

# A Genealogical Perspective on the Problematic: From Jacques Martin to Louis Althusser

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Jean-Baptiste Vuillerod

The current importance of the notion of the problematic invites us to think about its relevance and its conceptual content, but also to explore its genealogy in the works that explicitly refer to the problematic as a philosophical concept. Thus, it is often considered that the word ‘problématique’ appears for the first time in 1949 in Gaston Bachelard’s *Le rationalisme appliqué* (Bachelard 2004: 51). Even the statistical studies cannot find an occurrence of this word before 1949 and its apparition in Bachelard’s and Paul Ricoeur’s works (Benoit 2005). Its conceptual signification goes back further in France, however. Indeed, the introduction of a manuscript dating from 1947 and entitled ‘Some remarks on the notion of the individual in Hegel’s philosophy’ was entirely devoted to the thought of the problematic. Nowadays located in Louis Althusser’s archives, this manuscript is nothing but the master thesis that Jacques Martin, a nearly unknown student, wrote about Hegel under the direction – that is to be noticed – of Bachelard.

We know very little about Martin, except that Althusser owes him the notion of the problematic. Thanks to Yann Moulier Boutang’s work, we know that he was born May 18, 1922 in Paris and joined the École Normale Supérieure in 1941 (Moulier Boutang 2002: 376-393). There he became one of Althusser and Michel Foucault’s closest friends. Martin was a very brilliant student, passionate about German philosophy and notably Hegel and Marx. But he also suffered from depression and mental illness, which led him to inactivity and finally suicide. This is the reason why, as Nikki Moore insisted (Moore 2005), he is the ‘man without work’ that Foucault references in *History of Madness* and in *Madness, the Absence of Work* (Foucault 1995; 2006). His master’s thesis was never published during his lifetime and Martin just

translated some of Hegel's, Wiechert's and Hesse's work (Hegel 1948; Wiechert 1953; Hesse 1955).

The name of Jacques Martin was therefore apparently destined to fall into oblivion. Fortunately, Althusser preserved the master's thesis and recognized his debt towards him in *For Marx*, mentioning Martin as the real inventor of the concept of the problematic: 'I thought it possible to borrow for this purpose the concept of a "*problematic*" from Jacques Martin to designate the particular unity of a theoretical formation and hence the location to be assigned to this specific difference [...]' (Althusser 1969: 32). After Martin committed suicide in 1963, Althusser was profoundly shocked and this is the reason why he dedicated *For Marx* to him, the person that led him to the reading of Marx: 'These pages are dedicated to the memory of Jacques Martin, the friend who, in the most terrible ordeal, alone discovered the road to Marx's philosophy – and guided me onto it.'

Nowadays Jacques Martin's text is published at last (Martin 2020) and we can evaluate the real significance of his reflexion. The early development of the notion of a problematic in Martin's work and its importance for Althusser, one of the most famous and strongest proponents of the concept, calls into question the traditional genealogy of the notion and means that a new genealogical perspective on the problematic has to be pursued. Our objective here is to contribute to this debate by analyzing the intellectual context in which Martin used the word as a philosophical concept, then in presenting the signification of the problematic in Martin's view, and finally in confronting Althusser's and Martin's comprehensions of this notion to set out the philosophical issues of this genealogical perspective.

## From Germany to France

When Martin wrote his master's thesis in 1947, the problematic was not yet designated as a philosophical concept in France and was not considered as a powerful and relevant tool for analysis. But the word existed in the French intellectual area, especially in the philosophy of science. It is likely that the word had been imported from Germany, where Heidegger made a specific use of it and tried to provide a rigorous concept of the problematic in discussing Hartmann's and Windelband's works. Thus Martin picked up the problematic at the crossroads of those different influences and made it his

own to turn it into a very specific concept destined to have a great posterity in French philosophy. Let us sum up briefly here those steps that preceded Martin's appropriation of the notion.

