

RG: Okay I think we can go, okay, sir I will start please by asking you your name and your date and place of birth

PV: Wait, I have to get well

RG: Can I help you, or is that going to go?

PV: It's going to go there

RG: yes, it's good like that

PV: So I am Patrick Viveret and I was born on March 16, 1948 in Créteil

RG: In Créteil

PV: Yes, in the Val d'Oise

RG: And your family is of Parisian origin or?

PV: No, I have part of my family on the paternal side which is from the Paris region, on the side of what was before Seine-et-Marne, which is now the Val d'Oise, and the other part on the maternal side is Haute-Savoie

RG: Yes okay

PV: So, we, we don't mind if we go?

RG: Yes, we can

PV: As I thought it was not this morning

RG: Oh okay, so on your mother's side it's Haute-Savoie

PV: It's Haute-Savoie and it's a family that was itself an immigrant since its name is Luchuni, LUCHUNI

RG: Oh yes, immigrant from Italy?

PV: She was formerly from Italy and then she went through Switzerland

RG: Okay, and so on the point of, what was your father doing professionally?

PV: He was a chartered accountant

RG: Yes. And your mother worked or was at home?

PV: She was at home but she had worked during the war as a nurse in the Resistance. And when she was able she - especially when they left for a few years in Africa - she worked as a nurse or as a caregiver.

RG: So she joined the Resistance at, who did she go with?

PV: In Haute-Savoie, it was a maquis of Franc-Tireurs et Partisans, but it was a maquis which was led by Maurice Herzog, who well known mountaineer, who was also minister of sports under General de Gaulle

RG: And she went to Africa, with?

PV: Yes when my father was sent by the United Nations to help the development bank of Mali in Bamako. She went with him for five years

RG: Around when is that?

PV: It was around 1973 or so

RG: Yes okay. And your father lived a more peaceful war?

PV: Yes, the, he was too young to be mobilized, well I do not know exactly what happened but in any case, he has, he did not have the same commitment as my mother

RG: And then from a political and religious point of view where were they located?

PV: In the tradition ... they were on the left and in the tradition of social Christianity, and it also corresponded to the time when, behind Pierre Mendès France, there were a certain number of Christians who found themselves on the left

RG: Because when we say social Christianity, it covers a multitude of trends, right?

PV: Yes, but as its name suggests, it is still currents that can be seen in a perspective of social transformation.

RG: Okay, okay. And so, both parents, they thought like that, finally they had the same perspective on this social Christianity after the war?

PV: Yes. Yes, yes, my mother had also been in the Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne, and my father his parents were, Catholics much more traditional and conservative but he was in reaction against his parents.

RG: Okay. So what had you done for your studies? Secondary and higher

PV: Well, I studied at the Lycée Joliot-Curie in Nanterre, which then led to a bachelor's and master's degree in philosophy, then a CAPES in philosophy. And then the other side I was, I studied and I graduated from the Institute of Political Studies in Paris

RG: So you did both Nanterre and Sciences Po?

PV: There you go

RG: And it was done easily, there wasn't too much work or?

PV: That is to say there was an equivalence which allowed to be exempted from the preparatory year of Sciences Po after the license

RG: Okay, did you do the license first?

PV: The bachelor's degree and then jointly with the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris the master's degree and the CAPES in philosophy

RG: Okay. So what year did you enter Nanterre?

PV: Ben Nanterre I have been there since the age of ten and a half since I returned at the time of the sixth to

RG: Yes in high school

PV: In high school and at the faculty, well I must have entered in about 65 I think

RG: And Sciences Po later?

PV: And Sciences Po, I got there in September 68

RG: And you were in Nanterre because it tempted you as a new university or because it was in your neighborhood, because people from the west of Paris were focused on Nanterre, right?

PV: I lived in Nanterre

RG: Yes

PV: Finally, at that time I no longer lived in Nanterre but I stayed in high school in Nanterre

RG: Yes

PV: So geographically it was logical for me to be there and I was also interested in living the Nanterre campus as a new experience. And since I also requested a room at the university campus, it was more convenient for me

RG: And what were your impressions of Nanterre at that time?

PV: Nanterre was marked by a situation where spatially we could see all the major societal problems of the time, since there was the huge slum which was still present. The area of the faculty was a very desert area, which was also called "Nanterre la folie", the station which served it was called Nanterre-la-Folie.

RG: Yes

PV: And on the other side of the university campus there was on the one hand a barracks, and then on the other hand what we called the house of the little old people of Nanterre

RG: Yes

PV: So with great social misery, the issue of slums, the military presence, so there were many conditions that were met for individual and collective awareness in Nanterre

RG: So, can you tell a little about your political training? How, when and why did you have this, this ambition to become an activist or to get involved, and in what?

PV: First of all, I had social commitments relatively early since when I was in high school I joined the Jeunesse Étudiante Chrétienne where I was very active.

RG: Yes

PV: I quickly became responsible for the lycée, and then I was federal responsible, then I was regional responsible for the Paris region, then I was on the national team of Christian Student Youth.

RG: Yes

PV: And so through the JEC I had an awareness of most of the major collective issues and including on the political level. So it was in a way quite naturally that I found myself interested in student unionism, active in the movements that developed in Nanterre at that time, and then also my parents having been in the tradition of the new left and of mendesism. I was quickly interested in Michel Rocard and the Unified Socialist Party, in particular because my parents had moved to the Yvelines.

RG: Yes

PV: And Michel Rocard was presented at the time in the fourth district of Yvelines which was where my parents lived, and therefore it gave me the opportunity to attend meetings, to meet Michel Rocard, to see people from the Unified Socialist Party which was at the time the only party which was really open on new issues, which had both been the leading party in the fight against the Algerian war and which was the party most open to the new aspirations of May 68 and what we will call after the self-management current

RG: Because when you met Michel Rocard?

PV: In 1967 the first time

RG: And this is the year of his election in Yvelines?

PV: No his election in Yvelines, it comes two years later in a by-election in 1969 against the prime minister at the time who was Maurice Couve de Murville

RG: Oh yes, who won?

