagen wollen, er [sc. Wahnsinn] entsteht, sondern er tritt hervor*” (Schelling 1973, 469).<sup>3</sup> In other words, according to a literal translation, it does not come into being, but it appears, it

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<sup>3</sup> This term (*hervortreten*) is also used in the Georgii version (one of the text-variants of the *Stuttgart Private Lectures*) but not prominently and not in opposition to the term emergence (*entstehen*). However, the validity of our interpretation is also supported by this version given the inclusion of the actual meaning of the phrase “madness is in every man.”

steps forward. The right word is not “surface,” but “step forward.” So, madness is something that is in the human being, but under certain circumstances, it ceases to be hidden, it becomes visible, it becomes real, it manifests itself. In other words, δύναμις, or stepping out of the circle of potentiality, becomes ἐνέργεια, i.e., actuality, reality, so man begins to exist. The original meaning of existent (*ex-sistere*) is: to step out, to step forward. And it is this meaning that Schelling deliberately refers to (*ex-sistere = aus sich selbst heraustreten*).

To find a link between Schelling’s late philosophy and Kierkegaard, who is often called the father of existentialism, we had better look at the Danish philosopher’s Berlin lecture notes. Very early on, in the early 1990s, I formulated the opinion that there is indeed a connection between German Idealism and existential philosophies, that the latter did not arise in a vacuum, and that this connection is precisely the Berlin Lectures, where Kierkegaard was able to learn firsthand about Schelling’s critique of Hegel and the first construction of the concept of existence.<sup>4</sup>

Kierkegaard travelled to Berlin after the break-up with his fiancée Regine Olsen in 1841, partly to escape the negative fallout from the break-up of his engagement, and partly to be able to work in peace and attend lectures at the University of Berlin (Stewart 2024, 633 – 672). It was at the same period when Schelling held his series of lectures on revelation, on the philosophy of mythology.

The *Berlin Lectures* were carried out with unparalleled anticipation and meticulous preparation. Schelling’s arrival in Berlin, precisely a decade after Hegel’s death, brought a confrontation with the Hegelian spirit. Bruce Matthews eloquently captures this sentiment, stating that “Hegel’s brilliance dazzled Berlin, and like a supernova his death in 1831 left behind a black hole in the intellectual and cultural life of Prussia’s capital” (Matthews 2008, 6).

We must start with Schelling’s well-known words, which are highly significant in terms of the origin of the concept of existence:

Here we should note that in everything that is real there are two things to be known: it is two entirely different things to know what (*was*) a being (*ein Seiendes*) is, *quid sit*, and that (*daß*) it is, *quod sit*. The former – the answer to

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<sup>4</sup> See my first articles on this topic: Gyenge (1992), Gyenge (1999) and several presentations at various international conferences (Copenhagen, Frankfurt am Main, Budapest, etc.) Initially, Kierkegaard research almost completely ignored the Schelling-Kierkegaard connection. This is well illustrated by Malantschuk’s several comments on the subject (Malantschuk 2003, 27, 242, etc.).

the question: *what (was)* it is – affords me an insight into the *essence (Wesen)* of the thing, or it provides that I understand the thing, that I have an understanding or a concept of it, or have the thing *itself* within the concept. The other insight however, *that (daß)* it is, does not accord me just the concept but rather that goes beyond just a concept, which is existence (*Existenz*) (Schelling 2008, 128 – 129).

Later in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, it is as if Kierkegaard were “translating” Schelling’s ideas into his own existentialist language, which is something that is evident in the way he uses Schelling’s ideas to develop his own existentialist philosophy: “The term ‘being’ in those definitions must, then, be understood much more abstractly as the abstract rendition or the abstract prototype of what being *in concreto* is as empirical being” (Kierkegaard 1992, 190). Back to Schelling’s concept: the terms *What-being (das Was-sein)* and *That-being (das Daß-sein)* allude to two different kinds of knowledge and also show two directions in philosophy: negative and positive philosophy. Kantian, Hegelian and Cartesian philosophies belong to negative philosophy because they only deal with the essence (*essentia, Wesen*), whereas positive philosophy deals with the being (*existential, Sein*). Concept and reason are *potencia*, or, in Aristotelean terms, *δύναμις*, while real being is *actu*, reality itself, *ἐνέργεια*.<sup>5</sup>

### III. Postscript

In numerous works, Kierkegaard examines the genesis and content of the concept of existence, basing his analysis on his experiences at the *Berlin Lectures* in 1841 – 1842. It was there that he attended Schelling’s lectures, which initially had a profound impact on him. The *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* is one of Kierkegaard’s most significant works, marking a turning point in his body of work. However, I would also argue that Kierkegaard does not have a single major work, but rather several.

There can be no doubt that the *Postscript* (1846) is one of the most extensive and complex works in his oeuvre. In it, the author deals with almost every aspect of existence, always centring his discussion around the concept of existence. The *Postscript* is divided into two main parts in terms of both form and content. The first part deals with the problem of the truth of Christianity. According to this perspective, the current understanding and interpretation of Christianity is ultimately mistaken; it fails to grasp the true essence of Christianity. The second

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<sup>5</sup> See the following for details on the relationship between Kierkegaard’s concept of existence and Schelling’s late philosophy, Gyenge (2020, 103 – 129).

part is more extensive, examining important philosophical questions, particularly the true nature of the subject and contrasting it with generality. Kierkegaard wants to ground the foundation of his existential philosophy. A significant aspect of the text is the exploration of subjective cognition and the potential for subjective reflection, which it posits as superior to objective cognition. *Passion* is the alpha and omega of everything, not only for faith but for the cognition as well. Without passion or inwardness there is no life, no existence. Kierkegaard's train of thought encompasses philosophy, psychology, and literature. Ironically, his profound psychological analyses contain many elements that foreshadow both his later work and the existentialism that came to define the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this regard, Georg Brandes is right to write to Nietzsche that he knows no more "profound psychologist" than this, and that Nietzsche should definitely read him (Nietzsche 1904, 282). This appeal came too late, arriving in January 1888 shortly before Nietzsche's mental health deteriorated.

