# *Energeia* vs *Entelecheia*: Schelling vs Hegel on *Metaphysics* Lambda

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**Abstract**

The late Schelling develops an anti-Hegelian Aristotelianism best exemplified by his understanding of the "pure actuality" in Book Lambda of the *Metaphysics*. Against Hegel's "entelechial" interpretation (the pure actuality as an actuality that is also actualization of something potential, and implies a movement which it culminates), Schelling underlines that this actuality is a pure ἐνέργεια, with no potentiality at all, that is, no content whatsoever and in no relation to any movement or its culmination. In this article, I look at the differences between both interpretations from Schelling's perspective. I then discuss what Schelling gains for his own late philosophy by distinguishing ἐνέργεια so strictly from ἐντελέχεια.

*Keywords*: Schelling, Hegel, Aristotle, *energeia*, *entelecheia*, actuality.

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# *Energeia* vs *Entelecheia*: Schelling vs Hegel sobre *Metafísica* Lambda

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**Resumen**

El último Schelling desarrolla un aristotelismo anti-hegeliano cuyo mejor ejemplo es su interpretación de la "pura actualidad" en el libro Lambda de la *Metafísica*. Contra la lectura "entelequial" de Hegel (el acto puro como actualidad que es a la vez actualización de algo potencial y culminación de un movimiento), Schelling subraya que dicha actualidad es pura ἐνέργεια, libre de toda potencialidad, es decir, de todo contenido y sin relación a movimiento alguno o su culminación. En este artículo, analizo las diferencias entre ambas interpretaciones desde la perspectiva de Schelling. Finalmente, discuto cuál es la ventaja que gana la propia filosofía tardía de Schelling al distinguir tan nítidamente entre ἐνέργεια y ἐντελέχεια.

*Palabras clave*: Schelling, Hegel, Aristóteles, *energeia*, *entelecheia*, acto.

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## I. Introduction

In his late "purely rational philosophy", Schelling makes extensive use of Aristotle's works, and he seems to reformulate some of his key notions in Aristotelian terms. In several passages, Schelling seems to criticize Hegel indirectly by offering a counterinterpretation of Aristotle.

One particularly relevant example of Schelling's anti-Hegelian Aristotelianism is his understanding of the "pure actuality"[1] in Book Lambda of the *Metaphysics*. While Hegel would understand the pure actuality in an "*entelechial*" manner, that is, as an actuality that is also *actualization* of something potential, and implies a process which it culminates, Schelling underlines that this actuality is a pure ἐνέργεια, with no potentiality at all, that is, no content whatsoever and in no relation to any process or its culmination. The question I want to address is what Schelling gains by distinguishing ἐνέργεια so strictly from ἐντελέχεια, and why he thinks this is not just a fine aspect of Aristotelian interpretation but a key notion for his own late philosophy.

In what follows, I will take Schelling's perspective into account regarding what he considers to be a partial or mistaken reading of Aristotle. There are several indications that this criticism is aimed at Hegel, although Schelling does not mention Hegel by name in the particular work on which I focus, the *Darstellung der reinrationalen Philosophie* [*DRP*]. I will look at the differences between both interpretations but will do so from Schelling's perspective, since the question of the most faithful interpretation of Aristotle exceeds the limits of this article.

Then I will address two problems that arise from Schelling's use of the Aristotelian "pure actuality": in what sense the pure actuality can be said to be individual, as Schelling maintains, and what exactly *is* the role of Schelling's notion of pure actuality in the transition from a "purely rational" to a "positive" philosophy which, as he says, depends on the *will*.

[1] Schelling refers to "that, whose substance is actuality" (οὗ ἡ οὐσία ἐνέργεια) as "*reine Wirklichkeit*" (Cf. Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 314). Translations of this work are my own.

## Context

While Hegel had surely contributed to the growing interest in Aristotle at the time,[2] it has been suggested that his appropriation of some Aristotelian notions became rather a motivation for Schelling to go directly to Aristotle and suggest an interpretation along his own lines (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 382).

Schelling's interpretation of Aristotle takes place in the context of his late philosophy which is characterized by its division into a "negative" and a "positive" philosophy. While negative philosophy is the "purely rational", a prioristic development of the necessary contents of reason, positive philosophy realizes that this "logical" necessity only refers to the connections *between* the contents and not to their existence, which remains contingent. Positive philosophy is the a posteriori understanding that seeks to make sense of historical, contingent existence: only such an approach should be able to deal adequately with freedom and personality.

According to Schelling, Hegel's philosophy is a good example of a philosophy that does not undertake a clear cut between what he calls "negative" and "positive" philosophy.[3] That means that there is a confusion between mere contents, that is, between "being" in the sense of intelligibility ("*der Materie nach*") and actual existence, or rather, that mere contents are taken for positive actual being.[4]

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[2] Ferrarin, 2001, 406; 410, notes that Hegel started studying Aristotle around 1805 and was therefore one of the first scholars to encourage the renaissance of Aristotelian studies in Germany.

[3] "The philosophy that Hegel presented is the negative driven beyond its limits: it does not exclude the positive, but thinks it has subdued it within itself" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *PO*, XIII, 80); "The true improvement to my philosophy could partly have been to have restricted it precisely to only a logical meaning. Hegel, however, made much more specific claims than his predecessor did to have comprehended the positive as well" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *PO*, XIII, 86f).