PV: Yes, and Rocard to everyone's surprise won

RG: Oh yes, okay

PV: And that was the start of his known political career. He was known in a number of militant circles but there he was much better known

RG: And so in the wider world you were marked by the Algerian war or you or were too young or

PV: I was, I was too young compared to the Algerian war but I felt in the affiliation of the people and the actors who had fought the Algerian war, and then on the other hand I was obviously much more directly aware of the Vietnam War so I was, I was in the, networks of struggles against the Vietnam War, but I was always in a perspective of non-violent struggle

RG: Yes okay

PV: So for example I was not a supporter of the part of the Vietnam committees which advocated violent or armed struggle.

RG: Because there were Vietnam Committees and basic Vietnam Committees?

PV: Yes but

RG: But demonstrating is the same as violence?

PV: No, there is, the divisions between the national Vietnam Committees and the grassroots Vietnam Committees were more differences linked to political orientations and differences, in particular to the differences between the extreme left groups of the time.

RG: Yes okay

PV: The basic Vietnamese were more Maoist in inspiration as the national Vietnamese were more Trotskyist in inspiration, but I was not directly in these committees.

RG: Okay

PV: I took part more in the broader movement of the society of the time against the Vietnam war what

RG: But in Nanterre were you able to avoid the March 22 movement?

PV: Ah well I was there in the movement of

RG: Yes

PV: March 22, but the March 22 movement was a non-violent movement

RG: Yes

PV: It was a very pluralist movement where all tendencies could express themselves and, and it was a non-violent movement and we can say it was a rather festive and playful movement, like Daniel Cohn-Bendit

RG: That you knew at the time of course

PV: Yes, yes, yes

RG: What are your memories of him from that time?

PV: Well, it's mostly a memory of, of someone who was alive in the strong sense of the word what

RG: Yes

PV: And he had a curiosity, an imagination, a desire for life that made him out of step with all forms of traditional far-left activism, including groups, anarchist groups and - even if at that time. he was at the time of the extreme left and marked by an anarchist tradition - we felt that there was in him a curiosity, an openness wider than his own political tradition

RG: Yes, okay because, I just read his last book Forget 68 and there he says that really 68 it was a revolt but not very political. He insists on the side as you say playful, festive, subversive, cultural of that time and I wonder if it was a bit of a reading since now since politics is a little discredited. At the time, could we separate what was political and what was cultural?

PV: Uh, me, the way I lived that period was already a new approach to politics

RG: Yes

PV: But it was a new approach to politics that was marked precisely by the importance given to cultural issues, social issues, issues of lifestyle change, and also international issues were quite out of step with the postures of the extreme left which for us were in fact quite

traditional politics what, in the modes of organization, in the conception, in the obsession with a power to be taken. While what we wanted was more power to create than power to take, and I already felt this discrepancy at the time, I had a lot of friends or some friends who were in the groups of 'leftmost

RG: Yes

PV: And I told them you are missing out on the best of, this movement because necessarily they were so taken by the organizational objectives, what they considered the preparation for example of a revolutionary party that they were not in the places of speech, in the places of creative imagination, in the festive nature of the movement, and I find that this was moreover well expressed in Romain Goupil's film Mourir à trente

RG: Yes

PV: where we see Michel Recanati discovering after the fact that he had completely missed out on the flavor of 68, because he was too busy with the problems of organization, order service, internal logic in the Communist League of the time and, and suddenly this terrible depression that he experienced afterwards and which contributed to his, to his suicide; that seems quite revealing to me

RG: Okay

PV: from what was already at the time, finally when we lived it, the feeling that the extreme left did not express the unprecedented of 68

RG: Okay. Did you know him from Recanati?

PV: I don't have it, I've been around it, I can't say that I have it

RG: Yes

PV: that I knew him. I attended a few meetings or he was there but I did not know him personally

RG: But the people you knew in the March 22 movement who thought like you apart from Cohn-Bendit, who were they?

PV: Ben, it was not the leaders

RG: Yes

PV: Because the official leaders, because the movement of March 22 he himself expressed in his, his informal organization its two facets

RG: Yes

PV: Because on one side there were the representatives of all the political groups of the extreme left, perhaps larger than the extreme left but, all the political groups were keen on, especially at the time when the March 22 movement was very dynamic, to be present

RG: Yes

PV: So that was a bit of a cartel side. And then there was the March 22 movement more at the grassroots where people were less known, but where they were also much funnier and, and imaginative. But it is not people, it is not known people what, their names you will say nothing what, it is ... The people who were more known like Xavier Langlade, like etc., were themselves in extreme left political organizations

RG: Well for example I interviewed Anne Querrien, she was in this base or?

PV: Yes she, she, she is in my opinion more significant of this, of this second attitude

RG: Yes. Because for inspiration you read Marx, read and rejected Marx, you were more of a Situationist, where did you get your ideas from?

PV: Uh

RG: Maybe it was spontaneous but I don't know

PV: No, no but, especially through the JEC, it had been a real, a real openness to social, political and intellectual traditions. And then we were also very much in touch with the Communist Youth movement which was important at the time, I'm talking about the high school side. I was very quickly in touch with a plurality of transformative traditions, my personal sensitivity was rather on the side of the libertarian tradition, but of a non-violent libertarian tradition and which at the same time integrates elements of what I have. I had seen in André Gorz, which had interested me a lot, what he called radical reformism

RG: Yes okay

PV: And besides, it was funny because in the assemblies of March 22, I defended this posture of radical reformism, so which obviously was culturally unacceptable for many people who found that it was too right-handed compared to the revolutionary position, which was funny is that it was regularly Cohn-Bendit who defended me, not on the merits

RG: Yes

PV: but on the right to speak

RG: Okay

PV: So, and I realized afterwards - because this vision of radical reformism remained more or less constant in me afterwards - that most of the people I had at the time on my left, I



found them to my right because ... me one of the things that marked me quite quickly, I was very interested in the economic and social critical aspect of Marxism

RG: Yes

But the Radical reformism for me expressed this situation well because I spotted behind the revolutionary posture many authoritarian postures and, and a deep aspiration to a return to order, that is to say the physical definition of revolution in fact. You also find it on the political level, and, as there was a simplifying reductive vision there was also, in the, the hope of putting a society back on its feet.

