



Repetition

Søren Kierkegaard

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Un texte du célèbre philosophe danois du XIXe siècle, dans lequel il songe à reprendre ses relations avec Régine Olsen, son ancienne fiancée.

Repetition Details

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Nemo says

She is the boundary of his being

Kierkegaard met Regine Olsen in Copenhagen in 1837, and, by all appearances, there was a deep attraction between the two. They were engaged in 1840, but Kierkegaard immediately broke off the engagement the following year. Regina married her old tutor in 1847, and the couple left Copenhagen for the Danish West Indies in March 1855. Kierkegaard died in November that same year, having remained a celibate bachelor all his life.

These facts about Kierkegaard's life can be gathered from Wikipedia, and all the rest from his own writings. I first encountered Kierkegaard three years ago when I read *Fear and Trembling*. I knew nothing about him except his reputation as a Christian philosopher with a keen intellect. By the time I finished the book, however, I had learned about his affair with Regina and his innermost thoughts about their relationship. Kierkegaard would not divulge his secrets to any living person, yet he pours his heart out in his books, and Regina is in almost every one of them.

Repetition is a companion and prequel to "*Fear and Trembling*". A couple of times during reading, I had to keep back sentimental tears from staining the pages (for I borrowed the book from the local library). Kierkegaard wrote that Regina was "the boundary of his being". I suppose he wasn't exaggerating, since he died --became completely dissolved as it were, when she left the city where they both lived.

Can an existentialist love?

Heraclitus says that all things are in motion and nothing at rest, and that you cannot go into the same river twice. Plato counters by arguing that if that is the case, knowledge and love would be impossible. "There will be no one to know and nothing to be known"; in the same vein, there would be no one to love and be loved.

The existentialists seem to subscribe to Heraclitus' view, which makes me wonder whether they can have a normal relationship. If they themselves and the ones they are supposed to love are constantly in the process of becoming, how can they remain in love? As far as I can gather, Nietzsche never had a romantic relationship with woman. ("Suppose truth is a woman, what then?" Then you don't have it, period.)

I cannot say whether Kierkegaard's struggles with love also arise from his existentialist view, which leads the Young Man to proclaim, "I stick my finger into existence -- it smells of nothing." He seems to have progressed from the aesthetic sphere to the religious (in the spirit if not in the flesh), when *Works of Love* was published, four years after *Repetition*. In that book, he contrasts the worldly conception of love, as sublimated by the poets, with the Christian ideal.

Karl Hallbjörnsson says

Stórgóð en æði flókin. Mér fannst ég ekki skilja hana til hlítar. Ég þarf að láta einhvern útskýra hana betur fyrir mér.

Davide says

One of the readings that marked me the most when I was 18.

I clearly remember the intensity that surrounded these words and the mental constructions they aroused.

Una delle letture che mi ha segnato di più quando avevo 18 anni.

Ricordo chiaramente l'intensità che circondava queste parole e le costruzioni mentali che suscitavano.

Nadisha says

Brilliance drips from these pages not because it is monumental but because it speaks to those who read it on an intimately human level and provides solace to life's biggest questions. Love is a word we assign to something indescribable. It can only be referenced, yet Kierkegaard manages to provide insight into the tendencies we have when approaching love. He combines the forward struggle towards finding truth and transcendence, presence and awareness, to the struggle against the time, desire, pleasure, and urgency that comes with love. Love of recollection is a further extension of man's inclinations towards an urgent sacrifice of freedom and surrender, and it's furthermore a deceitful, manipulating entity, capable of confusing and delighting as it swallowing those it tortures. A fruit that never satisfies.

Love of repetition is something, upon my first read of *Repetition*, I sought a definitive description of. I wanted to know what this hazy, etherial entity was and why it was so hard to attain. What are we working towards? Upon the second and third reads, I realized it's likewise to Plato's good or Aristotle's happiness...it's everything encompassing the mindset and awareness required to reach it. Kierkegaard's account of the Young Man is a clever and introspective look into the struggle against recollection and towards repetition, though I don't find it to be the most poignant aspect of this work. His beginning meditations interest me the most, and the letters only further illustrate his points. Repetition is something must be willed, it cannot be urged but it must be accepted as life is a world of repetition, yet it can be so easily overtaken by the storm of recollection. A deliberate utilization of freedom and dialectic practice is required to maintain that will, and Kierkegaard dictates both what that entails and how it will be perceived. Kierkegaard is an artist with his words, and they deserve to be read again and again, repeated and savored. Everything is true and everything is beautiful.

Do read this and then read it again.

Also, the Van Dormael brothers' "Mr. Nobody" is a beautiful film to watch alongside this. It deals with a wealth of lessons and philosophical meditations, but it does a spectacular job at illustrating what I would argue is the ability to find repetition against the storm of recollection. It also contains major Kantian and Platonic undertones, and it's just in itself a truly beautiful piece of work. It might illuminate parts of the reading that are harder to grasp, and it's will resonate with all those who give the time.