[4] Schelling comments on Hegel's philosophy in his Berlin *Introduction to the Philosophy of Revelation*: "The fundamental thought of Hegel is that reason relates to the in itself, the essence of things, from which immediately follows that philosophy, to the extent that it is a science of reason, occupies itself only with the whatness [Was], or the essence, of things. […]. Reason is, properly speaking,

The main motivation that leads Schelling to work on a negative philosophy in his very last years is precisely the attempt to show from within negative or "purely rational" philosophy itself that the mere contents or determinations are insufficient because they can only exist if there is something *individual* and *actual* that brings them into existence. Schelling finds in Aristotle the arguments for this view and is appalled by interpretations of Aristotle that ignore the emphasis on the individual and actual, which he seems to blame on Hegel's influence:

If one could still be surprised by something in this day and age, it would be to hear Plato and even Aristotle named on the side of those who place thought above being. […] Aristotle, whom the world owes the insight that only the individual exists, that the universal […] is only attribute (*katêgorêma monon*), not something that is for itself […]- Aristotle, whose sole expression: *hou hê ousia energeia* should vanquish all doubts, since *ousia* here takes the place which Aristotle normally gives to the *ti estin*, the essence, the what, and the sense is that in God there is no preceding what, no essence, that actus takes the place of essence, that actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] precedes the concept, precedes thought".[5]

concerned with nothing other than just being and with being according to its *matter* and *content* (exactly this is being in its in itself). Nevertheless, reason does not have to show *that* it is since this is no longer a matter of reason, but rather of experience" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *PO*, XIII, 60).

[5] "Könnte man heutzutage noch über irgend etwas verwundert seyn, so müßte man es darüber seyn, auch den Platon, den Aristoteles auf jener Seite genannt zu hören, wo das Denken über das Seyn gesetzt wird. […] Aristoteles, dem die Welt vorzüglich die Einsicht verdankt, daß nur das Individuelle existirt, daß das Allgemeine, das Seyende nur Attribut ist (*katêgorêma monon*), nicht selbst-Seyendes, wie das, was allein *prôtôs*, zuerst sich setzen läßt - Aristoteles, dessen Ausdruck: *hou hê ousia energeia* allein allen Zweifel niederschlagen würde; denn hier ist ousia, was sonst dem Aristoteles das ti estin, das Wesen, das Was, und der Sinn ist, daß in Gott kein Was, kein Wesen vorausgeht, an die Stelle des Wesens der Actus tritt, die Wirklichkeit dem Begriff, dem Denken zuvorkommt"(Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 588). Note: in this work Schelling uses the term "*das Seyende*" to refer to the contents of thought. It is "being" in the sense of intelligible contents, i.e. possibilities, "*Realität*": being as grasped by pure reason.

In this passage we can see the two main points of Aristotle that Schelling is interested in emphasizing: only individuals exist; in the Aristotelian God *actus* takes the place of intelligible content.

## II. Aristotle

I focus here on Schelling´s interpretation of the Aristotelian notion of God as actuality devoid of potentiality, and the way he means to contrast his reading with the Hegelian one. This notion is found in Book Λ of the *Metaphysics*, where Aristotle argues that eternal movement requires something that is essentially actuality without any potentiality. In Chapters 7 and 9, Aristotle then discusses the kind of activity (thinking) that could account for such actuality. Indeed, in Chapter 7, the divine activity is described by inferring from our own kind of thought, whereas in Chapter 9 some of the problems that arise from this comparison are solved by underlining the differences between the human and the divine activity of thinking (Cf. Beere, 2010).

There is in particular one issue that is still very much discussed and which is relevant to the difference between Hegel and Schelling's interpretations of Aristotle. The term ἐνέργεια itself is problematic. It can be understood in a general sense as the opposite of potentiality (δύναμις) in which case it would be translated as "actuality" or "actualization". In this general sense, ἐνέργεια can be used interchangeably with ἐντελέχεια. However, there are other Aristotelian passages where ἐνέργεια in a stricter sense is contrasted with movement or change (κίνησις), in which case it would be best translated as "activity".[6]

This ambiguity might have resulted from the way Aristotle developed the notion of actuality itself, which does not appear in previous philosophers. While energeia originally meant activity in a general sense, especially referring to movement (Cf. Menn,1994), Aristotle comes to use energeia to refer to something's being-in-actuality as well (Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* Θ 6, 1048a31-35). He himself comments on this shift of meaning: "The term "actuality" [ἐνέργεια] with its implication of "complete reality" [ἐντελέχεια] has been extended from motions, to

[6] Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* Θ 6, 1048b18-34; cf. Aristotle, *Met.* Θ 1, 1045b35-1046a3. "Although Aristotle uses ἐντελέχεια interchangeably with ἐνέργεια in this context, there is no independent reason to think that ἐντελέχεια can mean 'activity'" (Anagnostopoulos, 2010, 36).

which it properly belongs, to other things" (Aristotle, *Met.* Θ 4, 1047a30-31).

The term ἐντελέχεια was coined by Aristotle and it properly means finalization, completeness, actualization. Here the debate is how the term can refer both to the process leading to the τέλος and to the τέλος itself. In any case, Aristotle uses the term entelecheia only in the sense of "actuality" and not "activity" (Cf. Aristotle, *DA*, II 1, 412b). In other words, although Aristotle might use the terms ἐνέργεια or ἐντελέχεια interchangeably to refer to something's being-in-actuality in contrast to potentiality, this seems to be possible by the ambiguity of the term energeia.

This is not simply a difficulty of translation, but one of understanding (Cf. Beere, 2010, 155ff). Indeed, the philosophical question would be precisely how these different aspects (being-in-actuality as opposed to potentiality, on the one hand, and an activity that does not involve movement or change, on the other) can come together under one term, that is, whether one is a special case of the other, or how exactly the notions are related to each other.[7]

As I will argue, Hegel could be seen as supporting the view of ἐνέργεια as *actualization*, fulfillment. In this case, change, movement and processuality towards the τέλος would be implied and contained in the actualization. Schelling, on his part, would underline ἐνέργεια in the strict sense as an *activity* that is *not* movement and in that sense excludes any actualization *of* potentiality, any *process*. This distinction will be relevant to Schelling's understanding of negative and positive philosophy.