RG: Yes

PV: something that was ultimately very conservative, very

RG: Ok I understand

PV: Finally a return to order, and from this point of view for me the notion of radical reformism, it had the advantage of going more to the root of the questions and in particular of the difficulty of human communities. to, to succeed in living together. Whether it was not simply linked to bolts to be broken down, whether it was exploitation, or whether it was the bourgeois state or whether it was later the patriarchal, there was an intrinsic difficulty of humanity in its report. to herself

RG: Yes

PV: who was already present. So that's the things I theorized about in later years but it's, I remember it was already there

RG: Okay

PV: a lot in the intuitive state, and in my resistance to what I found simplifying and reducing in the extreme left postures, for example there were a lot of elements of this nature. And for example one of the books that marked me the most, well there are two books that marked me at the time, one is La Brèche written by both Morin, Castoriadis and then , I don't remember the third one. isn't it Lefort?

RG: Yes

PV: No I don't know, and the other is La Prise de parole by Michel de Certeau

RG: Oh yes

PV: And, and where Michel de Certeau mentioned as a hypothesis the fact that there was such a novel of 68 which did not correspond to any known theoretical reference case, and that suddenly this novel had given way to what he called a recovery by previous languages

RG: Yes

PV: and in particular by the internal political languages of the visions of Third World revolutions which obviously did not match at all compared to the unprecedented of this, of 68, be it Maoism or Trotskyism, the one frozen on the Maoist Chinese Revolution, and the other on what the Russian Revolution would have been if it had been Trotskyist rather than Stalinist. In both cases it seemed to me to be completely out of step with reality, in a certain way and La Brèche and La Prise de parole by Michel de Certeau put concepts and organized what for me was present in the effective state. . In the same way as this third very important book which was for me at the time, Le Socialisme difficile by André Gorz

RG: Oh yes

PV: and the radical reformism hypothesis

RG: And did you fuck these people or is it just the readings?

PV: So then I got to know Morin, I got to know Castoriadis, I got to know Lefort. Michel de Certeau I knew him less, I listened to him, I saw him, I had to speak once or twice with him but I cannot say that I really knew him, I have met yes

RG: Is he a Jesuit?

PV: Yes he was a Jesuit yes

RG: Yes. And when you say the anthropological weakness of Marxism, you mean that it was not very well theorized in terms of human relations, right?

PV: Yes that's right, it's that the ... both economic criticism and social criticism were very strong, but the idea that, precisely once the proletariat, which had only its chains to lose, would have lost its way. liberated himself, the hypothesis that suddenly we could move towards a form of reconciled humanity and that is why the destruction of the bourgeois state opened the way to its decline and to a proletarian democracy that would be infinitely stronger than bourgeois democracy, and therefore a dictatorship of the proletariat during a weak period of transition was not dangerous. All these elements then seemed to me to be the very, very early rise of a, of a deep anthropological insufficiency which led to the, an insufficiency in the taking into account of the, the autonomy of the political question and in particular of the democratic question what. So obviously it was more complex with Marx than with Lenin and at the time the reading of Marx was also done a lot through the reading of Lenin and The State and the Revolution, but I remember having a lot discussed, commented on and criticized precisely the totally idealistic character of The State and the Revolution where Lenin explaining what communism was and explaining why there would be no more social contradictions in communism and that the problems would be Solved so simply, so easily, he said, that if people prey on an old woman the congregation around will immediately stop those people from doing harm. Finally as if precisely once the bolts of exploitation, of the domination of the bourgeois state had been jumped, things were going to be simple, and probably because the, my Christian tradition on the one hand and then

the opening to all the, the human sciences, in particular psychoanalysis, psychology obviously that I had done in the certificate of philosophy, brought me to consider that the human question was much more complex and that to free oneself from its chains. Yes, it was necessary and legitimate, but the mechanisms of voluntary servitude and the difficulty of living together, in the broad and radical sense of the term the question of love were much more complex than what the approaches of Marxist traditions believed. things were going to be simple, and probably because the, my Christian tradition on the one hand and then the opening to all, the human sciences, in particular psychoanalysis, psychology obviously that I had done in the certificate of philosophy , led me to consider that the human question was much more complex and that to free oneself from its chains. Yes, it was necessary and legitimate, but the mechanisms of voluntary servitude and the difficulty of living together, in the broad and radical sense of the term the question of love were much more complex than what the approaches of Marxist traditions believed. the psychology obviously that I had done in the certificate of philosophy, brought me to consider that the human question was much more complex and that to free oneself from its chains. Yes, it was necessary and legitimate, but the mechanisms of voluntary servitude and the difficulty of living together, in the broad and radical sense of the term the question of love were much more complex than what the approaches of Marxist traditions believed. the psychology obviously that I had done in the certificate of philosophy, brought me to consider that the human question was much more complex and that to free oneself from its chains. Yes, it was necessary and legitimate, but the mechanisms of voluntary servitude and the difficulty of living together, in the broad and radical sense of the term the question of love were much more complex than what the approaches of Marxist traditions believed.

RG: So you are talking about questions of love. That is to say that we talk quite often about a political radicalism, there is a political radicalism and there is a lifestyle radicalism in those 60s. Did you have uh, what were your ideas about some sort of cultural revolution or sexual liberation at the time?

PV: Well, there was on the one hand the importance of cultural issues, lifestyle and sexual liberation, the texts of William Reich, the texts of Marcuse, the, corresponded to, put words on a bubbling of life in a society which had otherwise remained very blocked, in particular remained very blocked in matters of morals

RG: Yes

PV: and that I experienced very, very positively. But at the same time, I was quickly struck by the fact that including this sexual liberation, it was basically relatively superficial and precisely, it often carried logic of domination behind its apparent radicalism. For example I was very, very struck by the number of men who used revolutionary ideology to convince

young women to have sex with them in the name of the fact that if she refused it was really a sign of their petty bourgeois ideology, so they, they

RG: Yes

PV: that struck me because

RG: Yes

PV: So in addition in certain extreme left groups, it took on extreme caricature forms.

RG: Yes

PV: A group like, like the JS, the emanation of the OCI, their double specialty was the defenestration of their political opponents and it was right to seize the girls who joined the groups. So I was very sensitive to the positive aspect of the moral issue, including the positive aspect of sexual liberation.