In the 1923-1934 lessons that he gives in Marburg – now published and entitled *Einführung in die Phänomenologische Forschung* (Heidegger 1994) – Heidegger proposes an intense reflection about the notion of problem and its implications for the history of philosophy. In section 10, he notably deals with the 'clarification of problems (*Klärung der Probleme*)' and distinguishes between problems and questions. A question refers to an implicit care of the *Dasein*: '*Suchen als eine bestimmte Sorge des Daseins*' (Heidegger 1994: 73). In Husserl's philosophy, discussed by Heidegger, it is the question of knowledge that is crucial, conceived as a care of an absolute clarity, a sake of clearness (Heidegger 1994: 79). But a question is not exactly a problem, in the sense that a problem is the question that is explicitly stated and raised in an explicit way (Heidegger 1994: 73). The question appears as the opening of the *Dasein* into the beings and the care that founds such an opening. But the problem is the explicitation of this ontological state of the *Dasein* as a necessary attitude towards the worlds (Heidegger 1994: 77). In 1923-24, the word 'problematic' does not appear yet, but Heidegger insists on the importance of the *Fragestellung* – the question stating – as part of the process of making the question explicit.

In *Einführung in die Phänomenologische Forschung*, Heidegger refers to the School of Marburg, to Wilhelm Windelband and to Nicolai Hartmann's philosophies as important reflections about the notion of the problem and its application to the history of philosophy. In *Zur Methode der Philosophiegeschichte*, written in 1909, Hartmann tried to understand the history of philosophy through the notion of problem (Hartmann 1958). According to him, problems would be the only way to overtake the idiosyncrasy of thinkers and to restore continuity in the history of thought. The problems are transmitted through the ages and thinkers progress in their resolutions. Thus Hartmann criticized Windelband, who had already conceived the history of philosophy as a history of problems, but who considered that those problems were not independent from the living and cultural conditions of the authors (Windelband 1912). On the contrary, in Hartmann's view, there is no link between the history of problems and the history of thinkers. It does not matter if sometimes the philosophers do not resolve the problems or change their preoccupa-

pations or ignore them, because the next ones will take care of them and will pursue the task of resolving them.

Heidegger indicates that those comprehensions of the history of philosophy through the notion of a problem were a 'starting point (*Standpunkt*)' for his own research (Heidegger 1994: 78), but that they had to be overcome by an ontological perspective, stepping forward to the source of the question (*Quellen und Motive des Fragens*): the *Dasein* itself. Indeed, for him, the problem has to reveal the question that is at the root of its existence. In 1927, with the publication of *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger gives a conceptual name to the *Fragestellung*: calling it the *Problematik*. The book opens on the oblivion of the question about being as 'a thematised question of a real research (*als thematische Frage wirklicher Untersuchung*)' (Heidegger 1977: 3). In this context, Heidegger uses the word problematic to point out the renewal of the question of being and the possibility of an explicit reflection about it. He speaks about 'the possibility of reaching an ontological founded problematic (*die Möglichkeit der Inangriffnahme einer zureichend fundierten ontologischen Problematik*)' (Heidegger 1977: 18). Therefore the problematic appears as the new philosophical term for the stating of the question.

Although the importance of the notion of the problematic in 'Sein und Zeit' is obvious, it seems that it was not this book that introduced the word in France, but another text that was translated long before and popularized Heidegger's thought on a large scale (Janicaud 2001: 40): *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, written in 1929 (Heidegger 1976) and published in France as early as 1938 thanks to Henry Corbin's translation (Heidegger 1968). In this text, Heidegger wants to bring to light what he calls 'the ontological problematic' (Heidegger 1968: 100), the 'problem of Being', which was 'repressed' by the tradition, but nevertheless was always present implicitly (Heidegger 1968: 156). The task Heidegger assigns to his own philosophy is to put forward a 'problematic explicitly worded of the concept of Being' (Heidegger 1968: 98). As in Hartmann and Windelband, the problematic is here connected to the history of philosophy, but conversely, Heidegger conceives the problematic as the unique question that underlies all the history of thought. Such a question is thought of as the ontological difference and, according to Heidegger, it is the task of philosophy to make the ontological difference explicit in a clear problematic.

