The Chains of Reason: An Interview with Alain Grosrichard

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Knox Peden (KP): To begin, could you say a few words about the origin of your participation in *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*?

Alain Grosrichard (AG): Let's distinguish between the origin and the beginning. I began to participate in the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* from its first volume, published in January 1966. Its title, 'Truth', speaks volumes about the ambitions of the 'Cercle d'Épistémologie de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure' whose instrument the journal was. As for the origin, it came about for me during my first year at the ENS, in October 1962, which was also the first year for Jacques-Alain Miller, who was with Jean-Claude Milner the true founder of these *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*. Like Miller, I had decided to take up studies in Philosophy with Louis Althusser, our *caiman*, serving as our director. This led me to get to know the other young philosophers who were already at the school: Regnault, Macherey, Balibar, Duroux, Ranciere… Milner, who was pursuing studies in linguistics, did not let this keep him from being very active in the discussions of this little group that gathered around Althusser. This was when Althusser devoted his seminar to a rereading of Marx that was hardly orthodox in the eyes of the official intellectuals of the Communist Party. Against their global and teleological interpretation of Marx, he located an 'epistemological break', in the Bachelardian sense, between the still Hegelian young Marx and the Marx of the *German Ideology* and of *Capital*, who was more Spinozist than Hegelian. This second Marx provided him with the elements of a theory of ideology, conceived as a system of representations that owes its coherence to the subject's misrecognition of structural causality, i.e. of the economic and social order that determines it. This reference to Spinoza in the Althusserian reading of Marx oriented our first readings of Lacan, wherein the 'ego', based in the imaginary, also saw itself defined as an instance of the subject of the unconscious's misrecognition insofar as it was determined by the symbolic order itself. In short, through Spinoza, we could think Marx and Lacan together. Having said this, the fact that the first volume opened with 'Science and Truth' (CpA 1.1), which Lacan allowed us to publish first, tells us that in 1966 it was under the auspices of the latter that the *Cahiers* was born.

KP: And why Spinoza at this moment?

AG: Macherey or Balibar would have a better response for you. But Althusser had already referred to him in his 1960 article on the 'Young Marx'.[1] And when I started attending his seminar on 'Reading *Capital*', it was clear that everyone was wearing lenses shaped by Spinoza. Of course the first volume of Gueroult's *Spinoza*, on the first book of *Ethics*, was not published until 1968.[2]

[1] Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London: New Left Books, 1969), 49-86.
[2] Martial Gueroult, *Spinoza I: Dieu* (Paris: Aubier, 1968).

KP: But Spinoza had been the subject of his course at the Collège de France during the 50s and 60s.

AG: Yes, and I suppose that Althusser had followed it. Spinoza's name was also found on the lips of Lacan. He had already cited a proposition of the *Ethics* as the epigraph of his doctoral thesis in 1933, and you know that at the start of his first seminar at ENS, in January 1964, he compared the fate dealt him by the International Psychoanalytic Association to the excommunication pronounced against Spinoza in his time.[3] In any case, lacking Gueroult's *Spinoza*, we made assiduous use of his *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons*.[4]

KP: Gueroult was no Marxist, however.

AG: No, no more than Lacan, who made a great case for his own Descartes. What counted for us, as well as for Althusser, is that Gueroult taught us to read a philosophical text 'according to the order of reasons'. You could even say that we held this formula as a kind of slogan… But let's get back to my first year at the ENS. In 1963, in his seminar dedicated to Politzer's *Critique des fondements de la psychologie*,[5] Althusser introduced us to Lacan's work, whose audience up until that point was limited almost exclusively to the practitioners of psychoanalysis. Among the presentations we could choose to do, one was on Lacan. Miller was charged with this assignment and he dove into *La Psychanalyse*, the journal where Lacan had published his articles. As I recall, this was St. Augustine's *Tolle, lege*! for him, a sort of illumination. His presentation was impressive especially because he presented a Lacan who was perfectly rational with no trace of the obscurantism that results from a first reading of his texts. It was then, between 63 and 64, that our interest for Marxist theory as Althusser had developed it converged with our burgeoning interest to the writings of Freud, which we read, as Lacan had, in the light of Saussurean linguistics.