## III. Schelling

Schelling sees in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* a progression from actuality as "actualization-*of*" something potential towards an actuality that is not the actualization of anything. How can we think of such an actuality? Only if we see it as activity in a strict sense, that is, as an ἐνέργεια that is not movement, and does not imply any process. For this reason,

[7] The relation between ἐνέργεια as activity and ἐνέργεια as actuality and the question which of these notions is a special case of the other, has been recently discussed in detail, cf. Anagnostopoulos, 2010; Beere, 2010; Kosman, 2000; Menn, 1994.

Schelling distinguishes sharply between ἐντελέχεια (as actualization-*of*) and ἐνέργεια (as activity).

Schelling also underlines that, for Aristotle, actuality does not merely refer to the *instantiation* of certain intelligible contents, but to an individual and active principle that brings such potential contents into existence. Contents of thought are universal (not individual) and in themselves merely possible (not actual). For this reason, Schelling understands the search for an individual actuality in Aristotelian *Metaphysics* as a search that points *beyond* intelligible contents.

It's well known that Hegel closes his *Encyclopedia* (1830) by quoting the laudatory passage of *Met*. Λ 7.[8] The long quote comes without comment after the last paragraph of the division on absolute spirit. In this Aristotelian passage, the focus is on the νοῦς being identical to its object, on νοῦς thinking itself.

> And thought thinks itself through participation [*metalêpsis*] in the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought by the act of apprehension and thinking, so that thought and the object of thought are the same (ὥστε ταὐτὸν νοῦς καὶ νοητόν). (Aristotle, *Met.* Λ 7, 1072b21-22)

[8] Aristotle, *Met*. Λ 7, 1072b18-30. "Now thinking in itself is concerned with that which is in itself best, and thinking in the highest sense with that which is in the highest sense best. And thought thinks itself through participation in the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought by the act of apprehension and thinking, so that thought and the object of thought are the same, because that which is receptive of the object of thought, i.e. essence, is thought. And it actually functions when it possesses this object. Hence it is actuality rather than potentiality that is held to be the divine possession of rational thought, and its active contemplation is that which is most pleasant and best. If, then, the happiness which God always enjoys is as great as that which we enjoy sometimes, it is marvellous; and if it is greater, this is still more marvellous. Nevertheless it is so. Moreover, life belongs to God. For the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and the essential actuality of God is life most good and eternal. We hold, then, that God is a living being, eternal, most good; and therefore life and a continuous eternal existence belong to God; for that is what God is" (Translation Tredennick).

This emphasis corresponds to the famous quote from Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*: "The main moment in Aristotelian Metaphysics is that thought and the object of thought are one".[9]

Why does Hegel choose precisely this passage? One interpretation might be to emphasize that particular contents are *not* separable from this activity of thought. However, as we will see, even this would give the contents too much weight against the activity *itself* according to Schelling. The famous passage does belong to Λ 7, where Aristotle has not yet reached the final conclusions on his notion of divine thinking. It would seem that Hegel is precisely interested in the *non-distinction* between human and divine thought, and in the fact that in this passage being, life, and thought are said to be one.

In contrast, when Schelling quotes Book *Lambda*, he does not focus on the fact that the activity of thought and its *object* be identical.[10] Schelling concentrates on the pure actuality that is not an activity *of* something but *is* radically its own activity, as it appears in *Met*. Λ 9: ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις (its thinking is a thinking of thinking).[11] The points that Schelling underlines in his interpretation are three: the pure actuality is pure *energeia*, and *not entelecheia*; it is *noêsis* rather than *nous*; and it is free of conceptual contents.

## 1. Actuality (ἐνέργεια) without actualization (ἐντελέχεια)

According to Schelling, this divine actuality cannot be thought after the model of the soul, as actuality *of* "x", that is, as *actualization* (ἐντελέχεια[12]).

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[9] "Das Hauptmoment der Aristotelischen Metaphysik ist, daß das Denken und das Gedachte eins ist" (Hegel, 1970, *TWA*, XIX, 162f).

[10] As some have noted, this is the case for *any* kind of thought and its object, not just for divine thought. Indeed, several scholars (K. Oehler, A. Laks, M. Gabriel) interpret this passage as referring still to human νοῦς and not yet to God. In any case, Hegel does not seem to distinguish strictly between passages referring to human νοῦς and divine thinking in Book Lambda (Cf. Dangel, 2013, 119n; 146).

[11] F. Inciarte notes that in the passage quoted by Hegel, νοῦς is at the same time a νοητόν, an object of thought. Νοῦς and νοητόν are not yet the pure activity in exercise expressed with νόησις (Cf. Inciarte, 2005, 243).

[12] Indeed, several interpreters of Aristotle have suggested translating ἐντελέχεια as actualization rather than actuality (Cf. Gill, 1989, 184).

To explain the difference, let us briefly recall the way Schelling understands the kind of actuality proper to the Aristotelian notion of soul in this last work. According to Aristotle, the soul is the "(first) actuality of a natural body having life potentially"(Aristotle, *DA*, II 1, 412a27). Schelling speaks of this actuality as "*Daß eines Was*", the *quod* of a *quid*, that is, the actualization of a certain potentiality and at the same time the instantiation of certain intelligible contents.