This formulation of a precise concept of the problematic in Germany, particularly in Heidegger's work, is important to understanding the discussion

around the concept in France during the 1930s and 1940s. Indeed, we have reason to believe that the text *Vom Wesen des Grundes* was central in the discussion between Jean Cavaillès and Albert Lautman in the *Société française de philosophie* in February 1939.<sup>1</sup> In his conference presentation, Lautman refers twice to Heidegger (Cavaillès 1994: 608, 630) and the notions of problem and problematic are at the center of the discussion. It is in light of the dialectical concept that the problematic is understood by Lautman and Cavaillès. Indeed, Cavaillès calls the ‘fundamental dialectic of mathematics’ the dynamic process of problem solving: ‘It could be called the fundamental dialectic of mathematics: if the new notions appear as required by the given problems’ (Cavaillès 1994: 601). In a Hegelian perspective, he understands the problematical dialectic as a historical process that goes forwards from problems to solutions. For his part, Lautman uses the term ‘problematic’ and claims that ‘dialectics in itself is pure problematic’ (Cavaillès 1994: 607). According to him, dialectics is the science of philosophical and abstract problems that are not mathematical (for example, the problem of essence and existence, of matter and form, of finite and infinite, and so on), and mathematical notions are answers to those metaphysical problems. Like Cavaillès, Lautman identifies the problematic with dialectics. But like Heidegger, in a Platonic tradition, he removes the dialectical problematic from a concrete history and considers that they cross through all the history of philosophy as transversal transcendent ideas. In the discussion, Jean Hyppolite stresses the difference between Cavaillès and Lautman in their discussions of dialectics and takes the side of a Hegelian concept of dialectic in which problems change at the same time as history moves forward (Cavaillès 1994: 619–620). But both make extensive use of the notions of problem and introduce the term of the problematic taken from Heidegger in France.

When Jacques Martin developed his own conception of the problematic in a historical and Hegelian way, he was probably aware of this discussion and he picked up the term from this epistemological appropriation coming from Heidegger’s notion. We can now move on to the very specific meaning that Martin gives to the problematic.

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1 Concerning Lautman, Emmanuel Barot explains that he had read *Vom Wesen des Grundes* and that he had appropriated the notions of this essay (Barot 2009: 138–144).

## Martin's problematic

The meaning of the problematic in Martin's text and the importance of this notion for him can only be understood by analyzing the particular goal that he sets for himself in his master's thesis: reading Hegel through the lens of Marx and, more precisely, finding in Hegel a precursor of the Marxist criticism of the bourgeois individual. Martin explicitly considers that the two authors enlighten each other in the way of thinking about the relationship between the individual and her social and historical determination: 'Thinking history as something effective (*dire que l'histoire est effective*) means that, on the philosophical level, Hegel's philosophy was an object of critical reflection for Marx; it is only in reference to this one that the indications of Hegel about the individual can be appreciated [...].' (Martin 2020: 41)

It is in this context that Martin uses the notion of the problematic. If the problematic is required by the Marxist reading of Hegel that Martin proposes in 1947, it is because he has to justify why he may raise the problem of the individual in Hegel's philosophy even though Hegel did not thematize it explicitly and, consequently, did not address it in a direct way. Indeed Martin needs a notion that could indicate the possibility of reading the history of philosophy in revealing some implicit questions in Hegel's thought. As Martin recognizes, 'the problem of the individual was not addressed in Hegel's philosophy (Martin 2020: 39). But this is precisely the reason why he has to think about a new way of reading Hegel and, therefore, why he has 'to institute a problematic to contribute to locate the importance of those themes'. The institution of the problematic means the elaboration of a particular perspective of reading, in light of a problem raised by the history of philosophy, but that remains implicit in a text. The notion of the problematic can thus resolve the issue of finding a Marxist question in a theory that came before Marx in the history of thought.