KP: But there is another concept that comes into play: Science. You say that Althusser distinguished between the Spinozist Marx of *Capital* and the Hegelian 'young Marx'. This Spinozist Marx was also someone for whom, in his view, science was at stake. Any thoughts regarding this valorisation of science in his reading of Marx?

AG: Althusser tried to theorize the distinction between science and ideology. According to him, dialectical materialism alone, such as he found it formulated in Marx and Engels, but above all in Lenin, deserved to be qualified as scientific, and distinguished from ideology, which was defined as a system of imaginary representations more or less put into play through different interests. But he did not think science was reducible to the pronouncements of scientists, even those most worthy of the title. A scientist can also construct an ideological representation of his own scientific practice and it is up to philosophy, following Spinoza's example in the appendix to Book I of *Ethics*, to identify this misrecognition and what it consists of so that it might be theorized. Althusser dedicated a seminar in 1965-66 to a critical examination of the 'spontaneous philosophy of the scientists'.[6] I remember hearing lectures by Bourdieu and Passeron there…

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[3] See Jacques Lacan, SXI, 3-4.
[4] Martial Gueroult, *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons*, 2 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1953).
[5] Georges Politzer, *Critique des fondements de la psychologie* (Paris: Rieder, 1928).
[6] Louis Althusser, *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists & Other Essays* (London: Verso, 1990).

KP: But what was the relation between the concept of science and that of analysis, which the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* aimed to promote? And how does this relate in turn to the relation between analysis and psychoanalysis? Was psychoanalysis but one particular example of analysis in a general sense, or did you consider it as the model of analysis as such?

AG: To answer that, we would need to return to the programmatic texts: the foreword to the first volume, for example, signed by Miller. Having defined epistemology as 'history and theory of discourse of science' [*la* science] and further defining this discourse as 'a process of language which is constrained by truth', the text continues by saying: 'we call analytic any discourse insofar as it can be reduced to putting unities in place that produce themselves and repeat themselves, whatever the principle may be that it assigns to the transformations at play in its system' (CpA 1.Introduction). And we name 'analysis properly speaking the theory that deals with concepts of element and their combinations in this way'. There you have an expansive concept of analysis that allows us to group together most of the work published in the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*. Regarding psychoanalysis, our interest was clearly dependent on the Saussurean re-reading of Freud that Lacan had done. What we found 'analytic' in this context was this promotion of the signifying chain as the determinant of a subject without substance, reduced to this pure point of enunciation that is the Cartesian cogito, which Lacan paradoxically established as the point of emergence of the subject of the unconscious. But alongside Althusser and Lacan, we recognized yet another master: Georges Canguilhem. Many of us attended his seminar at the *l'Institut d'Histoire des Sciences*. I wrote my undergraduate thesis under his direction, as did Miller. The subject that I treated fit into the program of our *Cahiers* since it was a question of the problem concerning the analysis of perception. I gave a summary of it in the second volume of the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*.

KP: We'll come back to this, but first a question on Canguilhem. Jean Cavaillès was his friend and comrade during the Resistance, and Canguilhem spoke with great admiration for his works of history, philosophy, and mathematics. Cavaillès privileged analysis and considered it more important than intuition or other models of knowledge. He situated himself in a trajectory that descended from Bolzano, or even earlier, and that called for an arithmetization of analysis.[7] This emphasis on analysis is striking. Is this why Canguilhem supported the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*?

