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The Essential Kierkegaard



Synopsis

This is the most comprehensive anthology of Søren Kierkegaard's works ever assembled in English. Drawn from the volumes of Princeton's authoritative Kierkegaard's Writings series by editors Howard and Edna Hong, the selections represent every major aspect of Kierkegaard's extraordinary career. They reveal the powerful mix of philosophy, psychology, theology, and literary criticism that made Kierkegaard one of the most compelling writers of the nineteenth century and a shaping force in the twentieth. With an introduction to Kierkegaard's writings as a whole and explanatory notes for each selection, this is the essential one-volume guide to a thinker who changed the course of modern intellectual history. The anthology begins with Kierkegaard's early journal entries and traces the development of his work chronologically to the final *The Changelessness of God*. The book presents generous selections from all of Kierkegaard's landmark works, including *Either/Or*, *Fear and Trembling*, *Works of Love*, and *The Sickness unto Death*, and draws new attention to a host of such lesser-known writings as *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions* and *The Lily of the Field and the Bird of the Air*. The selections are carefully chosen to reflect the unique character of Kierkegaard's work, with its shifting pseudonyms, its complex dialogues, and its potent combination of irony, satire, sermon, polemic, humor, and fiction. We see the esthetic, ethical, and ethical-religious ways of life initially presented as dialogue in two parallel series of pseudonymous and signed works and later in the "second authorship" as direct address. And we see the themes that bind the whole together, in particular Kierkegaard's overarching concern with, in his own words, "What it means to exist; . . . what it means to be a human being." Together, the selections provide the best available introduction to Kierkegaard's writings and show more completely than any other book why his work, in all its creativity, variety, and power, continues to speak so directly today to so many readers around the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A wonderful, chronologically arranged anthology from the immensely prodigious output of Soren Kierkegaard, complete with excellent introductory notes. My only criticism? The typography is a bit dense, and in particular the font size for the running text is small. I would appeal to the publisher to reformat this book using a larger text size (e.g., 10 point) -- even at the expense of adding additional pages to the overall book size.

With a dizzying series of pseudonyms, from Climaticus to Anticlimaticus, this book selects from the Hong's expansive translation of all of Kierkegaard's writings. The introductions place each piece in context, but don't over interpret as some other books. Reading from the complete work presents a view of Kierkegaard's total plan ("The Authorship") and his voices of the religious, esthetic, and ethical. In light of the whole body, "Concluding Unscientific postscript" seems to have a pivotal role. Existentialists may like to claim him as he speaks of the individual about despair, fear and trembling, and anxiety, but make no mistake his work is to be a Christian (" Once and for all I must urgently request the kindly disposed reader continually to bear in mente [in mind] that the total thought in the entire work as an author is this" becoming a Christian"). He is a self appointed critic of the established church and the inclusion of the lesser known "The Lily of the Field and the Bird of the Air' shows the religious side. Present are all of Kierkegaard's "Knights": the Knight of Faith, the Knight of Infinite Resignation, and the Knight of Hidden Awareness. Humor and irony abound. Come leap in, and have a good read!

Years ago I read almost everything Kierkegaard wrote. Wanting to return to his works and wanting a book that could go with me on my travels and on my boat, I chose this collection. It is comprehensive. It offers writings of Kierkegaard I had not read, namely his early writings. It is an exhaustive collection, carefully chosen by experts. It has met my needs of a full portable library of Kierkegaard and I recommend it.

I had heard about the philosopher Kierkegaard some time ago and had this book on my list of things

to read for some time. Now that I have finally finished reading it, I can say that his works are very interesting, but also very difficult to grasp at times. Since this book is made with philosophy students in mind, this is not a book for the uninitiated to tread lightly into. Some of the excerpted works are excellent and I will definitely be looking to read them in their entirety in the future (Fear and Trembling, The Sickness Unto Death, and his more religious works written in his later years come to mind), but not all of his works are interesting. In fact, one of my biggest problems with this book is that the least interesting works of Kierkegaard seemed to get more pages than the more interesting works. It's frustrating to read 10 pages of something really good only to have to plod through 20-50 pages of something incredibly boring afterwards. The other problem I had with this book was the editors' notes at the beginning of each excerpted work. They are interesting for those who want a little biography and background information on Kierkegaard, but they do almost nothing to help the reader to understand what they are reading. Some more in-depth notes to explain the works' main ideas either at the beginning of the excerpts or interspersed as editors' footnotes throughout would have done much to aid my understanding and enjoyment of this book. I will definitely be looking for that in the next book of Kierkegaard I find the time to read.

Søren Kierkegaard is undoubtedly the comedian's philosopher. And his humor is fundamentally reassuring - hilarious, even biting, but never bitter or nihilistic. He is one of the major influences on the films and writings of Woody Allen. Often Kierkegaard is rumored to be bleak, hopeless and terrifying. There are elements of despair, yes, but I've always found him good for a laugh even at his darkest. His humor is similar to Woody Allen's in that it is simultaneously cathartic, sobering and very funny. I flip around this excellent anthology and re-read passages in my spare time for encouragement.

This is an absolutely incredible collection of Kierkegaard material, expertly crafted by Howard and Edna Hong. Classic selections of Søren Kierkegaard are supplemented by a variety of essays and other writings less-known but perhaps most engaging. Great gratitude for this gem!

The Essential Kierkegaard Edited by Howard & Edna Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2000) 524 pages (ISBN: 0-691-03309-9; hardcover) (ISBN: 0-691-01940-1; paperback) (Library of Congress call number: B4372.E5 2000) After they completed the huge project of translating into English and publishing all of Søren Kierkegaard's writings, Howard & Edna chose (with the advice of other Kierkegaard scholars) the selections that make up this collection of the best of Kierkegaard. The

selections are presented in historical order, offering something from every kind of writing Kierkegaard ever did. All the translations into English are the same as used for the standard collection of SK's works, called Kierkegaard's Writings, which was also edited by the Hongs. This one-volume anthology of Kierkegaard's writings will introduce many future generations to the thought of the great Dane. Before I read this collection, I had read the complete works of SK. So I was quite familiar with everything contained in this volume. Nevertheless, it was a good experience to read it thru again, to see just how well the life-work of one genius or near-genius could be compressed into one volume. If you would like to explore other writings by Kierkegaard, search the Internet for the following exact expression: "Books on Existential Spirituality". James Leonard Park, existential philosopher.

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