

JACQUES LACAN

SEMINAR 1961-1962

(SEMINAR IX)

IDENTIFICATION

**TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH
FROM THE ORIGINAL FRENCH TYPESCRIPTS
AND THE VERSION BY MICHEL ROUSSAN**

BY BEN HOOSON

**(GRAPHICS BY PERMISSION OF
MICHEL ROUSSAN)**

2022

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Preface

This is a new English translation of the ninth year of Jacques Lacan's seminar (*Seminar IX*), held weekly at the Sainte Anne psychiatric hospital in Paris during term time in 1961-1962 and devoted to the theme of identification as relevant to Freudian psychoanalysis.

The French version of *Seminar IX* in the series of Lacan seminars under the editorship of Jacques-Alain Miller still awaits publication (as of December 2022). However, *Seminar IX* was already translated into English by Cormac Gallagher in a [version that is available online](#) (Gallagher's English versions of *Seminar IX* and other Lacan seminars are described as "from unpublished French manuscripts").¹ I took the earlier translation as a template for my own version, so it is for the reader to decide whether the latter is, in fact, a new translation or a revision.

The French sources, which I used, were, firstly, the original typescripts, prepared from on-the-spot stenographs of Lacan's Wednesday seminars and available on the site of the [École lacanienne](#), and, secondly, a "version critique" of *Seminar IX*, prepared by Michel Roussan. The latter is not available online, but Alain Lecat, manager and editor at [Staferla](#), kindly put me in touch with Michel Roussan, from whom I purchased a hard copy. As Lecat explained, Staferla, which offers excellent, free-access online versions of all Lacan's seminars, mainly followed Roussan's text in preparing the [Staferla version of Seminar IX](#), while omitting most of Roussan's annotations and notes. (It should however, be understood that Staferla versions of other Lacan seminars are the work of the Staferla team itself.).

The task of translation would have been impossible without the Roussan version for three reasons (ordered from least to greatest): the copies of the typescript provided on the École lacanienne website are sometimes as hard to read as a newspaper that has been soaked in a bucket; the typescripts on the website are missing pages and even whole weeks of the seminar; and (crucially) the text of the typescripts is clearly not an accurate reproduction of what Lacan said.

It appears that Lacan rarely checked the typescripts for accuracy after the weekly seminar (in 1961-62 and in other years). An official copy of the text, which was stored at the main office of the École freudienne on rue Claude Bernard (the "Rue CB" version), corrects only the most flagrant errors ("feverfoune" for "Verwerfung", "très socratique" for "Pré-socratique", "une survie" for "1/φ", etc.). We must sympathise with the stenographer and typist who had to struggle with sentences of Proustian length and unclear punctuation, extended parentheses (sometimes never closed), false starts, an abundance of foreign words and difficulty of the subject matter.

In preparing his critical version, Roussan took account of all available records of *Seminar IX*: the original typescript, the Rue CB version, the notes of several listeners (sometimes

¹ On the "about" page of [Lacan in Ireland](#). The translation is marked "amended by MCL". Acknowledgements on the same page suggest that MCL is Mary Cheyrou-Lagreze.

amounting to draft transcripts) and a second typescript, which drew together the sources just mentioned and which I have not been able to obtain. He uses margin notes to cite alternative versions of words, phrases and sentences. I have reproduced a sample page of the original typescript followed by the same page in Roussan's version (after this Preface). Roussan's appendices include a commentary on the excursions into topology, which dominate the seminars from March to June 1962.

A variety of sources for *Seminar IX* (and all other years of the seminar) can be accessed at the Aladdin's-cave internet site gaogoa (transcripts by Paul Lemoine and Monique Chollet can be accessed by clicking on "Z" in the "autres sources" column opposite "L'identification 1961-1962" and then on "L'identification" in the table of seminar years, which appears). Also to be found on gaogoa are sound recordings of Lacan delivering seminars in 1962-63 (click on any of the musical notes alongside the seminar dates opposite "L'angoisse 1962-1963"). They give an idea of Lacan's style of speech, which was presumably little changed from 1961-62.

My references in the footnotes are mainly to the original typescript ("Typescript 1") and the version by Michel Roussan. Most of Roussan's amendments of Typescript 1 are surely right (corrections of misheard words, punctuation, omissions, etc.). I have mainly accepted these changes without comment. However, some changes that significantly alter the meaning of the text are not beyond dispute. In these places I have used my judgment as to what is probably correct (Typescript 1, Roussan or, occasionally, my own hypothesis) and I report the rejected alternative in a footnote, sometimes with an explanation.

In some places Roussan diverges significantly from Typescript 1 without citing the notes of specific listeners and I assume that he is then following the second, revised typescript, mentioned above, which I have not seen.

I have made the translation internet-friendly by providing links to texts cited by Lacan that are in open access (nearly all of his citations). I use the astonishingly compendious archive.org unless a particular text is not available there or unless some other online resource offers a version that is clearly superior. I use perseus.tufts for Latin and Greek texts.

The Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales was an invaluable tool for grasping subtleties of the meaning of French words. The existence of gender in French often makes a passage much clearer in the original than it can be in English, because the gender of pronouns ("elle/la" or "il/le") indicates which nouns they refer back to.

My thanks to the commissioner of the original translation, who wishes to remain anonymous, and to Darian Leader who recommended me for the job. Thanks to Michel Roussan who gave me permission to use the excellent illustrations (topological and other) from his French version and who commented on my translation of the seminar of 14 March 1962. Thanks also to Alain Lecat, Staferla editor, who put me in touch with Michel Roussan and answered a question about French word play ("se décombattre" in the seminar of 21 March 1962,

footnote 16), to [Jacques Siboni](#) for advice on topology of the cross-cap, to a reading group (Claudia Lapping, Katherine Palley, Florence Boyd, Rick Koster, Oliver Jarvis and occasional others), with whom I read a draft of the seminars of 30 May and 6 June 1962 and received useful comments, to Will Greenshields, currently a university teacher in China, for help with the Chinese-language excursions in the seminars of 6 December 1961 and 24 January 1962, and to Jonny Gutteridge, physics student at Durham University and son of friends, for an afternoon helping to make sense of cuts on the cross-cap.

Anyone who wants easy access to a good French version of *Seminar IX* can use [Staferla](#). A hard copy of Michel Roussan's version (paperback, 367 pages), on which the Staferla version is based, can be purchased by sending an email to m.roussan2@free.fr. Roussan's version includes alternative versions of many passages and several useful appendices (most notably, a commentary on Lacan's borrowings from topology), which are not included in the Staferla text. Roussan has also produced scholarly editions of Lacan's seminar years 1962-63, 1964-65, 1965-66 and 1966-67 (the last three not yet published in the Seuil/La Martinière series edited by Jacques-Alain Miller). They can be obtained via the same email.

Comments and suggestions are gratefully received at benwilliamhooson@gmail.com. Correlation between text and topological diagrams in the first half of the seminar of 13 June 1962 is particularly puzzling.

Ben Hooson

Bourne, Lincolnshire

December 2022

First page of the seminar of 10 January 1962 in Typescript 1

SÉMINAIRE DE Monsieur le Docteur LISAN

Vendredi 10 Janvier 1962

(VII)

Résumons ce que j'ai dit la dernière fois : je vous ai parlé du non propre, pour autant que nous l'ayons rencontré sur notre chemin de l'identification du sujet, second type de l'identification régressive, au trait unaire de l'Autre. À propos de ce non propre, nous avons rencontré l'identification qu'il a déjà sollicitée de quelques linguistes mathématiciens en fonction de son caractère : qu'est-ce que le non propre ?

Il semble que la chose ne se livre pas au premier abord. Mais, essayant de résoudre cette question, nous avons eu la surprise de retrouver la fonction du signifiant ; sans doute, à l'état pur, c'était bien dans cette voie que le linguiste lui-même nous dirigeait quand il nous disait : un non propre est quelque chose qui vient par la fonction distinctive d'un son matériel sonore, ce en quoi bien sûr il ne faisait que redoubler ce qui nous avait précédemment été de l'analyse saussurienne du langage : c'est à Schlegel

First page of the seminar of 10 January 1962 in the edition by Michel Roussan

VII

10 JANVIER 1962

JO735 *JAMAIS je n'ai eu moins envie de faire mon séminaire... Je n'ai pas le temps d'approfondir... pour quelle cause pourtant... beaucoup de choses à dire... Il y a des moments de tassement, de lassitude...*

JO Réévoquons ce que j'ai dit la dernière fois, *ne serait-ce que pour nous mettre en train*. Je vous ai parlé du nom propre, pour autant que nous l'avons rencontré sur notre chemin de l'identification du sujet, second type de l'identification, régressive, au trait unaire de l'Autre. A propos de ce nom propre, nous avons rencontré l'attention qu'il a déjà sollicitée de quelques linguistes et mathématiciens en fonction de philosophe¹.

Qu'est-ce que le nom propre ?

Il semble que la chose ne se livre pas au premier abord mais, essayant de résoudre cette question, nous avons eu la surprise de retrouver la fonction du signifiant, sans doute à l'état pur. C'était bien dans cette voie que le linguiste lui-même nous dirigeait quand il nous disait : un nom propre, c'est quelque chose qui vaut par la fonction distinctive de son matériel sonore.

JO *renouveler*

Ce en quoi bien sûr il ne faisait que *redoubler* ce qui est prémisses même de l'analyse saussurienne du langage : c'est à savoir que c'est le trait distinctif, c'est le phonème comme couplé d'un ensemble, d'une certaine batterie, pour autant uniquement qu'il n'est pas ce que sont les autres. *Cette prémisses, nous la trouvons ici devoir désigner ce qui était le trait spécial, l'usage d'une fonction du sujet dans le langage : celle de nommer par son nom propre.*

d'après LB

Dact. *que nous le trouvons ici voir désigné comme ce qui était le trait spécial de l'usage d'une fonction sujet [...] MC *que nous la trouvons ici voir désigné* | CC38 *le phonème c couplé à l'ens d'une cert batterie pour autant qu'il n'est pas ce que sont les autres. Ceci apparaissant dans cette f du lang : nommer par un NP* | PL1 *[...] en tant qu'il n'est pas ce que sont les autres qui représente le trait spécial de l'usage dans le langage : de nommer par son nom propre.* | IR33.JO *fiction du sujet ds le langage : celle de nommer par son nom propre*

Il est certain que nous ne pouvions pas nous contenter de cette définition comme telle, mais que nous étions pour autant mis sur la voie de quelque chose, et ce quelque chose nous avons pu au moins l'approcher, le cerner en désignant ceci que c'est, si l'on peut dire sous une forme latente au langage lui-même, la fonction de l'écriture, la fonction du signe en tant que lui-même il se lit comme un objet.

Il est un fait que les lettres ont des noms. Nous avons trop tendance à les confondre, pour les noms simplifiés qu'elles ont dans notre alphabet qui ont l'air de se confondre avec l'émission phonématique à laquelle la lettre a été réduite. Un *a* a l'air de vouloir dire l'émission "a". Un *b* n'est pas à proprement parler un "bé" : il n'est un "bé" que pour autant que pour que la consonne *b* se fasse entendre, il faut qu'elle s'appuie sur une émission vocalique.

