

REPETITION AS A PATH TO AUTHENTIC EXISTENCE IN KIERKEGAARD'S WORK

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ABSTRACT

Thesis. The aim of the paper is to interpret Kierkegaard's concept of repetition as a way of creating and experiencing authentic existence in an environment that is set up to repeat this same, inauthentic content of consciousness.

Concept. Repetition is associated with determinism and represents social stagnation. Repetition creates the conditions for an inauthentic existence. The article offers an interpretation of Kierkegaard's concept of repetition, which is the repetition of another and produces authentic existence.

Results and conclusions. Repetition automatically produces of the same. The repetition of one's choice of oneself is a process of creating spirit and individuality, which is a fundamental principle of authentic existence. Creating an authentic personality is one of the ways to solve the current crisis in society, which is associated with an inauthentic experience of existence, abdication of responsibility and repetition of lies.

Cognitive value. The postmodern society associated with the use of the media is not the cause of social disorientation. It is a means that an individual uses to repeat the same. The social environment and magic themselves are not negative, the negative is the inauthentic attitude of a person to them.

Keywords: repetition, difference, authentic and unauthentic existence, choice, Kierkegaard



INTRODUCTION

Repetition is an important process in the formation of a person's personality. Repetition is not necessarily the same as production. At the spirit level, repetition is a process that can have a dynamic and creative dimension, not necessarily a production of the same. Repetition these days is becoming synonymous with mass society, becoming a danger to the post-modern era overflowing with media content. Repetition can be a consequence of fear of responsibility, a person is afraid to do things differently, so he prefers to do them in the same and proven way. Such an approach is possible in the production of objects, but not in the existence of an individual who is free (Deleuze, 1995).

The most costly ethical choice can be considered to be the choice to be free. We automatically assume that a person is free and wants to be free, but this may not always be true, We convince ourselves of this on a daily basis. We are witnessing parents transferring their freedom and responsibility for their children to teachers and schools. We watch voters shift their responsibility to politicians, we see people delegating responsibility for the state of the environment to the state or multinational corporations. Someone else is always to blame. In addition to the denial of responsibility, the diagnosis of our time is also accompanied by a negative attitude or an exaggerated critical attitude, which is fed by the absence of critical thinking and is based on an emotionally graded need to find the enemy, to find someone who will bear responsibility (Judak et al., 2022).

Repetition as a philosophical category seems to be in opposition to freedom. The current situation suggests that repetition is the favourite attitude of the masses, who repeat the words of the leader, the lies of the media, and their own irrational beliefs or attitudes. In this context, repetition is indeed a negative manifestation of the actions of the individual and society. However, there are opinions and attitudes that can perceive and use repetition as a positive tool for the development of freedom and the promotion of the autonomous personality of the individual.

REPETITION AS A PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM

Modern philosophy, which grows out of its ancient roots, is closely associated with repetition. In the context of systems theory, the idea of the closure of systems, whether we mean the universe or the social system, is significantly present in the European rational paradigm. A closed system is characterised by the fact that the standards by which the system is governed or by which it operates are transcendent. That is, either or nature determines what further movement will follow, what change will occur, what will be the direction of further events in society. In the dogmatic teaching of the Catholic Church, the transcendence of the external norm is expressed in the attributes of God. In addition to Himself, God knows all things real that

have ever existed, existed, or will exist – that is, things past, present, and future (Kandera, 1996). God knows the future, and by His will, He wants it to be fulfilled.

A similar model of a closed system is preferred in non-religious philosophy. The predictability of future events is very important. With the help of system predictability, power can be exercised to control society. Control happens on a simple principle: if we know what stimuli society responds to, we can achieve them to achieve the set goal. This was how both Plato and Comte, or Marx, reasoned. At the centre of their ideas about the social system was the belief that a person does not know what is good for him. It is debatable whether it is possible to teach a person what is good for him. Therefore, it is easier to bring a person to good without him having to be intellectually or willingly involved in this process. Individual existence in closed systems does not play an important role (Žalec, 2018). On the contrary, it is an obstacle to achieving socially relevant goals. A closed society is systematically set up for totalitarianism. Man submits and walks the path to happiness, which was set for him from the outside, by philosophers, by the state, by authority.