Through his original and very specific approach, Martin shifts the notion of the problematic from Heidegger's ontological perspective and from the epistemological debate between Lautman and Cavaillès to the political Marxist field of thought. In doing so, he transforms profoundly the meaning of the concept. The problematic, as developed by Heidegger, but also by Lautman, entailed exactly the means of asking a question to thinkers, even though this question was not explicitly raised in their philosophy. But Martin does not consider that an ontological question might be the unique cross-cutting of

all the history of philosophy, and he does not think that some eternal and ideal problems are present in particular mathematical problems. On the contrary, like Cavailles, he thinks that problems are totally historical and that only history can explain the implicit problematic of a thinker. According to him, a problematic does not transcend history and it is history itself that creates new problematics when it allows us to read the authors of the past in the light of some more recent authors – in this case Hegel in the light of Marx.

Nevertheless, Martin's objective should not be understood as the will of an ideologue plotting to incorporate Hegel in his political and strategic enterprises. Martin does not even join the French Communist Party, even though he shares a lot of their views (Moulier Boutang 2002). If he returns to Hegel from Marx, it is because he thinks that Hegelian concepts can help us to better understand Marx's philosophy itself. Like a lot of Marxists at that time, Martin thinks that Marx had developed a very precious science of history and of the economic conditions of the capitalist world, but had not explicitly exposed the philosophy that supported its explanations, making it difficult to actualize Marxist thought in the new capitalist context of the aftermath of World War II. It is therefore a very pressing task to explain the philosophy of Marx in the light of Hegel. This idea is notably claimed by Althusser in the master's thesis he writes in the same year, in 1947: 'Hegel is Marx's silent rigor, the living truth of a body of thought which is too pressed by circumstances to apprehend itself in self-consciousness, but which betrays itself in the least of its movements' (Althusser 2014: 142). Martin seems to share the same opinion as his friend. Both think that Hegel can provide the philosophy required by Marxism. We can notice that such a project, even after Martin's death, will be the aim of Althusser's life until his last reflections (Althusser 1994).

In terms of content, the problematic enables Martin to inscribe the individual in its social and historical conditions and in this way to criticize the solipsism of the bourgeois conception of the individual. It connects Hegel to Marx's criticism of the bourgeois individual and thus makes him appear as a critical transition between the individualistic thought of the 18th century and its criticism by Marxism: 'Hegel's propositions are nothing if separated from the individualistic conception of the person in Rousseau or Kant – and they are not determined for those who do not read them through Marx's claims, which make possible the meaning of Hegelianism that simultaneously makes Marx possible' (Martin 2020: 44). Thus, for Martin, the problem-

atic is a way to plunge Hegel into the history of thought and to read him as the first critical philosopher of the bourgeois individual.

As Marx, and Hegel before him, would object to the idea of the subject's self-sufficiency, he integrated the individual in society and history and set out all the mediations that contribute to create personality and subjectivity. According to Martin, Hegel had 'an intuition of the individual as integrated in a reality from which he cannot be separated (*une intuition de l'individu comme intégré dans une réalité dont il n'est pas separable*)' (Martin 2020: 70). Hegel wrote about all the historical and social mediations that determine the individual at one particular time: 'Hegel always conceived the concrete in the form of totality: not a totality of qualities or gifts, whose realization could be enough to define individuality, but the totality of the relationships between the individual and the world that defines her and constitutes her, and conversely those that the individual contributes to constitute and to define.' (Martin 2020: 87) Hegel was the first to propose such a conception of a mediated subjectivity opened to the world and defined essentially by its relations and not by itself. This is exactly why his philosophy is important for Marxism. Thinking the mediations as constitutive of subjectivity, it offers a clear articulation between individuals and collectivity that wipes out the solipsistic and individualist approach of man that characterizes the bourgeois point of view.