Regardons les choses de plus près : nous verrons par exemple qu'en grec, *alpha*, *bêta*, *gamma* et la suite sont bel et bien des noms, et chose surprenante, des noms qui n'ont aucun sens dans la langue grecque où ils se formulent. Pour les comprendre, il faut s'apercevoir qu'ils reproduisent les noms correspondant aux lettres de l'alphabet phénicien, d'un alphabet protosémitique², alphabet tel que nous pouvons le reconstituer d'un certain nombre d'étages, de strates des inscriptions. Nous en retrouvons les formes signifiantes : ces noms ont un sens dans la langue, soit phénicienne textuelle, soit telle que nous pouvons la reconstruire, cette langue

(1). Sir A. Gardiner, B. Russell, etc. *op. cit.*

(2). J.G. Février, *op. cit.*, notamment "les noms et les formes des lettres phéniciennes", p. 224 sq.

15 November 1961

Identification – such is my title and my subject for this year. It’s a good title but not an easy subject. I don’t think you are under the impression that it is an operation or a process that is very easy to conceptualise. It may perhaps be something that is easy to recognise when encountered, but it would perhaps nevertheless be preferable, in order to recognise it correctly, for us to make the effort to conceptualise it.

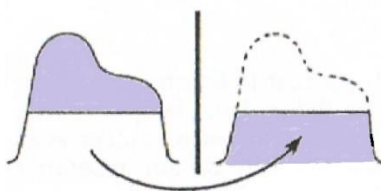
Certainly, we have encountered enough of its effects to be able to limit ourselves to a summary – to things that are tangible even to our internal experience – in order for you to have a certain feeling of what it is.

Without doubt, the effort of conceptualisation that we make this year (not the first year of our teaching) will appear, after we have made it, to have been worthwhile, by virtue of the places and the problems that it will lead us to.

Today we are going to take a first small step in this direction. I apologise to you in advance: we will perhaps be compelled to make efforts which can only be called efforts at thinking. It’s not something that we, or anyone else for that matter, do often.

If we are taking identification as our title, as the theme of what we are going to talk about, it would be as well for us to speak of it otherwise than in the, let’s say, mythical form in which I left it last year.

Something of this order, specifically of identification, was concerned at the point where I left off last year, you will remember, when I talked about the “wet sheet” that you can take to represent the narcissistic effects, which circumscribe the rock that was left protruding in my diagram,¹ this autoerotic rock whose emergence is symbolised by the phallus: an island battered by the surf of Aphrodite; a false island, what is more, since, like the island in Claudel’s *Proteus*,² it has no moorings, it drifts away.



You know Claudel’s *Proteus*. It’s an attempt to complete the *Oresteia* with a slapstick farce such as the conventions of Greek tragedy required, but of which (if I remember correctly) only two scraps of text by Sophocles and a *Hercules* by Euripides have survived in the literature.

¹ Lacan, *Seminar 8* (B. Fink, trans.), pp. 380-381, and pp. 389-392 (about the “wet sheet”). Lacan used the diagram to illustrate exclusion of the narcissistically privileged genitals from the libidinised body image in the mirror stage, with reference to a paper by Karl Abraham.

² Paul Claudel, *Protée*.

There's a reason why I mention this reference in connection with how, last year, my discourse on transference ended with this image of identification. I had to bring in the "beautiful" to mark the barrier where transference finds its limit and its pivot point.³

That certainly wasn't the beauty which I told you was the limit of the tragic, the point at which the ungraspable *Thing* pours its euthanasia over us.⁴

I am not embellishing [je n'embellis rien], whatever you may imagine based on certain rumours about my teaching: I am not prettying things up [je ne fais pas la partie trop belle] for your ease.⁵ That should be clear to people who attended my earlier seminar on ethics, where I addressed the function of this barrier of beauty as the agony, which is required of us by the Thing if we are ever to attain it.⁶

That was where we got to last year, dealing with transference.⁷ I indicated to you, to all those who attended the *Journées provinciales* in October,⁸ without being able to say more about it, that what we had there was a reference concealed in something comic – something that I couldn't go beyond in my attempt to describe a certain experience.

That is an indication, which, let me say, is there to be discovered in the hidden meaning of what one might call the cryptograms of this seminar, and I don't give up hope that, one day, a commentary will discern that meaning and make it plain, because I already have an encouraging sign, namely that the seminar of the year before last, on ethics, has been redacted (very successfully, people say who have read the work) by someone – Moustafa Safouan – who went to the trouble of rereading it in order to summarise its elements, and I hope that these things can be put at your disposal quite soon, to make the connection with what I will bring you this year.⁹

That makes a two-year jump, which may seem to be questionable or even to suggest a regrettable delay. But that's not quite right. You will see, if you look at the sequence of my seminars since 1953...

- the first on the technical writings,
- then the seminar on the ego [le moi], technique and theory, Freudian and psychoanalytic,
- the third on Freudian structures and psychosis,

³ Lacan, *Seminar 7* (D. Porter, trans.), seminar of 4 May 1960; *Seminar 8* (B. Fink, trans.), seminar of 28 June 1961.

⁴ This anticipates the reference in the next paragraph to *Seminar 7*.

⁵ Lacan chooses his expressions in order to play with "belle" ("beautiful") in "Je n'embellis rien" and then in "faire la partie trop belle".

⁶ Lacan, *Seminar 7* (D. Porter, trans.), seminars of 25 May, 1, 8, 15 June 1960 (discussing Sophocles' *Antigone*).

⁷ Lacan seems to refer back a couple of paragraphs to the beauty that interested him in *Seminar 8* (that of the body image, derived from the mirror stage), as opposed to the beauty that is Antigone's in Sophocles' play, discussed in *Seminar 7*.

⁸ Assembly of psychoanalysts of the Société française de psychanalyse (Lacan's organisation), held in autumn 1961. See below, footnote 1 to seminar of 4 April 1962.

⁹ Moustafa Safouan, "Notes du séminaire L'éthique", published in *Bulletin de la Convention Psychanalytique*, No.10 (December 1986) and No.12 (March 1987).

- the fourth on the object relation,
- the fifth on the formations of the unconscious,
- the sixth on desire and its interpretation,
- ethics,
- transference,
- identification, which we are starting on, so nine in all,

...that there's a clear alternation, a pulsation. You will see that the themes of the subject and of the signifier take turns every two years, and since we began with the signifier, with the elaboration of the function of the symbolic, that means that this year we are doing the signifier, because it's an odd-numbered year.

Although, really, the issue is the relationship of the subject to the signifier in identification.

No doubt, this identification, which we are proposing to give an adequate notion of this year, has been rendered quite trivial for us by analysis. "So this year you are doing identification," someone said to me, someone who is close to me and understands me very well. And that person added with a disapproving look: "The all-purpose explanation!" suggesting disappointment and suggesting that it is not what would have been expected of me.

But allow me to correct that person!

Their expectation that I would, so to speak, dodge the issue, will be disappointed, because I hope to give it a proper treatment, and I am also hopeful that the fatigue which this topic suggests in advance to that person will be dissipated.

I will speak about identification itself.

To make clear right away what I mean by that: when people talk about identification, what they think of in the first place is the other with whom one identifies, and that opens the door for me to emphasise, to insist upon the difference between the other and the Other, the little other and the big Other – a theme, which, I can surely say, you are already familiar with.

But that's not the angle that I want to start from. Rather, I am going to put the accent on what it is in identification that posits itself directly as making identical, as being founded on the notion of "the same", and even of the same to the same, with all the difficulties, which that raises.

Even if you can't pinpoint them straight away, you probably have some idea of the difficulties that have always been posed for thought by: "a is a". If a is so definitely a, then leave it be! Why separate it from itself in order to reassemble it again so quickly?

What we have here isn't just a piece of wit. For example, some proponents of the conceptual elaboration called logical-positivism made it their aim not to pose any logical problem unless

it has a meaning that can be discovered in some crucial experiment and to reject any logical problem, which could not in some way offer this final guarantee, as being a problem devoid of meaning.

When Russell, in his *Principia Mathematica*, gives a value to the equation, to the making equal, of “ $a = a$ ”, someone else, Wittgenstein, comes out in opposition because of impasses that seem to him to result from it, measured by the principles Russell set out from. And the refusal is even given in algebraic apposition, such an equality requiring a detour in the notation in order to find what can serve as an equivalent to recognition of the identity, “ a is a ”.¹⁰

The path of logical-positivism does not seem to us to be at all the right path in matters of logic. We will pursue our inquiry at the level of an experience of speech [parole], in which we put our trust through all its equivocations and ambiguities, and our inquiry will be into what we can approach under this term of “identification”.

You probably know that some quite general, even universal, historical turning points can be observed in all languages, so that it makes sense to draw a global contrast between modern syntaxes and syntaxes which are, not archaic, but simply ancient, by which I mean the languages of what we call Antiquity.

These general turning points are those of syntax, which is quite different from the lexical, where things are much more shifting.

We could say that each language, as compared to the general history of language, contributes vacillations that are specific to its own genius, so that such a vacillation can sometimes be particularly well-suited for revealing the history of a meaning.

We can then wonder what the term, or the essential notion of the term “identity” might be. “Identity” and “identification” contain the Latin term “idem” [“same”], and that shows you that a certain meaning-experience [expérience significative] is supported in the vulgar French term, “même” [“same”], which has the same signifying function as “idem”.

It seems that the “em”, the suffix of “id” [“it”, Latin] in “idem”, operates the function, I would say, of a root in the evolution of Indo-European at the level of a number of Italic languages. This “em” is redoubled in “même”. So an ancient consonant re-emerges as the residue, the remainder, the return to a primitive theme, but in passing it picks up the intermediate phase of the etymology, which is at the actual birth of “même”, namely the colloquial Latin “metipsum” [“same”], and even “metipsissimum” of expressive low Latin, and this pushes us to recognise the direction in which experience here suggests we should

¹⁰ This must refer to Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 5.53-5.535. Russell accepted Wittgenstein’s criticisms in his Introduction to the *Tractatus* (*ibid.* pp.5-6), but later rejected them (Bertrand Russell, *My Philosophical Development*, pp. 114-115).

search for the meaning of all identity, at the heart of what is a sort of redoubling of “moi-même” [“myself”], this “moi-même” being, as you see, “metipsissimum” – a sort of “au jour d’aujourd’hui” [“on the day of today”],¹¹ which we do not notice and which is there present in “moi-même”.¹²

And then, coming along behind “me”, we have “you”, “him”, “them”, “us”¹³ and even “self” [“soi”], which in French turns out to be a “soi-même”, all being drawn into “metipsissimum”.

So what we see here in our language is the indication of a work, of a special significant tendency, that you will allow me to qualify as “mihilism”,¹⁴ in so far as this experience of the ego [“moi”] refers to this act.

Certainly, the thing would have only incidental interest if we were not able to rediscover other instances where this fact, this clear and easily discoverable difference, is revealed. Think how in Greek, “αὐτός” [*autos*, “he”, “self”, “same”] also serves to designate “same”, just as in German and in English “selbst” and “self” come into play to designate identity.