Whether we are talking about a religious or strictly philosophical construction of a closed system, we perceive the striking presence of determinism as a decisive aspect of human existence. A philosophy that transcends the boundaries of metaphysics is oriented towards an open system in which determinism has no place, which has fundamental consequences for interpreting the authentic existence of the individual. As Petříček says, the idea of an open system contains everything but determinism. The open system model is associated with the latest scientific knowledge in the fields of cybernetics, chaos theory, or astronomy. The most significant event or idea in the thinking of the 20th century was the discovery that the world is not deterministic. Since antiquity, causality has been a fundamental pillar of metaphysics and has been key to interpreting both the physical and social worlds (Petříček, 2018).

Modern science starts from the idea that the past does not determine exactly what happens in the future. Thus, Aristotle's conception of the relationship between cause and effect receives significant cracks in the 20th century. The consequences are visible not only in the field of physics, quantum theory or fractal dynamics, but also in the plane of individual existence. To put it simply, a person's free choice leads to certain consequences, but it is not entirely in man's power to ensure that his actions achieve the desired goal. In essence, this is captured by Jean-Paul Sartre's vision of freedom, in which a person acts without knowing what consequences his decision will bring. Ian Hacking argues that During the 19th century, there is a slow emergence of the belief that the world can follow certain rules and still not be subject to the universal laws of nature. This opened up space for chance (Hacking, 1990).

The universal validity of laws implies the necessity of repetition, which is at the heart of the process of creating things, events, and also individual

moral decision-making. Gilles Deleuze suggests that repetition and differentiation can have different interpretations, finding one of them in Kierkegaard. "I make, remake and unmake my concepts along a moving horizon, from an always decentered centre, from an always displaced periphery which repeats and differentiates them" (Deleuze, 1995, xxi). The way that Deleuze interprets repetition is actually a description of creative creation, which relates not only to artistic creation and philosophical interpretation of reality, but also to the individual existence of the individual and the creation of his own future.

The difference between authentic and inauthentic ways of existence is understood in modern, or rather contemporary, philosophy as the difference between the fulfillment of destiny and the creative creation of one's own future, which, although uncertain, is at the same time open, is not predestined by fate or a higher power, and is a challenge that faces the individual.

The philosophical category of repetition is directly linked to the authentic existence of the individual. The philosophical concept of authentic and inauthentic existence is a fundamental concept for many philosophers who deal with the question of personal identity and the meaning of existence. An example is Sartre, for whom authentic existence is linked to a state of "being for oneself" (*être pour soi*) and responsibility for one's own decisions. An authentic individual is able to reflect on their values and beliefs and is aware of their freedom of choice. On the contrary, an inauthentic existence is a state in which the individual flees from his freedom and responsibility and finds himself in a state of "being for others" (*être en soi*). The inauthentic individual is controlled by external influences, lives according to expectations, and evaluates others. Sartre's concept of inauthentic being in terms of repetition can be understood as the repetition of external actions or the repetition of what others do. This state of affairs is most aptly expressed in Sartre's assertion that "Hell is other people" (Sartre, 1989, 45).

The understanding of another person as evil is based on the belief that the other person creates a social environment. And the social environment puts pressure on a person, forcing him to adapt, to give up his own authentic existence, and to behave according to the norms of the environment. External norms do not reflect the existential needs of the individual, and man is not himself.

Martin Heidegger thinks in a similar way, linking authentic being to the concept of death. For him, authentic existence is associated with the state of "being to death" (*Sein zum Tode*) (Heidegger, 1990). The authentic individual realises the finiteness of his existence and moves towards his own individual life meaning. He is able to accept his mortality and live in authentic communion with the world. On the contrary, an inauthentic existence is associated with a state of escape from death and hiding oneself. The inauthentic individual lives in a constant effort to satisfy the expectations and norms of society. An authentic being does not consist of a being

that avoids death; on the contrary, it is a being that counts death as an absolute constant.

Death is the end of individual existence and is the moment when man remains before himself, in the face of his finite existence. The individual attitudes of the individual should be constantly confronted with the finiteness of the here-being, which constantly laments on the border of meaning and nonsense. Authentic being is being in reality, which does not include transcendent categories by which one could extend one's existence beyond the horizon of death.

