



MALANTSCHUK, Gregor, *The Controversial Kierkegaard*

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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réponses proposées » (p. 10). Dès lors, « dans la mesure où la science est une activité, un processus intellectuel qui présuppose un acte de connaissance, la science retrouve sa dignité proprement philosophique » (p. 11). En conséquence, « le philosophe s'occupe du fondement de la science qui, pour le savant, demeure présupposé et refoulé au niveau de l'exposition, doit devenir explicite et thématique comme présupposition pour le philosophe. C'est aussi dans cette mesure que le philosophe peut éclairer le savant sur sa pratique » (p. 11). Enfin, poursuit M.M., « le cheminement de notre interrogation passe nécessairement par l'analyse critique du néo-positivisme contemporain (1^{re} Partie), avant de déboucher sur une conception originale de la science qui échappe aux difficultés rencontrées par le positivisme (II^e Partie) » (p. 11). Dans la première partie on verra donc que le positivisme « est incapable de satisfaire la double exigence philosophique d'expliquer et la synthèse et le rapport à l'expérience qui sont le propre de la science » (p. 12). Dans la deuxième partie, il s'agira d'aller de façon personnelle au-delà du psychologisme et du logicisme. M.M. résume lui-même sa thèse essentielle sur la « problématique » comme suit : « 1^o) Les propositions sont des réponses. 2^o) À toute proposition on peut associer une question, un problème. 3^o) À toute phrase ou ensemble de phrases, on peut associer une proposition qui en est la signification. Une proposition est une phrase déclarative. 4^o) L'activité linguistique est un procédé de questionnement qui s'opère dans un contexte. 5^o) On doit toujours considérer une phrase en situation, dans la mesure où elle ne se présente jamais isolément, hors de tout contexte, dans la réalité de la pratique discursive » (p. 219). Le dernier chapitre (pp. 217-354) montre que « le processus de questionnement scientifique est considéré dans son entièreté. La logique propre à son premier niveau est la métaphorisation. On montre qu'elle est irréductible à la logique mathématique et qu'elle est objective. Le second niveau, comme discours exposant les résultats de la science, est conceptualisé au sein d'une vision du langage fondée elle aussi sur la notion de questionnement » (pp. 14-15). Dans sa problématique M.M. développe ses idées sur l'importante notion de *contexte* dans un sens personnel. En bref, il s'agit avec cet ouvrage d'un travail technique où sont discutées les grandes positions de l'épistémologie, et c'est pour les « dépasser » qu'y sont présentées les idées de Kant à Quine, en passant par Carnap, Frege, Russel, Wittgenstein, Popper et Kuhn. Un livre utile par ses informations, son

caractère à la fois critique et constructif. Nous conseillons au lecteur, après l'Avant-Propos, d'aborder le paragraphe : *Métaphorisation et création de sens* (pp. 344-348). Ces lignes l'inciteront à reprendre sa lecture, sachant déjà où il sera conduit en fin de parcours.

Jean-Dominique ROBERT

Gregor MALANTSCHUK, *The Controversial Kierkegaard*, translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo, 1980. (15,5 × 23,5 cm), 82 pages.

Surely the decade of the 1840's is the most wonderful and fertile in modern European history. For those who were young, it must have been bliss to be alive, as it was for the generation of Wordsworth in the 1790's — and for similar reasons. Europe, its old structures and dreams, was exploding. We are staggered by the sheer quantity of intelligence and passion released in those years; and by its quality, too.

Of course, the young men agreed, then as now, on scarcely anything except the one crucial point : the crisis was both political and spiritual — each in its widest sense. They disagreed about the relations between these two aspects of the crisis, their relative importance, the proper direction of their own energies, and what must be done. Nearly all of them saw the spiritual confusion as a product of the political upheaval; but they disagreed violently about the exact nature of this latter — nascent capitalism? heavy industry? the flight to the city? democracy? liberalisation?

Whether or not we are today still living in their historical epoch, we are still living in the shadow of their ideas, their slogans and their ideologies. This is probably deplorable, but certainly inescapable. We do not yet have the new terms and concepts needed to see our own situation. We still depend on Bakunin, Marx, De Tocqueville, Mill, Thoreau, and Carlyle for our pictures of our selves and our world. As if suffering from a collective historical neurosis, we cannot yet break free of an apparatus which imposes on our own self-understanding hopes and fears and regrets themselves mostly alien and irrelevant to where we are at.

