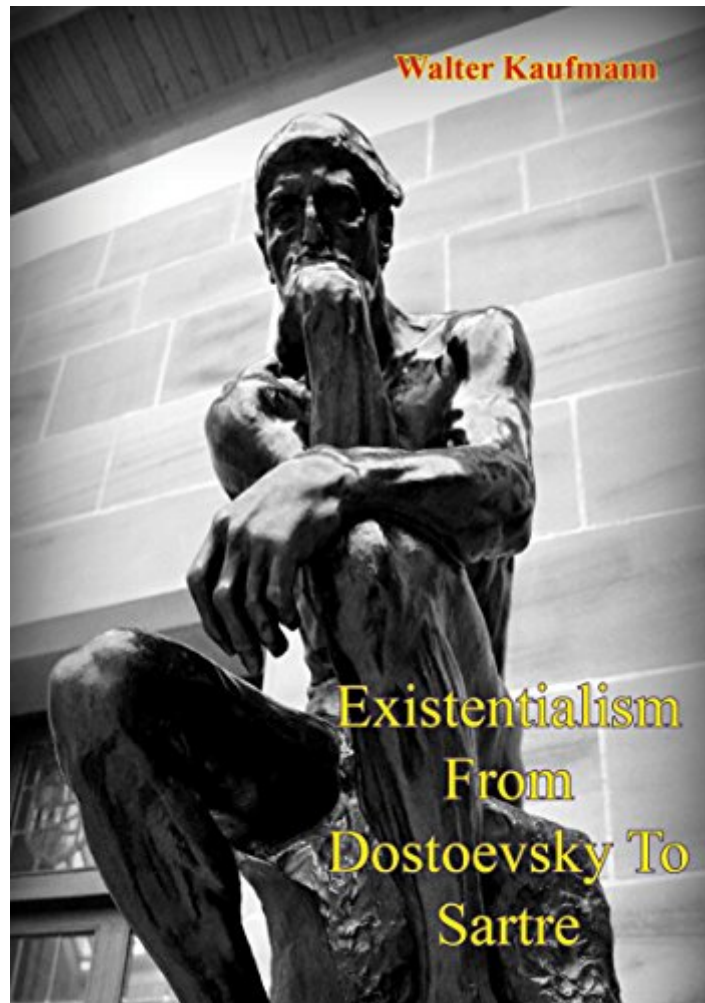


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Existentialism From Dostoevsky To Sartre



Synopsis

What is Existentialism? It is perhaps the most misunderstood of modern philosophic positions – misunderstood by reason of its broad popularity and general unfamiliarity with its origins, representatives, and principles. Existential thinking does not originate with Jean Paul Sartre. It has prior religious, literary, and philosophic origins. In its narrowest formulation it is a metaphysical doctrine, arguing as it does that any definition of man – his essence must follow, not precede, an estimation of his existence. In Heidegger, it affords a view of Being in its totality; in Kierkegaard an approach to that inwardness indispensable to authentic religious experience; for Dostoevsky, Kafka, and Rilke the existential situation bears the stamp of modern man – his alienation, uprootedness, and absurdity; to Sartre it has vast ethical and political implications. Walter Kaufmann, author of Nietzsche, is eminently qualified to present and interpret the insights of existentialism as they occur and are deepened by the major thinkers who express them. In every case complete selections or entire works have been employed: The Wall, Existentialism, and the complete chapter on "Self-Deception" from Lectures on Existence by Sartre; two lectures from Jaspers' book Reason and Existenz; original translations of On My Philosophy by Jaspers and The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics by Heidegger. There is, as well, material from Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Camus.

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Customer Reviews

This is the book that introduced me to Existentialism in graduate school. It has a great selection of writings, and unlike most books on Existentialism is clear, not turgid. I now think of Existentialism as being a mood rather than a system of thought, and many of these writings are literary not academic, but that is a good thing. I took a graduate seminar on Existentialism from the man who edited this book, Walter Kaufmann. He was acerbic, but a great teacher. His emphasis was not on what philosophers taught, or what arguments they gave for their positions, but what kind of men they were. He was more concerned that his students embraced challenging, creative, heroic lives, than he was about teaching them how to parse obscure and usually fallacious arguments.

At times it was a struggle to stay focused on the complex ideas presented in this book, but taking the time to understand the content pays big dividends. This is definitely a recommended read for anybody interested in what it means to exist.

Excellent talks about subject

It is through the literature of the well known authors featured in this book that we better understand existentialism, a subject very difficult to comprehend otherwise.

Enjoyed it

Great book, great selections from existentialist philosophers.

Easiest introduction to some difficult and/or prolific existentialist thinkers. The selections with regard to Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky are especially well chosen.

A fine analysis.

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