AG: What is certain is that Canguilhem was interested in what we were doing and that he supported us. You will have noticed that a citation of his ('To work on a concept…' etc.) figured in the epigraph of the *Cahiers*. Invited by Althusser, he came to the ENS for a session of his seminar especially dedicated to him. This was when Macherey delivered a remarkable presentation on 'Canguilhem and Science' in front of Canguilhem himself.[8] Lacan also appreciated his work. In 'Science and Truth', he cites this passage from 'What is Psychology?', published in the next volume (CpA 2.1), where Canguilhem wrote, not without ferocity, that there are two ways of leaving the Sorbonne: one up top, which leads you to the Pantheon, and another, that of academic psychology, which slides you down the hill along rue St. Jacques, landing you before the police station: his way of showing that psychology is nothing but a pseudo-science in the service of political power.

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[7] See Jean Cavaillès, *Sur la logique et la théorie de la science* (Paris: PUF, 1946).

[8] Cf. Pierre Macherey, 'Georges Canguilhem's Philosophy of Science: Epistemology and History of Science', in Idem., *In a Materialist Way*, eds. Warren Montag and Ted Stolze (London: Verson, 1998), 161-188.

KP: What was his attitude toward Marxism and the connection that you made between Marxism and his own work?

AG: He expressed some reservations in a rather grumbly manner. (Our friend François Regnault does a marvellous impersonation of it). He'd continue to have more reservations against some of us, especially those who belonged to the student cell of the Communist Party, when Althusserian Marxism started to be replaced by 'Mao Zedong thought' and particular reference to the Chinese Cultural Revolution. This was obviously not yet the case in 1963. But we need to remember that before the creation of the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*, we worked on another publication, the *Cahiers Marxistes-Léninistes* which had chosen Lenin's affirmation as its epigraph: 'The theory of Marx is all powerful because it is true'. This lasted until the day when two articles by Regnault and by Milner, which were to be included in a volume on the theme of the novel, were rejected, after a lively debate among the comrades led by Robert Linhart and Benny Levy. In their eyes, these two articles no doubt represented a petit-bourgeois revisionist perspective. Still, it was this rejection which served as the origin of the creation of the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* in 1966.

KP: So there was a scission at the heart of the *Cahiers Marxistes-Léninistes* and the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* came out of this split?

AG: Yes. The other comrades went on very different paths. Some decided to become workers in factories, for example. The volume of *Cahiers Marxistes-Léninistes* in question was however never published. It was thrown out. As for the articles of Milner and Regnault, they were published much later in volume 7 of the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*, entitled 'From Myth to the Novel' (CpA 7.2; 7.3), a volume to which Georges Dumézil actively sought to contribute (7.1) as well. However, he was also not a Marxist. That's the least one could say…

KP: In sum, you made use of all the available structuralist tools.

AG: Yes, but we didn't use them all the same way.

KP: Milner uses the word 'hyperstructuralist' to describe the project of *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*.[9] Do you agree?

AG: I think that, in effect, what he and Miller wanted to construct was a general formal model, a sort of pure logic of the signifier capable of operating in very diverse fields and discourses, stretching from mathematical logic to psychoanalysis and going through anthropology and mythology. We were obviously far away from phenomenology.

KP: A hot topic in France, in those days.

AG: That's right. From Hegel to Merleau-Ponty, it was the dominant discourse. We also talked about it at the ENS of course, enough that the young Derrida had come to support Althusser for the position of director of philosophical studies. At the Sorbonne where we followed some courses, such as Canguilhem's, I also attended Derrida's lectures on Husserl. He came to ENS to speak to us about *Logical Investigations*, at the same time as he was preparing *Speech and Phenomena*. However what left the deepest impression

[9] Cf. Jean-Claude Milner, *L'Oeuvre claire: Lacan, la science, la philosophie* (Paris: Seuil, 1995).

on me was the seminar he gave on Rousseau, a seminar from which he would develop in the book that made him known to a general public: *Of Grammatology.* We had published an excerpt of this before its publication in Volume 4 of our *Cahiers* (CpA 4.1). Derrida delivered a rather disrespectful reading of Lévi-Strauss, who wasn't pleased at all.

KP: Did Derrida support the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*?

