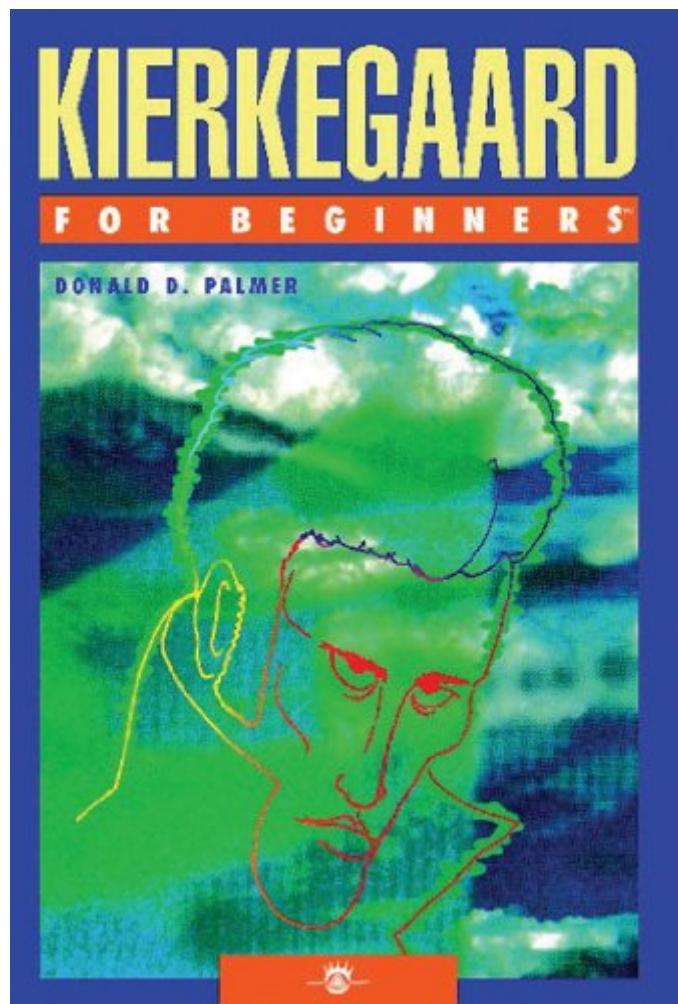


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Kierkegaard For Beginners



Synopsis

The Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard was one of the most original thinkers of the 19th Century. Kierkegaard was the "bridge" that led from Hegel to Existentialism. Kierkegaard abhorred Hegel's abstract, Know-it-all idealism that tried to capture reality in a few words. Kierkegaard's attack on social and religious complacency and his single-handed assault on traditional Western philosophy generated a crisis that produced a radically new way of philosophizing and made him the founder of the school that would later be called Existentialism. To Kierkegaard, reality was personal, subjective and it began and ended with the individual. And philosophy was not something one merely talked about, it was the way you lived. For such a brilliant thinker, the way Kierkegaard lived was somewhat too interesting? His "abstract" love affair? His obsession with death? His "leap of Faith"? his cynicism, his marvelous sense of humor and how do you put all that into one man? For starters, you read Kierkegaard For Beginners. It explains, plainly and simply, the great Danish thinker's obsession with the particularity of human existence as well as his demonstration of how the creation of an authentic new kind of individual is possible.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Few initially realize that the aesthetic slug which Kierkegaard often decried was he himself. Kierkegaard struggled with determining, or rather willing, who he would be as a man in books like *Either/Or*. All of this is what makes him so relevant for postmoderns, existentialism students and even for card-carrying religionists. The format of the *For Beginners* series is very inviting and helps make the subject matter less daunting and far from boring, which is the point, and a good reason to use this series' versions whenever getting to know a thinker for the first time. You will get a broad overview of the person's career without getting bogged down too quickly in any one particular life phase. Once you see what it is you appreciate in the career timeline, you can more easily zero in on that selection of books and go from there. *Kierkegaard For Beginners* covers the *Either/Or* argument, the felial Abraham sacrifice delimma and explores Soren's own Christian commitment in a way that will charm and attract even nonchristians as it did me. His inspired figure of the "Knight of Faith" is a fascinating hook and resolves his existentialist concerns heroically. At the bottom of his writing is the need to account for and deal productively with the bitter anxiety bedrock of the human psyche, and how to resolve that energy and bring it into a sort of freeing self-affirmation by resolving one's will on the issues on which it brings anxiety to bear (thus the "Either/Or" theme elsewhere in title by same name). The comical critique of this is "which breakfast cereal ought I to eat today?!" but the practical application is more in line with "should I renounce playing bridge with the back-stabbing cretins at the moose lodge and take up philosophy/working with kids/see Tibet.") The concern is on changing those things that make one anxious so that they no longer cause anxiety. This said, there is a positive spin on anxiety as the doorbell that "God" rings when he is ready to visit. The feeling of dread, thus, is the threshold over which one comes into contact again with the Divine or whatever makes your life unquestionably, profoundly worthwhile. This book, as typically the series does, makes the full nature of the life and work roughly, excitingly intelligible in the space of about an hour. No small feat. Definite MUST for Kierkegaard beginners.