> But for him [Aristotle] *Eidos* is act, that is, not a mere *quid* [*Was*], but rather the *quod* [*Daß*] of the *quid* [*Was*] posited in the being, the same as the *ousia*, insofar as this is *cause* of being for the corresponding being, in our expression: that which *is* the being.[13]

Even regarding the notion of *form*, Schelling underlines that it consists in actualization and determination of a certain matter, and for this reason, the form, εἶδος (as well as the essence, τί ἦν εἶναι) must be *individual* actuality rather than a *universal* concept.

> I can answer the question 'what is Callias' with the concept of a genus, for instance, he is a living being; but that which is for him cause of being (here then of living) is nothing universal anymore, not ousia in the second but in the first and highest sense, πρώτη οὐσία, and each has its *own* and this belongs to *no other*, while the universal is common to many; the cause is *each* thing *itself,* in the living being then what we call the *soul*, which is explained as the ousia, the *energy* of a body formed as an instrument, as its τί ἦν εἶναι, and this is also *proper to each* and not common to many. (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 406f)[14]

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[13] "Aber diesem [Aristotle] ist das Eidos Actus, also kein bloßes Was, vielmehr das *Daß* des in dem Seyenden gesetzten Was, dasselbe mit der Usia, inwiefern diese dem jedesmal Seyenden *Ursache* des Seyns — in unserm Ausdruck: das es *seyende* ist" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 406).

[14] Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 406f. Schelling quotes *De Anima* at this point, Aristotle, *DA* II 1, 412a10: τὸ εἶδος ἐντελέχεια; and Aristotle, *DA* II 4, 415b12-13: αἴτιον τοῦ εἶναι πᾶσιν ἡ οὐσία.

Schelling stresses the fact that form is the opposite of that most universal and indeterminate being: matter, and he takes the opportunity to criticize contemporary interpretations which understand the form as concept or universal, that is, as content:

What is called εἶδος in the same passage and equated to τί ἦν εἶναι was translated as *form* by the Scholastics, quite appropriately as the opposite of matter: what is most universal since it receives all, what is furthest from all that is a "*this*". In recent times some translate it with *concept* [*Begriff*], but for them the concept only has the mere *quid* [*Was*], the τί ἐστιν, as content, although they later say: *only* the concept is *actual*. However, they affirm the same of the *universal* and would like to ascribe this wisdom, from which they profit, also to Aristotle.[15]

Although Schelling underlines the soul as individual and actual, he nevertheless considers it to have a certain *doubleness (*Cf. Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 411), since the soul is always an actualization *of* something potential and the instantiation of a certain concept. The soul is not actual *for* itself, independently of potentiality, and cannot exist separately.

> As *energeia* the soul is the *quod* [*Daß*] of this determined body, but not a *quod* [*Daß*] which is separable from it. In this respect the *quid* [*Was*] is contained and *conceived* in the *quod* [*das Was in dem Daß*]. Only in *this* sense is in *eidos* also the concept.[16]

[15] "Was in derselben [Stelle] εἶδος gennant und dem τί ἦν εἶναι gleichgesetzt wird, haben die Scholastiker durch *Form* übersetzt, ganz passend als Gegensatz des allgemeinsten, weil alles aufnehmenden, und von allem, was ein *Dieses* ist, entferntesten Wesens, der Materie. Neuerer Zeit übersetzen es manche durch *Begriff*, der Begriff aber hat ihnen das bloße *Was* (das τί ἐστιν) zum Inhalt, obwohl sie nachher sagen: der Begriff sey das *allein Wirkliche*. Dasselbe versichern sie aber auch von dem *Allgemeinen*, und möchten diese Weisheit, auf die sie sich nicht wenig zu gute thun, gern auch dem Aristoteles aufdringen" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 406).

[16] "Als Energie nun ist die Seele das *Daß* eben dieses bestimmten Körpers, aber nicht das von ihm trennbare Daß. Insofern ist das Was in dem Daß enthalten und *begriffen*. Nur in *diesem* Sinn ist im Eidos auch der Begriff" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 407f).

By contrast, God is not the soul of the world. Aristotle never calls him an εἶδος, since form is always form of a certain matter.[17] Besides, the term ἐντελέχεια implies a teleological understanding of actuality that goes hand in hand with hylemorphism in the following sense: While Aristotle characterizes the activity of organic life as well as human thinking through the pattern of an εἶδος to be attained, fulfilled, or grasped, when he describes God's *activity* of living and thinking, he avoids any mention of εἶδος, since God's pure activity of thinking is not preceded by any possibility (i. e. the possibility of grasping or becoming a certain form) (Cf. Inciarte, 2005, 242f). There is no teleological development in God.

Indeed, Schelling explicitly mentions the fact that God is only called ἐνέργεια but not ἐντελέχεια:[18] "Everything that is becoming demands that which is neither as possibility nor, like the soul, as actuality of something else, and for that reason Is absolutely for itself and separated from everything else, […], not universal anymore, but an absolutely individual being which as such is pure actuality without mixture, that excludes all potentiality, not *entelecheia* but *energeia* […]".[19]

As contrast, Hegel could be said to have an *entelechial* understanding of actuality, since he understands ἐνέργεια as "actualization of a potency".[20] That is, Hegel considers the sense of actuality present in movement but not the sense of actuality that is *separated* from

[17] Of course, for Aristotle, the opposition εἶδος/ὕλη is different from the one ἐνέργεια/δύναμις. While form requires matter, there is a sense of actuality without a corresponding potentiality.

[18] Although there is one passage, quoted by Schelling, where God is described by Aristotle as the first τί ἦν εἶναι and also as the first ἐντελέχεια (Cf. Aristotle, *Met*. Λ 8, 1074a35-36).