Nietzsche also considers authentic being in the sense of repetition, according to which authentic being and existence are the ability to rethink and transcend traditional values and moral norms. An authentic individual is able to live according to his own volitional manifestation and manifest his individual will to power. On the contrary, an inauthentic existence is associated with submission to social conventions and norms. An inauthentic individual submits to external influences and loses his authenticity, or does not develop an authentic existence at all. The reappraisal of all values in Nietzsche, as in Heidegger, is associated with accepting the finiteness of man's existence. This limiting moment of existence leads a person to resign himself to the common and mass solutions offered by society. A person reassesses social norms and values and realises that these norms are not applicable (Žalec, 2017).

The application of universally applicable norms leads a person to slavery and submission to external laws, norms and rules. These norms are considered by Nietzsche to be too human and too mediocre to lead a person to an authentic being. The will to power can also be interpreted as the will to project one's own existence, primarily power over oneself. Man does not allow himself to be controlled by the ordinariness and everydayness of crowd existence, but is the creator of his own norms and values, which allow him to exist authentically in the world to which man gives his own meaning.

What these authors have in common is that they understand authentic being as the being of an individual who stands in opposition to social norms and rules. External norms, or norms in general, are created to ensure the process of repetition, the production of the same. In such a setting, it is very difficult to talk about human freedom, about the possibilities of free choice, and, ultimately, about his authentic being. Submission to external rules deprives a person of the opportunity to see reality with his own eyes and find his own place in it. Inauthenticity also has its risk in that it turns individual existence into a mass existence, one becomes part of the crowd, guides public opinion, and does what everyone else does. He does not think about the meaning of his individual actions, subordinates the meaning of his own existence to what others want from him, and submits to the reflection of society.

Man is an authentic and social being in which the aspect of responsibility for his decisions and actions is not present. The external rules and

norms that a person accepts do not require taking responsibility, because the responsibility is on society, on the crowd, and on external circumstances (Nemec, 2017). A mass being is an inauthentic being that does not allow man to rise up by himself. The authentic is thus directly linked to repetition—the performance of actions that are regulated by external rules and norms and that do not respect the individuality and specific setting of the individual's being. The relationship between repetition and authentic being is given special attention by Kierkegaard, who created the basic concept of authentic being in relation to repetition. This paradigmatic model is adopted by a whole line of existential philosophy (Tavila et al., 2018).

REPETITION AND AUTHENTIC BEING IN KIERKEGAARD

Several authors consider Kierkegaard, along with Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Camus, Scioran, and Weil, to be important exponents of thought that transcends the boundaries of metaphysics. Movement and crossing the border are important categories for him, which also touch on the relationship between consciousness and spirit. Unlike Hegel, Kierkegaard argues that consciousness is a synthesis, but it is not yet spirit. This means that consciousness must transcend itself to become a spirit. Paradoxically, consciousness becomes spirit precisely when it is capable of arriving at repetition. This is because the Self is not a proportion in itself, as was the case with Fichte, but must have a ratio to himself (Kierkegaard et al., 1967). Consciousness is not a given that is metaphysically or even substantially grounded in the Self, but is an effect of the relationship of the self to itself. Just as Socrates exhorts us to know ourselves, Kierkegaard suggests that consciousness must turn to itself in order to become spirit. In the case of Kierkegaard, however, it is not only about the cognitive plane of knowing oneself, but also about the ethical plane of acting, constructing oneself (Mahrik, 2017).

What is repeated is the awareness of consciousness. For Kierkegaard, repetition does not mean certainty that things will go according to plan. On the contrary, repetition is a permanent repetition of choice, which brings anxiety, fear, uncertainty, and despair. Anxiety is understood existentially as a way of revealing oneself to one's telos—the goal of one's existence, that is, being oneself and one's freedom. In anguish, the individual realises his fundamental destiny, which is freedom of spirit. This awareness precedes the fundamental ethical choice between good and evil. Man is aware of himself before he realises that he is to do good. Kierkegaard calls this state of primordial innocence a state of innocence in which consciousness is not yet spirit and there is a harmonious state between body and soul (Conway, 2015).

Existential anxiety is not fear, because fear refers to a specific object, such as death. Anxiety, on the other hand, is gratuitous and touches the being as a whole. Anxiety is interpreted as a state of dialectical tension in which a person loves it, feels good in it, and at the same time escapes it or

tries to escape it. He who becomes guilty in anguish is innocent; it is not himself but anxiety, some foreign power that grabbed him, a power that he did not love, a power from which he was anxious. And yet he is guilty because it immersed him (Cappelørn et al., 2007).

