

Summary of the doctoral dissertation

On possible directions of development of Søren Kierkegaard's aesthetic subject concept

written for the Ethics and Philosophy of Man Seminar
under the supervision of Rev. Prof. dr hab. Wladyslaw Zuziak

The principal goal of the thesis is a profound analysis of the aesthetic subject in Søren Kierkegaard's anthropology based on his philosophical thought and relevant supporting literature. The research problem is the issue of the essence, limitations and actuality of the aesthetic dimension of human life. The stated aim and the analytical-synthetic method applied determined the structure of the presented dissertation.

The first chapter opens with the problem of the genesis of the Danish philosopher's existential thought in the context of Hegelian philosophy, popular at the time, and a synthetic presentation of Kierkegaard's theory of the stages of life: aesthetic, ethical and religious. This section closes with an attempt at a thorough analysis of the life of the aesthetic subject by indicating the key aspects of human existence at this stage. Three issues are highlighted: the relation of the subject to beauty, the problem of the subjective truth of the individual, and the inevitability of melancholy and despair at the level of aesthetic life.

The second chapter deals with the problem of the inadequacy of aesthetics and indicates new perspectives for understanding it, i.e. possible directions of development of the aesthetic subject. Analysing the consecutive changes of an individual which emphasise their dynamism, the qualitative leap, the absolute choice and the category of paradox are highlighted. These represent the 'possibilities' of the subject, or opportunities for further growth, characteristic of the philosophy of existence. The next part of the chapter is an in-depth study of the human being at the ethical and religious stage, and the shortcomings and inconsistencies mentioned in their realisation have inspired the search for other possible directions of development of the subject. The chapter culminates in the presentation of Kierkegaard's new aesthetics, in which the author seems to subtly modify his original conception. He includes it in the essay *The Lily of the Field*.

The main purpose of the third chapter is to indicate possible directions in which the Danish philosopher's concept of the aesthetic subject might be developed. Based on the sources and studies of selected contemporary philosophers, propositions for updating, extending or elevating Kierkegaard's aesthetics are presented. The author of the first perspective is Jozef Tischner, a philosopher from Krakow, who, unlike Kierkegaard, sought to introduce the aesthetic subject into the world of axiology. Tischner's thinking was enriched by Władysław Stozewski's theory of the metaphysics of beauty. The second part of the chapter presents the theological-philosophical thinking of Hans Urs von Balthasar, who believed that the aesthetic subject is already in the horizon of beauty able to participate in the metaphysical world. In the final section of the chapter, the floor is given to thinkers who understand the aesthete and his world differently from Kierkegaard. In addressing the aestheticization of life, Richard Shusterman and Michel Foucault propose their own projects for the 'rehabilitation' of aesthetics. However, even in this broadened perspective, the relevance of Søren Kierkegaard's anthropology is evident.

K. Kamil Szpilka