[19] "Alles Werdende verlangt vielmehr nach dem, was weder als Möglichkeit noch wie die Seele als Wirklichkeit von etwas andrem und schon darum schlechthin für sich und von allem andren abgesondert Ist, das darum auch nicht mehr Princip in dem Sinn, wie die bisher sogenannten, d.h. Allgemeines, sondern absolutes Einzelwesen ist, und als solches reine, ungemischte, alles Potentielle ausschließende Wirklichkeit, *nicht Entelechie, sondern reine Energie*, […]" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 412). My own italics.

[20] Ferrarin, 2001, 7. In this one definition we find all the elements that Schelling is interested in eliminating from the pure actuality: potency, a subject, and any movement.

movement.[21] Hegel would apply this understanding to the Aristotelian God as well, as an actuality that contains potentiality sublated in itself (Ferrarin, 2001, 15). In this respect, we might say that Hegel considers both ἐνέργεια and ἐντελέχεια as expressions of actualization implying a process.[22]

When Hegel interprets Aristotle in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, he understands the actuality of the Aristotelian God as not separate from possibility, as movement and as producer of contents:

> He [God] is the substance that in its *possibility* also has actuality, whose essence (*potentia*) is itself activity, where *both are not separate*; in this substance the possibility is not distinct from the form, it produces itself its *content*, its *determinations* […]. There must be a principle whose substance is grasped as activity (movement) [*Bewegung*].[23]

This passage from the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* shows that Hegel understands the Aristotelian God as the *non-distinction* of possibility and actuality. This might go back to Kant's notion of an intuitive understanding in the *Critique of Judgment*, which would not be able to distinguish between possibility and actuality since it would know any objects as actual. This ‚modal collapse' was also a favorite notion of the early Schelling regarding the Absolute. By contrast, Schelling's insistence in this late philosophy that pure actuality excludes possibility is all the more relevant.

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[21] Although in a different context, also M. Boenke speaks of Hegel's "*entelechial*" thought in the sense that the process contains its own end and perfection in itself. In contrast, Schelling's late philosophy would have the coincidence of actuality and possibility as a non-place, a *utopia* (Cf. M. Boenke 2004, 102; 110f).

[22] Hegel´s understanding of ἐνέργεια as process was explicitly criticized by Schelling, as Kierkegaard notes (Cf. JJ 160 in Kierkegaard, 2008, 178).

[23] "Er [Gott] ist die Substanz, die in ihrer *Möglichkeit* auch die Wirklichkeit hat, deren Wesen (*potentia*) Tätigkeit selbst ist, *wo beides nicht getrennt ist*; an ihr ist die Möglichkeit nicht von der Form unterschieden, sie ist es, die ihren *Inhalt*, ihre *Bestimmungen* selbst, sich selbst produziert. [...]. Es muß also ein Princip geben, dessen Substanz als Tätigkeit (*Bewegung*) gefaßt werden muß, [...]" (Hegel, 1970, *TWA*, XIX, 158f). My own italics.

Furthermore, Hegel relates ἐνέργεια to movement. He translates ἐνέργεια often as "*Tätigkeit*" (activity) and he stresses its aspect of *life*, actualization, but he also seems to understand those as movements and processes (Cf. López Farjeat, 2003, 24), whereas Schelling would follow Aristotle in the distinction between actualization implying movement (ἐντελέχεια) and actuality (activity, ἐνέργεια) that does not involve any potentiality or movement.

Finally, at this point, Hegel himself mentions the fact that his perspective differs from the Aristotelian one, since thought is for Aristotle "the best", but in that sense one object among others instead of "*all* truth",[24] *totality*. It is particularly this inclusion of totality that Schelling attempts to eliminate from his reading of ἐνέργεια.

## 2. Rather νόησις than νοῦς:

Schelling emphasizes the fact that "the act of thinking" is *not* a capacity, so much so that the Aristotelian God should be understood not as νοῦς (a *faculty* of thinking), but rather as pure νόησις[25] (actively *thinking*): "The highest is to such a degree *actus* for Aristotle, that for him God is not properly νοῦς separated from νόησις (from actual thinking). He is not mere potency of thought anymore".[26]

The passage quoted by Schelling from Λ 9: "its thinking is a thinking on thinking", accentuates the verbal character of the expression. God is not a "substance-which-acts" but a pure, self-sustaining or substantial activity (Cf. Inciarte, 2005, 156). Therefore, he simply or absolutely *is* (Cf. Aristotle, *Met*. Λ 7, 1072b12-13). Because God is his own activity, he needs no substrate, the activity is its own substrate. In contrast, anything that is expressable through subject + predicate propositions can be or not be. In that way, s + p propositions point to the ambiguity or dyadic character of materiality and potentiality.[27] God is not expressable as

[24] Cf. Hegel, 1970, *TWA*, XIX, 164. Cf. Martin, 2012, 661.

[25] "If the Prime Mover is itself the highest being it cannot be potentiality; it must be pure actualisation, νόησις and not νοῦς" (Norman, 1969, 70).

[26] "So sehr ist dem Aristoteles das Letzte Actus, daß ihm Gott eigentlich nicht mehr νοῦς, abgesondert von der νόησις (vom wirklichen Denken), nicht mehr bloße Potenz des Denkens ist" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *PO*, XIII, 105).

[27] "The principle we are looking for must be beyond this dichotomy of subject and object because in thinking thoughts there is always something potential, even material involved" (Gabriel, 2009, 395).