RG: Yes

PV: I found that it was a very important screed of lead which began to jump there, but very, very quickly I had the feeling that it was necessary to work more on the complexity of the love question in all its forms.

RG: Yes of course

PV: And besides, I was then, I lived in community for ten years, I was completely in this lineage there but I remember one of the things that we had done before living in community. was for six months to read, to exchange on all the experiences of community that we knew as well in France as abroad to also identify the main mistakes not to make. And in these mistakes not to be made there were elements of idealisms on love and sexual matters or on the question of children, of believing that children could belong to the community and that kinship ties could easily be blurred. , or that everyone could have sex with everyone and that it was very healthy, that was no problem.

RG: Yes okay

PV: So we did not draw conservative conclusions for any of them but let's say that we did draw conclusions in terms of the depth of the difficulty of the love and sexual question which was not limited to the fact that it was enough to free oneself from the bowels of a society, of a bourgeois society. And I've seen a lot of, a lot of personal dramas, of people who believed that, and found themselves pretty deeply hurt to find that it was so much more complicated.

RG: And when you say "we", you rethought these questions, it was with a group of students, a group of friends, a ...?

PV: Yes I was in a group of friends who got together. So I had my social commitments, so I had enough commitment to the JEC, until the 70s since I was still with the national team of the JEC, I had political commitments since I had returned in the Unified Socialist Party and fairly quickly I took on responsibilities, notably in the, the newspaper of the time which was called the Socialist Tribunal

RG: Yes

PV: I had a pseudonym which was Gérard Ferrant at the time and which was precisely the - as everyone had pseudonyms at the time it was the big game - this pseudonym - at the beginning it was collective, it that is to say there was a friend named Gérard Doiret, another named Alexis Ferrant in our group of student friends, and therefore regardless of these socio-political commitments, we had a group of friends from a dozen friends who met very regularly and who in particular did two things, on the one hand a general exchange on the situation, current events etc., on the other hand an exchange based on reading cards

RG: Yes

PV: At that time it was quite archaic, we used carbon sheets which meant that everyone could make a reading sheet for the whole group which meant that at the end of the year we had a fairly large package of reading cards and that helped us a lot because for example all the great theoretical debates of the time, structuralism, Althusser, Lacan, Foucault etc., independently of our own experiences but we discussed a lot in this group. And it is also a lot in this group that the elements of locating what seemed to us both interesting and at the same time limited or superficial in the dominant traditions of the time and in particular in the Marxist tradition or in the libertarian tradition. too

RG: Yes

PV: appeared to us

RG: And was it just after 68 all that or during?

PV: Yes that's it, it's a group that existed from 68 years ago, it lasted quite a long time since afterwards when we were in community from 73 years old, it is a group that lasted for two more years. pretty much so i would say it's, it lasted at least, at least six years

RG: Okay. Just to get back to the Catholic perspective, so you were at JEC?

PV: We never spoke to the JEC about a Catholic perspective, the

RG: Christianity

PV: For us it was, it was Christianity

RG: Okay, excuse me

PV: Identification, no I, it's not

RG: Yes

PV: not at all a reproach that I am making you, but it is a precision because I am very struck by the fact that in the current periods which are marked by identity regressions, it is very striking to see that there is a Catholic identification which did not exist at the time, in any case which did not exist in the so-called Catholic Action movements but which were defined by Christianity and not by Catholicism

RG: Okay, but JEC, the 'C' is for Catholic or

PV: Christian

RG: Christian

PV: Christian, yes

RG: Okay

PV: Yes, and we wanted to

RG: Heard

PV: We wanted it, yes

RG: Because you have, there were still crises inside the JEC in the years, well it was 55, 65

PV: Yes, yes, yes

RG: Did you experience the last crisis?

PV: So me

RG: Because there were people leaving that's it

PV: I experienced it indirectly because at the time I was still relatively young, even if it was the moment when I passed my baccalaureate, but I began to have responsibilities at the federal level but not all at the national level

RG: Yes

PV: So I felt rather in sympathy with the national team in its conflict with Monsignor Veuillot who was the Archbishop of Paris at the time but I was not directly involved. But on the other hand fairly quickly, and in particular from the Paris region, the orientations which were those of the new national team set up by the episcopate were contested. And from

the National Council of Limoges we again reconstituted a national team which was more in line with the perspective of the social commitment which had been that of the JEC

RG: Yes

PV: Expressed by the team of 6five, even if we were, we were very open and interested in Marxism but we did not have the kind of fascination or feeling that apart from Marxism there was no possible theoretical framework for thinking about society, from this point of view we were no longer

RG: Okay, and you had Protestant friends?

RG: Yes. Yes Yes

RG: For example, there are movements like this around the Sower

PV: Yes. Yes Yes Yes

RG: So it was really Christian, not Catholic

PV: So, let's hear it, the JEC was mainly made up of Catholics

RG: Yes

PV: But Catholics who did not define themselves in relation to catholicity

RG: Yes

PV: They were spontaneously in an ecumenical vision. You have to remember this is a period when all these movements prepare and are then nourished by the Council

RG: Yes

PV: The role of the Council is a very important role, the person of John XXIII, Pacem in Terris, Mater and magistra, play a very big role in, in this dynamic there.

RG: And you were influenced, you spoke of Michel de Certeau, there were nevertheless also quite radical Dominicans

PV: Yes, for example Father Chenu

RG: Yes

PV: Well, to a certain extent, all the fathers of the Council but certainly Father Chenu was one of those who influenced us the most

RG: Okay

PV: Besides, me then in my thesis of philosophy I worked on the topicality of Thomism

RG: Oh yes

PV: There was also Maritain who influenced us, Gabriel Marcel, I am talking about Christian authors

RG: Yes

PV: And then there were obviously all the currents linked to psychoanalysis, to Freudo-Marxism, Marcuse, Reich

RG: Yes, okay. So to get to the events of 68, so how did it go for you in Nanterre and in Paris at this time?

PV: Well first of all, being at the Cité universitaire, I was in the start of the movement even before March 22

RG: Yes okay

PV: Since it started first at the University campus and because, it is because there was this turmoil, this mobilization on the side of the University campus that the conditions were also met.