I believe, then, that we have good reason to point out and wonder about this sort of permanent metaphor in the French mode of expression.

We can, I think, glimpse a connection between this and the fact (a fact of a quite different level) that it is in French, specifically in Descartes, that being has been thought of as inherent to the subject in a manner so captivating that, ever since the formula was proposed to thought, a large part of the efforts of philosophy have consisted in trying to find a means of extrication from it – more and more overtly in our own day, there being, I might say, no philosophical topic (with rare exceptions) that doesn’t begin by trying to overcome the famous “I am thinking, therefore I am”.¹⁵

¹¹ “Aujourd’hui”, French for “today”, already means literally “on the [au] day [jour] of today [d’hui]”, since “hui” comes from Latin “hodie” (today); so “au jour d’aujourd’hui” (which can be said in French, at least in rhetorical contexts) is not a double but a triple pleonasm.

¹² Lacan leaves out the step in this etymology that is crucial for establishing his point: Latin “ipse” (accusative “ipsum”) means “self”, and “met-”, in the (unattested but highly probable) vulgar Latin “metipsum” and its superlative “metipsissimum” (roughly “same” and “very same”), is a form of the emphatic suffix “em”, which Lacan has just discussed, and it had become a *prefix* to “ipse” because the word it originally belonged with as *suffix* had been elided, and that word was “ego” (accusative “me”) in the Latin expression “egomet ipse” (accusative “memet ipsum”), meaning “myself”. This is the sense in which French “même” (same), derived from “metipsissimum”, can be said to *already* contain “moi-même” (myself). These points are well explained in English at <https://latin.stackexchange.com/questions/5039/how-did-met-ipse-issimus-compound-to-mean-the-same-in-metipsimus> and in French in Oscar Bloch, W. von Wartburg, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue française* (entry for “même”). Lacan already discussed the etymology of “même” in the seminar of 30 March 1960 (*Seminar 7*, D. Porter, trans., p. 198).

¹³ Lacan must mean when these pronouns are made reflexive (yourself, himself, themselves, ourselves), which in French is by the addition of “même” to the pronoun.

¹⁴ “mihi” is the dative case of the Latin pronoun “ego” (“I”).

¹⁵ Descartes’ famous formula, “je pense, donc je suis” is traditionally translated in English as “I think, therefore I am”. However, French does not distinguish the present simple and continuous tenses, so “je pense” is ambiguous between “I think” and “I am thinking”. As pointed out succinctly by Simon Blackburn (cited at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cogito,_ergo_sum), “Descartes’ premise is not ‘I think’ in the sense of ‘I ski’,

I believe that “I am thinking, therefore I am” is not a bad entry point for us and that we can take it as the first step in our investigation.

It is clear that, in the way Descartes proceeds [la démarche de Descartes], “I am thinking, therefore I am” (I had meant to point it out in passing, but I say it to you straight off; I cannot by any means embark today on a commentary on Descartes and I do not intend to do so)... if you refer to Descartes’ texts – the *Discourse on Method* and the *Meditations* – you find that “I am thinking, therefore I am” is infinitely more fluid, more slippery, more vacillating than the lapidary expression, in which it is imprinted as much in your memory as in the passive or surely inadequate idea that you may well have of the Cartesian process.

How could it¹⁶ fail to be inadequate, since no two commentators are in agreement as to its exact contours?¹⁷

It is therefore with some arbitrariness, but nevertheless with enough reasons, that today I am going to dwell on this formula, which means something to you and which has a weight that certainly goes beyond the attention that you have granted it before now, and I am going to show you how it offers a sort of introduction to our theme.

The task for us, at the point of elaboration that we have arrived at, is to try and articulate in a more precise fashion something that we have already advanced more than once as a thesis: that there is nothing to support the traditional philosophical idea of a subject, other than the existence of the signifier and of its effects.

This thesis, which, as you will see, will be essential for every incarnation that we can give hereafter of the effects of identification, requires us to try and articulate in a more precise way how we actually conceive of this dependence of the formation of the subject on the effects of the signifier as such.

We will even go further and say that, taking the word “thought” in a technical sense (the thought of those whose job is to think), we can see, looking closely and perhaps with hindsight, that nothing of what is called “thought” ever did more than to position itself somewhere inside this problematic.

By the same token, we can say that – whether or not we intended it or you knew it – the whole experience of the unconscious, which is ours here, and all investigation as to the nature of this experience, is located at a level of thought where (to the extent that we make this journey together, but, nevertheless, under my guidance) the most present, most immediate,

which can be true even if you are not at the moment skiing. It is supposed to be parallel to ‘I am skiing’.” The point is vital for Lacan’s discussion, so I translate “je pense” as “I am thinking”.

¹⁶ The idea of the Cartesian procedure.

¹⁷ The contours of the Cartesian process.

most incarnate, tangible aspect of this effort is the question that you put to yourselves in making this effort, namely: “Who am I?”

This isn't an abstract philosophical game, because you know – at least some of you know – that when it comes to this subject of “Who am I?”, to what I am trying to initiate you into, I really mean business.

Those who know it may, naturally, be those from whom I hear it, and I am not going to embarrass anyone by broadcasting what I hear from them.

Moreover, why would I do so, since I will grant you that the question is a legitimate one?

I can lead you very far along this path without you having a guarantee, even for a moment, of the truth of what I say to you, even though everything I say to you is about truth.

As to what I hear from you, it goes as far as the dreams of those who address themselves to me. I recall one of them: “Why,” one of my analysands dreamt, “doesn't he tell the truth about the true?” The dream was about me and the dreamer complained to me when fully awake that my discourse is always missing the last word.

It's no answer for me to say, “Children that you are, always wanting to believe that I tell you the real truth [la vraie vérité]”, because this term, “the real truth”, does have a meaning, and I would go so far as to say that the whole credit of psychoanalysis is built on this meaning. Psychoanalysis first presented itself to the world as the bringer of the real truth. Of course, one quickly falls into all sorts of metaphors, by which the point is eluded.

This real truth is the hidden side of the cards. There will always be one, even in the most rigorous philosophical discourse. It's what our credit in the world is based on and the amazing thing is that this credit still endures, even though, for a good while now, no one has made the slightest effort to offer even the tiniest beginnings of anything worthy of it.

So I feel quite honoured when I am asked: “Where is the real truth of your discourse?”. After all, it leads me to think that it's precisely because I am taken, not for a philosopher, but for a psychoanalyst, that I get asked this question. Because one of the most remarkable things in the philosophical literature is the degree to which, among philosophers – I mean, when they are philosophising – this question is never posed, except to admit, with a disconcerting facility, that the greatest of them never thought a word of what they communicated to us in their writings. It is permitted to think, for example, as regards Descartes, that his faith in God was far from sure, because that suits one or other of his commentators, unless it happens to be the opposite that suits him.

There is one thing, in any case, which has never seemed to anyone to lessen the credit of philosophers, namely that one could say of each of them, and even the greatest, that they maintained a double truth. So when, entering into psychoanalysis, I put my foot in it with this

question about truth and the ground beneath my foot grows hot, I ought to be pleased, since, if you think about it, it was me who turned the heat back up.

But enough of that. Let's get started on the subject's relationships of identity. We will go via the Cartesian formula and you will see how I mean to approach it today.

Clearly, there can be absolutely no question of trying to go beyond Descartes. What we have to do is to extract the maximum possible effects using the impasses, the depth of which he suggests to us.

As you follow me in a critique that is in no sense a "commentary on the text", I would ask you to bear in mind what I mean to gain from it for the sake of my own discourse.

The formulation "I am thinking, therefore I am" seems to me, in this form, to concentrate habitual uses to the extent of becoming the worn coin without an image that Mallarmé refers to somewhere.¹⁸

If we hold onto it for a moment, and try to polish its function as sign, to reanimate its function for our purposes, I would point out that this formula, which, I repeat, we only find in its concentrated form in Descartes at a certain point of the *Discourse on the Method*¹⁹ (it is by no means expressed in this densified form)... this "I am thinking, therefore I am" runs up against the objection – I believe that it has never been made – that "I am thinking" is not a thought.

Certainly, Descartes proposes these formulas at the end of a long process of thought, and it is quite certain that the thought in question is a thought of a thinker. I will go so far as to say that this characteristic, "it is a thought of a thinker", is not requisite in order for us to be talking about thought. A thought, in a word, in no way requires that one thinks about thought.

Specifically, for us, thought begins with the unconscious. One cannot but be surprised at the timidity which makes us resort to the formula of psychologists when we try to say something about thought, the formula which tells us that thought is: "an action in outline, in a reduced state, the small economic model of action".

You will tell me, "But that's just what Freud says somewhere!"

Certainly, you can find everything in Freud: he may have used this psychological definition of thought in some paragraph of his writings. But there's no getting round the fact that Freud

¹⁸ "To tell, to teach and even to describe have their place, and suffice, perhaps, in order to exchange human thought, to take or to put into someone else's hand in silence a coin, this elementary use of discourse serving the universal reporting in which, except for literature, all genres of contemporary writing participate." (Stéphane Mallarmé, *Divagations* (Barbara Johnson, trans.).)

¹⁹ René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method* (J. Veitch, trans.), Part 4.

also calls thought an efficacious and, in some way, self-sufficient mode of masturbatory satisfaction. The point being that we have a somewhat broader take on “the meaning of thought” than other workers.

Still, when we question the formula at issue, “I am thinking, therefore I am”, we could say that, used as it gets used, it poses a problem for us. However large the field we have reserved for thought in order to see that the characteristics of thought are satisfied – in order to see that the characteristics of what we can call “a thought” are satisfied, – we need to question this saying [parole], “I am thinking”.²⁰

This saying might prove completely inadequate to sustain anything whatsoever that we could grasp of the presence, “I am”. And that is exactly what I contend to be the case.

To clarify what I am saying: “I am thinking”, taken simply in this form, is logically no more sustainable, no more supportable than the “I am lying” that has created problems for a certain number of logicians – this “I am lying” which is only sustained by a logical vacillation (empty, but sustainable) that deploys this semblance of meaning, a semblance that is quite sufficient to find a place in formal logic... if I say “I am lying” and it is true, then I am not lying, but I *am* lying because in saying “I am lying” I affirm the contrary.

It is very easy to dismantle this so-called logical difficulty and to show that the supposed difficulty of this judgment arises because the judgment that it involves cannot refer to its own statement [son propre énoncé]. What happens is a collapse. The difficulty arises from failing to distinguish between two planes, from the fact that “I am lying” is treated as bearing on the very articulation of “I am lying” without being distinguished from it. Put simply: without this distinction, we are not dealing with a real proposition.

These little paradoxes, which logicians make much of (though only to reduce them at once to their true measure) may pass for simple amusements. But they have an interest: they are worth dwelling on if we are to pin down the true position of all formal logic, up to and including the renowned logical-positivism that I mentioned earlier.

What I mean is that, in my opinion not enough use has been made of the famous aporia of Epimenides, which is simply a more developed version of what I have just presented to you in connection with “I am lying”: “ ‘All Cretans are liars,’ says Epimenides the Cretan.”

You see straight away the little merry-go-round, which this sets off.

