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Sommario/riassunto	<p>The Jester and the Sages approaches the life and work of Mark Twain by placing him in conversation with three eminent philosophers of his time-Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and Karl Marx.</p> <p>Unprecedented in Twain scholarship, this interdisciplinary analysis by Forrest G. Robinson, Gabriel Noah Brahm Jr., and Catherine Carlstroem rescues the American genius from his role as funny-man by exploring how his reflections on religion, politics, philosophy, morality, and social issues overlap the philosophers' developed thoughts on these subjects. Remarkably, they had much in common. During their lifetimes, Twain, Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx witnessed massive upheavals in Western constructions of religion, morality, history, political economy, and human nature. The foundations of reality had been shaken, and one did not need to be a philosopher-nor did one even need to read philosophy-to weigh in on what this all might mean. Drawing on a wide range of primary and secondary materials, the authors show that Twain was well attuned to debates of the time. Unlike his Continental</p>

contemporaries, however, he was not as systematic in developing his views. Brahm and Robinson's chapter on Nietzsche and Twain reveals their subjects' common defiance of the moral and religious truisms of their time. Both desired freedom, resented the constraints of Christian civilization, and saw punishing guilt as the disease of modern man. Pervasive moral evasion and bland conformity were the principal end result, they believed. In addition to a continuing focus on guilt, Robinson discovers in his chapter on Freud and Twain that the two men shared a lifelong fascination with the mysteries of the human mind. From the formative influence of childhood and repression, to dreams and the unconscious, the mind could free people or keep them in perpetual chains. The realm of the unconscious was of special interest to both men as it pertained to the creation of art. In the final chapter, Carlstroem and Robinson explain that, despite significant differences in their views of human nature, history, and progress, Twain and Marx were both profoundly disturbed by economic and social injustice in the world. Of particular concern was the gulf that industrial capitalism opened between the privileged elite property owners and the vast class of property-less workers. Moralists impatient with conventional morality, Twain and Marx wanted to free ordinary people from the illusions that enslaved them. Twain did not know the work's of Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx well, yet many of his thoughts cross those of his philosophical contemporaries. By focusing on the deeper aspects of Twain's intellectual makeup, Robinson, Brahm, and Carlstroem supplement the traditional appreciation of the forces that drove Twain's creativity and the dynamics of his humor. &nbsp;

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