"s+p" or "F(x)", because he *is* his own being: actuality is not a predicate for him, because actuality makes him up, it is constitutive. Schelling wants to emphasize that God is not "something *of* something" (*Daß eines Was*) but pure activity (pure *Daß*):

> And while, as Kant says, all existential judgment is synthetic, that is, a judgment in which I go beyond the concept, this is not in any way applied to the pure *quod* [*Daß*] (liberated from anything universal) as it remains standing at the end of rational science, because the pure abstract *quod* [*Daß*] is not a synthetic judgment.[28]

The comparison with Kant might be helpful insofar as Kant rejects existence as determination of a concept, as "real predicate". We "go beyond a concept", in his terms, to posit its object as existent because the determinations, the contents of the concept, can never be enough to affirm the existence of the thing in question. For that reason, existential propositions are always synthetic ("go beyond the concept"). However, in the case of Schelling´s "pure Daß", we do not have a determined concept lacking only a synthetical affirmation of existence. This is not a determined concept but rather a pure existence lacking determinations, if you will. I will come back to this notion of "pure *Daß*" below.

### 3. Absence of contents:

Indeed, if this activity of thought is absolutely simple because it is nothing but its own *activity*, excluding all potentiality, it seems that it can have no other content than itself. Otherwise it would include the potentiality –as capacity– of thinking certain objects and would be determined by these contents:

> If it thinks, but something else determines its thinking, then since that which is its essence is not thinking but potentiality, it cannot be the best reality; because it

[28] "Und wenn auch, wie Kant sagt, jeder Existentialsatz ein synthetischer ist, d. h. ein solcher, durch welchen ich über den Begriff hinausgehe, so findet dieß doch auf das reine (von allem Allgemeinen befreite) Daß, wie es am Ende der Vernunftwissenschaft als Letztes stehen bleibt, keine Anwendung, denn das reine, abstracte Daß ist kein synthetischer Satz" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 563).

> derives its excellence from the act of thinking. (Aristotle, *Met*. Λ 9, 1074b18-21)

Hegel considers that the Aristotelian God, as selfthinking, still has an eidetic content,[29] a much discussed issue in the history of Lambda reception, whose defenders rely on the positive determinations of the divine activity made in Lambda 7. As mentioned above, contents are problematic since they imply some potentiality in divine thought and that the objects of thought determine its dignity.

In contrast, Schelling underlines the absence of any contents other than the thinking thinking itself: "God is νοήσεως νόησις,[…]. God is –this is what the expression really means– only infinite act of thinking, that is, one that thinks *itself* continuously (no limiting object other than itself)".[30]

## IV. Two Problems of Schelling's Rational Philosophy

What does Schelling gain with this "*energical*" interpretation (as opposed to "*entelechial*")? Why is this distinction important to his own late philosophy? In order to approach these questions, I propose briefly looking at two problems that arise within Schelling's own rational philosophy.

One is the question in what sense the pure actuality can be said to be individual. Schelling stresses this notion several times and it seems to be one of the motivations for his particular reading of Aristotle. The pure actuality as "absolutely individual" [*absolutes Einzelwesen*] (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 412). What does he mean by this? We need to make sense of this claim in order to understand why he is interested in this *anti-Hegelian* reading of Aristotle.

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[29] Cf. Hegel, 1970, *TWA*, XIX, 161f. Cf. Halfwassen, 2005, 352. As mentioned above, Hegel does not distinguish strictly between the passages where Aristotle speaks of νοῦς in general and those where he discusses divine thinking, blurring the difference between human and divine thought.

[30] "[Gott] ist νοήσεως νόησις, was freilich von dem Denken über das Denken, wofür es sich so oft anführen lassen mußte, etwas höchst Verschiedenes ist. Gott ist —dieß will der Ausdruck eigentlich sagen— nur unendlicher, d. h. *sich* immer wieder (keinen begrenzenden Gegenstand außer sich) denkender Actus des Denkens" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 559n).

The second problem is the relation between "pure actuality" and the individual, personal *will* who is ultimately responsible for the transition from negative to positive philosophy. Another way to pose this question would be to ask whether the crisis and the transition from purely rational to positive philosophy depend *only* on the will, and whether, in that case, the pure actuality plays no role in this respect, or what exactly *is* the role of Schelling's notion of pure actuality towards this transition.

## 1. Two Senses of "Individual"

As we have seen, Schelling is interested in a notion of pure actuality that is completely free of anything "material" [*hylisch*], that is, it is radically separated from any potential or universal contents. Consequently, not only must it be pure activity but also absolutely individual, says Schelling. How does he understand individuality in this context? If pure actuality is an activity that does not have a substrate beyond its own activity, in what sense is it individual? And why is it important for Schelling to underline this?

I suggest that we need to distinguish between two senses of "individual". One would be "individual" as an *instance*: something particular falling under a general concept, instantiating a general term. To focus on *this* notion of "individual" would be to regard something from the point of view of the contents it instantiates, of "*what*" it is.

The other notion is the individual as "self-being". This term would have different applications throughout the *DRP* as we move forward following Aristotelian characterizations of what is actual. Schelling uses three different expressions:

a) He uses the term "self-being" [*selbstseyend*] to distinguish between a substance (*chôriston*) and its attributes which are not *selfbeing (*Cf. Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 313; 333).

b) Then, when discussing his interpretation of Aristotelian essence (τί ἦν εἶναι), Schelling writes that this is what constitutes something's "self": for animate beings it is their soul, since it is what actually *is* each of them (Cf. Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 408). In other words, the soul constitutes the *living being's* self, but this means that the soul is not its *own* self (Cf. Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 402). The soul is the *Daß* of the *Was*, but not its own *Daß (*Cf. Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 402).

c) In contrast, there are several passages where the notion of absolute individual is expressed through the term "pure self" [*reines*

*Selbst*] (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 373). While the soul is not its self (it actualizes and instantiates material contents), the pure actuality is God considered "in his pure self".[31] In other words, instead of being "*Daß* of *a Was*", it is "*pure* Daß".