²⁰ I follow Typescript 1 in this sentence. Roussan follows several listeners who heard “si elle satisfait” instead of “satisfaite” in Typescript 1. That produces a quite different meaning: “...in order to see whether it [the saying ‘I am thinking’] satisfies the characteristics of thought – to see whether it satisfies the characteristics of what we can call ‘a thought’”.

Not enough use has been made of it to demonstrate the vanity of the famous universal affirmative proposition A.²¹ Because, as we will see, it is the most interesting form for resolving the difficulty. Because observe carefully what happens if one poses the following, which is possible and which has been put forward as a criticism of the universal affirmative A, the substance of which, some people have claimed (not without foundation) is none other than that of a negative existential proposition: “There is not any Cretan who is not capable of lying.”

In this formulation the problem disappears. Epimenides can say it because, put this way, the statement doesn't assert that there is anyone, even anyone Cretan, who could lie non-stop, and that is plausible when one considers that, in order to lie all the time, you would need a sustained thread of memory, so that the liar would end up by orienting his discourse in the direction of an avowal. So even if “all Cretans are liars” means that there is no Cretan who wouldn't like to lie all the time, the truth will slip out at some point, precisely by virtue of his resolve to lie all the time.

The most sensible interpretation of the statement by Epimenides the Cretan that all Cretans are liars has to be that he takes pride in lying and that he wants to faze you by honestly admitting his strategy. It's the same urge and has the same success as when someone tells you that he is blunt and doesn't mince his words – the sort of person who asks you to go along with his bluff.

What I mean is that every universal affirmative A, in the formal sense of the category, has the same oblique goals, and it is nice to see these goals manifest themselves in classic examples: we should be intrigued that it is none other than Aristotle who is keen to tell us that “Socrates is mortal”, since it offers an opening for what we psychoanalysts call “interpretation”, in a sense that goes a bit further than the function to be found in the title of one of the books of Aristotle's logic,²² because although, clearly, it is *qua* human animal that the one whom Athens called “Socrates” is bound to die, it is nevertheless in so far as he is named Socrates that he escapes death. This is so not only because his renown will last for as long as the fabulous operation of transference, carried out by Plato, endures, but also, and more specifically, because by having succeeded in constituting himself, based on his social identity (this being of atopy that defined his character), the person named Socrates, he who was so called in Athens (the reason why he could not go into exile), was able to sustain himself in the desire of his own death even to the extent of making it the acting out of his life.

To which he added the final touch of the sacrifice of a cock to Asclepius,²³ as if it was a matter of recommending that no harm should come to the chestnut seller on the corner.

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Categorical_proposition.

²² Aristotle, *De Interpretatione* (J. Ackrill, trans.).

²³ Plato, *Phaedo*, 117e-118a.

So we find in Aristotle something that we can interpret as an attempt to exorcise a transference, which he believed to be an obstacle to the development of knowledge. It was, moreover, an error on his part, since the failure of the attempt is patent. It would have been necessary to go further than Plato in the denaturing of desire for things to have turned out otherwise. Modern science is born in a hyper-Platonism and not in the Aristotelian turn to the function of knowledge according to the statute of the “concept”.

What it took, in fact, was something that we can call “the second death of the Gods”, namely their ghostly re-emergence at the time of the Renaissance, for the word [le verbe]²⁴ to show us its real truth, which dissipates, not the illusions, but the darkness of meaning, and from which modern science emerges.

So, as we said, the “I am thinking” has the interest of showing us (it’s the least that we can deduce from it) the voluntaristic dimension of judgment. But we don’t even need to say that much about it: the two lines that we distinguish as saying and said [énonciation et énoncé] are sufficient for us to affirm that it is when these two lines get mixed up and confused with each other that we get a paradox culminating in the impasse of “I am lying”, to which I briefly drew your attention.

The proof that this is the issue is that I can lie with the same breath in which I say that I am lying. It’s perfectly admissible, so long as I distinguish the two voices. If I say, “he says that I am lying”, there’s obviously no problem, no more than if I said, “he is lying”. But I can even say, “I say that I am lying”.

There is, all the same, something here which ought to give us pause, namely that if I say, “I know that I am lying”, this has something very convincing which ought to draw our attention as analysts because, as we know, what is original, sharp and captivating in our intervention is the fact that, moving to a dimension that is the exact opposite but strictly correlative, we can say (it’s our job to say), “But no, you don’t know that you are telling the truth”, which immediately goes much further and becomes, “You couldn’t tell it so well if you didn’t think you were lying, and when you don’t want to lie, it’s to protect yourself from that truth”.

It seems that one can’t grasp this truth, except by way of these glimmerings. Truth is a girl (I have said it before) because, like any other girl,²⁵ she is lost.

The same goes for “I am thinking”. If various teachers, people who trot it out or relay its message, find it so unproblematic, that can only be because they don’t dwell on it enough. If we make the same demands on “I am thinking” as we did on “I am lying”, it will either mean, “I think that I am thinking”, which is nothing other than the “I think” of opinion or imagination, your “I think” when you say, “I think she loves me”, which means trouble on the way, and, reading Descartes, even in the text of the *Meditations*, one is surprised at the

²⁴ “Word” (“verbe”) here is almost equivalent to “language”.

²⁵ “La vérité” (“truth”) is a feminine noun.

number of places where “I am thinking” is just this essentially imaginary notation, upon which no would-be radical proof can be founded or gain purchase. Or, alternatively, “I am thinking” will mean “I am a thinking being”, but that, of course, is to push through in advance the whole process that aims to extract from “I am thinking” a statute for my existence that is without prejudice or infatuation. If I start saying, “I am a being”, that means “I am a being who is essential to being, without doubt”, and there is no need to throw in anything else – my thought can be kept for personal use.

Having made that clear, we come to something important, to this level, this third term that I raised in connection with “I am lying”, namely that one can say, “I know that I am thinking”. This, indeed, is the support of everything that a certain phenomenology has developed regarding the subject.

And here I introduce a term that we will come back to in the weeks ahead. What we have to do, because we are psychoanalysts, is to radically subvert – to render impossible – a most radical prejudice, which is the true support of a whole development in philosophy and which is the limit that our experience has transcended, the limit beyond which the possibility of the unconscious begins. It’s a prejudice thanks to which there has never been, in the philosophical lineage that dates from the Cartesian investigations (from the *cogito*), any subject other than the one, which I will designate by the term, “the subject supposed to know”.

The term deserves a special resonance, which carries with it an irony and a question, and you should notice that when it is applied to phenomenology, and specifically to the Hegelian phenomenology, the function of this “subject supposed to know” acquires its value in connection with the synchronic function, which is deployed there. The presence of this subject, from the outset of the phenomenological questioning, allows us, at a certain point, at a certain knot in the structure, to extricate ourselves from the diachronic unfolding that is meant to lead us to “absolute knowledge”.

We will see in the light of this question how this absolute knowledge is singularly refutable, but today we’ll go no further than proposing a motion of no-confidence as regards the attribution of this supposed knowledge (knowledge that is supposed) to anyone whomsoever, and, most of all, we will resolve not to suppose (*subjicere*)²⁶ any subject to knowledge. Knowledge is intersubjective, which is not to say that it is the knowledge of everyone, but that it is the knowledge of the Other with a capital O.

We have stated and we insist that the Other is not a subject, it is a locus [un lieu], to which people have tried, since Aristotle, to transfer the powers of the subject. What Hegel unfolded as the history of the subject is a left-over of these efforts, but that doesn’t by any means imply that the subject knows the slightest bit more of what this is all about. The subject is only

²⁶ Latin.

stirred, so to speak, by an undue supposition: the supposition that the Other knows – that there is an absolute knowledge.

But the Other knows even less about it than the subject, for the good reason that the Other is not a subject. The Other is the dumping ground for representative representations²⁷ of this supposition of knowledge, and this is what we call the unconscious in so far as the subject himself has got lost in this supposition of knowledge. He unwittingly drags it around with him and “it”²⁸ is the debris that comes back to him from what his reality suffers in this thing – debris that is more or less prone to be misrecognised.

He sees it come back and he can say or not say, “that’s it for sure” or “that’s not it at all”, but it most certainly is it, all the same.

The function of the subject in Descartes is where we will resume next time, with the resonances that we find in analysis.

What we will do next time is to try and find references to the phenomenology of the obsessional neurotic in a signifying scansion where the subject finds himself immanent to every articulation.

²⁷ Freud’s “Vorstellungsrepräsentanz” (“ideational representative”) (Freud, [Standard Edition 14](#), p. 148 (*Repression*)).

²⁸ French “ça”, which is the usual translation of Freud’s “Es” (“id”).

22 November 1961

You saw, not without satisfaction, that I was able to introduce this year's theme to you last time by a reflection which, in appearance, might seem very philosophical, since it had to do, precisely, with a philosophical reflection – that of Descartes, – without, I think, arousing too many negative reactions on your part. Far from it, I seem to have won your confidence as regards the legitimacy of what is to follow. I am gladdened by this feeling of confidence which I would like to be able to translate as meaning that you have at least sensed where I wanted to lead you by making the start that I made.

Nevertheless, so that you don't get the impression – from the fact that I am going to continue today on the same theme – that I am going slow, I would like to state that such is our aim in using this mode of approach as we embark on this path. Let me say it right away, in a formula that all of our future development will subsequently clarify: what I mean to say is that what we as analysts understand by identification – because it is what we encounter in identification, in our concrete experience regarding identification – is a signifier identification [une identification de signifiant].¹

Read again in the *Course in Linguistics* one of the many passages where Saussure strives to get close to the function of the signifier – as he continuously does in his efforts at circumscribing that function – and you will see (I say this in parenthesis) that all these² efforts have ultimately still left the door open to what I would not so much call differences of interpretation as veritable divergences in the possible use of what he opened up with this essential distinction between signifier and signified.

Perhaps I could touch on this for you in passing so that you can at least note the difference there is between one school and another: between the Prague School, to which Jakobson, to whom I so often refer, belongs, and that of Copenhagen, which took its orientation from Hjelmslev under a heading, which I have never mentioned to you before – that of glossematics.

You will see: it is almost inevitable that I will be brought back to this because we cannot take a step without attempting to go deeper into this function of the signifier and, consequently, its relationship to the sign.

You ought to know by now, including those among you who might have believed (even to the extent of reproaching me for it) that I was repeating Jakobson, that, in fact, my position here is in advance of and more radical than that of Jakobson as regards the primacy I give to the function of the signifier in every realisation, let's say, of the subject.

¹ Roussan has “identification de signifiants” (“identification of signifiers”) which would be indistinguishable to the ear. “Signifier identification” seems more probable since Lacan takes it up again five and seven paragraphs further on.

² “ces” in Typescript 1. Roussan has same-sounding “ses”; Staferla has “mes” (“my”).

The passage in Saussure that I was thinking of a moment ago (I only pick it out for its value as an image) is where he tries to show what sort of identity signifier identity is by the example of the 10.15 express train.³ The 10.15 express, he says, is something perfectly defined in its identity: it is the 10.15 express despite the fact that, obviously, the different 10.15 expresses, which occur and are identical day after day, have elements and even structure that are absolutely different as regards what they are made of and how they are put together.