RG: Yes

PV: on March 22, when we learned of the arrest of Xavier Langlade, so that the idea of going to occupy the administrative building spread like wildfire, and so precisely I was immediately sensitive to the fact that 68 was first of all questions about the ways of life

RG: Yes

PV: Even before dealing with more direct political subjects. But I have both aspects that is to say, I was not in the extreme left and I did not feel represented by the extreme left for the reasons that I mentioned to you, but on the other hand I was very sensitive to international issues

RG: Yes

PV: From this point of view, the JEC had also helped me there because through the international JEC there were a lot of networks, therefore, the question of Vietnam, and therefore the, the simultaneity of the question, we would say today civilizational, mode of development and way of life on the one hand, and of the planetary question on the other hand, that is something that I felt through this double moment which was d " on the one hand the question of opening girls' buildings because there was this kind of absurd



partitioning which meant that young men had the right to go to young girls, finally young girls had the right to come to young men but not the other way around

RG: Yes

PV: So this kind of hypocrisy and expression of a society that was culturally blocked; and then through the question of Vietnam, but also we were already very sensitive to the questions of Eastern Europe

RG: Yes

PV: And the criticism of the totalitarian fact and bureaucratic communism. So in those weeks

RG: Yes

PV: which are the weeks of March, even before May, I know that I am sensitive to this double, to this double aspect even if here again I am more sensitive to it intuitively than in expressing it in a more theoretical way as , as I would do later

RG: And then you came to Paris

PV: Well I came to Paris like all fashion. Finally I came there after for my studies at Sciences Po but at the time of the movement I came there after because the closure of the Nanterre university propelled us to the Sorbonne like all the Nanterre students who were involved. in the movement what

RG: And at the time there were centers - well I am avoiding the word Catholic - but there were places like the Saint-Yves center, the Saint-Guillaume Center

PV: Yes, the Richelieu Center

RG: Who was more Christian - as well as the Sorbonne - you traveled in what environment in May 68?

PV: Ah well I was more often in, in broad circles, well of March 22 type than Christian circles

RG: Yes

PV: Christian circles I was no longer there but through the JEC, because there, suddenly the JEC was very present in 68. I had written a text which was then taken up by the national team, j I was in the group of young people that had been created by the Archbishop of Paris at the time Monsignor Marty

RG: Yes

PV: who wanted to try to understand the movements. But I disagreed with, for example, Father Lustiger who was the chaplain of the Richelieu Center and who, whom we felt very reluctant with regard to 68 and in a perspective that was already much more traditional. So there was a fairly strong disagreement between the approach of a Catholic Action movement like the YCS, but it was also the case on the side of the YCW or the, what will become after the Rural Movement of Christian Youth. , and then, the Richelieu Center under the influence of Father Lustiger

RG: Because the Richelieu Center was what exactly

PV: It was the, really the center of Christian students, the chaplaincy of Christian students for the Faculties of Letters

RG: Yes

PV: Saint-Guillaume was rather Sciences-Po, Saint-Yves was more on the side of the Law

RG: Yes okay. And you have, you have

PV: But there was already the very strong personality of Father Lustiger

RG: Yes okay

PV: Who was a bit of a reference what

RG: The text you mention is "We refuse to be wise"?

PV: Yes that's it. Yes Yes

RG: That I haven't read but can you, it's not a bad title but what's in there

PV: Well it's

RG: and why?

PV: it was precisely to say that the movement that was happening was not a superficial movement, a movement, it was a movement in depth and that we should not expect movements like the Jeunesse Étudiante Chrétienne that it is in some way in opposition to the

RG: Yes

PV: this movement in depth, and that we too, precisely we were not the good students, we were not the nice students, that we were also part of the movement, even if within the movement we expressed logics of in-depth transformation, of the logic of non-violent conflict, and then, of perspectives broader than the perspectives of movements of the extreme left type, but somehow comes from within these movements.

RG: But it was a text, because it appeared in Messages, is it a?

PV: Yes Messages was the national newspaper of the JEC but which was a newspaper which had to be weekly or monthly, and we had drawn from it, a very important special issue, which we had widely distributed especially at the exit of the churches

RG: Alright, alright

PV: So it was mostly for one, for your Christian audience?

PV: Yes, it was really directly aimed at Christian circles

RG: So how did May-June 68 end for you?

PV: Well, there is the, the great political refusal but which, at the same time - my friends and I - does not affect us excessively. Because the feeling that the, the essential fertility of 68 was not on the traditional political level but rather precisely on the cultural, civilizational, international question, and that the, that seemed to us a fundamental element which would remain independent of, of the refusal politics of 68, even if I had a lot of hope at one point that Pierre Mendès France could play an important role, since we were as critical of the Communist Party as of François Mitterrand and of the Federation of the Left, so there was hardly any other than Pierre Mendès France who, who seemed to us to be able to assume the changes politically. So from the moment we

RG: Okay

PV: and on the other hand, we invested more each other through the CFDT and through the PSU in what we called the self-management trend. Because the self-management current expressed well the link between questions of civil society, democratic questions and cultural questions

RG: There was this great gathering in Charléty

PV: Yes

RG: Were you there?

PV: Yes

RG: So you had hoped for a Mendes France-Mitterrand government that did not happen?

PV: Well, we especially hoped that Mendès France would take a big initiative and we were quite disappointed not to see him, since he remained quite silent in Charléty

RG: Yes

PV: Michel Rocard, who was very close to it, told us, 'Mendès France does not want to go there', and after we saw François Mitterrand's statement, we had the impression that the carrots were cooked on strictly political level

RG: Okay. So you started to invest in a new form of politics, a new form of unionism. This is the first thing you allude to CFDT

PV: Yes, yes

RG: Was it also your background?

PV: Yes, yes absolutely, yes

RG: By what means there, by

PV: Well, on the one hand quite quickly, I was a student-teacher because I did what was called at the time the Institute, IPES, what is it, what is it? - what that meant IPES, well it was a student-teacher system

RG: Some kind of normal school?

