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Penguin Classics Fear And Trembling: Dialectical Lyric By Johannes De Silentio (Penguin Pocket Hardbacks)



Synopsis

In *Fear and Trembling*, Søren Kierkegaard's infamous and controversial work made a lasting impression on both modern Protestant theology and existentialist philosophers such as Sartre and Camus. This Penguin Classics edition is translated from the Danish with an introduction by Alistair Hannay. Writing under the pseudonym of 'Johannes de silentio', Kierkegaard expounds his personal view of religion through a discussion of the scene in Genesis in which Abraham prepares to sacrifice his son Isaac at God's command. Believing Abraham's unreserved obedience to be the essential leap of faith needed to make a full commitment to his religion, Kierkegaard himself made great sacrifices in order to dedicate his life entirely to his philosophy and to God. The conviction shown in this religious polemic - that a man can have an exceptional mission in life - informed all Kierkegaard's later writings. His 'teleological suspension of the ethical' challenged the contemporary views of Hegel's universal moral system, and was also hugely influential for both protestant theology and the existentialist movement. Alastair Hannay's introduction evaluates Kierkegaard's philosophy and the ways in which it conflicted with more accepted contemporary views. This edition also includes detailed notes to complement this groundbreaking analysis of religion, and a new chronology. Danish-born Søren Kierkegaard (1813-55) wrote on a wide variety of themes, including religion, psychology, and literature. He is remembered for his philosophy, which pioneered the idea of the Absurd, and was influential in the development of 20th century existentialism. His other works include *The Sickness unto Death*, *Either/Or*, and *Papers and Journals*, all of which are available in Penguin Classics. If you enjoyed *Fear and Trembling*, you might like Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death*, also available in Penguin Classics.

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Customer Reviews

The value of this work is that it correctly argues that faith is ultimately a choice that cannot be completely supported by logic or rational proof. It was Kierkegaard's experience of losing the chance to be with the person he loved that forced him to confront the absurd nature of faith. Although believers in many religions will argue that their faith is logical and rational, Kierkegaard fully grasped that if conviction is based fully on logic, it does not need faith to support it. Perhaps the best metaphor can be found in the New Testament passage where Christ invites Peter to walk on water -- Peter takes a step with faith and does not sink, but then looks down, and begins to evaluate the situation using his rational mind, and begins to sink. True faith walks on water. Only true faith could be sufficient to base a life on the conviction that a dead guy in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago came back from the dead and has his own kingdom where his followers will live forever in eternal bliss. On the other hand, this conviction has become so entrenched in the popular culture of the last 2,000 years that it has just become an unremarkable backdrop to the modern world and is considered a socially acceptable belief. The challenge for a modern christian is to find true faith when they mistakenly believe that the story of Jesus Christ is completely supported by logic and rational thinking. The mere act of mentally assenting to what has been accepted in popular culture, a broad and shallow idea that God and Jesus exist, is not faith at all; just an unexamined conclusion of a lazy mind that has not yet questioned its own surroundings. True faith is a radical departure from the status quo, a renewal of personal conviction despite all contradictions and a recognition of UNCERTAINTY.

FEAR AND TREMBLING stands as one of Søren Kierkegaard's most widely read works. Its brevity is appealing to those with only a marginal interest in philosophy and theology. Its subject matter is what attracts those persons who want to find a nexus between ethics and theology. In the work, Kierkegaard engages the famous passage in the Old Testament of the bible where Abraham is ordered by God (Yahweh) to sacrifice his son, Isaac. It stands today as the most salient episode in the bible where Plato's EUTHYPHRO dilemma is confronted. Now, what is the EUTHYPHRO dilemma, you may ask? The dilemma is set out by Socrates in Plato's dialogue of the same name. Basically, it comes down to this: are good and evil intrinsic to the universe itself? Or are the qualities of good and evil decided upon by God (or gods)? If the former is true, then God (or the head of a pantheon

of gods) cannot be truly omnipotent, for there is at least one power that even he / she / it must follow. If, on the other hand, good and evil are decided by God(s), then might makes right. Enter Kierkegaard, who spends the pages of this work acting more-or-less as a defense attorney for Abraham for his even contemplating the murder of his son. For Kierkegaard, the divine-command-theorist, the latter horn of the conundrum (i.e.: might makes right) is the only plausible alternative open for the religious believer. The first horn denies God's sovereign omnipotence over the universe and all of its affairs, which is utterly unacceptable. So, the Dane offers to us the defense of what he calls the "teleological suspension of ethics." That is to say, while Abraham was acting out of direction from God, he was not subject to the ethical laws of the "everyday" universe that the rest of us live in every day.

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