

REALLY REAL Text and Lyrics

All lyrics and *Repetition* text by Phil Kline, using the writings of Søren Kierkegaard

Text for *He Led a Somewhat Uneventful Life* by Wally Cardona, from the life of Søren Kierkegaard

HE LED A SOMEWHAT UNEVENTFUL LIFE

He led a somewhat uneventful life. / He rarely left his hometown and traveled abroad only five times. / His prime recreational activities were attending the theatre, walking the streets to chat with ordinary people, and taking brief jaunts into the surrounding countryside. / His personal life is more relevant to his work than is the case for many.

Much of the thrust of his critique is on a system of thought that is abstracted from the everyday lives of its proponents. Of course one's work is an important part of his or her existence, but for the purpose of judgment we should focus on the whole life not just on one part. In a less abstract manner, an understanding of his biography is important for an understanding of him because his life was the source of many of the preoccupations - and repetitions - within his work.

Because of his existentialist orientation, most of his interventions in contemporary theory do double duty as means of working through events from his own life. In particular, his relations to his mother, his father, and his fiancée pervade his work. He saw himself as a "singular universal".

His relation to his mother is the least frequently commented upon since it is invisible in his work. His mother does not rate a direct mention in his works (or in his diaries) nor even on the day she died. However, for someone who places so much emphasis on indirect communication, we should regard this absence as significant. How deceptive then, that an omnipresent being should be recognizable precisely by being invisible.

The influence of his father on his work has been frequently noted. Not only did he inherit his father's melancholy and his sense of guilt and anxiety, but he also inherited his talents for philosophical argument and creative imagination. The themes of sacrificial father/son relationships, of inherited sin and of the burden of history are repeated many times in his works.

His broken engagement has also been the focus of much attention. The theme of a young woman being the occasion for a young man to become "poeticized" recurs in his work, as does the theme of the sacrifice of worldly happiness for a higher purpose. His infatuation and the sublimated libidinal energy it lent to his poetic production were crucial for setting his life course. The breaking of the engagement allowed him to devote himself monastically to his purpose, as well as to establish his outsider status (outside the norm of married life). It also freed him from close personal entanglements with women, thereby leading him to objectify them as ideal creatures.

His central problematic was *how to become*. The task was most difficult for the well educated, since prevailing educational and cultural institutions tended to produce stereotyped members of "the crowd" rather than to allow individuals to discover their own unique identities. This problem was compounded by the fact that the social structure changed from a rigidly hierarchical one to a relatively "horizontal" one. In this context it became increasingly difficult to "become who you are" for two reasons... One: social identities were unusually fluid

Two: there was a proliferation of normalizing institutions which produced pseudo-individuals. Given this problematic, he perceived a need to invent a form of communication which would not produce stereotyped identities. On the contrary, he needed a form which would force people back onto their own resources, to take responsibility for their own choices, and to become who they are beyond their socially imposed identities.

He was a gadfly. / He rarely left his hometown and traveled abroad only five times. / His prime recreational activities were attending the theatre, walking the streets to chat with ordinary people, and taking brief jaunts into the surrounding countryside. / He led a somewhat uneventful life.

He also assisted the birth of individual subjectivity by forcing his contemporaries to think for themselves.

His art of communication became "the art of *taking away*". He thought his audience suffered from too much knowledge rather than too little.

Other things promised to make absolute knowledge available by virtue of a science of logic, claiming that anyone with the capacity to follow the dialectical progression of the purportedly transparent concepts of this logic would have access to the equivalent to the logical structure of the universe. He didn't think highly of this and his strategy was to invert this dialectic by seeking to make everything more difficult.

Instead of seeing scientific knowledge as the means of human redemption, he regarded it as the greatest obstacle to redemption. Instead of seeking to give people more knowledge he sought to take away what passed for knowledge. Instead of setting himself up as an authority, he used a vast array of devices to undermine his authority and place responsibility for the existential significance to be derived squarely on the receiver. He distanced himself from his work, which served to problematize the authorial voice for the receiver. He partitioned his works into: prefaces, forewords, interludes, postscripts... All of this play with narrative point of view, with contrasting works, and with contrasting internal partitions within individual works, can leave one very disoriented. In combination with the incessant play of irony and his predilection for paradox and

semantic opacity, it becomes a polished surface for the receiver in which the prime meaning to be discerned is one's own reflection.

His "method of indirect communication" was designed to sever the reliance of the receiver on the authority of the maker. The receiver was to be forced to take individual responsibility for knowing who one is - and for knowing where one stands - on the existential and ethical issues raised.

Faith is not a matter of learning dogma by rote. It is a matter of the individual repeatedly renewing one's passionate subjective relationship to an object which can never be known but only believed in.

The point of indirect communication is to position the receiver to relate to the truth with appropriate passion, rather than to communicate the truth as such.

His prime recreational activities were attending the theatre, walking the streets to chat with ordinary people, and taking brief jaunts into the surrounding countryside. / He rarely left his hometown and traveled abroad only five times. / He was a gadfly. / His personal life is more relevant to his work than is the case for many.