Søren Kierkegaard was one of these brilliant young men, and by almost all criteria among the

most brilliant. He matches Thoreau for originality; Dostoyevsky for depth; and only Herzen is his match for wit, the supreme expression of a mind's sharpness and clarity. But as no man has all good qualities, neither did Kierkegaard. He lacked the sobriety of Mill, the comprehensiveness of De Tocqueville, and the informed knowledge of Marx. It is thus no service to Kierkegaard to pretend that he is strong where he is weak, or that he has qualifications to speak where he lacks them. And is it not enough, that a man is the greatest philosophical theologian since the Middle Ages? and probably our profoundest psychologist? and certainly one of the world's finest prose-writers?

Like his marvellous contemporaries, Kierkegaard saw that he was living through a time of crisis; and his writings are in multifarious ways a reflection of, and upon, his vision of this crisis. For many years, he was known only through the pseudonymous books. In these he takes issue, from within, with the complex of attitudes that formed Northern Bourgeois Romanticism. Later, we have been reading the later acknowledged works, which contain the so-called Attack upon Christendom. (Even the Kierkegaard of the edifying discourses may now be about to find his audience.) In the present study, the distinguished Kierkegaardian Gregor Malantschuk considers a third element in Kierkegaard's response to his times — the specifically socio-political diagnoses expressed in such books as *Either/Or*, *Two Ages*, and the unpublished *Book on Adler*, and implicit also in *Fear and Trembling* and *Works of Love*.

Kierkegaard's talents were, I said above, partial. In addition, his point of view was extreme. (This remark does not address the question of truth-and-falsity.) For just these reasons, his diagnosis has a peculiar power of illumination, quite independently of whether we judge it acceptable or even sane. In this respect, his role for our own thinking is like Gogol's, or Kafka's, or Ingmar Bergman's. And, I repeat, it is no more necessary to accept Kierkegaard's point of view than theirs, in order to find illumination therein.

Here, now, are the main outlines of Kierkegaard's socio-political thought, as Malantschuk presents it in this study. (1) The crisis through which Europe is passing is essentially ethico-religious in nature; its causes — and also its possible cure, which Malantschuk passes over — are themselves religious. (2) The essence of the crisis can be stated thus: a loss of the relation to the absolute (the eternal), with the attempt to

replace this by the relativities of politics, society, the mass. (3) It follows that all social and political activities which ignore or deny the religious are themselves only further expressions of the real crisis, and cannot help to solve it.

I give some illustrative examples from Malantschuk's study. On p. 6 and elsewhere he writes — claiming to speak for Kierkegaard — that freedom can exist only within the religious, outside which everything is wholly determined by biology and environment. He writes on p. 27 that we can win and preserve our identities only in the religious — the relation to the transcendent. He says on p. 8 and frequently that equality can never be established in socio-political terms, but only in religious terms.

It appears to follow, in Malantschuk's exposition, that socio-political and psychological attempts to gain and increase our liberties, equalities, identities (and happinesses?) are not only doomed to failure, but actually dangerous and harmful. Malantschuk, following Kierkegaard, has on the whole two major cases in mind: political movements towards greater democratisation, and social and psychological struggles for the varied forms of emancipation of women. It must be clearly said that Malantschuk's position is deeply disturbing. It is not obvious in this study that he has a deep historical grasp of the reasons why individuals, classes, nations, and races have in recent centuries been fighting oppression and injustice; nor is it obvious that he has a sympathy for history's victims. I recognise that these are strong assertions; but Malantschuk's own writing, in this study, is strong.

A further deep flaw in Malantschuk's exposition is that he presents as the main alternative to Kierkegaard's religious diagnosis a "Marx" who is oversimplified, both as communist and as materialist, to the point of caricature. Already in the 1844 Manuscripts Marx had decisively and openly distinguished his own (humanistic) communism from any crude levelling egalitarianism, such as Malantschuk presents. And Malantschuk is silent about the quite crucial point that all Marx's "material" prescriptions are designed as being conditions for "spiritual" achievements.

