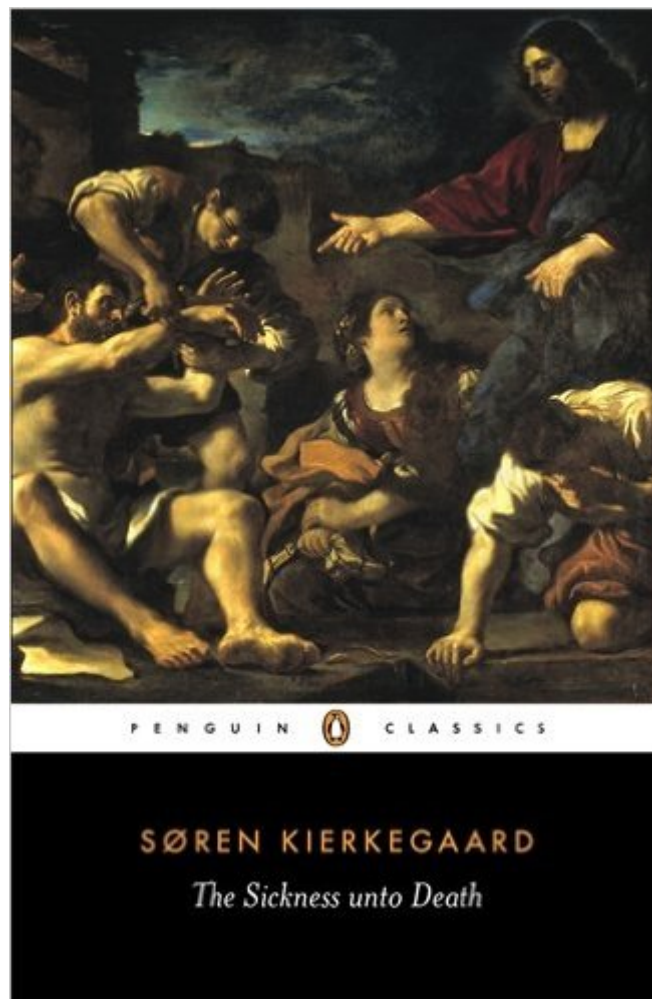


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The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition Of Edification & Awakening By Anti-Climacus (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

One of the most remarkable philosophical works of the nineteenth century, famed for the depth and acuity of its modern psychological insights. Writing under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus, Kierkegaard explores the concept of "despair," alerting readers to the diversity of ways in which they may be described as living in this state of bleak abandonment "including some that may seem just the opposite" and offering a much-discussed formula for the eradication of despair. With its penetrating account of the self, this late work by Kierkegaard was hugely influential upon twentieth-century philosophers including Karl Jaspers, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. *The Sickness unto Death* can be regarded as one of the key works of theistic existentialist thought "a brilliant and revelatory answer to one man's struggle to fill the spiritual void. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

Book Information

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Penguin Classics; First Printing edition (August 1, 1989)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0140445331

ISBN-13: 978-0140445336

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.5 x 7.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 0.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars See all reviews (24 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #68,919 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #32 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Movements > Existentialism #116 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Religious #295 in Books > History > World > Religious > Christianity

Customer Reviews

In perhaps his most relentless probing of the human condition, Kierkegaard's "The Sickness Unto Death" rediscovers the very notion of "sin." Having been tossed around by anyone and everyone in the Danish Christendom of his day, the word "sin" has lost much of its original meaning; hence he chooses the term "despair." By doing this, Kierkegaard rediscovers "original sin," or that notion of

sin which has been lost through misuse. For Kierkegaard, "despair" or "sin" is not simply an individual act, but it is a state of existence. Only when an individual acknowledges the inherent human situation, one that is "in despair," can one then "actively despair" and move out of the aesthetic mire of common existence. It should be noted that it is an ill advised version of Christianity which is "in despair," such a Christian wanting a simple solution without having to face the terrifying problem of our being. Kierkegaard not only documents the different levels of "despair" (no one type is exclusive of others), but he looks into why it is that we often refuse to accept our condition, such denial forcing us to remain "in despair." As he himself makes clear, "The very nature of despair is that it is unaware of being despair." There are endless implications from such an important work, not least of which is the idea that words can hold as well as lose their meaning, depending on how they are used and who is using them. But over and above a theory of semiotics is Kierkegaard's belief that authentic Christianity can only arise for the one who faces his/her desperate situation; and upon doing so, sees no other way out than total submission to "the Power that posited it."

Please indulge me only a brief autobiographical reflection on this singularly impressive work of the great Dane. I was assigned this book in the spring of 1976 for a History of Modern Philosophy course at the University of Northern Colorado. Having cut my philosophical teeth on Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud, and being in the heady environment of the state university (albeit not a distinguished one), I had, in a protracted fit of post-adolescent pseudo-intellectualism, thrown off the light religion of my youth and was endeavoring to embrace atheism. Thank God, I would eventually fail in this. I wrote a short essay against SK for my class, but had not taken on this formidable volume, relying only on secondary sources. But then one night, after a bizarre dream that covertly indicated my alienation from God, I picked up the book and began reading--not at the beginning, but at a random place. Then the book began to read me. It explained my "despair" as form of rebellion against God. "Defiant despair" is what SK called it: despair that finds its meaning in being miserable in its rebellion against God. He called it the most "potentiated" (or full-bloodied) form of despair. I saw myself in the dense and psychologically thick description. SK read my soul in Christian terms, and it disarmed and alarmed me. This marked a turning point; about a month later, I gave up this despair and instead embraced the Christian message. A few years later I taught through this demanding and rewarding book in a class at the University of Oregon--the only time I have done so in all my years of teaching. I part company with SK's rejection of rational apologetics (natural theology and historical evidences for Christianity); however, his divination of the soul, his art of uncovering the soul's escape mechanisms, his ability to bring one before God through this

writing...is uncanny. Call it subjective apologetics. Call it brilliant.

This review is devoted exclusively to the Kindle edition, which is literally broken. It costs 2 1/2 times the price of the other Kindle edition, which is only modest as most Kindle editions go, but by comparing it with a hard copy from Princeton, I am assured that it has the complete text. This edition seems at the very least to have radically broken pagination. The Preface (written by Kierkegaard) is missing, and it seems as if much of the Introduction is missing. What would normally be on one page is often smeared across a dozen or more pages. The Kindle Edition, taken from a Penguin paper edition, is plainly broken. Buy the \$1.99 edition. It ain't great, but its readable.

This book is a must-read for everyone who claims to be Christian or have Christian values. It is a fascinating read for those who are agnostic or atheist as well, although I understand that a lot of atheists do not like to read it. If you are Christian, it will help you gain more insight and a more intellectual approach to your faith and applications for daily life/dealing with situations. If you are atheist, perhaps it can help you resolve some of your issues with religion or to help you see a more intellectual approach to religion other than the bible-verse screamers or other hard-core (and offensive) religious folk out there (just so you can get an understanding of people with religious/faith-based beliefs). I think there are lessons to be learned from it whether you are Christian or not. It gives information on how to live your life to the fullest regardless of what you believe, and will help you make more thoughtful, intelligent choices in the future.

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