In such a view, and in the horizon of a comparison between Martin's and Althusser's problematics, we could sum up the comprehension that Martin had of the problematic in three points: the problematic is a question, it is essentially diachronic and it is a way to read together Hegel and Marx.

1. In Martin's view, a problematic is a specific problem, a particular question, a thematic. Martin speaks of 'the theme of the individual (*le thème de l'individu*)' (Martin 2020: 43) and of 'a theme that offers itself as a problem (*un thème qui se propose comme un problème*)' (Martin 2020: 44). It is not a global structure of thought or a way to raise particular problems, but a single particular problem itself. Martin looks forward to Hegel's criticism of individualism in the Age of Enlightenment and considers the problematic as the designation of such a singular question.
2. Martin's problematic is essentially connected to history and is consequently understood from a diachronic point of view. It is a means to escape from the subjectivity of a thinker and from the explicit questions



that are raised by a philosopher in order to reintegrate a philosophical system in the whole process of the history of thought. This is the reason why, according to Martin, the problematic carries out a 'dispossession by history' (*dépossession par l'histoire*) (Martin 2020: 45). By that means, Hegel is deprived of his own intentional work and is questioned with a problematic that belongs to the later history of Marxism.

3. Martin's objective is to promote a reading of Hegel that would be compatible with Marx. His goal is to read Hegel and Marx together thanks to the common problematic of the criticism of the bourgeois individual. In some ways, it is the idea that Marx had not completely developed his philosophy and that Marxism needs a philosophical theory that meets its practical aspirations.

It is only by keeping in mind these elements that we will understand the differences that Althusser introduces to the notion of the problematic in the 1960s. In spite of those differences, Althusser recognizes his debt towards his friend Jacques Martin, who had accomplished the decisive action of shifting the problematic from Heidegger's philosophy and from the French epistemological debates between Lautman and Cavailles to the Marxist space of thought, and thus had given the impulsion of a new Marxist theory that could be improved thanks to the use of this notion; henceforth it was truly reflected and worked as a legitimate concept.

## From Martin to Althusser

My objective here is to analyze the way Althusser inherits the notion of the problematic from his friend Jacques Martin and how by doing this he transforms the notion at the same time in a decisive way. It is only this double movement of inheritance and transformation that can explain how Althusser is able to recognize his debt towards his friend while creating one of the most representative and powerful concepts of French philosophy during the 1960s.

In *For Marx*, Althusser uses the notion of the problematic to reflect on the 'epistemological break' (*coupure épistémologique*) (Althusser 1969: 32) that occurred between Marx and the philosophers that came before him, especially Hegel and Feuerbach (Gillot 2009: 31). Against Hegel's teleological dia-

lectic, focused on the unity of spirit and on the end of history, Marx opposed a complex dialectic that could contain the 'overdetermination' (Althusser 1969: 87) of a singular event by the diversity of all the elements of the society, understood as a 'complex structured whole' (Althusser 1969: 193). And against Feuerbach's humanism, which had referred to an ahistorical human nature, Marx dispensed with the unscientific and ideological concept of Man and replaced it with a scientific view of society and its history, based on social structures in which men were limited to occupying functions (Althusser 1969: 219-241). The date of the break would have been 1845, when Marx wrote with Engels 'The German Ideology' and thus reached a real science of history. Althusser's intentions were perfectly clear: through Hegel, he targeted the simplistic and rigid Stalinist dialectic, and through Feuerbach, he wanted to criticize the humanist Marxism in France and the Soviet Union that followed Stalin's death. Marx's epistemological break was also Althusser's break with the ideological Marxism of his time.<sup>2</sup>

Althusser's objective is to provide an adequate explanation of the social organization and of the revolutionary process. To this end, he has to take into account the extra-economic causalities that traditional Marxism did not consider since it limited the social contradictions to the conflicts between the productive forces and the relations of production, and thereby restricted the revolution to a transformation of the economic basis. Althusser estimates that such a program is clearly unsatisfactory and needs to be completed by the importance of the political, juridical and ideological factors of the revolution. In particular, the Chinese Cultural Revolution and Mao's criticism of Stalinism proved that a society could change in its economic basis and, despite of this transformation, could remain the same from the point of view of its political and ideological domination.