The author of *Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments* is Johannes Climacus. As the work marks a turning point in the author's thinking, the pseudonymous author subsequently becomes Anti-Climacus. However, neither name can be identified with Kierkegaard himself; rather, they are a means of *indirect* communication (Gyenge 2022, 71 – 78). The title contains two expressions indicating that Kierkegaard intends to draw conclusions. 1) To conclude something does not only mean to bring it to a close, but also to open the door to a new way of thinking.

2) The *Postscript* is both a postscript and a summary. Remember that all of this relates to a work that is only a fraction of the length of Kierkegaard's "Postscript." Perhaps the most exciting part of *Philosophical Fragments* is the chapter entitled "Interlude," in which Kierkegaard analyses the concepts of reality and possibility, as well as freedom and necessity. However, the *Fragments* also deals with many other issues, which Kierkegaard explains in detail in the *Postscript*. The main topic in the *Fragments* is whether the past is more necessary than the future. Or has the possible, by becoming actual, become more necessary than it was?<sup>6</sup>

3) Clearly, Climacus opposes Anti-Climacus, as he approaches the question of modal categories completely differently to the way he does in the work *The Sickness unto Death* by Anti-Climacus, for example. Without going into detail on

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<sup>6</sup> The problem with the translation is that the concept of "*Tilblivelse*" cannot be translated as "coming," because it means becoming from nothing to something and vice versa (in German: *Werden* = creation and / or destruction) (SKS 4, 273 – 274).

this issue, he discusses the idea that the human being is spirit and that the spirit is the self in this work. Therefore, the self is a relation that relates to itself. "*Mennesket er Aand. Man hvad er Aand? Aand er Selvet. ... Mennesket er en Synthese af Uendelighed og Endelighed, af det Timelige og det Evige, af Frihed og Nøvendighed, kort en Synthese*" (SKS 11, 129). This sparked a major debate, in which many distinguished scholars spoke out (Sløk 1954; Theunissen 1958; Holl 1972; and Lübcke 1983, 114 – 134).

(Un)scientific requires no further explanation. Rather than universality, it is individuality; rather than reason, it is emotion that can make a bleak world beautiful. Malantschuk rightly notes that Kierkegaard presents ethics as the opposite of aesthetic individuality. However, he completely ignores the concept of *Allgemeinheit* (universality) in both Hegel and Schelling (Malantschuk 2003, 62). This idea has been proclaimed by many Romantics, including Novalis, the Schlegel brothers, Schleiermacher, and Rilke, who was a follower of Kierkegaard.

We can see that, for Kierkegaard, the reality of being is not static, but rather a movement (κίνησις), meaning that through choices and a kind of "meta-physical leap," man becomes himself, an existence, in short: a human being.

## Conclusion

The notes demonstrate that Kierkegaard closely followed Schelling's line of thought, perceiving in it the origins of a novel philosophical paradigm. This may have been a source of trepidation for him. This period coincided with Schelling's own philosophical contemplation, which culminated in his decision to cease publishing around 1810 and focus exclusively on lecturing instead, which he did for nearly four decades. This represented a marked departure from his late 1700's period, during which he ardently embraced Kantian-Fichtean philosophy and published his works with almost uninterrupted regularity.

In early 1842, Kierkegaard came to the conclusion that he had assimilated the fundamental concepts from Schelling, and it was now time for him to move on. He wrote: "I am too old to attend lectures, just as Schelling is too old to give them. His whole doctrine of potencies betrays the highest degree of impotence (*hans hele Lære om Potenserrøber den høieste Impotens*)" (SKS 28, 18). But Schelling's train of thoughts on the difference between essence and existence was followed by Kierkegaard, when he made a strong link between the term inwardness (*Inderlighed*) and the concept of the individual or that of existence. (SKS 7, 178). We should add a remark: Kierkegaard's use of concepts is not consistent: subjectivity, being, inwardness, individuality refer to similar or

nearly identical contents. Schelling's terminology is more consistent than Kierkegaard's. But the concept of existence plays a central role, for example, in *Repetition* where Kierkegaard already writes that *religious existence* and *poetic existence* are essentially linked. The poet and the believer are real exceptions, a form of being that exists in opposition to everything else considered "general." They are "exceptions" (*Undtagelser*) (SKS 4, 93) insofar as they differ from the general. In addition, it can also be considered a radical turn, and it also marks the end of a long era. Later authors and thinkers do not refer to the subject or the object anymore, Heidegger even "bans" the use of these concepts: the new concept of the age becomes *being*. This undoubtedly is the beginning of a new era in philosophical thinking, which means it is the beginning of the era of existential philosophy.

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Zoltán Gyenge  
Institute of Philosophy  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
University of Szeged  
Egyetem utca 2  
6722 Szeged  
Hungary  
e-mail: gye@philo.u-szeged.hu  
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9717-1361>