



November 11

Commemoration: Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, teacher, 1855

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (5 May 1813 –11 November 1855) was a Danish Christian philosopher, theologian and religious author. He was a critic of idealist intellectuals and philosophers of his time, such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling and Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel; he was also critical of the state and practice of Christianity in his lifetime, primarily that of The Church of Denmark. He is widely considered to be the first existentialist.

Much of his philosophical work deals with the issues of how one lives as a "single individual", giving priority to concrete human reality over abstract thinking, and highlighting the importance of personal choice and commitment. His theological work focuses on Christian ethics, institution of the Church, and on the difference between purely objective proofs of Christianity and a subjective relationship to Jesus Christ, the God-Man, which comes from faith.

His psychological work explores the emotions and feelings of individuals when faced with life choices. His thinking was influenced by Socrates and the Socratic method.

Kierkegaard's early work was written under various pseudonymous characters who present their own distinctive viewpoints and interact with each other in complex dialogue. He assigns pseudonyms to explore particular viewpoints in-depth, which may take up several books in some instances, while Kierkegaard, openly or under another pseudonym, critiques that position. He wrote many *Upbuilding Discourses* under his own name and dedicated them to the "single individual" who might want to discover the meaning of his works. Notably, he wrote: "Science and scholarship want to teach that becoming objective is the way. Christianity teaches that the way is to become subjective, to become a subject." The scientist can learn about the world by observation but can the scientist learn about the inner workings of the spiritual world by observation? Kierkegaard said no, and he said it emphatically. In 1847 Kierkegaard described his own view of the single individual. "God is not like a human being; it is not important for God to have visible evidence so that he can see if his cause has been victorious or not; he sees in secret just as well. Moreover, it is so far from being the case that you should help God to learn anew that it is rather he who will help you to learn anew, so that you are weaned from the worldly point of view that insists on visible evidence. (...) A decision in the external sphere is what Christianity does not want; (...) rather it wants to test the individual's faith."