PV: Yes that's it but it was, yes it was a little UFM before the letter what, but for the secondary teaching staff, not for the primary as the normal schools

RG: Okay

PV: And so naturally I registered with the CFDT and the teachers' union of the CFDT which was the SGEN

RG: Oh yes

PV: And then obviously for people who had had a Christian tradition and a committed Christian tradition on the side of social justice the CFDT was a natural outlet, and then it is there that the junction with the traditions which seemed to us the most interesting in the movement, which were the traditions inherited from utopian socialism and libertarian socialism, it was also where they were most present through the CFDT, and the self-management approach somehow brought all this together

RG: So what year did you become a student teacher? Was it after Sciences-Po?

PV: It's after Sciences-Po so it must be in, I think it's there, in 72 the first time I was appointed professor. That is to say that I first went to an internship at the École Normale de Garches for about a year ... No, no I first did a year of what was called the CPR which was practical training when we had passed the theoretical CAPES, then I was appointed to the Normal School of Douai

RG: As?

PV: As, it was, in the normal schools they were not teachers of philosophy strictu sensu, we called that psycho-pedagogy, that is to say we had to work more on the adults, the adults. major educational trends, Freinet, Montessori, Decroly, etc.

RG: But I was very interested in doing that too, and then afterwards I will do a one-year internship at the École Normale de Garches, and then Michel Rocard asking me to, to take the direction of the Tribune Socialiste newspaper.

RG: yes?

PV: I will ask for leave for personal convenience from the National Education to be really the most invested politically through the PSU and

RG: So which year is the Socialist Tribune

HP: It's 72 to 74

RG: Okay

PV: So I was the editor of the newspaper for two years. And I am the director, and there it is really a full-time activity, including I become an employee of Syros editions which publishes the newspaper

RG: And so you start to, you are in a trajectory, in a journey that explains I think - I haven't read your last writing, but you have, you are focused on the question of the self-destruction of the planet, of humanity, on new forms of democracy, on new forms of citizenship, all these ideas date from that time or even

PV: Yes, yes

RG: before?

PV: Yes, yes. Finally, they were born through what I do in high school, through movements like the JEC and they open up and deepen in the period 68 and post 68 in particular through this self-management trend which was very interesting because precisely it There was at the same time a social component, workers' union, very important through the CFDT and a political component but of a renewed policy which was more precisely expressed by the posture of the PSU, and then an intellectual component which is very, very important , sociologists such as Alain Touraine, Castoriadis, Morin, Lefort, finally all the intellectuals of what has been called after the anti-totalitarian left

RG: Yes

PV: were present. And so this tripod, social movement, democratic movement and intellectual movement that marked me a lot because I, I have always found that it was in

these phases that there was a very great dynamism. Whereas when there is a withdrawal of each in its sphere, it gives a much less important fertility

RG: And it was while you were at the Socialist Tribune that there was the strike in Lip?

PV: Uh yes, well, yes, yes, the Lip strike, the march on Besançon, yes that I was directly involved

RG: Was it a bit, could it have confirmed your ideas about this strike and this occupation?

PV: Yes, yes, yes, it is, yes ...

RG: A self-management strike?

PV: A self-management strike, especially since there was precisely at the same time the link with the approach of radical reformism, that is to say that, for example the PSU it was doubly committed on the side of the workers of Lip, and the strike and the self-management struggle but he was also directly involved in finding economic solutions, it was through the PSU that Claude Neuschwander first

RG: Oh yes, okay

PV: And then José Bidegain were, were found, well, including we had launched a whole operation because Société Générale had refused to finance Lip. And we had launched a campaign entitled "Société Générale refuses its money to Lip, refuse your money to Société Générale". So we were aware that it was not with the Tribune Socialiste newspaper that we were going to work miracles. But we were contacted one day - Bernard Langlois and me - by a senior executive from Société Générale who explained to us how worried Société Générale management was about this campaign and was ready to negotiate, because they were convinced that behind the PSU it was in fact all the CFDT

RG: Yes

PV: and the CFDT had its accounts at Société Générale therefore

RG: Okay

PV: Not only directly but obviously indirectly the trade union power of the CFDT without commonality with the PSU, therefore thinking that it was in fact a campaign unmanned by the CFDT and they were afraid and they were ready to negotiate

RG: They made a loan?

PV: Yes they have, then they took part in the funding round

RG: Oh okay. And there was talk for a while that Piaget would be a candidate for the PSU ...

PV: Yes, yes

RG: What did you think of that?

PV: I was very ambivalent, because on the one hand I had a lot of esteem and affection for Pierre Pierret, and then for Charles Piaget who was

RG: Yes

PV: someone of very high quality but at the same time we could clearly see that it was an application for testimony, and that the question that was asked more and more was the fact of going to renew in depth the whole of the socialist left and not simply to remain in the space of the only PSU on the political level

RG: Yes okay

PV: and therefore from this point of view I was still rather in the opinion of, of Michel Rocard, to prepare a larger rally which took place at the time of the assizes of socialism with the new socialist party of Épinay, rather than, to remain complementary in a friendly but marginal space

RG: Okay. And to come back to this community, did you live in a community during those years?

PV: Yes

RG: Can you tell that a bit? Because it was a ... good, we also talk to the Church about grassroots communities

PV: Ah yes, no, no, it was really the communities of life as they were created after 68, it was not the movement of basic Christian communities. But, but even if there were correspondences, it is not by chance that the word community was used in both senses, but this was really the concrete application to change life, and therefore to live from other social relationships that were marked by greater equality, greater openness, greater autonomy for each within families and couples, greater openness to society as well, finally

RG: Yes

PV: It's not to be in a total cut between private space and public space, but at the same time as I told you earlier, we spent six months exchanging, discussing because we were struck by the fact that a lot of communities broke their face after a few months

RG: Yes

PV: because they had been idealistic either by being open all-round to the outside when they said that there was practically more life possible because there were political meetings practically every night, or the fact that if we were open to the national Vietnam committee,

it created a conflict with the base Vietnam committee so we also had to open the house to the base Vietnam committee. There was this kind of invasion by the outer sphere, and then inside there was this idealism on the question of children, on the question of love or a lot - that was one of the things that we had spotted a lot. - idealism on the question of domestic tasks.