The truth of such an affirmation supposes, in the constitution of an entity such as the 10.15 express, a fabulous interlinking of signifying organisations that enter into the real through the mediation of speaking beings. This can be said to have an exemplary value⁴ for defining properly what I mean when I give this initial statement of what I am going to try to articulate for you: I will try to articulate the laws of identification as signifier identification.

As a reminder, it's worth highlighting what it is that we need to distinguish signifier identification from (limiting ourselves to an opposition that offers a sufficient support for your understanding): what is opposed to it, what signifier identification is distinct from, what makes it necessary that we elaborate its function (the function that sets it apart), is imaginary identification.

I tried a long time ago to show you the extreme case of imaginary identification (the background of the mirror stage) in what I will call the organic effect of the image of a like-being [semblable] – the effect of assimilation that we find at certain points of natural history, – and I chose to show it *in vitro* by the example of a little creature called the desert locust.⁵ As you know, the evolution, the growth, the appearance of the totality of what are called its integuments, the form in which we see it, depends in some way on an encounter that happens at some point in its development – the stages and phases of its larval transformation. Depending on whether or not a certain number of features of the image of a like-being appear to it, it will evolve in the form which is called “solitary” or in the form which is called “gregarious”.

We know very little about the stages of the organic circuit that produces such effects. What we do know is that it is experimentally certain.

We will classify it under the very general rubric of “effects of the image”, of which we find all sorts of forms at very different levels⁶ of the physical world, and even the inanimate world, as you know, if we define an image as any physical arrangement which has as its

³ The 8.25 express train, in fact (Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, pp. 108-109).

⁴ Typescript 1 has a full stop here and starts a new sentence, “To properly define what I mean when I give this initial statement...”.

⁵ Lacan, *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.), p. 77.

⁶ A page is missing in Typescript 1, from here to “something that carries bi-univocal concordance?”.

result the constitution of a bi-univocal concordance between two systems, at whatever level that may be.

This is a very handy formula, and one that can be applied just as well to the effect I just used as an example as to the formation in nature of an image – even a virtual image – through the mediation of a plane surface, whether it be the surface of a mirror or the surface of the lake reflecting the mountain (the example I used some time ago).⁷

Is that to say, as is the tendency today (a tendency which is spreading under the influence of, I would say, a sort of intoxication that recently gripped scientific thought due to the irruption of what is really just the discovery of the dimension of the signifying chain as such, but which, in all sorts of ways, gets reduced by scientific thought to more simple terms, to what are called “information theories”), that it is right, without reservation, to characterise the link between two systems, one of which is an image with respect to the other, by this idea of information, which is very general, implying certain paths taken by the something that vehicles the bi-univocal concordance?

Here, indeed, there is a great ambiguity, an ambiguity that makes us forget the proper levels of what information needs to involve if we are to accord it a value other than the vague value, which, in the end, would only give a sort of re-interpretation, a false consistency to what has hitherto been subsumed, from Antiquity to our own time, under the notion of form – something which captures, envelops, commands the elements, gives them a certain type of finality, which, all in all, is that of an ascension from simple to complex, from inanimate to animate. That, no doubt, is something which has its own enigma and value, its order of reality, but which is distinct⁸ – this is the point I want to articulate here with all its force – from the novelty brought to us, in the new scientific perspective, by the accenting, the setting apart of what is brought by the experience of language, and from what the relationship to the signifier lets us introduce as an original dimension, to be radically distinguished from the real, in the form of the symbolic dimension.

It is not (as you see) by that route [par là] that I approach the problem of what will enable us to break apart [scinder] this ambiguity.

But I have said enough about it already, nonetheless, for you to know, to have already sensed, to have apprehended, in these elements of signifying information, the originality that is brought by the character, we might say, of seriality that they involve, the character of discreteness too, of cutting, which Saussure found no other or better way of articulating than to say that what characterises each element is to be what the others are not.

⁷ Lacan, [Seminar 2](#) (S. Tomaselli, trans.) pp. 46-47.

⁸ Typescript 1 ends the sentence here. Roussan’s punctuation produces much better sense.

Diachrony and synchrony are the terms that I referred you to. But all this has not been fully spelt out, because a distinction needs to be made between *de facto* diachrony, which too often is all that is meant in the articulation of the laws of the signifier, and diachrony proper, by which we arrive at structure. And the same goes for synchrony: we haven't said everything about it – far from it – when we take it to imply virtual simultaneity in some supposed subject of the code, because that means going back to what, as I showed you the last time, is for us an untenable entity.

I mean that we cannot, by any means, settle for recourse to that entity because it is precisely one form of what I denounced at the end of my discourse last time under the name of the “subject supposed to know”.

That is why I am starting my introduction to the question of identification this year in the way I am doing. We need to start from the difficulty itself that is proposed to us by the very fact of our experience, by what it arises from, what we have to start from in articulating and theorising it. We cannot in any way refer, as Hegel did, to a possible arrival point of the subject in some absolute knowledge, even as something to aim at (a promise for the future), precisely because we have no right to suppose it as possible.

We must learn to always do without this subject supposed to know. We cannot have recourse to it ever. It is excluded by an experience that we already discussed, in the first trimester of the seminar on “Desire and its Interpretation”, which has been published.⁹ It's something that I thought had to be published without delay because it marks the end of a stage of our teaching. This subject of ours, the subject I want to bring into question for you today in connection with the Cartesian enterprise, is the one that, in that first trimester, I told you we could not get any closer to than in the exemplary dream, which articulates this subject around the phrase: “He did not know that he was dead.”¹⁰

Being absolutely rigorous, we have here (contrary to Politzer's opinion)¹¹ the subject of enunciation and it is in the third person that we are able to designate him.

That is not to say that we couldn't approach him in the first person, but we must be aware that by doing so, in the most pathetically accessible experience, he eludes us, because by translating him into this first person, we come back to that same phrase in order to say what we can say, to the extent that we really can have an encounter with time's chariot (as John

⁹ “Séminaire Le désir et son interprétation, 1958-59, résumé par J.B.Pontalis”, in *Bulletin de Psychologie*, 1960, vol. XIII, n°5 et 6 [Roussan note].

¹⁰ “A man who had once nursed his father through a long and painful mortal illness, told me that in the months following his father's death he had repeatedly dreamt that his father was alive once more and that he was talking to him in his usual way. But he felt it exceedingly painful that his father had really died, only without knowing it.” *Standard Edition 12*, p. 225 (*Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning*).

¹¹ Georges Politzer, *Critique of the Foundations of Psychology* (M. Apprey, trans.), pp. 25-33, 95-96.

Donne says: “hurrying near”, it is at our heels),¹² and in that moment of pause where we can foresee the final moment, that of complete release [où tout déjà nous lâchera], to say to ourselves: “I did not know that I lived only because I was mortal”.

Clearly, it is because we will be able to say to ourselves that we forgot this almost always that we will be placed in the uncertainty, for which there is no name, either tragic, or comic, and that we may say to ourselves, at the moment of our death, that we will have always been, in some degree, a stranger to our own life.

This is what is at the bottom of the most recent philosophical questioning, which communicates something more than a fad in the formula¹³ that reminds us of the existential foundation of “being for death” (communicates something to people who don’t get much of it, and even to those who make much of their sense of its obscurity).

That’s not a contingent phenomenon. Whatever its causes, its correlations, or even its implications, what we can call the profanation of the great phantasies forged for desire by the religious mode of thought leaves us exposed, even disarmed, giving rise to this emptiness, this void, to which the modern philosophical meditation tries to respond, and where our experience also has something to contribute, because this is the place, at the moment in time that I am clearly indicating to you,¹⁴ the same place where this subject constitutes himself as unable to know precisely why that which is at stake for him there is everything.

This is the value of what Descartes brings us and the reason why he was a good place to start. This is why I am coming back to him today, because we need to do a retake in order to measure once again what you heard me call the impasse (the impossibility even) of “I am thinking, therefore I am”. It’s precisely this impossibility which gives to it its value and its worth. If this subject, which Descartes proposes to us, is none other than the subject around which age-old cogitation turned before and has turned since, it is clear that the objections that I formulated last time carry all their weight, the weight implied in the etymology of the French verb “penser” [to think], the meaning of which is none other than “peser” [to weigh].

What can we found¹⁵ on “I am thinking” if we know, we analysts, that this “what I am thinking about”, which we grasp, goes back to a “from what, from where, starting from what do I think”, which necessarily escapes us? And this is why Descartes’ formula makes us ask whether there is not at least this privileged point of the pure “I am thinking”, which we can take as a foundation (this is why it was important for me to make you pause here for a

¹² In fact, Andrew Marvell (1621-1678) in “To His Coy Mistress” (“But at my back I always hear Time’s wingèd chariot hurrying near”).

¹³ Roussan has “in Heidegger’s formula”.

¹⁴ Perhaps the time of Descartes, to whom Lacan returns in the next paragraph.

¹⁵ “Quoi fonder...” in Roussan. Typescript 1 has almost same-sounding “poids fondé” and punctuates without a preceding sentence break to give “..the meaning of which is none other than ‘peser’ [to weigh], weight founded on ‘I am thinking’”. Typescript 1 then begins a new sentence, “For us analysts this ‘what I am thinking about’, which we grasp...”, producing a statement and not a question.

moment).¹⁶ The formula seems to imply that the subject must take care to think at every instant in order to be assured of being.¹⁷ This is a strange condition, but is it even sufficient? Is it enough for him to think that he is in order to touch thinking being? Because this is where Descartes, in the incredible magic of the discourse of the two first *Meditations*, leaves us suspended.

What he manages to establish in the progress of his actual text (not the text as read after a professor of philosophy has fished out the signifier from it and too easily exposes the artifice involved in formulating that, by thus thinking, I can say that I am a thing which thinks; that is too easy to refute) has all its force, except that we must question this thinking being [être-pensant] and ask ourselves if it isn't the participle of "to be-think" [être-penser]¹⁸ (to be written in the infinitive and in a single word): "I be-think" [j'être-pense], like one says "I overbear" ["j'outrecuide"],¹⁹ or as our analysts' habits make us say "I compensate", or even "I decompensate", "I overcompensate". It is the same term and just as legitimate in its composition.

But then the "I thinkbe" [je pensêtre], which is proposed in order to get us started, may appear unfit for purpose, because, if we formulate things this way, being already determines the register in which my whole enterprise is undertaken. As I said last time: even in Descartes' text, this "I thinkbe" inevitably bears the marks of delusion and semblance.

"I thinkbe" brings with it no more consistency than that of the dream, where Descartes effectively leaves us suspended at several points in his enterprise. "I thinkbe" can be conjugated like a verb, but it doesn't go very far: "I thinkbe", "you thinkbe" [tu pensêtres], with the "s" at the end, if you like, and you could even have "he thinkbes" ["il pensêtre"]. All we can say is that if we want to conjugate the verb that has the infinitive "pensêtrer", we would have to add the proviso, in the manner of dictionary writers, that "all forms beyond the third person singular present tense, are not used in French". If we want to be funny we will add that they are usually supplemented by the equivalent forms of the verb, which is complementary to "pensêtrer", namely the verb "s'empêtrer" [to get in a tangle].

