



XIV. A Fragment on Kierkegaard (1952)

[This lecture was included as-is in fragment form by the original editor. -Ed.]

From: Man Alone; Existential Thinking from Kierkegaard and Nietzsche to Heidegger and Sartre

By Heinrich Blücher

Note: The following excerpt dealing with Kierkegaard begins on page fifty-two of the original manuscript.

He (Kierkegaard) discovered the process of the human self, the idea of an individual transcending himself into a grotesque monster. He did not think anything in the world was important; he did not, as with Schopenhauer, take the processes of the world very seriously. Schopenhauer was not concerned entirely with himself. He was not yet an individual. Schopenhauer made a last stand. (With Kierkegaard, the situation was entirely different). He lived off of the money his father had left him, only and entirely for himself, in absolute privacy and withdrawn. The situation seems similar to Medieval mystics but there is a difference, because the mystic was not only standing against the world and society. The mystic first withdrew to God and then secondarily from the world. With Kierkegaard. The withdrawal from the world came first.

Kierkegaard dropped dead when he took his last check from the bank and had finished his work. He established by his life and work that role of individual sovereignty, the first to achieve that performance of the individual retiring into his private self and finding out what it is with the danger of paying the price of insanity. Kierkegaard almost paid that price, and consciously so, because he wanted to find out what was in that great darkness. He hoped that he was going to find God but he forgot that he could not meet God in the darkness without first having faith and belief in God; otherwise he would meet only himself and identify the self with God which is something quite different and terrible.

Kierkegaard was the discoverer of the possibility of modern analytic psychology. He lived a neurotic life (which is not the same as saying he was a neurotic) that he created voluntarily in order to find out certain unknown things; a life situation the same as a neurotic who breaks away from all things. He consciously destroyed any possibility of human love. He was the first to be concerned with the question "What are human motives like" and to face the possibility for the bad. Nietzsche also engaged in such a process but in a very different way. Nietzsche never used the method of an inquisitor. Nietzsche, seeing dark things in others, by a magnificent

gesture identified himself with them ("if it is possible in others then it is also possible in me"). He was not a neurotic or complicated person although he took upon himself responsibility for the possible existence of dirty ulterior human motives in others. Kierkegaard on the other hand suspected others of his own dark motives whereas Nietzsche did just the opposite. The interrogator in Crime and Punishment was really invented by Kierkegaard (although Dostoyevsky did not know of him); because Kierkegaard had turned himself into an inquisitor, questioning himself (as if he were a criminal) to death. In this process of constant self reflection he came to the action of the psychological provocateur where he tried to put people before certain artificially created situations where they would be forced to make a decision and then watched the reaction. These situations were created by deliberately false gossip. He was the first modern man to apply scientific terror. He thought he was a philosopher which he could not be, because he did not respect human beings or the truth. Rather he used them as guinea pigs.

Kierkegaard was Janus-faced. On the one hand he wanted to believe in God and on the other he wanted to be a psychologist (not as a scientist who knows his own limits) but as a reckless experimenter in search of psychological motives. The whole darkness and ambiguity of the nihilistic situation comes out in Kierkegaard although he did not do much harm except to himself, and it can be seen essentially as a process of self destruction which in Kierkegaard was the destruction of himself. But we have overrated his importance. We cannot run after ourselves. We must see ourselves reflected in others. If we want to become ourselves the surest way of losing ourselves is to run after ourselves, because it means that we escape ourselves. In seeking the self we get lost in the labyrinth and are consumed by the Minotaur.

Spring 1952