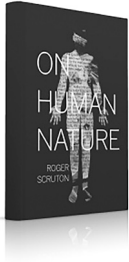


REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



On Human Nature

Roger Scruton

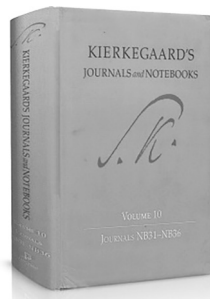
Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540, USA. Website: <https://www.press.princeton.edu>. 2017. viii + 152 pp. \$22.95. P.B. ISBN 9780691168753.

This lecture-style brief book on human nature by Roger Scruton is a rebuttal to the reductionist approach of humankind as a mere biological entity in an evolutionary biologist world and favours the holistic approach of humankind as an emergent entity in a philosopher's world. In the introductory chapter on humankind, Scruton starts with something modest such as laughter and proceeds on to explain intricate topics such as subject identification or self-awareness, religious faith, intentionality, and above all, human responsibility, accountability and freedom that distinguish us from primates. In fact, many of the repertory of human emotions like admiration, commitment, and praise stem from the responsibility or accountability of human beings with their individual rights and duties and this has been lucidly portrayed by Scruton in this book.

The next chapter on human relations that deals extensively with 'I-you' relationship, self-other identification with multiple references from Kant, Descartes, and other great thinkers is a good fit for students of Western philosophy. Scruton raises the 'relevancy' bar in the last two chapters and discusses practical issues surrounding human nature in the current human world. He describes the moral and spiritual aspects of human nature with diverse topics such as praise and blame, forgiveness, honour and autonomy, rights and duties, virtue and vice, pollution and taboo, sacred and

profane, desire, sexual morality, and piety. One aspect missing from the book is gratitude, which is a latent yet inherent part of human nature and it has been of great interest recently in normative ethics and moral psychology. Overall, this book is a good read for students of bio-philosophy.

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Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks: Volume 10, Journals NB31–NB36

Søren Kierkegaard

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. Website: <https://press.princeton.edu>. 2018. 704 pp. \$150. HB. ISBN 9780691178981.

Kierkegaard writes:
On the other hand, the person who does not want to worship, does not want to suffer, does not want to serve God—he comes up with the notion that God has a cause in the hum[an] sense, so it is therefore important to get this to fit into the world of relativities, for which cleverness and hum[an] means are used—and this is called serving God. With this, people have degraded God and in addition make Christ into a dreamer, because he disdained the use of hum[an] means, the use of hum[an] cleverness, to avoid suffering (suffering is namely inseparable from the unconditioned and from serving God unconditionally—therefore hum[an] cleverness avoids suffering by transforming the unconditioned into something conditioned), and he [Christ] was dreamer enough to enjoin his disciples [Christians] to the same (235).

Volume 10 of Kierkegaard's *Journals and Notebooks* is a treatise on theodicy which spans from meditations on empathy (255–6) to an attack on the Enlightenment (362–3). Throughout this volume, we have Kierkegaard writing of the need to suffer because he correctly sees suffering as the only way to commune with God and in particular, Christ. It is, as it were, the entire cosmos worships God while intensely suffering. It is this theme of cosmic suffering that we find in the Hebrew scriptures and in the New Testament.

This service to God as equivalent to suffering is a form of theodicy that is ignored by philosophers. Suffering is not caused by God but is itself the solution to the problem of evil. One suffers because to suffer is to become mystically one with God. In the *Psalms*, the Psalmist writes of this need for the worshipper to suffer for and with Yahweh. Within the Christian worldview, unlike within the Hindu worldview, God is weak. God participates fully in human pain. It is from this understanding of pain in the Bible, to Anti-Climacus's, Kierkegaard's pseudonym, writings (256), to the explicit writings of Kierkegaard himself collected in this volume, we have the same symphony on suffering which will be later picked up by Edith Stein and Simone Weil.

Both Stein and Weil would later stress on the primacy of suffering in their works. Stein, of course, had to struggle with what has come to be known as the problem of empathy or the problem of other minds. Strangely, Stein does not elaborate on Kierkegaard too much and stresses on phenomenology in her corpus. This is perhaps because she was not too well versed with Kierkegaard's works. As this volume proves, Kierkegaard is the ontic origin to not only Stein and Weil's intellectual moorings but he is also the base from which Western theodicy takes a modernist turn. Hannah Arendt and now, Susan Neiman, owe a lot to Kierkegaard's oeuvre.

Here, we need to pause and reflect why Kierkegaard is not taught in many Christian seminaries, why he is not part of the philosophy syllabi in many university departments of philosophy—if he is, then only a small part—and why he is not considered a literary theorist. This is where these Princeton editions of

Kierkegaard's *Journals and Notebooks* come into the picture. Kierkegaard's output is vast and earlier, was not available in English. Had they been available then certainly Stein, Weil, Arendt, and Neiman would have constructed their theodicies around Kierkegaard more fully, abandoning the charlatanism of Martin Heidegger's Nazi histrionics.

These Princeton hardbacks, handsomely bound, with appealing fonts and meticulous notes will help disseminate Kierkegaard's writings to a broader audience. The endnotes are copious and without pedantry. Doctoral work can be done referring to these volumes. Congratulations are due to both Princeton University Press and, to the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre, Copenhagen for undertaking such a project which they have been able to meticulously execute with nary a typos.

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Poetry and the Religious Imagination: The Power of the Word

Edited by Francesca Bugliani Knox and David Lonsdale

Ashgate Publishing Limited, Wey Court East, Union Road, Farnham, Surrey, GU97PT, England. Website: <https://www.ashgate.com>. 2015. 280 pp. £68. HB. ISBN 9781472426246.

During this COVID-19 pandemic, as had happened before during global epidemics and as will happen ages hence, we can only find solace in poetry and the discourses of 'theology, philosophy ... [and] spirituality on the other' (1). After all, true theology, philosophy, and spirituality are all poetry. What is not poetry will never soothe and heal our souls. The anthology of essays under review does its cultural work through acts of remembrance and faith-building. Thus, Francesca Bugliani Knox reclaims 'the "truth-bearing" potential of the poetic imagination' by referring to