



### **en.light.en.ment**

Carsten Burmeister

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Carsten Burmeister began to write while grappling with middle age. Now in his 70s, he's interested in sharing his eclectic moral code that blends pacifism, science, the Golden Rule, Eastern spirituality, and the need for rational, intellectual debate. *en.light.en.ment* is a compilation of 150 short essays that reflect life as he sees it, covering big ideas – the meaning of life and whether it's possible to fight for peace – as well as little things such as the proper way to dunk a tea biscuit.

Burmeister's essays are organized alphabetically, from "Acceptance" to "Zen," and each is broken into easily digestible nuggets of narrative. Many also include famous people's quotes, and dictionary-style definitions (when called for). Among the heavier commentaries about truth, justice and moral law are a few personally revealing essays about the author.

Burmeister is a divorced father, a resident of Australia, a man who almost drowned and, on another day, learned first-hand what it's like to go broke. He emerges as a seeker, an apt pupil of the world's greatest prophets and philosophers, and a thinker who likes the process of rolling their ideas around until he can make sense of them.

Readers find in him a writer who toggles between detached teacher, gentle spirit and argumentative mental gymnast. He's at his best as the first two, synthesizing the values shared by all great religions, for example, and warmly inviting readers to consider the many forms in God can be viewed. He's far less effective and becomes tiresome when he exchanges that pleasant detachment for a more strident, harsher voice when arguing against the folly of blind patriotism, war and organized religion. For example, he calls the Bible "a book of lies, horrors and disastrous, destructive, unfathomably evil advice."

It's possible to overlook these blind spots, however, because they are balanced by such a rich smorgasbord of ideas. Taken as a whole, *en.light.en.ment* provides a rollicking ride through the world of animated discourse.