

SOREN KIEKEGAARD

- Sometimes known as the “melancholy Dane”. He was something of a local celebrity
- His fame comes from
 1. opposing Hegel (the dominate philosopher of the time; dispute over interpretations of Christianity)
 2. rebellion against the established church, called it “lifeless”
 3. for championing the individual spirit
- He is acknowledged as the father of “existentialism”
 - ↳ explores the problem of human existence.

Biography

- Born 1813 Copenhagen, Denmark
- An unhappy childhood; rejected from military due to chronic poor health
- By age 25, he had lost five siblings and both parents. Only one brother remained.
- Broke off a love affair with a girl **Regine** (1822-1904); they had been engaged.
 - ↳ A major influence on his work was this broken engagement.
 - ↳ Met in 1837, he proposed 1840, soon felt disillusioned (doubts about his ability to be a husband) and ended engagement 1841.
 - ↳ Why? He’s a workaholic! Kierkegaard was unable to reconcile the prospect of marriage with his vocation as a writer, his passionate, introspective Christianity and his constant melancholy.
 - ↳ 1843 Kierkegaard was leaving church when he saw Regine who nodded to him, which Kierkegaard understood to mean she had forgiven him.
 - 1847 she marries another and is happy. But she and Kierkegaard continue to love one another.
 - She moves to the West Indies (due to husbands’ job) and has distaste for the superficiality and pettiness of colonial life. Dies at age 82.
- 1845, a newspaper criticized him, and so he writes a scathing piece lambasting their journalistic capabilities. And then openly invites them to satirize him! His response earned the ire of the editor, who unleashed on him. He regrets his encouragement.
- Endured loneliness as a self-isolated figure
- He wrote frequently, but never worked for pay. He lived comfortably on his inheritance
- In his final years he wrote a sustained written attack on the Church of Denmark (Lutheran)
- Died 1855 Copenhagen, Denmark



Philosophy (major ideas)

Kierkegaard proposed that the individual passed through three stages on the way to becoming a true self: the aesthetic (appearance), the ethical, and the religious. Each of these “stages on life's way” represents competing views on life and as such potentially conflicts with one another.

He opposed the notion of “progress” and maintained that all human beings stand where everyone before them has stood

Uncertainty permeates human life and is only overcome by human decisiveness

Paradox stands at the center of all human existence.

Kierkegaard believed that Christianity was not a doctrine to be taught, but rather a life to be lived. He considered that many Christians who were relying totally on external proofs of God were missing out a true Christian experience, which is precisely the relationship one individual can have with God

Kierkegaard is best known as a critic of Hegel and Hegelianism.

Hegelianism says reality is shaped by the mind and that consciousness is the highest form of reality.

The advances of science, and even of civilization, do not take the burden of decision off the individual

As human beings, we are often in situations in which we must choose between incompatible alternatives

God may place us religiously in paradoxical situations of anguished choice as a test of faith