I did my college thesis 40 years ago on his philosophy and this was a superb summary with a little humor thrown in to keep your interest as to an intense man with intense thoughts

Amusing, thoughtful summary of Kierkegaard's major tenets. I love images and the cartoons are just

the thing to help the author get Kierkegaard's point across. Neither the text nor the cartoons are trite but are right to the point.

great

The "For Beginners" series provides much towards understanding basic concepts of major thinkers. I own a few these books. However, I think that interpretations of Kierkegaard in this series (both in "Kierkegaard For Beginners" and "Existentialism For Beginners") do not due justice to the Christian convictions which informed Kierkegaard's life and works. The creative illustrations and clear address of major concepts are positives of this book, yet it interprets Kierkegaard through the lens of 20th century existentialists (e.g. Sartre), offering little to elucidate the Christian nature of Kierkegaard's writings.

I purchased the Kindle edition of this book and found two typos in the first few pages, so I got a refund. Here they are (the first date is correct and is included for reference). Location 25 of 1422 Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) Location 42 Soren Kierkegaard was born in Copenhagen on May 5, 1513. Location 75 Therefore Soren was totally amazed when at two A.M. on August 9, 1333, his father died at eighty-two years of age. I therefore felt I could not trust the data in this book.

I am a big fan of the "For Beginners" series. I own a number of titles in the series and believe that they provide excellent introductory information on complex subjects. Donald D. Palmer provides an excellent sketch of the 19th century philosopher and existentialist icon Soren Kierkegaard. The underpinnings of his angst, walking away from a true love, is portrayed beautifully. Palmer goes on to explain the use of irony in Kierkegaard's work, and his belief that existence is subjective. The author then walks us through a number of Kierkegaard's most important works. One thing I love about this series is the way that the narrative and art work very much like a graphic novel; you have to interpret them together to derive meaning. You can feel confident that this is a thorough yet succinct introduction to Kierkegaard.

Author/illustrator Palmer brings out Kierkegaard's brilliance in a way accessible to all, simply conveying the complexity of Kierkegaard the person and Kierkegaard the writings while providing a continuous laugh fitting for SK's own serio-comic ironic style. Kierkegaard's the epitome of epigrammatic writing and living, a zealous genius misrepresented by both secularist existentialists

as well as respected Christian theologians/teachers who wrongly accuse SK of throwing out objective Christian truth, when really SK's subjectivity IS the evangelical truth of personal relationship with God, not mere external religious tradition. As for the comics in this book, they (as is SK) are HILARIOUS, though probably more so because of the Bible allusions. This book contains a glossary and bibliography, and after this SK intro I'd recommend 'The Essential Kierkegaard' by the editors Hong, then skipping 'Concept of Irony' and starting with 'Either/Or' reading thru the rest of SK's books, which from the outset were written on 2 parallel tracks, one being pseudonymous works (from which it is unfair to attribute quotes to SK) and the other being signed works. P.S.--it's ironic that SK is now associated with the existentialist all-about-self-and-living-in-the-moment philosophies when SK lived so dead to self (his name even means 'graveyard') and with vision, methodically poured himself out in a planned series of books so that his readers entrapped in dead state church religiosity might become aware that they're dead and need to get a life (a self).

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