Many communities have collapsed on themselves because having trusted in the spontaneity of each other, not having set the rules of the game, well so we had learned lessons from all that and we had established a certain number of rules of the game, which were not very restrictive but which were nevertheless quite precise. For example, every week, we were in charge of shopping and cooking. Well that made my friends from the PSU national office, from Tribune Socialiste laugh a lot because we always had a lot of meetings that ended very late but they knew that the week I was shopping and cooking, I shouldn't be. to put meeting, that it was sacred, it was necessary that I left at the latest at 7 pm what good. We made sure that everyone had their own room, was the, we recognized the existence of couples which was not the case of communities, but we strengthened the autonomy of each. For example I remember our thesis was to say if we sleep together it is by choice and it is not because he has only one room for the couple what

RG: Okay

PV: Les, but suddenly the fact of having worked a little on these causes of failures and worked on a minimum of rules of the game, that first allowed us to stay longer

RG: Yes

PV: We first stayed five years with the same group, and to have enjoyed it enough for another five more years to do it with other groups, in all I stayed for ten years.

RG: From 73 you said?

PV: Yes that's it so

RG: One group for five years and then another group

PV: Uh yes that, but we had to start in 72, so it must have been a 72-82 type period, roughly, or 72-81, it was maybe nine years but it was more or less what

RG: And when the children arrived, did you have to change the rules or did they evolve?

PV: No, when we started we already had, we already had our daughter with my wife, from whom I was divorced more recently, but we already had a little girl at the time. And the friends with whom we were already had their children, the children were not born in the community, they were already present

RG: Okay



PV: But it was a small community, well the, the group that had reflected for six months was a fairly large group but the group that materialized was smaller precisely because the, the preparatory work had also revealed that it there were not necessarily the same expectations for everyone

RG: So how many were you approximately?

PV: So the, the group itself it was, it was seven

RG: Yes

PV: So there were, there were four adults and three children

RG: Okay

PV: But it was, it was a real, real transformation. I know that we had lived with my wife, we had lived for a year in a classic form and we quickly realized that, that we felt in a state of confinement, and for us the community c was really a good point of balance

RG: Okay. And when you say four adults are two couples, it is, it was?

PV: That is, initially it was two separate people, finally a woman with her two children

RG: Yes

PV: And then another person but who have become a couple

RG: Yes okay

PV: On this occasion what

RG: Okay

PV: But with the same principle that everyone finally had their room

RG: Yes okay

PV: That's it. It's not as if there had been two families, especially since the children were from Christine and not from Gilles, there was a fluidity

RG: Yes

PV: who was very, very important in this group

RG: Okay. So two questions, finally more, on your trajectory first, finally after you worked at the Socialist Tribune until 74

PV: Yes, then afterwards there was the Assises du Socialisme

RG: Yes

PV: And so a whole part of the PSU joined the new Socialist Party

RG: Yes

PV: And I had a time of unemployment at that time, but rather quickly we created a journal, which was the magazine Faire, which was a bit the journal of the self-management current, and which was a, which increased inspirations of the CFDT, intellectual approaches, social experiments, and then who represented the most self-managing part of the Socialist Party

RG: Okay

PV: And the Faire magazine existed until, then the Faire magazine had to be created in 1975 and it existed until, in 81, when the left came to power. It stopped at that moment because Gilles Martinet in the meantime who was the director - I was the editor-in-chief - became the French ambassador in Italy and it took over in another form and another title which was the journal Intervention, but who was the continuation. That was all we called the second left if you will

RG: Yes. So you've had a career as a journalist more or less

PV: Yes, but it was both journalism and at the same time it was a lot of research, theoretical work because it was journals that were at the junction of the citizen universe and at the same time of the theoretical universe, it is precisely, it was a round trip that I liked

RG: Yes

PV: And that I found a third time when I took a vacancy from the Court of Auditors to be editor-in-chief of the journal Transversales Science Culture

RG: Okay

PV: So whether through Faire, Intervention or Transversales Science Culture, in all three cases they were journals that were both plural and multidisciplinary.

RG: Okay. And when you entered the, the Court of Auditors, or the Cours des Comptes

PV: At the Court of Auditors yes

RG: At the Court of Auditors, at the Court of Auditors, and then I do not know this institution but I wonder how you manage to develop, to make follow your rather radical ideas in an institution which from the outside seems rather conservative , curator

PV: Yes, so first of all I get there under very specific conditions because, in the case of the review Intervention and before it stops because there was a moment when we knew that it no longer had the economic means to continue, we had launched a major investigation into what we had called "what has the left learned from its experience of power?" "

RG: Yes

PV: since we were in '85, we realized that the legislative elections were very likely to end with a defeat of the left, and our concern at Intervention was to say well finally since 81 there has been quite a concrete experience. of the French left grappling with the question of the State, and uh rather than being in a kind of schizophrenia, before 81 which had been fascinated by the State, its capture, its radical transformation, and then the 'after 83 which had been very managerial and very empirical, and what interested us was, always a little in the logic of radical reformism, to understand what had been the State in concrete terms and what Was it just concrete reform with the left in power? And we had launched a number of monographs, a major conference that we had entitled "the management of complex societies", and on this occasion we had brought out the theme of the democratic evaluation of public policies.

RG: Yes

PV: and we created, during this conference which, in particular, which we co-organized with Le Nouvel Observateur in 1986, we created in associative form the Observer of the Public Decision to launch this question of the evaluation of public policies.

RG: Yes

PV: And Michel Rocard, with whom I had remained in contact, was very interested in this work, and when he became Prime Minister

RG: Yes

PV: He wishes to make the evaluation of public policies one of the important axes of his project concerning the reform of the State and the public service. And so at that time he asked me to do an institutional mission to launch the evaluation of public policies in France since it was not exciting at the level of public policies, it existed, and still in a very limited way on a level sectoral for example

RG: Yes okay

PV: The evaluation body, but which was more on the classic side of evaluation in National Education, there was no evaluation of public policies, and there was none at the interministerial level. And so Michel Rocard asks me to lead this mission and at the same time launch the first major evaluation on the first major reform of his government which is the reform of the Minimum Insertion Income.

