

Kierkegaard and nietzsche



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There are a number of misconceptions many have regarding the philosophy of existentialism. Probably the most common misconception is the notion that it is a nihilistic, dark philosophy with a miserable outlook. This is a horribly inaccurate assessment as existentialism is really a philosophy of looking at life through a realistic lens. Of course, different people see things differently and this is why even famous, leading existentialist philosophers such as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche have diverse teaching methodologies for presenting existentialism. In order to clearly understand existentialism, one must look at some of these differences between these two existentialist philosophers.

Both of these two philosophers understand that it is often perception that gets in the way of reality. That is, people will look at life through their own biases and perspectives as opposed to looking at reality. Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche understand that this inherent flaw is common among all humans and they stress that improvement of the individual can overcome this problem. Their approaches to the problem, however, lack much in terms of similarity.

Probably the main difference between the two would be the notion of inward understanding vs. outward expression. For Kierkegaard, there is much internalization. That is, the individual needs to look at his or her own flaws and come to an anagnorisis of that is somewhat akin to enlightenment and personal spirituality. For Nietzsche, the approach is far more humanist as the process for self improvement is found in how the person acts. That is to say, enlightenment does not come from a quasi sense of spirituality as much as it comes in personal achievement in realized goals. In a way, Nietzsche's "

superman" displays who he is through his actions. For Kierkegaard, there is internal philosophizing that creates a different perspective. This, too, can change the person but without the external displays.

Individualism is a very important point for both of these philosophers. Often, existentialism is the philosophy of the self and is not concerned with collectivism. (This is one of the reasons why the philosophy is erroneously referred to as being pure narcissism) Kierkegaard, while very negative towards the notion of group think and groups, stresses that there are certain gains that can be made from within the group.

This is provided, of course, that the man does not allow the group to take over his thinking. For Nietzsche it would seem there is more anger and bitterness towards the group. He has little use for collective pursuits of any kind and would prefer to shun it as opposed to Kierkegaard plays the collective for individual benefit. That is, use the flaws of the group as a guiding principle for self enlightenment.

If there was any confusion present it would center on the notion that one could be self enlightened or a superman within a vacuum. That is, if you are the loner who feels "above it all" what value can that be worth if the group collective does not honor your achievements. Perhaps Kierkegaard and Nietzsche would state that whatever the group believes is worthless but most people do hope to gain value from the collective's envy. Then again, perhaps this confusion derives from rejecting some of the isolationist tendencies of existentialism. If you are not willing to completely reject "the group" then much of existentialism will prove unappealing.

Once again, while the teachings of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in regards to promoting existentialism seek the same goal, their approaches have a number of differences. Some are overt and some are subtle. Then, some are merely a matter of perception.

Heidegger

But what really is the human being? While there are physical, biological and even spiritual aspects that comprise the human being most people can not put the sums together and provide a finite, conclusive answer to that very important question. Yet, it has been a question posed by many existential philosophers for many years. One existentialist who sought to provide a very unique and definitive insight to what is a human being was Heidegger/ The attempts to do so are seen in his examination of Dasein. Dasein is essentially a way of looking at the individual's place in the world. As such, if you understand the person's place in the world then you will understand the person. In a way, this is because a being and a being's environment are inseparable. After all, does not environment shape the being?

The interesting point that Heidegger puts forth is that throughout human history there is an unfortunate tendency by society to ignore the question of being. This is because the being is taken for granted. That is, individualism is somewhat discarded due to benign neglect. This is the result of putting far too much emphasis on society towards looking at the being on overly psychoanalytical or not overly metaphysical means. In other words, the collective has too much of a complicated definition for the being. This is often because society does not look at the being from the perspective of extreme simplicity: a human is a thinking organism prone to emotion. When

a school of thought or an institution ignores this fact the ability to truly understand the being is lost.

In a way, it would seem that Heidegger would hope that the being - the individual - would ignore society as it generally ignores him. That does not mean one should be dismissive or insubordinate to the rule of law. It simply means one should seek his or her own individual path and try to avoid the collective mentality and the influences it pedals.

In a similar vein, there are a number of strong opinions surrounding Heidegger's philosophy vs. Wittgenstein's Logical Positivism. On a baseline level, Logical Positivism is a rebuke of mysticism and seeks to establish a more secular, logic based outlook on life. In a way, it is much like traditional existentialism although its approach can be somewhat more biting. What makes the comparison between Heidegger's theories and Logical Positivism is the fact that followers of Logical Positivism often accuse Heidegger's theories of being overly based in mysticism!

This is a bizarre notion because it would infer that Heidegger's outlook on the concept of the being was not based on humanism, Instead, it would be inferred that the being centered on mysticism. Perhaps this is because those who prescribe to Logical Positivism see concepts of " the being" as being psychoanalytical variants of mysticism and spirituality. Obviously, this was not Heidegger's intention and such an inference would infer confusion.

Perhaps this is because the Logical Positives followers would assume that there is far too much speculation inherent to answering questions regarding who or what is the being. Again, this brings us to the antagonistic attitudes certain realists may have regarding anything psychoanalytical. Perhaps to <https://assignbuster.com/kierkegaard-and-nietzsche/>

these individuals looking inward to answer questions of being might walk too close of a line towards spirituality. (Again, this is not Heidegger's intent but this is how some critics may have defined it.) Notion of spirituality walk too closely to mysticism for followers of Logical Positivism and that is why they may very well reject Heidegger.

On a basic level, however, Heidegger's theories of the being are sound. Of course, there will be critics and that is expected, but to outright dismiss the benefits of Heidegger's work upon cursory examination would not be the wisest path to take.