AG: Let's say that Derrida was not our most solid supporter. Even if he liked speaking with us, he did not really identify with the project. Also, he kept a prudent distance with respect to our political engagement, which I think he judged rather naïve and utopian. Though it is true that he was interested in Lacan's reading of Freud, he followed a path that was his own.

KP: Incidentally, one of my colleagues, who wrote his dissertation on the young Derrida, suggests that his article on 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture', published in the summer 1966 issue of *Tel Quel*, in many respects came out of the debate between André Green and Serge Leclaire on the status of affect.[10]

AG: That's very possible. Since you bring up Leclaire, I should mention that we invited him in November 1965 to come speak to us about his analytic practice. Lacan had just founded the l'Ecole Freudienne de Paris in June 1964. One of the original aspects of his school – something that elicited protesting on the part of some colleagues who were attached to their exclusive domain – was that he wanted to open its doors to non-analysts. Like Freud, Lacan refused to make psychoanalysis a branch of medicine and to reduce it to psychotherapy. Insofar as the practitioners of the concept took up the vocation of theorizing, we had a proper place in the Freudian field in his eyes. We were also convinced that in cultivating our garden there, we would make the best of all possible Freudian fields. We did seek, however, to know a bit more about analytic practice and its relation with theory. So Leclaire held regular seminars over a number of years and their notes were published in the *Cahiers* (CpA 1.5; 3.6; 8.6). Even Lacan himself came a few times to chat with us at night. He joined us late one night and strolled from rue d'Ulm back to his flat on rue de Lille. On the way, he was kind enough to invite us for champagne in a café. And when I say champagne, we're talking Dom Pérignon, grand cru. However there was nothing patronizing about the way he treated us. He smoked his cigar and told us funny stories… Speaking of funny stories, I do remember this prank that I'm not going to tell you because you are a serious person and this will lead us to anecdotes.

KP: Go ahead.

AG: Only because you insist, here we go. Among the scientific students at ENS, there were a few brilliant minds who liked to make fun of the circus that squeezed themselves into the auditorium every Wednesday at half past noon to listen religiously to the weekly pronouncements of Saint Lacan. Among them, my neighbour in the dorm, a nice guy, was an electro-physicist. Now, I didn't know this until after the investigation, but he had invented a means to interfere with Lacan's microphone from his room. So one Wednesday, when Lacan was in the middle of his talk, we heard music –*piano piano* at first but then *riforzando* – taking over his voice until it overtook him completely. I remember thinking that it was Bach's Mass in B minor, if it was not the Magnificat. In

[10] Edward Baring, *The Young Derrida and French Philosophy, 1945-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Chapter 6.

any case, it was religious music, with organ fugues and choral harmonies. What was hilarious was that Lacan continued to speak as if nothing was happening, and no one in the audience dared to lift a finger to observe that somehow there was something wrong with the sound…. And to put the icing on this rather delirious cake, the prankster and his accomplices had taken the care to put a few smoke bombs under the platform so that Lacan, still continuing to speak, would finally disappear, in the eyes of his faithful followers, in a thick cloud of smoke.

KP: Is this true?

AG: Totally, as much as the whole truth can be said. But what happened afterwards was actually quite edifying. That night, Lacan called me, 'Listen, Grosrichard. Find me the guy who played this prank, I have a few words for him.' I was quite flattered to be trusted to play the role of Dupin in this crazy story and I started to investigate. My detective sense brought me logically to knock on the door of my neighbour. He confessed to being the mastermind. I told him, 'Lacan would like to speak with you.' Anyone else would have been shaking in his boots. Not him. 'O.K. let's go.' And so we went to rue de Lille into the waiting room of Lacan's clinic. The door opened, Lacan saw us and I presented him with the individual. I slipped away and thought, 'Damn! This is going to get rough!' Big mistake: they spent an hour together discussing modern science and its applications. Lacan was enthusiastic. My friend too. I never came back for him. But Lacan was like that: surprise, in every domain… Also, when he asked me something, he gave me this feeling that I knew much more that I thought I did. Not always. Often he kindly let me know that I was nothing but an imbecile. But he had this Socratic side that often surprised me with the fact that I wasn't. I remember one day when he invited me to have lunch with him to talk to him about the blind, a theme I was writing about for my thesis. Because of him, by dessert, I realized I saw things much more clearly than I feared when I had blathered some thoughts over appetizers, regarding the quandary that was Molyneux's problem.