What's the point here? It's that the act of "be-thinking" (because that is the issue) can only lead, for whoever thinks, to a "perhaps is I" [peut-être est je],²⁰ "perhaps I" [peut-être je]²¹ and I am not alone and not the first to have pointed out that the "I" in the conclusion "I am

¹⁶ Typescript 1 ends this sentence with the words "...in order to be sure of being."

¹⁷ This sentence, present in Rue CB and Roussan-Staferla, is not in Typescript 1.

¹⁸ Typescript 1 and Roussan hyphenate the invented word. There seems no particular reason to do so, but I follow suit to avoid confusion with the antiquated verb "to bethink".

¹⁹ Lacan's passing wordplay cannot be reproduced in English. "Outrecuider" ("to overbear"), is composed of "outré" ("beyond"), which sounds similar to "être" ("to be"), and "cuider" (an old French word meaning "to think").

²⁰ Literally "can be is I". This phrase is not in Typescript 1. Roussan notes that Lacan may have said "peut-être ai-je" ("perhaps I have"), which would be indistinguishable to the ear. However, the drift of the argument makes that unlikely.

²¹ Literally "can be I".

thinking, therefore *I am*” is smuggled goods. It is quite clear that this “I” remains problematic and that, until Descartes takes his next step (which we will come to), there is no reason why it should be exempt from the total putting-into-question of the whole process that Descartes carries out by introducing the function of the deceitful God.²² And you know that he actually goes further. The deceitful God is still a good God (calming me with pleasant illusions), but Descartes goes as far as the malicious demon, the radical liar, who leads me into error for the sake of it,²³ in what has been called “the hyperbolic doubt”. There is no way of seeing how this doubt has spared the “I”, which is therefore left in a fundamental vacillation.

There are two ways of articulating this vacillation. There is the classic way, which I was pleased to come across in Brentano’s *Psychology*, and which Brentano attributes quite rightly to Saint Thomas Aquinas,²⁴ namely that being cannot be grasped as thought except in an alternating fashion: it thinks, its memory appropriates its thinking reality, in a succession of alternating moments, without this thought ever being able to join up with itself in its own certainty.

The other way, which brings us closer to the Cartesian enterprise, is to see the essentially evanescent character of this “I”, to see that the real meaning of the first Cartesian step is the articulation: “I am thinking and I am not”. Of course, one can tarry on the way to this position and take note that I spend in thinking all of the being that I may have. And it is clear that, in the final analysis, it’s by ceasing to think that I glimpse that I quite simply am.

These are only first approaches. “I am thinking and I am not” [je pense et je ne suis]²⁵ brings us to a whole series of remarks, notably to those, which I spoke about the last time concerning French morphology, particularly as regards the “I” [“je”], which, in our language, is so much more dependent in its first person form than in English or German, for example, or in Latin where to the question, “Who did it?” you can reply, “I”, “Ich”, “ego”, but not “je” in French, but rather “it was me” [“c’est moi”] or “not me” [“pas moi”].

But “je” is something different, the “je” that is so easily elided in speech thanks to what are called the muted properties of its vocalisation, the “je” which can be a “j’sais pas” [“dunno”], where the “e” disappears.

But “j’sais pas” is something different from “je ne sais” [“I’m not sure”].²⁶ You can feel it, as people who have an original experience of French: “je ne sais” is an “I know without knowing”,²⁷ the “ne” of “je ne sais” does not bear on the “sais” [“know”] but on the “je”.

²² René Descartes, *Meditations* (J. Veitch, trans.), Second Meditation, section 9.

²³ *Ibid.*, First Meditation, section 12.

²⁴ Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, pp. 95-97, second footnote.

²⁵ Lacan uses “je ne suis” instead of the more formal “je ne suis pas”.

²⁶ These English translations of “j’sais pas” and “je ne sais” are approximate.

²⁷ This phrase is not in Typescript 1.

That is also why, contrary to what happens in these neighbouring languages, to which I allude for the moment rather than going further afield, the uncoupled part (we will call it that for the moment) of negation, which is the French “ne”, comes before the verb. Of course, the “ne” is not specific or unique to French: the “ne” in Latin presents itself to us with the same problematic, which I am only introducing for the moment and to which we will return.

As you know, I already alluded to the indications that Pichon offers regarding negation in French.²⁸ I don't think (I'm not saying anything new here, it's something I said then)²⁹ that Pichon's formulations on the “foreclosive” or the “discordant” can resolve the question, although they offer an admirable introduction to it. But the neighbourhood, the natural commingling in the French sentence of the “je” with the first part of the negation, “je ne sais”, is something that enters the register of a whole series of concordant facts, surrounding which I pointed out to you the emergence, in a certain linguistic usage, of problems that concern the subject as such in his relationship to the signifier.

What I want to get to is that³⁰ we are put on our guard (more easily than others) against the mirage of absolute knowledge, a mirage that can already be sufficiently refuted by translating it into the satiated repose of a sort of colossal seventh day, a Sunday of Life³¹ where the human animal will finally be able to plunge its snout into the grass, the great machine having been finally regulated to the nth degree of materialised nothingness which is the conception of knowledge [savoir].

And being [être] will finally have received the lot, which is its due, in its henceforth definitively accommodated stupidity, and we may assume that care [souci]³² will have been torn out along with the thinking excrescence, of which it is the peduncle.

But, charming though this scenario is, the actual way of things makes it look rather like what we are doing here with (I must say) a lot more phantasy and humour: these are light diversions in the science-fiction genre, where all sorts of variations on the theme are possible.

Descartes looks quite well-placed in this regard. One might perhaps regret that he didn't know more about these prospects of knowledge, but then, if he had known more about them, he would probably have had more scruples. Putting that on one side for now, the implication for the value of his initial step is quite different.

²⁸ Jacques Damourette, Edouard Pichon, *Des mots à la pensée* (chapter 7, “Negation”).

²⁹ Lacan, *Seminar 6* (B. Fink, trans.), seminars of 10, 17 December 1958.

³⁰ Roussan inserts “as regards Hegel”.

³¹ Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art, Vol. 2*, (T. Knox, trans.), p.887; *Lectures on the Philosophy of History, Vol. 1* (E. Haldane, trans.), p.92. Lacan's friend, Raymond Queneau, used the first Hegel quote as an epigraph to his 1952 novel *The Sunday of Life* (B. Wright, trans.).

³² “Souci” is the usual French translation of Heidegger's “Sorge”.

Professors like to emphasise that the Cartesian doubt is methodical. They attach enormous importance to that. “Methodical doubt” means “doubt done cold”. It is true that chilled meals were eaten, even in a certain context; but I don’t, in truth, think that this is the right approach.

Not that I want in any way to encourage you to consider the psychological case of Descartes, however exciting it may seem to find in his biography, his family relationships, his ancestry, some features which, drawn together, could give a picture with the general characteristics of a psychaesthesia, fuelling the demonstration with the famous passage about human coat-hangers,³³ those marionette-like entities around which you could restore a presence which you can see unfolding in the whole thrust of his thought at that point. I don’t see it as having much interest.

What matters to me is that, having tried to make you sense that the Cartesian thematic is logically unjustifiable, I can reaffirm that it is, nevertheless, not irrational. It’s no more irrational than desire is irrational for not being articulable, simply because it is articulated, which, I believe, is the whole import of what I have been demonstrating to you for the last year, by showing how it is articulated.

It has been emphasised (I am not the first to do it) that Descartes’ doubt is very different from sceptical doubt. This is certainly true. Compared to Descartes’ doubt, sceptical doubt operates completely at the level of the question of the real and, contrary to what is believed, it is far from challenging the real: it brings us back to it, reassembles its world from it. A sceptic whose discourse insists that nothing but sensation is valid does not make sensation disappear. He tells us that it has more weight, that it is more real than everything we can construct in connection with it.

This sceptical doubt has its place, as you know, in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*: it’s a moment in the research, the quest, which knowledge has embarked on with regard to itself, this knowledge which is only a “not yet knowledge” and which is therefore an “already knowledge”.

This isn’t what Descartes sets himself to. Descartes doesn’t have any place in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. What he puts in question is the subject itself and, although he doesn’t know it, what’s at issue is the subject supposed to know. The issue for us is not to recognise ourselves in what spirit is capable of; what is in question is the subject itself as an inaugural act.

This, I believe, is what gives Descartes’ crazy enterprise its prestige and fascination, what makes it the turning-point in history that it effectively is. The enterprise has all the characteristics of what, in our vocabulary, we call “taking action” [“un passage à l’acte”].³⁴

³³ Descartes, *op.cit.*, Second Meditation, section 13.

³⁴ For Lacan’s understanding of a “passage à l’acte”, see the definition in Dylan Evans’ [Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis](#).

The first phase of the Cartesian meditation has the hallmark of a “passage à l’acte”: it is at the level of what is necessarily inadequate and at the same time necessarily primordial in any initiative, which has the most radical, most original relationship to desire. The proof of that is the step, which Descartes is brought to take immediately afterwards, that of the deceitful God.³⁵ What is this step?

It’s the appeal to something that I will allow myself to oppose as the “verissimum” [“most true”, Latin] to the “entissimum” [“most existent”, Latin] in order to contrast it with previous proofs (which certainly cannot be made redundant) of the existence of God. For St. Anselm, God is “the most being of beings”.

The God we have here, the one whom Descartes brings in at this point of his thematic, is the God who must guarantee the truth of everything which is articulated as such. He is “the truth about truth”, the guarantor that truth exists. And all the more guarantor because this truth, as such, could be different, Descartes tells us; that it could be, properly speaking, error, if this God wanted it to be.³⁶

What is the meaning of that? If not that we find ourselves here³⁷ in everything that could be called the battery of the signifier, confronted with this single stroke, this *einzig*er Zug³⁸ which we already know³⁹ and which could, at a push, be substituted for all the elements of what constitutes the signifying chain – which could support this chain all by itself simply by being always the same.

What we find at the limit of the Cartesian experience as such of the vanishing subject is the need for this guarantor, for the simplest structural stroke, the single stroke which, I might say, is absolutely depersonalised, not only without subjective content, but even without any variation that exceeds this single stroke, this stroke which is *one* by being the single stroke. The foundation of the *one* that this stroke constitutes is to be found nowhere else but in its unity; we can say nothing else about it except that it is what every signifier has in common, by being constituted, before all else, as stroke, by having this stroke as support.

Will we be able to make anything of this in our concrete experience? I mean what you already see highlighted, namely the substitution, in a function that has given so much trouble

³⁵ René Descartes, *op.cit.*, First Meditation, sections 9-12.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Roussan, but not Typescript 1, has a comma here.

³⁸ Freud, *Standard Edition 18*, p. 107 (*Group Psychology*): “the identification is a partial and extremely limited one and only borrows a single trait [nur einen einzigen Zug] from the person who is its object”. Freud is describing the second of three types of identification that he presents at this point in *Group Psychology* (*ibid.*, pp. 105-108). “Zug” can mean “stroke”/ “line” or it can mean “feature”/ “attribute”. The French “trait” also has these alternative meanings. In the Freud passage the word is clearly meant in the second way. But in the present seminar and throughout the following seminars Lacan is interested in the first way, so I translate the word as “stroke”.

