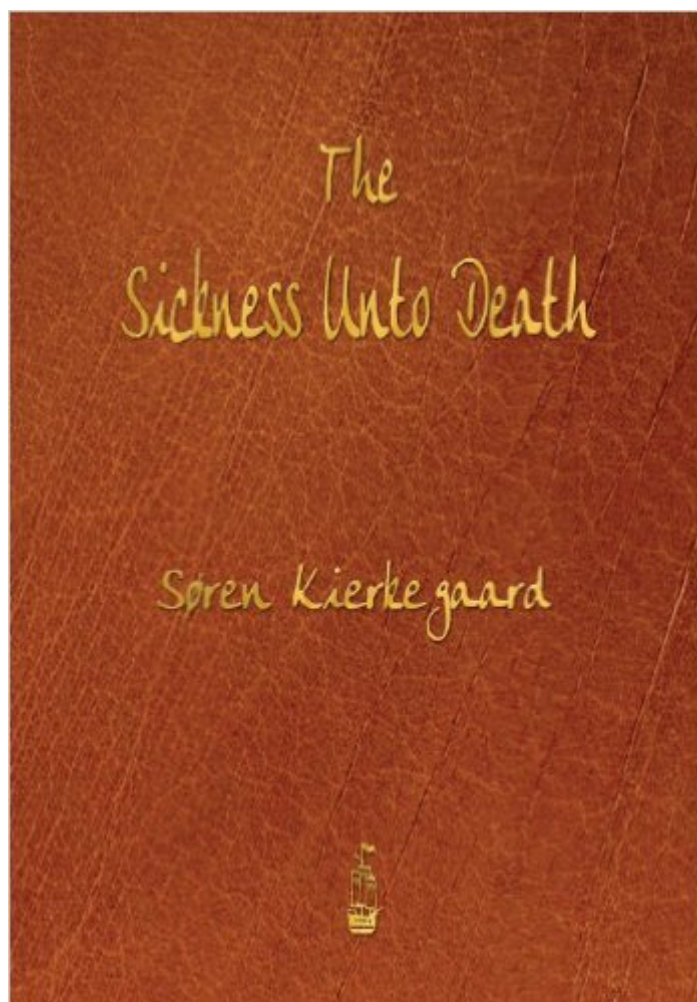


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The Sickness Unto Death



Synopsis

An unabridged edition, to include - Preface - Introduction - That Despair is the Sickness unto Death - The Universality of This Sickness (Despair) - The Forms of This Sickness, i.e. of Despair - Despair is Sin - Continuation of Sin

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For Kierkegaard, "the self is not the relation (which relates to itself) but the relation's relating to itself." From the start, he shifts from a Cartesian or essentialist view of the self to an existentialist one. Whereas for Descartes "self" is a common noun, for Kierkegaard, it is a gerund. And the embedded verb, to relate, points to the dynamics of the self. In this case, relating to itself. The first despair is that "which is ignorant of being in despair, or the despairing ignorance of having a self and an eternal self." Similar to the "unexamined life" of Socrates, this is the unexamined self. And for Kierkegaard, this is the most common despair, though the individuals involved aren't aware of it. In the Christian worldview, "a human being is a synthesis of the infinite and finite," and therefore the tension between these poles becomes the source of next two types of despair: "wanting in despair to be oneself" and "not wanting in despair to be oneself." For Kierkegaard, despair is the sickness unto death, one different from an ordinary sickness that leads to physical death. Within the Christian framework, physical death may be a path toward eternal life and a dying person may hope for the life after. But despair, as the sickness unto death, is when one hopes for death as a resolution, but the person cannot die. Hence, the despair. Such despair presupposes life after death. For the atheistic existentialist, such as Sartre or Camus, death is the ultimate end and creates the despair

by nullifying hope and achievement and life. Faith, the interacting with the "power which established it," is for Kierkegaard the only way the self can overcome despair.

NOT MY SELF: THE DISGUISES OF DESPAIR IN Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death*. Kierkegaard's prose is sometimes so intricately convoluted that Woody Allen merely had to quote a sentence or two for the joke to work; it was so difficult to understand, it was funny. And Woody Allen chose a sentence from *The Sickness unto Death*: "Such a relation which relates itself to its own self (that is to say, a self) must either have constituted itself or have been constituted by another." I read the opening paragraph of Part One of *The Sickness unto Death* and almost stopped there. It was so difficult to understand, I thought of Woody Allen's joke and was amused as much as I was discouraged. How would I find my way into this book? I persisted, and discovered that understanding grows as the pages are slowly turned. When I'd finished the book, I was quick to read it again and soon my copy had passages underlined, notes in the margins, and aphorisms committed to memory. Some books are like windows that enable you to see a panorama; *The Sickness Unto Death* is like a magnifying glass that enables you to see something too often neglected but infinitely precious: the individual human being, yourself. In any contemporary intellectual discussion the individual is rarely seen; what is seen is the nation, the class, the stakeholders, and worst of all because it implies only biology, the species. *The Sickness unto Death* is a lucid, uncompromising, and wise book that acts like a bright and keen axe, wielded by an expert, on all this indifference to the individual. Kierkegaard wrote *The Sickness unto Death* in 1848. He published the book under a snappy pseudonym: Anti-Climacus.

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