The complex causality that Althusser proposed by reading Marx in a new perspective is precisely dedicated to thinking these pluralistic phenomenon. But he was convinced that this purpose cannot be achieved if we continue to read Marx in the light of the Hegelian legacy. Hegel's philosophy developed a simple, or even a simplistic concept of causality, where each society is structured by a fundamental contradiction and by a unique principle – for example the juridical principle in the Ancient Rome. Regarding this point, Feuerbach did not differ from Hegel, when he considered each social state

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2 On the context of Althusser's thought, see Elliott 1987 and Lewis 2005.

and the whole history of humanity as constituted by the self-alienation of humankind. In each case, it is the philosophical desire for a first and unique principle that is at stake. It is exactly this Hegelian simplicity, extended by Feuerbach, that can be found in the traditional Marxism, that focuses only on the economic contradiction and ignores other social contradictions. This is the reason why Althusser decides to insist on the epistemological break between Marx and his predecessors and when he reads Martin's text to find a concept that could help him to express this theoretical and historical shift.

The problematic is therefore required to think this epistemological break of Marxism. Althusser gives some dispersed definitional elements that characterize it. According to him, the problematic is 'the constitutive unity of the effective thoughts' (Althusser 1969: 66) of an author; 'the *typical systematic structure* unifying all the elements of the thought' (Althusser 1969: 67); a way by which a philosophy or an ideology reflects its objects, '*the way it reflects that object* (and not in the object itself)' (Althusser 1969: 66); 'the system of *questions* commanding the answers given by the ideology' (Althusser 1969: 67); more generally the 'theoretical presuppositions' (Althusser 1969: 68) of thought; and an unconscious element of thought supposing that 'a philosopher *thinks in it rather than thinking of it*' (Althusser 1969: 69). We can thus say that Althusser considers the problematic as a way of questioning and reflecting objects that provide unity to thought and of which the philosopher is never absolutely conscious.

Hence the problematic describes the organisational mode of a system of thought, the way of thinking it entails, and the particular ways of raising and solving particular questions. In Marx' theory, according to Althusser, it means that the questions are never raised by presupposing a simplistic causality, even if this causality would be the economic contradictions and not the spiritual principle of a society (Hegel) or the alienation of humankind (Feuerbach). The resolutions that he proposes are also not instructed by a single phenomenon. Marx always takes into account the diverse factors that constitute each society and he underlines the multiplicity of causes – the overdetermination – that are at stake in the revolutionary movement. His manner of formulating problems is not the Hegelian way of thinking, and in this sense we can say that he thinks in a different problematic.

On this basis we can understand the difference that has arisen in the concept of problematic between Jacques Martin and Louis Althusser. Althusser's polemical perspective against Hegel's and Feuerbach's philosophies brings

him to transform the notion. In his view, it is necessary for the problematic to be understood as a means to separate all the mature thought of Marx from other philosophies. From there stems the differences with Martin and the fact that Althusser considers the problematic not as a single question raised from a diachronic point of view in order to reconcile Hegel and Marx, but as a systematic and synchronic structure of thought absolutely original and revolutionary, without any link to any prior philosophy.

1. In Althusser's discourse, the problematic does not concern a thematic or a unique question, but a whole organization of thought from which the particular questions can be raised. Althusser deals with 'the active but unavowed problematic which fixes for it the meaning and movement of its problems and thereby of their solutions' (Althusser 1969: 69). This means that the singular elements of thought should be considered from the problematic and not the opposite: 'So anyone who still wants to pose the problem of elements in this perspective must recognize that everything depends on a question which must have priority over them: the question of the nature of the problematic which is the starting-point for actually thinking them, in a given text.' (Althusser 1969: 68) Or, as he also writes: 'Every ideology must be regarded as a real whole, internally unified by its own problematic, so that it is impossible to extract one element without altering its meaning.' (Althusser 1969: 62) Thus the problematic is not a problem, but a way or a perspective to raise problems. It is not a particular question – Martin's question of the individual – but a principle of coherence between all the questions that a philosophy can ask. Feuerbach's problematic, for example, was anthropology, a way of questioning from the presupposition of human nature and from the point of view of human relationships. On the contrary, Marx discovered a problematic where social structures and structural relations, not men, were at the center.