³⁹ Lacan, *Seminar 8* (B. Fink, trans.), seminars of 7, 14, 21 June 1961.

to philosophical thought, as we see in the almost inevitably idealist tendency of every articulation of the subject in the classical tradition... to substitute for it this function of idealisation, upon which rests the structural necessity, which I already articulated for you in the form of the ego-ideal, in so far as it is from this point (not mythical but perfectly concrete) of inaugural identification of the subject with the radical signifier, not of the Plotinian One, but of the single stroke as such, that the whole perspective of the subject as “not knowing” can be unfolded in a rigorous fashion.

That is what I think I can begin to formulate for you in a manner that is more satisfying and more applicable for our practical purposes, after today having made you travel mountain paths that (I reassure you by saying) have taken us across the most challenging peak of the difficulty, via which I must lead you.

29 November 1961

I brought you last time to the signifier that the subject must in some way be in order for it to be true that the subject is a signifier.

What we are dealing with here is *one* qua single stroke [trait unique]:



We could add refinement about how a school teacher writes “1” with a rising line, which in a way indicates where it emerges from, and that would not be mere refinement because, after all, it is precisely what we are going to do too: to try and see where it comes from.

But we haven’t got there yet. What’s needed is an adjustment of your mental vision, which is seriously impaired by the effects of a certain cultural mode that leaves a gap between primary education and the other sort, called “secondary”. Be aware that I’m not directing you towards “the One of Parmenides” or “the One of Plotinus”, or the “One” of any totality in our field, of which much has been made recently.

What we are dealing with is the *one* which I just called that of the primary school teacher, that of “Pupil X, write a hundred lines of ones for me,” namely strokes. “Pupil Y, you get a one in French.” The teacher jots the *einzigere Zug*¹ in his notebook, the single stroke of the sign that has always been sufficient for minimal notation. This is what we are dealing with – with the relationship of this *one* to what happens in identification.

If I talk about a relationship, it should perhaps occur to you, like a light coming on in your mind, that identification is not immediately collapsed, that it is not simply this *one*, at least not as we envisage it. As we envisage it, strictly speaking, the *one* can only be, at most [à la rigueur], the tool of this identification (you see already the path by which I am leading you), and you will find, when we look closely, that this isn’t so simple.

Because if what thinks, the thinking being of our last meeting, remains at the level of the real in its opacity, there’s no guarantee that it can emerge from “somebeing” [“quelqu’être”], where it is not identified. I don’t mean from² a “somebeing-itself” [“quelqu’être-même”]

¹ See above, seminar of 22 November 1961, footnote 38.

² Roussan has “...where it is not identified, I mean from...”. I follow Typescript 1 (a full stop followed by negative verb), since Lacan’s point seems to be that “somebeing itself” requires a step *beyond* “somebeing”, as indicated by the next, exclamatory sentence “Not even that, we haven’t got there yet!”

where it is thrown on the paving of some extension, which first needed a thought in order to be swept clean and left empty. Not even that, we haven't got there yet!

At the level of the real, what we can glimpse, amongst “so-much-being” (“tantd'être”) – written as one word – is a “be-being” (êtrétant), where it is attached to some teat, capable at the most of outlining the sort of “palpitation of being”, which makes the Sorcerer laugh so much from the depths of the tomb where the cunning of the Lady of the Lake has imprisoned him.³

You remember from a few years ago, the year of the Seminar on President Schreber, the image I evoked in the last seminar of the year, the poetic image of the Monster Chapalu after he has gorged himself on the bodies of the sphinxes slain in their suicidal leap, and his comment, “When you eat you are no longer alone,” which leaves the Rotting Sorcerer laughing long afterwards.⁴

Certainly, for Chapalu to come to the light of being there has to be the perspective of the Sorcerer. It's that perspective which, essentially, puts everything in order.⁵ Certainly the genuine ambiguity of this coming to light of truth constitutes the horizon of our whole practice. But we cannot possibly start out from this perspective, and the myth indicates well enough that it is beyond the limit of what is mortal: the Sorcerer rotting in his tomb.

Which is not to say that it's a viewpoint that is ever completely removed from our thought, at a time when the ragged fingers of Daphne's tree – profiled against the field charred by the giant mushroom of our omnipotence, always present today at the horizon of our imagination – are there to remind us of the beyond, from where the viewpoint of truth can be weighed.

But that is not the contingency which brings me here to talk to you about the conditions of the genuinely true [du véritable]. It's a far more minor incident, namely that I was summoned to take care of you – a handful of psychoanalysts, whom I remind that, although truth certainly isn't something that you have by the bucketful, it's nevertheless your stock and trade, it's what you sell. When people come to you they are after the truth. As I said the time before last, it's the truth about the true that they are looking for.

That is the exact reason why, dealing with identification, it's legitimate that I should start out from a text, which, as I tried to make you feel, has a quite unique place in the history of philosophy because it poses the question of the genuinely true in a particularly radical fashion, by addressing the issue, not of what can be found that is true in the real, but of the status of the subject in so far as he has the task of bringing the true into the real.

³ Guillaume Apollinaire, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* [*The Rotting Sorcerer*]. I have translated the passage in Apollinaire's play, which Lacan refers to, at the end of the present seminar (below).

⁴ Lacan, *Seminar 3* (R. Grigg, Trans), seminar of 4 July 1956.

⁵ See the reference to the *Rotting Sorcerer* in the seminar of 13 June 1962 (below).

At the end of my last talk I had got as far as showing you what we can find in the shape (already familiar to us) of the single stroke, the *einziger Zug*, in so far as it concentrates for us the function of indicating the place where the question is suspended in the signifier – where the question is attached regarding the signifier, – of the guarantee, of the function of the signifier, the question of the role of this signifier in the advent of truth.

On that basis, I don't know how far I will advance today, but I am going to focus entirely on establishing this function of the single stroke, this function of the *one*, in your minds. Of course, this is at the same time to raise the issue, to advance our knowledge, of what this signifier is, and I hope you will give me your approval in this and take courage.

I will begin, because it suits me, by taking a sidetrack. I made an allusion the other day to a remark that someone made – ironic, but well-meant – about my choice of subject for this year, as if it wasn't really very necessary. That gives me occasion to make the point (surely not unrelated to the reproach which the remark implied) that identification would be the key to everything if it avoided the reference to an imaginary relationship, which is the only support for the experience of identification, namely the relationship to the body.⁶

All of this coheres with the reproach that might be addressed to me in the paths that I follow, of always keeping you too much at the level of language articulation, which I am at pains to distinguish from any other articulation.

From there it's only one step (all the more easily taken because taken without noticing) to the idea that I neglect what is called the "preverbal", that I neglect the animal – that I believe that man has a certain privilege in all this.

It was from thinking about that – just when I am going to make everything I want to explain to you this year turn around language more than ever before, – that I came upon an experience close at hand, immediate, succinct, tangible and appealing, which is an experience of mine and which may perhaps demonstrate that I have my own notion of the preverbal, articulated inside the relationship of the subject to the word [verbe] in a way that might not have ever occurred to you all.

I have, in the entourage of *Mitseienden*⁷ where I occupy my place as *Dasein*, a dog (a bitch) that I named Justine in honour of Sade, but on which (rest assured) I don't inflict systematic torments.

In my understanding and without ambiguity, my dog speaks [parole]. My dog, without any doubt, has speech [parole]. This is important, because it doesn't mean that she possesses

⁶ Lacan's meaning here is not clear. Perhaps that identification with the body image is experienced in a way that overlays and conceals the more fundamental signifier identification ("the key to everything"). On 'signifier identification', see above, pp. 14-15, seminar of 22 November 1961.

⁷ In Typescript 1. Roussan has "Mitsein". Both words are Heideggerian, as is "Dasein".

language totally. The extent to which she has speech without having the human relationship to language offers a useful angle, from which to envisage the problem of the “preverbal”.

What does my dog do when she speaks, in my understanding? Why do I say that she speaks?

She doesn't speak all the time. Unlike many humans, she only speaks when she needs to. She needs to speak at moments of emotional intensity and of connection with another being – me and a few other people.

The thing is manifested in small guttural whimpers, but it goes further than that and is particularly striking and touching because of its quasi-human quality, which is why I had the idea of talking to you about it today. She's a boxer bitch, and you see a slight trembling of the lip, the upper lip, on this quasi-human visage (a bit Neanderthal, admittedly), under the snout – a bit too high for a human, but you do meet people like that. I had a caretaker who looked ever so much like her, and this trembling of the lip when she (the caretaker) had something important to tell me wasn't so very different.

The effects of breath on the animal's cheeks do just as much to evoke a whole set of authentically phonatory mechanisms which could, for example, furnish material for the celebrated experiments of Abbé Rousselot, the founder of phonetics.

As you know, Rousselot's pioneering experiments are based on connecting little metal drums, horns and vibrating instruments to the various cavities where phonatory vibrations are produced in order to measure the levels and times of super-imposition of the various elements that make up the emission of a syllable, and more precisely everything that we call a phoneme, because these phonetic experiments are the natural antecedents of what was afterwards defined as phonematics.

There can be no denying or contesting that my dog has speech [la parole], not just because of the modulations resulting from her efforts at articulation, which are decomposable and inscribable *in loco*, but also based on correlations between the times at which this phenomenon occurs, namely when she is with us in a room where experience has taught her that the human group gathered around the table will stay there for a good while and that she will get some of the leftovers from what is happening at that moment, namely feasting.

It would be wrong to think that all this is centred on need: there is, no doubt, a certain connection with consumption, but the element of communion, of the fact that she is eating with the others, is there too.

What distinguishes this usage of speech – perfectly adequate for the uses of my dog – from human speech?

My aim is not to give you words that would presume to cover all aspects of the question, I am only offering responses oriented towards what we are trying to map, namely, the connection with identification.

What distinguishes this speaking animal from what happens when a person speaks – and my dog, which is a perfectly ordinary dog that could as well be your dog, demonstrates it well – is that, unlike what happens when a person speaks, she never takes me for someone else.

That is absolutely clear: this shapely boxer bitch who, if one is to believe those who observe her, has feelings of love towards me, is subject to transports of passion in which she assumes an aspect that more timorous souls, such as exist at various level of my progeny, find positively frightening. They are apparently fearful that, when she starts to jump on me with her ears pressed down, to growl in a certain way, and then takes my wrists between her teeth, a threat might be implied.

But not a bit of it. Very quickly, a few words from me, perhaps repeated a few times, put everything to rights by stopping the game (this is why they say that she loves me).

And that is because she knows very well that it is me who is there. She never takes me for someone else, contrary to what happens, as all your experience goes to show, when, in the analytic experience, you put yourself in the conditions of having a “pure-speaking” subject (if you will allow the expression, by analogy with how we talk about a “pure pork” pâté). The pure-speaking subject, so long as he stays pure-speaking, is always led to take you for someone else. That is the birth of our experience.

If we are getting anywhere via the paths that I try to lead you by, it’s to show you that by taking you for someone else, the subject puts you at the level of the Other with a big O.

This is exactly what is lacking for my dog: she only has the little other. It seems that her relationship to language does not give her access to the big Other.

