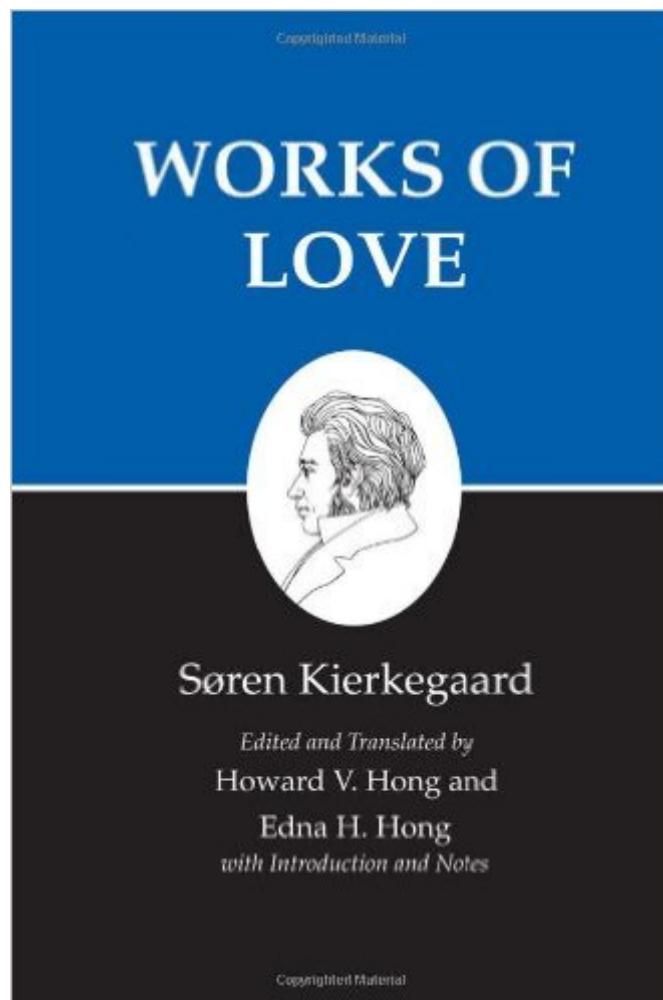


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Works Of Love : Kierkegaard's Writings, Vol 16



Synopsis

The various kinds and conditions of love are a common theme for Kierkegaard, beginning with his early *Either/Or*, through "The Diary of the Seducer" and Judge William's eulogy on married love, to his last work, on the changelessness of God's love. *Works of Love*, the midpoint in the series, is also the monumental high point, because of its penetrating, illuminating analysis of the forms and sources of love. Love as feeling and mood is distinguished from works of love, love of the lovable from love of the unlovely, preferential love from love as the royal law, love as mutual egotism from triangular love, and erotic love from self-giving love. This work is marked by Kierkegaard's Socratic awareness of the reader, both as the center of awakened understanding and as the initiator of action. Written to be read aloud, the book conveys a keenness of thought and an insightful, poetic imagination that make such an attentive approach richly rewarding. *Works of Love* not only serves as an excellent place to begin exploring the writings of Kierkegaard, but also rewards many rereadings.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Works of Love by Kierkegaard is the most uplifting, encouraging, and hope-restoring book I have ever read. Kierkegaard's statement that "the greatest act of love anyone can ever achieve is to mourn for someone who is dead" is a statement I have used to guide myself through innumerable existential crises and has given me hope in my darkest hours. The wisdom contained in this book is

an essential tool in dealing with the premature and untimely death of a loved one, and restoring your hope and faith in God even in the face of tragedy. Kierkegaard's sense of empathy and morality is unsurpassed by any other philosopher living or dead, and I will also go so far as to call him a saint. This book is also extremely well-written, well-translated, and readable. *Works of Love* is living proof of the theory that inherently complicated and profound subject matter does not necessarily have to be extremely difficult to read. Kierkegaard's use of anecdotal situations and clear real-life examples to illustrate his theories make the book more readily understandable, and his writing style naturally lends itself to clear and accurate translation. Unlike many German philosophers of the same time period, Kierkegaard (from Denmark) does not lapse into highly personal, abstract, and inaccessible concepts, but instead focuses on more realistic and timeless problems that have plagued humanity since the dawn of sentience. While authors like Hegel and Schopenhauer are intellectually stimulating and mildly interesting, reading their works does not exactly make you happier, more hopeful, and more empathetically caring. You are often left with nothing but pie-in-the-sky theories regarding esoteric philosophical questions that are only marginally relevant to the everyday realities we experience.

This is more of a reaction to Kierkegaard's "Works of Love" than a review of the book. I cannot perfect perfection. First, he hits the genius of Christianity, and takes Paul's chapter on Charity, 1 Corinthians 13 as the backbone text. This is an impressive "love poem" which really explains why Christianity is so novel. If you don't believe me, read pre-Christian literature, such as Socrates, Homer, or The Epic of Gilgamesh. Pre-Christian society ignored human dignity and worth, and people were just functions of the state, or the whim of the king. Secondly, Kierkegaard recognizes that love is a work, and not merely a state of heart or a chattering point. This notion of work is anathema to "Pop Protestantism," which was Kierkegaard's mortal enemy. He commented that the obsession with "grace" had turned Christianity upside-down, and had caused men to try and cheat God out of his religion. This is another way of saying that faith without works is dead. Kierkegaard's last insight is that God is the basis of love, which he underscores in the opening invocation. Too many people gloss by this prefacing prayer, but that is what separates love and love with power. God gives us power to love. I found this translation quite readable. Soren, in any version, is rather thick, almost as if he is intentionally trying to hide things. Part of difficulty comes from the dense 19th Century verbosity that was a token of the age. However, his greatest asset is humorous illustrations, which helps mentally fix the points forever. The only criticism I have is that Kierkegaard does not connect love to the Atonement.

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