KP: Let's discuss your thesis, which was certainly related to the agenda of the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*.

AG: That's right. Canguilhem had suggested that I study the history of this problem that Molyneux had posed to Locke, which he reproduced and attempted to resolve in the second part of the *Essay on Human Understanding*. In the beginning, the problem was posed in a purely formal way: let us suppose that someone born blind learned by the sole means of touch to distinguish the globe and the cube, and imagine that, all of a sudden, his eyes regained the sense of sight. Question: by the use of his eyes alone, would he be able to distinguish which is the cube and which is the globe? Locke, basing his answer solely on what he'd learned from his empiricist theory of perception as the combination of elementary ideas, responded in the negative. And yet later on the problem would resurface for a number of philosophers, from Leibniz to Condillac, by way of Berkeley, Voltaire, Diderot and many lesser-known philosophers. Some respond yes, others say no, and yet others say yes if and only if the blind person is also a geometer, etc. What I wanted to show was how this little formal structure, deep within the discourse of such or such a philosopher, functions like a tell-tale sign of different philosophical positions, the idealism of Berkeley for example or the materialism of Diderot. This approach was thus in line with *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* (CpA 2.3).

But this was only the first aspect of my work. There was a second aspect. Since this problem was one for which philosophers proposed purely speculative solutions, it was

also illuminating to go into the history of medicine and more precisely eye surgery. And on this point, I was in Canguilhem's field. In 1728, if I remember correctly, the surgeon William Cheselden very successfully operated on a young man born blind with cataracts such that the abstract psychological subject who was somebody born blind at the outset became a 'subject supposed to know' incarnate. It was expected that once the bandages were taken off we could have a clear and trustworthy response to the problem of Molyneux since it was founded in experience. In fact, we quickly realized that the response was not obvious for all sorts of reasons tied to his post-operational reactions.

In the end, the history of this problem took me to a third field: the relations between knowledge and power, which Foucault's work would radically reshape. In terms of my own trajectory, I ended up working on a series of writings in the history of the problem that were published in the 1770's by the Chevalier de Mérian (CpA 2.4). He was the permanent secretary at the Academy of Berlin, founded and directed by Frederick II, the very model of the 'enlightened despot'. Seeing that the problem had neither been resolved speculatively nor experimentally, he submitted to the sovereign a project that he believed would please the philosopher-king. Given that our five senses provide the primary material of all our knowledge, as he basically put it, why not increase the profitability of these tools in rationalizing the production of knowledge? Let us create a sort of seminar on practical epistemology that would also be a workshop of knowledge where the division of perceptive labour would take over for philosophical analysis. This would permit in turn the resolution of a harmful social problem. Each year, a number of mothers abandon their babies. Instead of letting them starve uselessly, we should take them from their unworthy mothers at birth and solidly cover their eyes such as to basically artificially recreate the conditions of those born blind. Let's bring them to the seminar. Over seven years, we'll then train them methodically to use their tactile senses, which are manifestly under-utilized by those who can see since they double what is already seen. Some of them could specialise in the development of other senses like smell, sound, taste, just as the perfectly tuned statues of Condillac. And then, the day when our precious children of Minvera reach their age of reason, *tada*! We remove the covering from their eyes and Molyneux's problem will finally cease to be one. This is not all. How many new kinds of questions would these young children bring to us in their new light! How many prejudices of these future priests of science would finally be swept aside! As Mérian concludes, outside of its humanitarian vision, it is a highly philosophical project that would have the further advantage of being easy to put into place. The king's order is all that would be required to make it reality… Fortunately, Frederic II had the wisdom of abstaining from this project. One could also point to this argument for accusing the century of the Enlightenment for having prepared the grounds for fascism, Nazism and god knows what other crimes against humanity.