I shall now quote a sentence from p. 38 of this study, since it expresses very neatly a quite fundamental misconception of "spirit" which, I think, underlies all Malantschuk's exposition and explains its strangeness. "This conception (sc. of the human being) builds primarily upon the

Christian view of the human being as consisting of body, soul, and spirit, and by stressing the decisive importance of the spiritual this conception is fundamentally anti-materialistic." Now Malantschuk's study is innocent of precise conceptual definitions; but the view of the relation between "spirit" and the human body which this sentence seems to imply is, to my best understanding, neither Kierkegaard's, nor (orthodoxly) Christian, no intelligible. And it has the plausible implication that, because only "spirit" matters, we may — indeed, must — ignore or despise all claims that are "material". Thus, fighting against oppression, exploitation, and poverty do not really matter, since ("material") oppression, exploitation and poverty do not themselves matter.

Such seems to me to be the heart of Malantschuk's own point of view, as expressed in the present study. But it is not Kierkegaard's. And the natural effect of its imposition on a reading of Kierkegaard is to present a "Kierkegaard" whose ideas are not just extreme, but repulsive. This is, alas, the case at other points too in Malantschuk's study. By selective quotation, we are confronted with a "Kierkegaard" who seems to have been simultaneously naive and arrogant. "It all fits my theory *perfectly*, and I dare say it will come to be seen how *exactly* I have understood the age..." (p. 8). Admittedly Marx, and later Nietzsche, also say things like this; but that is no excuse, and it would be both kinder and fairer to the true Kierkegaard to pass over such aberrations silently.

I do not in the least wish to deny that Malantschuk has got certain important points about Kierkegaard right. It is quite true, for example, that Kierkegaard had no time for politics — meaning the struggle for democracy and liberalisation. It is also quite true that he took no favorable view of the emancipation of women; for he shared the unfounded, ignorant, instinctive stereotypes of his male contemporaries. But surely it is not a necessary part of being a Christian that one is a political conservative with patriarchal prejudices? (It does not follow that we must go to the opposite extreme, either.)

I said above that Kierkegaard's diagnosis, precisely in virtue of its narrowness and extremism, has a peculiar power of illumination. The right way to use Kierkegaard (*sit venia verbo*) is not to accept his own point of view wholly, or unquestioningly; nor to use its weaker, more conditioned, elements. It is to concentrate on the

conception of the self — its relations to itself, to God, and to others — which Kierkegaard works out in the central edifying discourses: *Edifying Discourses in Various Spirits, Works of Love, and The Sickness Unto Death*. And then to ask how that conception of human selfhood can be used to illuminate our understanding of our own situation.

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YVON LAFRANCE, *La théorie platonicienne de la doxa*, Montréal, Bellarmin, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1981, 475 p.

La société d'édition Les Belles Lettres vient d'édition, en collaboration avec Bellarmin, un volume que l'on peut classer dans la tradition platonicienne moderne, à la fois par sa présentation de ton dialectique et par son approfondissement des thèmes classiques de l'œuvre de Platon. Cette étude de la doxa constitue une approche peu fréquente des thèmes chers aux commentateurs platoniciens modernes. Essayons de sentir l'originalité de cette étude.

Après un examen impressionnant des sens du mot « doxa » et une présentation du dialogue platonicien en général, l'auteur suit la chronologie des écrits de Platon dans son déroulement. Il retrace pour nous l'évolution des conceptions attachées au mot « doxa » chez Platon à travers ses œuvres de jeunesse (*Gorgias, Ménon*), de maturité (*République*) et de vieillesse (*Théétète, Sophiste*). Plusieurs raisons nous incitent à recommander la lecture de ce livre.

Premièrement, l'écoute bienveillante que l'auteur accorde à Platon. M. Lafrance fait à Platon le crédit d'assez d'intelligence pour rechercher avec maints efforts la cohérence interne de ses écrits avant de se résigner à y déclarer la présence de contradictions. « Nous avons essayé de montrer une certaine cohérence dans la théorie platonicienne de la doxa à l'encontre d'une tendance des commentateurs contemporains à mettre l'accent sur les contradictions » (p. 393). L'auteur ne cherche cependant pas la cohérence à tout prix. Il ne va pas comme bien d'autres jusqu'à tordre le sens des mots et des passages pour appuyer ses thèses. « Nous avons voulu faire ici œuvre scientifique » (p. 18), nous assure-t-il. Cet appétit de certitude textuelle se traduira par une analyse détaillée de tout ce qui se rapportera à son