Since Schelling repeats elsewhere that nothing could exist without being *something*,[32] it would seem that he is speaking here of a way of *considering* existents:[33] to consider something not from the perspective of the contents it happens to instantiate (of *what* it is) but simply from the point of view *that* it exists.

> That which Is Being, as that which is absolutely free of essence, or free of idea (namely for itself and considered apart from Being), cannot even be *the One*, but just *one*, Ἕν τι, which for Aristotle means the same as that which is a *this* (a τόδε τι ὄν) and that which is able to be-for-itself, the χωριστόν.[34]

This perspective would take the individual being into account as if it were independent of (*separable*, prior to) those contents: "Of him as he is in himself (in his *pure self*) one cannot say *what* he is but *only that he Is* [*nur, daß er Ist*] (this is that being which is independent and separable from all *What* towards which science strives)".[35]

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[31] "Because God is Being, but against this still has a being of His own, a being that He has even without Being. […]. Nevertheless, that He is independent of Being *according to his pure self*, this we know, and this whole science is based on the assumption that Being is separable from him" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 418).

[32] "[…] anything that *Is* must also have a relation to the *concept*. What is *nothing*, that is, what has no relation to thought, *Is* not *truly*" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 587).

[33] Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 314. My italics.

[34] "Das, was das Seyende Ist, kann als das schlechthin Wesen- oder Idee-Freie (nämlich für sich und außer dem Seyenden betrachtet), nicht einmal *das Eine* seyn, sondern nur *Eines*, Ἕν τι, was dem Aristoteles mit dem was ein *Dieses* (ein τόδε τι ὄν) und dem für-sich-seyn-Könnenden gleichbedeutend ist, dem χωριστόν" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 314).

[35] "Von ihm, wie er in Sich (*in seinem reinen Selbst*) ist, [ist] nicht mehr zu sagen, *was* er ist, sondern *nur, daß er Ist* (es ist eben dieses von allem Was unabhängige und trennbare Seyn, wohin die Wissenschaft will)" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 402).

I suggest that the "pure actuality" is the anticipation, in purely rational or negative philosophy, of a way of considering existents, a way of pointing at something that cannot be reached through the purely rational means: the perspective on an individual considered from the point of view *that* it exists, beyond the contents it might instantiate.

The pure actuality is, as Schelling says, a *negative* concept. Indeed, in the case of the pure actuality, there is nothing to determine, it is rather a pure positing of existence without a concept that accounts for it.[36]

"One could find it incomprehensible how the negativity of this determination has gone unnoticed in Aristotle as well as in modern philosophy".[37]

It is a negative concept for several reasons:

a) The pure actuality has been obtained by progressive elimination of potential contents.[38]

b) At each step of the *DRP*, actuality turns out to be beyond the contents that have been grasped.

c) It points towards something that it cannot reach with this purely rational approach.

d) Through this notion, reason touches the limitations of purely rational philosophy and its paradox nature: it tries to think an actuality that it can never know.

d) Only after this realization of its limits can we speak of the purely rational philosophy as a *negative* philosophy.

Is having a negative concept tantamount to having nothing at all? Has Schelling simply negated all thinkable contents and that's the end of the story? We should rather think of a negative concept as a *silhouette*

[36] Indeed, Schelling refers several times to Fichte's *Thathandlung* as a way of understanding what Aristotelian ἐνέργεια means. „If this is merely about showing what *Actus* is at all, then Fichte was not that wrong to point to that which is nearer to *us*, the continued deed or, as he thought to express himself more strongly, the *Thathandlung* of our selfconsciousness" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 315).

[37] "Unbegreiflich könnte man finden, wie man das *Negative* dieser Bestimmung bei Aristoteles ebensowohl, als in der neuern Philosophie übersehen" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 559).

[38] "[...] to pull out everything that is hidden in Being as possibility in order to arrive, after exhaustion of all possibility, to that which is actual through itself" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 422).

that has been carved out by eliminating all that is not actual and individual in the sense sought after. As when someone says "at least I know what I *don't* want": the more clarity one attains on that, the sharper their search can become.

This negative concept or "inverted idea", in Schelling's terms, leads to a crisis where purely rational procedure experiences its own limitation and the need for a different method becomes clear.

## 2. Standpoint of Existence and the Crisis

Indeed, Schelling seems to use the term "pure Daß" for two moments in the transition from negative to positive philosophy: both for the notion at the end of purely rational philosophy (a negative concept, a pointing-at-something-beyond-contents), and for the starting point of positive philosophy, the standpoint of existence from which positive thought can begin, once the pure actuality has been "expelled from the idea" and rational philosophy itself has been abandoned.

According to Schelling, positive philosophy must begin from a different standpoint, the standpoint of existence that is beyond contents. This does not mean that I have to somehow step *outside* of reason or thought, but rather to *realize* that reason and thought are always already taking place within the larger framework of actual existence. Reason, thought, are themselves existent. Rather than *going over* into existence, negative philosophy comes to realize that it is situated, posited, within a larger framework: the standpoint of existence which was always already there. This realization takes place through what Schelling calls the "last crisis of rational science".

At the end of the DRP, Schelling describes how the spirit, the "I", unsatisfied with its practical life in the world, renounces its will by embracing a contemplative life where it *practices* purely rational philosophy.[39] At this point, the place of purely rational philosophy in actual, historical existence comes into view.