KP: But couldn't we say that, all the same, the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* sought to defend Enlightenment rationalism against a certain phenomenological romanticism which was focused more on interiority or feeling.

AG: Yes, the Enlightenment that we wanted to reclaim was that of d'Alembert, of Newton of the *Principia*, who Lacan refers to, through the work of his master Koyré…

KP: Lacan was also a close reader of Heidegger. Were you?

AG: No, I have to admit that the forgetting of being left me rather indifferent.

KP: I asked Milner the same question because he wrote on Plato's *Sophist*, also a key text for Heidegger. He responded that he didn't spend much time with Heidegger's work back then either.

AG: On the other hand, we'd already taken up in our own way what Lacan would later call 'antiphilosophy'. In 1974, he himself implemented it, along with linguistics, logic and topology, in the educational program of the Department of Psychoanalysis at the University at Vincennes. It was not a question, to be clear, of considering philosophy as a whole as an enemy to vanquish. To be an 'antiphilosopher' is still to be a philosopher but in a different way. Freud loved to cite Heine, for whom the conceptions of the world that the philosophers constructed only appear to be coherent because they have filled the holes of their systems with their nightcaps. To mark, through analysis, the places where the signifiers played the function of this 'stop-gap' in one or another of these discourses, this approach, if you like, was antiphilosophy, for me at least. There were many ways of doing this. Althusser delivered a 'symptomatic' reading. With Derrida, this would become deconstruction. With Foucault, archaeology and genealogy were posed against the old theme of the history of ideas. As for myself, I practiced a form of antiphilosophy without knowing it. Obviously when I read Badiou, who practices it as well as he speaks of it, that seems boastful.

KP: That's doubtful. At the end of your introduction of Mérian's text, you wrote these lines: 'The techniques for knowing Nature within man, which require and allow it to be decomposed, allow in return their reassembly according to a constructed order, which is no longer that of chance and habit, but of a nature ordered by reason. Because reason is in man the product of a natural progression, the order imposed by reason will be the sole natural order. Man makes use of what nature provides him in order to perfect his nature' (CpA 2.3:112). I think Foucault is saying something similar in *The Order of Things*.

AG: Oh really?

KP: Was he important for your work?

AG: Certainly, and not only because he was on the entrance committee the year Miller and I entered the ENS. In the following years, he taught in Tunisia and was thus far away from us. Physically, I mean, for we followed his publications quite closely.

KP: The passage I just cited also recalls the concept of 'suture' such as Miller developed it in reference to Frege and his theory of numbers (CpA 1.3). What use did you make of this concept? It seems to me that in this passage you're describing a similar process wherein man operates a sort of closing-in on himself.

AG: That's probably true. But, in my view, your remark bears more directly on my article on Rousseau. In 'Gravité de Rousseau' (CpA 8.2), I tried to integrate Althusser's reading of the *Social Contract* with my own understanding of what he presented as a series of 'discrepancies' (CpA 8.1). According to him, in this text there was an 'unthought' or an 'unsaid' that caused a disequilibrium in Rousseau's discourse, which made it theoretically unbalanced and thus led him to bring about nothing more than provisional moments of equilibrium. In this unsaid, one could recognise an 'absent cause' producing a chain of symptomatic effects on the level of effective discourse. I picked up this idea of discrepancy in my article in order to apply it to the sum of Rousseau's work. At the time, we (with the notable exception of Jean Starobinski, in *La Transparence et l'obstacle* [1957]) still opposed Rousseau the labourer of the concept,

the author of the *Social Contract*, to Rousseau the writer, author of the *New Heloise*, the *Confessions*, the *Dialogues* and the *Reveries*. In short, there were two Rousseaus, a division the critics shared: for the philosophers there was the philosophical Rousseau, for the literary critics there was the literary Rousseau. These two Rousseaus were what I tried to think together, in showing that the Rousseau of the *Confessions* was not this proud *ego* who, once his theoretical work was accomplished, decided to bare himself before the public declaring that, 'I am the best of men, despite what they say', but rather that this 'I' of the *Confessions* was theoretically necessitated by a fundamental defect [*défaut*] in his theory. To summarize very quickly, the subject of the autobiographical work is, ultimately, the foundation that lacks in the theoretical work. If he is not what he is, everything risks collapsing [*S'il n'est pas ce qu'il est, tout risque de s'écrouler*].