Coping with anxiety has different ways, these ways characterise individual forms of existence and, in a sense, ethical approaches to interpreting one's own actions. The easiest way is to ignore anxiety and avoid it. Give up repetition and postpone your own decision-making. It is a childlike attitude that is characteristic of an innocent consciousness that is not a spirit. It is a kind of childish naivety that does not want to be disturbed by bringing choice and responsibility into one's own existence. On the other hand, it is precisely the desire to become a spirit that leads a person to enter a state of anxiety, and plunge into the vortex of existential dialectics. Where there is spirit, there is anxiety.

Similarly, the despair that occurs at the birth of the spirit. A desperate person tries to get rid of being himself, and this leads him to despair. A man looks toward death, hoping that death will set him free. On the other hand, he realises that death is not the ultimate redemption, but merely the transfer of despair to the dimension of eternity. Kierkegaard doesn't talk about despair in terms and relationships that are used in everyday language or psychological contexts. He penetrates deeper and sees in despair a latent state that only manifests itself in acute despair (Mahrik, 2018).

That someone despairs is only a manifestation of the fact that despair is present in their existence. Despair takes many forms and causes. A person who lives in fantastic, or today we would say conspiratorial, worlds despairs; a person who is fixated on earthly goods such as property or fame; a person who is a determinist and no longer sees any possibility. Despair can only be overcome by faith. The imperfection of facts is overcome by faith, which can rise above the facts and see the system of reality from a different perspective. Through faith, we can see the realities in their wholeness. Overcoming despair takes place in the third, so-called religious stage or religious form of existence. (Králik, 2017a). Neither the ethical nor the aesthetic stages allow guilt to be abolished. In the ethical stage of existence, the distinction between good and evil always appears, as does the inevitable repetition of the choice between these possibilities. The permanent presence of ethical choice is also the permanent birth of guilt that stands before man. It is also the knowledge that man cannot extinguish his guilt; for this act, he needs God (Mahrik, 2017).

At the religious stage, despair and guilt are overcome by faith in a transcendent God. At this stage, one does not seek to reshape oneself according to some ideal of an exemplary Christian, a believer who is guided by public opinion. The ideal, on the contrary, is opening oneself freely. Man gains freedom by choosing himself in the framework of repeating choices, does not want to be someone else, does not want to resemble the ideal, but wants to be himself face to face with God (Mahrik, 2015).

Kierkegaard's concept of repetitive consciousness thus suggests that authentic being rests on the principle of not being determined by society and others, but by oneself (Králík & Török, 2016a). Repetition refers not only to the constant construction of consciousness in the form of self-awareness, but also to the constant repetition of one's God-centered decision. Faith in God is not the answer to all questions. Man does not know his future; he does not know what awaits him, as was the case with Abraham. But he knows that openness to God's existence is a choice that is a certainty, an ethical guarantee, and all that is needed is a repetition of the choice with a constant assumption of responsibility (Králík & Török, 2016b).

The difference between an authentic and an inauthentic existence lies primarily in the norms according to which the individual governs his decisions and actions. Authentic existence arises from norms that are formulated by an active consciousness, a consciousness that, through repetition, constantly declares its existence, itself, and at the same time defines itself towards its external environment. The basis of authentic existence is the moral conscience, which stands between the individual and the social, that is, it is in constant conflict between what consciousness, the self, wants and what external norms, including public opinion, demand. Kierkegaard, as well as other philosophers of existentialism, are well and clearly aware that Individuality, which is supposed to be authentic, cannot be controlled from outside. In the case of dominance of external norms, the possibility of individual decision, the possibility of taking one's own stance, and, ultimately, the possibility of assuming responsibility for one's own decisions and actions are lost (Mahrik et al., 2020).

Thus, authentic existence necessarily implies responsibility. Postmodern philosophy and the postmodern situation create space for the exercise of individuality and individual consciousness, but at the same time they also create significant pressure on the validity of truth, which manifests itself in the relativisation of responsibility. Several authors agree that responsibility, specific to the time of media overuse, has no place in social discourse. From a philosophical and ethical point of view, a paradoxical situation is created here in which we reject repetition, we do not want to be the same, we want to be different, but at the same time, we do not want to take responsibility for this Otherness of ours. Ultimately, this means that we want freedom that is based on norms. A freedom that does not respect norms cannot take responsibility for the consequences of its application, because we do not have the tools to assess the effects of this application of freedom. In other words, where there is no norm, there is no responsibility (Kondrla, 2021).

