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The Hero with a Thousand Faces of Madness, or Why it is Worth to Be an Outcast

Summary

The aim of this article is to outline the selected features of the portrait of a modern man based on the figure of the madman proposed by the Danish thinker, Søren Kierkegaard. Such figure a) has been made an almost obligatory part of the emerging anthropological structures, b) is linked with the essential acts of existential decision and c) the corresponding social roles, which problematise the communication of human experience. The point of departure is the assumption that Kierkegaard continued, in his own way, the old tradition of Western thought that related authentic existential experience with the immediate threat of madness. The unrevealed mystery of madness in the Danish philosopher's works recovered the power of attraction it once had, initiating a new adventure in the romanticisation of pathological phenomena, which was soon supplemented with

the aestheticization and the subsequent socialisation of pathology. Kierkegaard's elaboration of the concept of madness may not have been the most significant detail of the anthropological structure in the universe of his writings, but giving prominence to the figure of madness, by attributing it to the fundamental existential human equation, cannot go unnoticed. By shrouding and framing the fundamental existential content, the figure of madness has in a way responded to the trend of paradoxical and contradictory revaluation of pathological phenomena, which has been characteristic of the Western culture to the present day. Madness could no longer be just the impenetrable night of the human mind, for its impenetrable veil was potentially concealing the greatest mystery given to man – a direct encounter with the superior ontological powers.

Keywords: Kierkegaard, modern anthropological structures, self-transcending madness, a stage for human inner self, aesthetics.