Within rational philosophy, explains Schelling, the spirit strives to find God in his "pure self" which is no other than the pure actuality. However, it still only has God as mere idea.[40] Soon it becomes clear

[39] At this point, purely rational philosophy is itself situated in the actual world (Cf. Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 558n).

[40] "The *quod* is here in the position of the *quid*. It is, thus, a pure idea, and nonetheless it is not an idea in the sense in which this word is understood within

that there is no escape from the necessity of action, the spirit realizes it *must* act *in* the world. The merely ideal God is not enough for the spirit anymore. Its previous desperation comes back and it then decides to seek for a *personal* principle, one that is capable *of acting in the actual world* as well (Cf. Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 560). This decision precipitates the *crisis* of purely rational philosophy and leads to its rejection.

> "[…] the great, last and true crisis consists only in God, the last one found, being expelled from the idea, and the rational science itself being therewith abandoned (rejected). Negative Philosophy ends thus with the destruction of the idea (as Kant's *Critique* ultimately with the humiliation of reason) or with the result that what is truly Being [*das wahrhaft Seyende*] is only that which is outside the idea, what is not the idea but is more than the idea, κρεῖττον τοῦ λόγου".[41]

After the crisis, then, we have a "pure Daß" in a different sense: not as a negative notion beyond reach, but as a realization of our own facticity, as assuming our own contingent existence in a practical sense previous to any conceptualization.

Although the actual transition to positive philosophy is, according to Schelling, due to a *will* that decides to abandon negative philosophy,[42] the notion of pure actuality plays an important role in the transition to positive philosophy:

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the negative philosophy" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XIII, 162).

[41] "[…] die große, letzte und eigentliche Krisis besteht nun darin, daß Gott, das zuletzt Gefundene, aus der Idee ausgestoßen, die Vernunftwissenschaft selbst damit verlassen (verworfen) wird. Die negative Philosophie geht somit auf die Zerstörung der Idee (wie Kants Kritik eigentlich auf Demüthigung der Vernunft) oder auf das Resultat, daß das wahrhaft Seyende erst das ist, was außer der Idee, nicht die Idee ist, sondern mehr ist als die Idee, κρείττον τοῦ λόγου" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 566). Compare with Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* VIII 14, 1248a27-28: "The principle of reason is not reason but something superior to reason [λόγου δ᾽ ἀρχὴ οὐ λόγος ἀλλά τι κρεῖττον]."

[42] "Die Vernunftwissenschaft führt also wirklich über sich hinaus und treibt zur Umkehr; diese selbst aber kann doch nicht vom Denken ausgehen. Dazu bedarf es vielmehr eines praktischen Antriebs; […]. Ein Wille muß es seyn, von dem die Ausstoßung A°'s aus der Vernunft, diese letzte Krisis der Vernunftwissenschaft, ausgeht" (Schelling, 1856-1861, *DRP*, XI, 566).

In order to adopt the standpoint of existence, reason has to undergo a reversal, it has to adopt a different attitude. This is only possible if there is an experience of the insufficiency of contents of thought. The question for the late Schelling is how the negative philosophy *itself* can lead to the realization of the insufficiency of contents regarding the standpoint of existence. Once the insufficiency becomes clear, then it will be the decision of a will to demand a factical principle that can act in the world.

This means that the link between the pure actuality and the willing spirit is not one of contents. Ultimately, the key is not a *theoretical* understanding of individuality, but rather consists in the fact that what the rational philosophy strives for through the pure actuality (the standpoint of existence: grasping onself as a particular existent) can only ultimately be attained by the willing self or I.

Only once we have realized the insufficiency of contents as such, even from the perspective of negative philosophy, do we become able to envision a different relation between individual self-being and conceptual contents. But this is possible because by going through the *needle's eye* (through the pure actuality as negative concept or inverted idea, through renunciation of the world in a practical sense) reason is now beside itself (*außer sich*), ecstatic, turned about. Only through a humiliation of reason, as Schelling says, quoting Kant, can a different approach to actual reality begin: one that starts out from actual existence and then attempts to make sense of it a posteriori. Whatever determinations or capacities are regained after starting out from the standpoint of particular existence, these contents gained a posteriori will have a different status than those of purely rational philosophy.

While Hegel's ἐνέργεια would remain laden with potentiality and conceptuality, so that he would not distinguish negative and positive aspects in his philosophy, in Schelling's eyes, at least Aristotle did not confuse the negative with the positive perspectives, but remains clearly within the limitations of negative philosophy.[43]

[43] Cf. Schelling, 1972, *GNP*, X, 136f.; Schelling, 1856-1861, *PO*, XIII, 128. Cf. this letter from Schelling to F. Ravaisson, Jan. 14th, 1838, where he explains that Aristotle is a negative philosopher but at least not a mixture of positive and negative philosophies: "Je ne conçois pas tout à fait ce que vous dites sur la philosophie d'Aristote, relativement à la philosophie, et à la direction nouvelle que vous me supposez vouloir imprimer à la philosophie; je fais le plus grand cas d'Aristote, et je me suis trouvé sur une partie de son chemin avant de le

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savoir, c'est pourtant por la philosophie négative que je lui reconnais le plus grand mérite; je suis bien loin de le blâmer de n'être pas allé jusqu'à la positive; j'admire au contraire sa retenue à cet égard et sa clarté parfaite sur ce point qui l'a empêché de faire ce mélange du négatif avec le positif qui, sous l'influence du Christianisme, devait entrer dans la Métaphysique des siècles postérieurs, et que même après Kant on n'a pas su se garder" (Schelling, 1936, 504).

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