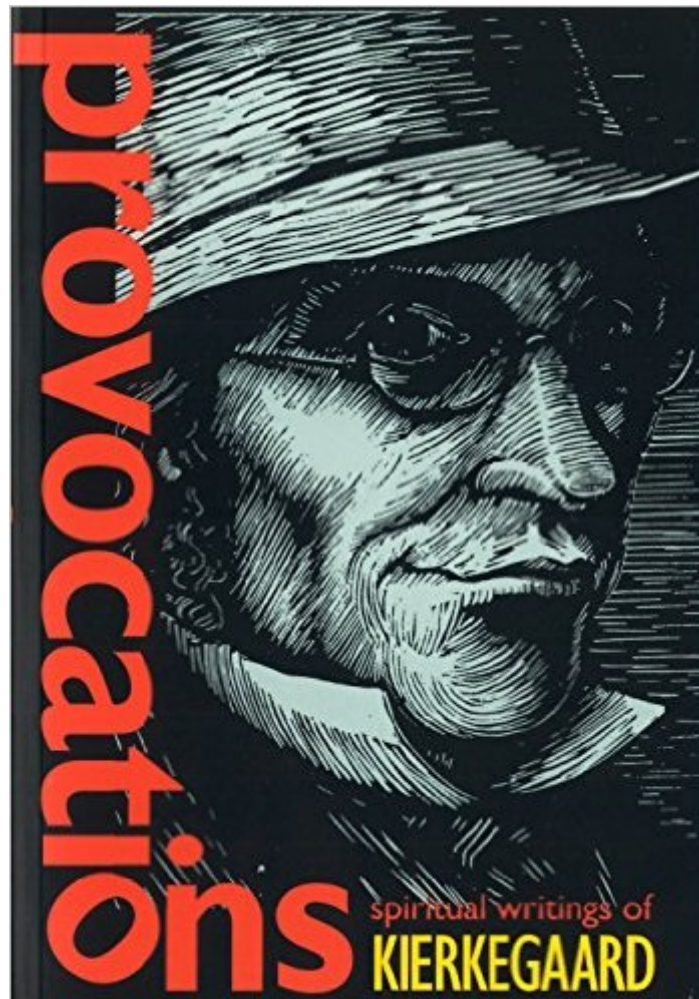


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Provocations: Spiritual Writings Of Kierkegaard



Synopsis

Provocations contains a little of everything from Kierkegaard's prodigious output: his famously cantankerous (yet wryly humorous) attacks on what he calls the "mediocre shell" of conventional Christianity, his brilliantly pithy parables, his wise (and witty) sayings. Most significantly, it brings to a new generation a man whose writings pare away the fluff of modern spirituality to reveal the basics of the Christ-centered life: decisiveness, obedience, and recognition of the truth.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Where to begin studying Kierkegaard? Start with "Works of Love"! But for a generalist overview of his work, to gain a sense of the scope of Kierkegaard's vastly prodigious work as an author, to be introduced in a more thematic way to the thoughts of this thinker, start with "Provocations" (which I prefer to the Brentall anthology because it tends to weave a sense of the main burdens of SK into the fabric of the selections). I am also happy to say that this work reads more easily than some of the earlier renditions of SK, especially for U.S. readers of the new century.

I have nothing to add regarding the "dumbing down" of SK. Sure, it's better to read him in full, but a reader would have to be very dumb indeed to think that this highly edited collection is pure Kierkegaard. It is an excellent introduction to his religious works -- if you accept introductions like this in the first place. My main complaint and correction is to the reviewer who claims that this book is unsourced. Every single selection is sourced with the page number(s), edition, and translator(s) of

the original work whence the selection is pulled. The sources are well-indexed, easily found in the back of the book. In addition, the Hong & Hong translations the reviewer calls authoritative (and which, he claims, are not used in this book) are in wide use throughout *Provocations!* If this book was truly unsourced, it would be a huge problem; only, that's not the case.

This is a book that will wrestle with your soul at the deepest level, yet it is written in language that will deal with your mind in the most simple terms, without demanding you to take a leap of arcane philosophical knowledge. Here is Kierkegaard for all of us: the philosopher who holds a mirror to one's innermost being and at the same time aims a Hubble telescope right at God. One way or another, this book is bound to change your life.

...and then you will know the reality of grace." p 254 Kierkegaard is too good to miss. Unfortunately his writings were so copious and obscured under the cloak of pseudonyms that many people give up before they begin to mine the riches of his work. Moore has finally provided an accessible distillation of his work in this topical compilation. There are 98 topics (e.g. doubt, love, faith/reason, despair, risk, passion...) which either contain single, important passages or a series of quotes from various works. I often found myself laughing out loud. Unlike many Kierkegaard scholars who insist on anachronistically viewing him through his twentieth century French interpreters, Moore has a sense for passions, wit and contributions of the Danish philosopher. A caution: SK out of context can often be misinterpreted since he usually speaks in a voice not his own, intended to incite passionate response. However, I would still highly recommend it to anyone who has either a deep interest or a passing curiosity in Kierkegaard or a passionate, authentic life of action in general. (Note: the text of this is also available in a free, searchable pdf on-line).

The trick with any book is to accurately identify its audience. In a way, I agree with the reviewer who only gave it one star when he said it does not represent the heart of Kierkegaard's thought, which was deep, highly convoluted argumentation and psychological insights which could make your head hurt in trying to unravel them. Just try reading the relatively short book "Fear and Trembling" and you will soon be rereading sentences and paragraphs to get a handle on exactly what Kierkegaard meant. But, that is not the only side of Kierkegaard's works. Of all the philosophers of the 19th century, Kierkegaard is probably second only to Friedrich Nietzsche in the number of non-philosophers and non-theologians who actually read their works. Kierkegaard certainly knew how to state an insight in a lapel-grabbing way, and make you stop and think. And, there are a large

number of people who have no interest in going any further. They may be the people who often need a catchy quote to decorate a weekly blog or what have you. For those, this is a perfect book. While they are not listed along with the quotes themselves, which is noisome at best, there are notes which indicate from which of Kierkegaard's writings these quotes come. That reveals one positive and one negative aspect of the quotes. The positive side is that many come from Kierkegaard's journals, which may not be easy to locate outside a large university library. The negative side is exactly the same. Kierkegaard's journals are not easily accessible, so if one were inclined, it would be hard to locate Kierkegaard's context. But, if context is of no interest to you, you are home free. For a scholar, context is everything. Therefore, this is at best an index to where Kierkegaard spoke about the topics under which the quotes are listed.

Soren Kirkegaard can be difficult to understand. This book presents Kirkegaard's writings in their essence in a way that is easy to read and comprehend. This book can be used as a devotional due to the format.

I have dedicated a few years of my life to Kierkegaard's writings, in various undergrad and graduate level philosophy/theology courses. So I understand first-hand the intricate attention required to fully appreciate the aims and motivations of his authorship. I first came across Provocations, compiled by Charles E. Moore, as a free PDF download --free, and yet so valuable. Being able to Ctrl+F search through the text for relevant material was when the sheer utility of this book truly hit me. This book makes Kierkegaard accessible to everyone. Period. That makes it an achievement all by itself. Having said that, I readily admit the danger in reducing SK's body of work into chunks of quotable aphorisms and excerpts (even as pithy and awesomely sharp as he was). But I am willing to sacrifice a bit of the hermenutical depth for the every-man if it means the many can quickly interact with gems that have otherwise taken a few scholars generations to sift through the rich soil of SK's journals and works to discover. Bottom line: this book is awesome, in the most strict sense of the term. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

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