KP: What really struck me in your article is how you highlight the desire that labours over and animates Rousseau's oeuvre from beginning to end. You seek to procure the set's structure without, for all that, failing to inscribe it in a history.

AG: Let's say, if you like, that I read it as if it were a diachronic form given to the structure, to invoke what Lacan said about myth as it was analysed by his friend Levi-Strauss. I was impressed by this 'hyperstructuralism' that Miller and Milner elaborated, but what really bothered me was that it was difficult for me to use in my reading of the texts of those called the *philosophes* of the eighteenth century. When it concerned Montesquieu, Diderot, Voltaire, and Rousseau, all of them held an essential relation with language, and knew how to make admirable use of it in the fight against prejudice. Instead of outlining their ideas in systems, they had at their disposal the most diverse forms of expression: tales, novels, theatrical works, dictionary articles, letters… *The Persian Letters*, *Jacques the Fatalist*, *Candide*, the *New Heloise* are 'antiphilosophical' novels, each in its own ways and in its style. It was difficult to formalize them in Millerian terms!

KP: Evoking Rousseau's 'theology', you write that its essential character is that 'it allows for the restoration of an order wherein the subject rediscovers its unity and ceases to be infinitely alienated in representation' (CpA 8.2:60). But you show the way in which this unity of the subject is undiscoverable, unless it is situated in an ego which is nothing but an imaginary decoy. And you conclude from this that, for Rousseau, 'the subject is unnameable' (64). This impossibility for the speaking subject of making a unity of himself, to have a name that is really his own is something that we have already encountered in Plato's *Sophist* (cf. CpA 3.4; 3.5).

AG: And elsewhere too! It is the unique feature of the subject of the signifier. In this regard, Rousseau himself was Lacanian when he declared, at the start of the Confessions: 'I am other'. A little attentive reading suffices to notice that he lived and felt, in and through his discourse, as a divided subject, as a 'lack of being'.

KP: Which justified an entire volume of *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* dedicated to Rousseau (CpA 8).

AG: Yes. We even had a republication of his *Essay on the Origin of Languages* at the same time. But I think that this interest for Rousseau also came from the fact that we imagined that our theoretical practice had something to do with the Revolution. And the *Social Contract* was the Bible of the French revolutionaries – notably Robespierre. We were also able to interpret the Terror as the effect in the real of 'the unthought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau'. No doubt, we should have studied the *Discourse on the Arts and*

Sciences more closely: the critique that he had developed of the society of consumption in his time would have prepared us to conceptually confront May 68, which would erupt a year later. But I jest…

KP: In any case, after and despite May 68, the *Cahiers* seemed to come back to their initial program. Volume 9, 'Genealogy of Sciences' (CpA 9) came out in the summer of 1968 and the tenth, on 'Formalization' (CpA 10), the winter of 1969.

AG: I think that they were already ready by the start of 1968, a moment when no one could predict what would happen a few months later. But I am not the right person to speak to about this, since I was no longer in Paris after October of 1967. I had just passed my *agrégation* in philosophy and had to finish my military service. Since I had no wish to wear the uniform, I chose civil service and was appointed to the French *lycée* in Casablanca, Morocco.

KP: So you were missed at the May events?