- - -

He led a somewhat uneventful life.

He presents his authorship as a dialectical progression of existential stages. The first is the aesthetic, which gives way to the ethical, which gives way to faith.

The aesthetic stage of existence is characterized by the following: immersion in sensuous experience; valorization of possibility over actuality; egotism; fragmentation of the subjective experience; nihilistic wielding of irony and skepticism; and flight from boredom. The aesthete uses artifice, arbitrariness, irony, and willful imagination to recreate the world in his own image.

The prime motivation for the aesthete is the transformation of the boring into the interesting. His real aim is the manipulation of people and situations in ways which generate interesting reflections in his own voyeuristic mind. It is seen to be emptily self-serving and escapist. It is a despairing means of avoiding commitment and responsibility.

Anxiety or dread is the pre-sentiment of this terrible responsibility. On one side is the dread burden of choosing for eternity; on the other side is the exhilaration of freedom in choosing oneself.

The ethical position lays down various necessary conditions for ethically correct action. These conditions include: the necessity of choosing seriously and inwardly; commitment to the belief that predications of good and evil of our actions have a truth-value; the necessity of choosing what one is actually doing, rather than just responding to a situation; actions are to be in accordance with the rules; and these rules are universally applicable to moral agents.

The world is divided dualistically into: the actual and the ideal. In order to arrive at a position of faith, the individual must first embrace the ethical. And in order to raise oneself beyond the merely aesthetic life, which is a life of drifting in imagination, possibility and sensation, one needs to make a commitment.

He was always preoccupied with aesthetics. / He was a gadfly. / His personal life is more relevant to his work than is the case for many. / He referred increasingly to himself as a poet in his later years.

- - -

He led a somewhat uneventful life
(*layered voices...*)

As a side note, in terms of his own psychological economy, he seems to have been struggling to lose his melancholy and have it at the same time.

His central problematic was *how to become*. Of constant striving within an individual's existence.

Language (and all other media of representation) belong to the realm of the ideal. No matter how eloquent or evocative language is it can never *be* the actual. One character acknowledges this implicitly when at the end, he revokes everything he has said, with the important rider that: *to say something then to revoke it is not the same as never having said it in the first place*.

His art of communication became the art of taking away.

He thought his audience suffered from too much knowledge rather than too little.

And his strategy was to invert this dialect by seeking to make everything more difficult.

MIDNIGHT HOUR

There comes a midnight hour when everyone has to take off their mask.
Do you not believe it?
Do you think that life can be mocked in this way?
Are you not terrified?
Do you suppose you can just slip away while no one watches and silently disappear?
The man who cannot see himself cannot reveal himself and cannot love
And he who cannot love must be the most unhappy man of all.
And at the stroke of twelve the mask is slowly removed to reveal
Nothing, no one, nobody.

A LEAP

(I fell in...)
Can we not think of this moment for a while?
It need not be very long, for it is a leap.
To be able to transform all this distance into one normal step into life is the single miracle.
To be able to fall free, as one walking normally.
To be able to express the sublime simply.

THE GREATER

The greater the number of things that a person forgets,
The greater the number of changes his life can attain.
The greater the number of things that a person recalls,
The better the chances he ever will have of becoming divine.

MEN

Men are accustomed to traveling the world, looking for rivers and snow-covered mountains.
Men are intent on discovering new stars, races of men, incredible fishes and birds.
They abandon themselves to an impulse to gaze open-mouthed at life,
Believing that they have seen something of real importance.
Men are accustomed to traveling the world, looking for rivers and snow-covered mountains.
Men are intent on discovering new stars, races of men, incredible fishes and birds.
Possessed by an animal pleasure they follow the smell of adventure,
But this kind of adventure does not interest me at all.

LIKE THE LILIES

Become like the lilies and the birds.
Become silent.

REPETITION

Repetition and recollection are the same movement, only in opposite directions; for what is recollected has been, is repeated backwards, whereas repetition properly so called is recollected forwards. Therefore repetition, if it is possible, makes a man happy, whereas recollection makes him unhappy – provided he gives himself time to live and does not at once, in the very moment of birth, try to find a pretext for stealing out of life, alleging, for example, that he has forgotten something. The love of recollection is the only happy one, an author has said. In that he is perfectly right, too – if one will only remember that it first makes a man unhappy. In truth, the love of repetition is the only happy love. Like that of recollection it has not the disquietude of hope, the anxious adventure of discoverers, nor the sadness of recollection; it has the blessed certainty of the moment. Hope is a new outfit, brilliant and glittering, yet one has never tried it on, and therefore does not know how it will look or fit. Recollection is discarded clothing, which may still be beautiful, but does not fit, for one has outgrown it. Repetition is an indestructible garment, which fits snugly and comfortably, neither too tight nor too loose. Hope has charm but slips through the fingers, recollection has beauty but is not useful right now, repetition is the faithful companion who never lets you down.