

The School Shaped [*Travaillée*] by the Cartel

By *Caroline Leduc*

Entering a cartel is often the first step towards the School and analytic formation or indeed towards an analytic treatment. Having passively attended some lectures or seminars, the candidate, after leaving his comfort zone, engages in an experience in which his desire to know is called upon. If he is waiting for the plus-one to deliver the answers to his questions like a classical master, he will be let down through the operation of the cartel. What emerges is a scattered knowledge, bits and pieces that are sometimes contradictory and never conclusive. A knowledge that is a little disappointing in fact, but that produces no disenchantment because it palpitates with desire. It is a knowledge held in suspense: something additional is there to know.

The role of the plus-one is crucial in this operation but takes an unexpected turn. As Jacques-Alain Miller emphasises, it is not about being a teacher: “when a cartel ends with ‘something that cannot be said’ – I understand that many cartels end with a ‘we cannot testify to what we have done’ – that seems to me to be the sign that there was something of the master at the start, which has not been got rid of. I absolutely do not see in the fact of this impotence the proof that there would have been an excellent cartel there.”¹ Nor is it a question of forming an analyst. The plus-one refrains from putting the supposed knowledge, which of course is present, into operation as he would do in the treatment: “If the cartel has believed to have co-opted an analyst and the analyst conforms to this, which in a cartel means to play dumb, we know the result: the participants mess around. It is the structure of the analytic discourse, but transposed to the cartel, the result of which is the denunciation of some master-signifiers, which seems to me very poor.”²

Thus Lacan pinpointed the necessity of the “anyone” character of the plus-one, although it has to be someone.³ In other words, the plus-one who works on his cartel question like the others, is invited as a subject in want of knowledge. Chosen by three or four others, he is put in the position of being the leader of the group, but he is a “poor leader”, “weakly invested”.⁴ In this weakness, in this hollow, lives the transference to the School, providing vectors to the joint work.

Jacques-Alain Miller thus argues, astonishingly if one thinks about it, that the appropriate discourse in cartel work is that of the hysteric, whose affinity, he reminds us, is with the discourse of science. It is nevertheless a question of producing knowledge, and the hysterical discourse is expert in this, on condition that its aim of reducing the master to impotence is thwarted. That’s why the plus-one is not the master, and that’s why Jacques-Alain Miller says that what is at stake is that the cartel members “work on the basis of their insignia [traits] and not from their want-of-

¹ Miller, J.-A., “Five Variations on the Theme of ‘Provoked Elaboration’”, 11 December 1986. Available <http://quatreplusone.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/41-NUMERO-5-English-version.pdf>

² *Ibid.*

³ Lacan J, “D’écologie”, 11 March, 1980. A text read by Lacan during his Seminar, available online at <http://www.londonsociety-nls.org.uk/index.php?file=Cartels.html>

⁴ Miller J.-A., “Le cartel au centre d’une école de psychanalyse”, 8 October 1994, published as “Le cartel dans le monde”, in *La Lettre mensuelle*, No. 134. <http://www.causefreudienne.net/cartels-dans-les-textes>.

being.”⁵ From their insignia, in other words, from a support that is already symptomatic.

From this perspective, we are not sufficiently aware of the subversion at stake in Lacan’s act of making the cartel the “basic organ”⁶ of the School: non-members work there with the support of a hysterical discourse that is well handled, deflated. Though Jacques-Alain Miller may have wondered, at a particular moment, if it was necessary to make a distinction between the cartels of the School and those of the ACF,⁷ nothing was done to bring about a distinction that could have abolished the largely misrecognised scandal of the cartel.⁸ On the contrary, it drives home the point: “because the cartel is contemporary with the creation of the School, we can assume that it is congruent with the concept of the School.” It is thus a School that consents to be de-completed by what is not it, shaped [*travaillée*] by questions that agitate those who want it and who could harbour its future.

“Whoever is pro-cartel is anti-authoritarian,”⁹ says Jacques-Alain Miller, because he perceives what drives [*anime*] the School at the opposite pole to that of the bureau, defined as “management committee”, “brewing countless affairs, to whom one submits one’s work which is met with a yes or a no,”¹⁰ which is something we try *not only* to be. At this other end is the often obscure and humble, but crucial work of the cartel. “No progress can be expected, other than by periodically bringing the results as well as the crises of the work to light.”¹¹ It is crucial because it is intrinsically linked to failure.

Thus, the device of the cartel shapes the School by means of failure and leads it to change, not through the spectacular profusion of a new doctrine, or political decisions of its governing bodies, but because it makes the subjectivity of future generations of analysts pass “through the depths of taste”¹² and through the social bond it constitutes.

Translated by Jo Rostron

⁵ Miller, J.-A., “Five Variations...”, *op. cit.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Miller, J.-A., “Le cartel au centre ...”, *op. cit.*

⁸ [TN: the ‘scandal’ is that non-members may join cartels alongside members of the School and work within this crucial device, thus mixing people from all works of life, with many kinds of experience who then work together with practising analysts of the School.]

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Lacan, J., “D’écologie”, *op. cit.*

¹² Lacan, J., “Kant avec Sade”, *Écrits*, Paris, Seuil, 1966, p. 765.

The text is available online at:

<http://londonsociety-nls.org.uk/index.php?file=Cartels.html>