2. Being a structure of thought and not a particular question, the problematic is set out by Althusser from a spatial figure and not from a temporal perspective. It is therefore not understood as diachronic, as it was in Martin, but as synchronic. According to Althusser, the problematic is a 'field' (Althusser 1969: 66) and it is not constituted by the succession of thoughts in history, but by the combination of different elements inherent to a philosophy. From this principle, reading Hegel in light of the individualistic thought of the 18th

century and of Marx is not relevant; much more so is searching in Marx's work for the moment – after 1845 – when his thought found a new systematic way of raising problems and hence became absolutely original.

3. The consequence is that Althusser does not want to read Hegel and Marx together but, on the contrary, strives to distinguish Marx from all the philosophies that preceded his, especially from Hegel's dialectic and Feuerbach's humanism. He searches for what is called, in an Aristotelian language, the 'specific difference' that separates Marx from others, and then defines the problematic as 'the particular unity of a theoretical formation and hence the location to be assigned to this specific difference' (Althusser 1969: 32). The objective cannot be, as it was in Martin, to reconcile Marx and his predecessors, but to inscribe the very originality of Marx in the history of philosophy: 'The truly Marxist critique of Hegel depends precisely on this change of elements, that is, on the abandonment of the philosophical problematic whose recalcitrant prisoner Feuerbach remained.' (Althusser 1969: 48)

## Conclusion

When Bachelard used the word 'problematic' in *Le rationalisme appliqué*, he may have borrowed it from the epistemological debate between Cavaillès and Lautman, but he also could have found it in the work of his young student Jacques Martin, whose master thesis he supervised. In any event, the role of Martin in the development of French philosophy after World War II should surely be revalorized. His importance in the thought of the problematic is enough to reconsider his name in the great tradition of Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard and others. But his thought of social mediations is not unconnected with the idea of a historical transcendental that is thematized at the end of Althusser's work in 1947 – 'Marx understood that transcendental was history' (Althusser 2014: 170) – and that is exposed for itself in Michel Foucault's 'La constitution d'un transcendental dans la *Phénoménologie de l'esprit* de Hegel'<sup>3</sup>, his master's thesis written in 1949. One can also notice that Martin mentions already the psychoanalytic concept of 'overdetermination (*surdétermination*)' (Martin

3 Manuscript not yet published.

1947: 31)<sup>4</sup> to explain the complex causality that results from interfering social mediations. And as we said earlier, Foucault's 'absence of work' is a reference to Martin's madness.

My objective here is not to claim that all the French philosophy in the 1960s was contained in Martin's first work. I just would like to sketch the possibility of considering him as an essential moment of its development from the 1940s to the 1960s and even afterwards. The transformation of the notion of the problematic by Althusser is remarkable on this point, because he uses Martin's work but he turns it into something else and in a different context of thought. Martin developed some decisive intuitions and some important concepts that have not been developed further in their original form, but that have been changed to serve a different goal and to signify different meanings. He is one of the links in this philosophical chain that runs to us and we probably would not reflect today on the problematic without his contribution.

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4 'But this reciprocity implies a dialectic – it could be said provisionally an *overdetermination* of significations – that Hegel has the merit of revealing and, conversely, of integrating into the totality [...]' (Martin 1947: 31). Martin speaks also of an 'overdetermination of significations' to qualify 2020: 55 Hegel's thought of the universal 2020:76 (Martin 1947: 74).

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