AG: Let's say I missed them. I burned with impatience for the academic year to end so I could jump on the next plane to join my friends. That's what I did. In August, I was in Besançon, together with Miller and Milner writing tracts and distributing them at the gates of the factories, and I don't remember talking much about formalization. And also, returning to Morocco, I was part of an underground Maoist group that aimed at no more and no less than the overthrow of the Moroccan monarchy. In fact, this ended badly: my Moroccan friends were arrested and sentenced, for the most part, to thirty some years in prison. As for me, I was politely asked to leave the country and I found myself as a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Aix-en Provence, where I taught Spinoza and was a militant in the Gauche Prolétarienne. But my participation in this was rank-and-file, following the orders of the Parisian intellectual leaders of the group.

KP: And so the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* was terminated after the publication of the tenth volume.

AG: We had other fish to fry. Lacan, who valiantly continued his seminar, no longer at the ENS where he had been chased out, but at the Department of Law just in front of the Pantheon, was clearly sad to see these youths taken in by the illusion of this revolution that they heaped praises on. He tried, with his theory of the 'four discourses', to make them see that this revolution did nothing but take them back to their starting place, just like the revolution of heavenly bodies.[11] 'You want a master, you will have him!' he announced to the troublemakers of Vincennes. He was not mistaken and he would soon track down his lost flock, returning them to the fold under the guiding staff, no less firm than illuminating, of Jacques-Alain Miller. The time of *Ornicar?* had come, and that would be another adventure.

KP: Final question: in your view what remains today of the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*? Is it still a reference in the intellectual life of Paris?

AG: That presupposes that there is still an intellectual life in Paris, which Milner seriously doubts.[12] There are, in any case, still those who work today so that we don't end up brain dead. As for the question of what remains of the project, your questions are already the beginning of an answer, are they not? As for me, I would say that the project

[11] Cf. Jacques Lacan, SXVII.
[12] Cf. Jean-Claude Milner, *Existe-il une vie intellectuelle en France?* (Paris: Verdier, 2002)

of the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* has had its time. It was a logical time, that which precisely structures analysis.[13] Like the fable of the three prisoners in Lacan – our chains are nothing but the sequences [*enchaînements*] of reason – at the start we were looking at each other as if in the mirror. The time of understanding and explaining what united us or what separated us had lasted a few brief years. May 68 sounded off the moment of conclusion in the real, and the small team dispersed. And we really were a team, even a real sports team. Even if there was nothing like a match-up between the members of the Cercle d'Épistémologie and the football team at ENS (half-orange jersey, black shorts), it was largely composed of philosophers (Balibar, Bouveresse, Duroux, Mosconi, Rancière...), for the most part brought up in Althusser's school. Althusser was himself a big fan of football. He came to the training sessions, and encouraged us from the sidelines and every time that a match of the French team was on the television, he explained to us why the *Bleus* had lost and what would have been the better strategy to surely win. Good theoretical lessons where we took careful notes. This did not keep us from regularly scoring against the students of the *Polytechnique* or the *Ecole des impôts*. But in the end, what was the importance of all this? We will demolish them the next time, persuaded as we were with Lenin that 'the theory of Marx was all powerful because it is true'. Perhaps it is this sort of certitude that lacks among youths today, even those nourished by Badiou and Žižek, and that keeps them from rediscovering the spirit that animated our project.

They are lacking something else too, that you wouldn't know just from reading the *Cahiers*. We should really reprint these great voices that gave us so much to think about and which can no longer be heard. The voice of Lacan, those of Canguilhem, Foucault, Barthes, Derrida. And the voice of Althusser. A little anecdote, to conclude on a musical note?

KP: Sure.

AG: Althusser also loved the opera. In the spring of 1964, Maria Callas had come to perform a series of special shows at Palais Garnier. La Callas performing *Norma*, we couldn't have missed that! We went with him to the show. La Callas was divine, very much so. A memorable night. What was also unforgettable was that a few days later we learned that on the day after the incident, when she reached for the sublime highs of the aria '*Casta diva*', her voice broke. This was the beginning of the end.

Translated by Tzuchien Tho.

[13] Jacques Lacan, 'Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty' in E 197-213/161-175.