RG: Yes

PV: and so I do all this for two years, and as one of the challenges for the, the next step in developing an evaluation culture, was to make things happen also in the control bodies, and especially at the Court accounts

RG: Yes

PV: and that there was in particular the stake of a reform of the public report of the Court of Auditors to go in the direction of the criteria which I had put to the democratic evaluation and in particular of a greater transparency, of greater pluralism, greater independence. And therefore, there is a negotiation that takes place at that time with the Court of Auditors so that through a reform of the public report we go in this direction, and in particular that the particular public reports make it possible to have a , a material much more public, much more concern for debate than the previous productions of the Court of Auditors, where there was an annual public report. That was all and that was understandable only by the initiates, and then for the rest all the activity of the Court of Auditors was summary proceedings and notes which were unknown to the general public. And so as there was no one from the inside to really push in this direction, Michel Rocard asked me at that time to go to the Court of Auditors.

RG: Okay

PV: So it's from that perspective - and I'm coming to it, first I come a little backwards because the feeling I had is basically yours, I said to myself but what - what I'm going to do in this institution that I found very stiff, conservative, but I'm coming to it with this project, pushed by Michel Rocard, pushed by networks which were more on the citizenship side, which were in the observatory of the public decision, and with the idea of constantly doing interior-exterior work, so as not to let myself be seen by the interior of the institution, and it is for this reason also one of the things that me, will quickly interest me, which is an extension of the evaluation, it is the evaluation on the question of wealth

RG: Yes

PV: Because I see how the economic questions, the accounting questions, the monetary questions are determining, and I also see how the fact of these questions - taken only in their bubble serve the dominant conservatism, therefore one of the things that interests me very quickly, it is the link between what I call the accounts in the accounting sense of the term but the accounts in the TALE sense, what Ricoeur called the narrative identities, and how there are fundamental choices of societies that are here

RG: Yes

PV: Behind the costing methods, behind the national accounts, behind the accounting systems, and therefore one of the things that will interest me is to raise this question, to re-open a public debate on the wealth that I am going to prepare and on the side of the Court of Auditors and on the side of what I do in my citizenship activities

RG: Yes

PV: And that I could then realize from 2000 when, on the occasion of the preparation of the centenary of the law of 1901 on associations Pierre Joxe who the first president of the Court of Auditors at the time asks me if that I'm interested in taking on the general secretariat of this mission

RG: Yes

is a good opportunity to ask publicly questions which are known only to socialists on the inadequacy of our accounting systems to the major current ecological and social issues; and as it was not possible to achieve it in the case of the centenary mission law of 1901 which was nevertheless very marked by a rather classic logic of commemoration

RG: Yes

PV: I negotiated at that time with the Jospin government the possibility of carrying out a specific mission on these questions, of a new approach to wealth, and to do so within the framework of the Secretary of State for the Economy. solidarity that had just been created

RG: And impossible question, in a nutshell what are these new approaches to wealth

PV: Well, it's on the one hand to say that our current accounting systems were created in a well-defined historical context, which was the context of, post-war and industrial reconstruction and we had chosen a system accounting which allowed to promote industrial wealth but also to the detriment of other forms of wealth, and this system has become counterproductive complement at a time when most of the major issues, including major economic issues are no longer relevant. order of industrial production but are either on the side of services, or on the side of ecological issues in the broad sense of the term

RG: Yes okay

PV: And so we have to re-situate the context in which the accounting systems were built, to say that we are both historical epochs and we need to change the accounting system, I have often taken the example of the story of a sailor who would decide to change stage, who would choose for example what is agreed to call sustainable development, but if his onboard instruments remain on the old stage of purely productivist growth and dominant industrialist, it will not be able to achieve its change of direction, so there is all the new relationship to the very definition of wealth and its measurement on the one hand, and also, that's even more subversive, a new compared to money and change, because necessarily, when you pull on this ball, the units of account found in accounting systems are monetary units

RG: Yes

PV: And so I started to take an interest again in this black box of money, and in particular the conditions under which there had been another absolutely undemocratic transfer that

had taken place in the 1970s or the essential part of monetary creation had been transferred to private commercial banks, and all this without any democratic debate and with quite considerable consequences, in particular the process of state indebtedness which comes directly from there; and so in the new approach to wealth there are these two, there are these two parts, so in, when I did the mission at the time it was really considered marginal, pioneering work, but I was able, thanks to the United Nations development program,

RG: Yes

PV: And so suddenly and the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister were obliged to take an interest in it whereas otherwise there was just the Secretary of State for the Solidarity Economy, and in the meantime this issue has become a fundamental issue since it has now become one of the major international public issues debated, and then Joseph Stiglitz began to take an interest in this issue with his authority, therefore, the commission that was created for this purpose clearly shows how point this question is fundamental

RG: Because there was a big meeting in Porto Alegre, right?

PV: Ah well it's more than a meeting, it's the world social forum of Porto Alegre

RG: Yes

PV: Yes I was among the first to participate in the creation of this social forum - come in, come in.

RG: We're almost done

(PV: That's it we're almost done but come on)

RG: Last question on your feelings today over this period, you said earlier that at one point the people you found on your left you found them on your right, and I have the impression listening to you that your journey has a certain unity from the beginning until now, is that your feeling and what was the role of 68 in that?

consumer societies obsessed with the question of having assets, and that, in time, the strength of the ecological and climate question clearly shows us today that we cannot continue on the path of productivist growth organized solely around of consumption and having, and all the questions of lifestyle, the questions between two letters in the broad sense of the term, which had been opened by 68, they are before us; and I analyze more of the phenomena of the Anglo-Saxon conservative revolution and or Sarco-ism in France, rather in terms of resistance to a in-depth historical movement that has emerged, more of the counter-revolution cultural could we say that phenomena which would signify the end

RG: Yes

PV: Me, I think the, 68, the life, I was asked about an interview that I had done precisely when I was in charge of the JEC, and I called it an unfinished spiritual revolution, that is - that is to say I think that 68 opened a breach, but as Michel de Certeau said, it remained superficial, and paradoxically too one-dimensional compared to the criticism that Marcus was making, and that including on these areas of predilection, and of especially sexual liberation for reasons that I mentioned earlier remained at a superficial level, therefore, I am not in an idealization of 68 but I think that the breach opened by 68, it is a breach of a historical nature that opens a new historical cycle and that these questions have not finished asking, that they are structuring for the future, so for me it remains a luminous moment and a subsequent source of life, which has never ceased to nourish me.

RG: Okay, I think we can finish it. Thank you very much for your testimony.