A current problem that occurs throughout society is the absence of critical thinking. In our opinion, this society-wide problem is directly linked to its authentic being and the misunderstanding or interpretation of repetition as a choice. The absence of critical thinking is a rejection of the repetition of the choice of consciousness that Kierkegaard talks about (Králík & Mahrik,

2018). Man does not reflect his being; the authenticity of knowledge and choice is replaced by affective authenticity. Instead of the search for truth, the dominant factor is the presence of simple tools of choice in the form of an irrational or even biological category of pleasantness. Pleasant is good, and good is true. According to this algorithm, information that comes from all sides through various media channels is processed. The choice of content does not take place on the basis of truth or on the basis of the confrontation of the self in dialectical consciousness with media content. The criterion for choosing the truth and verifying it is utility. If media content usefully complements my construction of the lifeworld, then it is true. If media content contradicts my construction of the lifeworld, then it is true.

At first glance, it would seem that it is an expression of an existential choice, within which the individual makes daily decisions and tests the contents of his knowledge. However, the opposite is true. The repetition that takes place in the processing of media content is not a repetition of a choice, but an affirmation of a previous decision. The repetition we talk about in relation to the media is a repetition that rejects change. Things must be as my consciousness constructed them and understands them as such. I try to understand the world, otherwise, the world must be as I understand it. The media do not create an alternative reality; they create a picture of reality that media perceivers construct in their consciousness. The media does not take responsibility for individual decisions, quite the contrary. The recipient voluntarily and joyfully relinquishes his responsibility and transfers it to the media. I saw it on TV, I heard it on the radio, and it was on the Internet. A person rejects responsibility for the veracity of the content of his consciousness and moves all his decision-making to the aesthetic stage, in which the feeling of pleasantness is important and decides what is true for the individual.

Kierkegaard's concept of repetition, on the other hand, provides an authentic model of existence in the form of permanent choice and affirmation of one's own decision (Martin, 2017). It is a choice that is based on taking responsibility for one's decisions, a choice that is confronted with absurdity, fear, and despair. The repetition of choice is the constant presence of the fundamental ethical dimension of human existence, in which choice alternates with the assumption of responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Applying Kierkegaard's model of repetition to a choice that constructs the spirit is both an inspiration and a memento for the postmodern era. First of all, because Kierkegaard does not see repetition as a process of abdication of responsibility (Králík, 2017b). Repetition does not produce the same, but is the creation of the new, it is the construction of the individual spirit, the authentic personality of man (Jampol-Petzinger, 2022). An important

feature of an authentic personality is concern for one's neighbour. An individual who builds his consciousness on a permanent choice of himself is at the same time an individual who permanently chooses his neighbour and takes responsibility for him. The leap one chooses is also one's choice of one's neighbour in terms of the Christian attitude towards one's neighbour (Tkacova, 2023).

Kierkegaard offers not only a challenge but also a solution to the current problems of the time, including those related to sustainable development. The diagnosis he applied to his own time is equally valid for the present. The mob person who represents an inauthentic existence for Kierkegaard is the same person who today allows himself to be guided by the influence of social media and fake news, he is a person who avoids choice and responsibility, he is a person whose decision-making takes place at the level of the aesthetic stage (Rychnova et al., 2022). The necessity of choice and authentic existence is shown in the consequences that mass communication and uncritical thinking bring us on a daily basis.

The school system is based on passive learning, receiving information, and delegating responsibility. Our school system produces inauthentic existences that gladly hand over responsibility into the hands of individuals and institutions (Kondrla, 2023). Someone else is responsible; the decision has to be made by someone else. Raising a passive generation results in individuals becoming easily controlled, trusting populist statements by politicians more than facts, and willing to accept irrational arguments just because it suits them. Kierkegaard's ethical concept is both a memento and a challenge for us to innovate the education system so that pupils find in it the possibility of self-development, learn to make choices, and take responsibility for themselves, for others, and for the environment as a whole.

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