



Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography

Joakim Garff

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"The day will come when not only my writings, but precisely my life--the intriguing secret of all the machinery--will be studied and studied." Søren Kierkegaard's remarkable combination of genius and peculiarity made this a fair if arrogant prediction. But Kierkegaard's life has been notoriously hard to study, so complex was the web of fact and fiction in his work. Joakim Garff's biography of Kierkegaard is thus a landmark achievement. A seamless blend of history, philosophy, and psychological insight, all conveyed with novelistic verve, this is the most comprehensive and penetrating account yet written of the life and works of the enigmatic Dane who changed the course of intellectual history.

Garff portrays Kierkegaard not as the all-controlling impresario behind some of the most important works of modern philosophy and religious thought--books credited with founding existentialism and prefiguring postmodernism--but rather as a man whose writings came to control him. Kierkegaard saw himself as a vessel for his writings, a tool in the hand of God, and eventually as a martyr singled out to call for the end of "Christendom." Garff explores the events and relationships that formed Kierkegaard, including his guilt-ridden relationship with his father, his rivalry with his brother, and his famously tortured relationship with his fiancée Regine Olsen. He recreates the squalor and splendor of Golden Age Copenhagen and the intellectual milieu in which Kierkegaard found himself increasingly embattled and mercilessly caricatured.

Acclaimed as a major cultural event on its publication in Denmark in 2000, this book, here presented in an exceptionally crisp and elegant translation, will be the definitive account of Kierkegaard's life for years to come.

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