She speaks, so why can’t she constitute these articulations, like we do, in such a way that the place of this Other, where the signifying chain is located, takes shape for her as it does for us?

Let’s have done with the question by saying that it’s her sense of smell which stops her, by which we are only rediscovering a classic suggestion, namely that the organic regression of the sense of smell in man has much to do with his access to this Other dimension.

I am very sorry if by this reference I seem to re-establish the cut-off between the canine and the human species. Because you would be quite wrong to think that the privilege I give to language is due to some kind of pride, concealing a prejudice which would make man into some sort of pinnacle of being.

I will temper this cut-off by remarking that if my dog lacks the kind of possibility (not brought to light before psychoanalysis), which is called the capacity for transference, that by no means reduces the field of emotion between her and her partner (between her and me), which I precisely call, in the current meaning of the term, “human relations”.

You can see in the way my dog behaves, in the return on her own being of effects of comfort and positions of prestige, that a large part, if not the totality, of what constitutes the pleasure of my own relationship, for example, with a woman of the world, is there in full.

When my dog has taken up a privileged position, when she has climbed onto what I call “my cot” – the marriage bed, – the look she gives me, suspended between the glory of occupying a place whose special significance she well understands and the fear of an imminent gesture which will make her scam, is not a different dimension from what is to be discerned in the eye of someone who (by purely demagogy) I have called a “woman of the world”, someone who does not have any special privilege as to what could be called the pleasure of conversation, but who has just the same look when, having embarked on a dithyramb about some film that appears to her to be the last word in technical achievement, she feels suspended over her a declaration from me that I was bored to the back teeth by it, which, from the point of view of *nihil mirari* – the law of good society, – leaves her wondering if she would have done better to let me speak first.

I say this in order to temper, or more exactly to re-establish the meaning of the question that I am posing about the relationship of speech [parole] to language, and to introduce what I am going to try to clarify for you about what specifies a language [langage] as such – what one simply calls “language” [langue], – in so far as it is the privilege of man, without it being immediately clear why it should be limited to man. It is something that is worth spelling out, and “spelling out” is the right expression.

So, about language. For those of you, at least, who haven’t heard of Rousselot for the first time here, it’s not unimportant to note how Rousselot’s reflexes are produced, and that brings me to the importance of something, which was left out in what I said earlier about my dog. I talked about something pharyngeal, something glottal, about tremblings here and there, which are recordable in terms of pressure and of tension. But I did not speak about effects of language. In the sounds my dog makes there is nothing that produces a click for example, and still less anything that produces an occlusion. There is undulation, trembling, breath; there are all sorts of things which come close to an occlusion, but there is no actual occlusion.

I don’t want to expand too much on this today, because it would delay matters regarding the *one*... But, then again, too bad – we have to take the time to explain things. If, in passing, I put emphasis on this, trust me, it’s not just for the sake of it. It’s because we will see the significance of it later on, in retrospect. It may not be an essential pillar of our explanation, this matter of occlusion, but it will assume all its importance in due course, and the reference points left by Rousselot, whose work you may have consulted in the interim (that will allow me to shorten by explanation), may perhaps be particularly eloquent in this regard.

I am going to give you an example so that you have an image of what occlusion⁸ is. The phonetician takes the phoneme “pa” and the phoneme “ap” together, for a special reason, as you will see. By taking them together he can state the principles of opposition between the implosion “ap” and the explosion “pa” and show us that the consonance of “p” arises from its being mute (like your daughter).⁹

The import of “p” is between this implosion and this explosion. The “p” is heard precisely because it is not heard and this silent time in the middle (remember that formula), is something that, at the phonetic level of speech [parole], marks a special point, to which, as you will see, I will lead you after a few twists and turns.

I simply take advantage of the excursus about my dog in order to make this point in passing and to bring to your attention that this absence of occlusives in the speech [parole] of my dog is something that it has in common with a vocal activity which you know well and which is called singing. It often happens that you don’t understand what the singer is on about, and that is because it’s impossible to sing an occlusive. And I hope you will be happy to land on your feet and be able to think that everything comes right because, in short, my dog sings, so she can join the carnival of the animals. There are many others animals that sing and the question still hasn’t been decided whether that means that they have a language. It’s something people have always discussed.

The shaman whose figure I have on a very beautiful little grey bird made by the Kwakiutl of British Columbia has on his back a sort of human image who communicates in a language which links him with a frog. The frog is supposed to be teaching him the language of animals. But we don’t have to go too far into ethnology because, as you know, St. Francis talked to the animals. He is not a mythical personage, he lived in an era that was already brightly illuminated by all the lights of history. There have been some very pretty little paintings made that show us St. Francis standing on a rock and, all the way to the horizon, the heads of fishes emerging from the sea to listen to him, which, you must admit, is jaw-dropping.¹⁰ You may well ask: what language is he supposed to be talking?

This has significance at the level of modern linguistics, and at the level of psychoanalytic experience.

We have learned to perfectly define the function in certain beginnings [avènements] of language of what is called “talking babyish”, something that some people, me for example, find extremely annoying: “coochee, coochee, coo – who’s a little baby?” etc. But this has a

⁸ Both Typescript 1 and Roussan have “solution”, but the context makes it highly likely that the stenographer misheard similar sounding “occlusion”.

⁹ A jocular reference to a passage in Molière’s *The Physician in Spite of Himself* (M. Bishop, trans.), Act 2, Scene 4, pp. 309-310.

¹⁰ The sermon to the fishes is, in fact, a miracle ascribed to St. Anthony.

role that goes well beyond these manifestations, with their connotation of silliness, the silliness consisting in the adult's feeling of superiority. There is no essential distinction between what is called "talking babyish" and, for example, languages such as pidgin: languages that are constituted when two spheres of language articulation come into contact and the adherents of one consider it both necessary and their right to use certain signifying elements of the other in order, by means of those elements, to transmit into the other sphere various communications which are specific to their own, based on the prejudice that what they are doing by this operation is getting across, transmitting categories of a higher order.

These sorts of integration between one language sphere and another are the object of linguistic study and should be treated as having a perfectly objective value based on the fact that, in respect of language, there really are two different worlds – one in the language of the child and another in that of the adult.

We can't afford not to take this into account, to neglect it, because this reference is where we find the origin of some rather paradoxical features of the constitution of signifying batteries, by which I mean the particular prevalence of certain phonemes in the designation of certain relations which are called relations of kinship: the (not universal, but) overwhelmingly prevalent use of the phonemes "pa" and "ma" to designate – to provide at least one mode of designation – of the father and the mother.

This irruption of something, which can only be justified in terms of elements of genesis in the acquisition of a language, namely facts of pure speech, is only explicable in the framework of a relationship between two distinct spheres of language.

And what you see appearing here is the outline of a frontier. I don't think that I am innovating in this regard because you know what Ferenczi tried to begin to highlight, specifically at the level of the verbal relationship between child and adult, under the title "Confusion of the tongues".¹¹

I realise that this long detour means that I won't get to the function of *one* today, so I may as well add something else, because the point of all this is to clear the way, so you don't think that I am leading you into a field which is external to your experience.

On the contrary, it is as internal as can be, because this experience – the concrete distinction, for example, which I evoked earlier, between the other and the Other – is one that we have to go by way of.

Identification – what makes you put the substance of an Other under the being of your relationships, and do so as intensely as can be imagined – can be illustrated *ad infinitum* in an "ethnographical" text: Lévy-Bruhl used identification in the construction of a whole series of

¹¹ Sandor Ferenczi, [*Confusion of the Tongues*](#).

theoretical conceptions, expressed under the headings of “pre-logical mentality” and even (later on) “mystic participation”, when he was led to focus on the function of identification in what seemed to him to be the path towards objectification of the field he had taken for his own.

You are aware, I think, of the immense caution and parentheses that are required before we can accept relationships placed under such headings. If we want to situate the facts (archaic or not) of identification as such, we have to start out from something infinitely more common, which has nothing to do with anything whatsoever that brings logic or rationality into question.

Something that has always been known and can still be verified by us is that, when we consider people in certain contexts which remain to be defined, certain phenomena – of “false recognition”, let’s say, on the one hand, and of “bilocation”, on the other hand, occurring in certain experiences and relationships – abound (the testimonies are endless). The terms I use do not respect barriers and are crude, but that is because I want to avoid any partitioning that could obscure the primacy of such phenomena.

A human being (the question is why it happens for a human being, but not for my dog) can recognise a person he has just lost in a particular animal that comes onto the scene. Whether it’s a member of his family or an eminent personage from his tribe (the chief, perhaps), or the president of a youth association, or whoever – it’s him, that bison is him!

Take a Celtic legend, which I light on by pure chance because I would have to talk forever if I was to tell you all the things that arise in my memory in connection with this central experience. It’s not actually a legend but a piece of folklore from the testimony of someone who worked as a servant on a farm.

On the death of the master of the place (the lord), the servant notices a little mouse and follows it. The mouse goes all around the field, then it comes back and goes into the barn where the farming implements are kept, runs all over these implements – the plough, the hoe, the spade and the others – and then disappears.

After that the servant, who already knew the significance of the mouse, has a confirmation of it when the ghost of his master appears and says to him:

“I was in that little mouse, I made an inspection of the property to say farewell to it, I had to see the implements because they are essential objects, to which a soul remains attached longer than to any others, and I had to make that inspection so that I could free myself from them..”, with an infinite considerations about the relationship of the deceased with certain instruments associated with work in the fields – agricultural work.

I take this example in order to focus your attention on the identification of being between two individual appearances as obviously and as strongly to be distinguished as that of the being

who, with respect to the narrating subject, had occupied the eminent position of master, and this contingent little animal, going we know not where, going nowhere.

There is something here, which, taken alone, deserves to be treated not merely as something to be explained, as a consequence, but as a possibility that deserves to be highlighted as such.

Is this to say that such a reference can engender anything but the most complete opacity? It would be a misrecognition of the type of elaboration, the degree of effort that I require of you in my teaching, to think that I could in any way consent to consider the phenomenon of identification as something natural, based on a reference to folklore, even if we blur the limits of the phenomenon.

Because, having recognised this as the basis of the experience, we know precisely nothing more about it. We know nothing more about it just because it couldn't happen to the people whom I am addressing now, except in exceptional cases.

One should always make a small reservation: you can be sure that it could perfectly well still happen in some country place. But the fact that it couldn't happen to you, you to whom I am speaking, is what settles the matter. If it can't happen to you, you can't make anything of it, and don't imagine that it would be enough to put it under a chapter heading, calling it "mystical participation", like Monsieur Lévy-Bruhl, or to follow Lévy-Bruhl by including it in the greater category of "pre-logical mentality", in order for you to have said anything of the slightest interest.

And any part of it that you can make tame and more familiar with the help of phenomena that are easier to handle will not be any more valuable for that, because you will have started out from an opaque foundation.

There is a reference you can find in Apollinaire. The hero/heroine of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* says to her husband:

"Eat your feet à la Sainte-Menehould"¹²

Eating your feet à la *Mitsein*, won't solve anything.

What we have to do is to grasp the relevance of this possibility which is called identification, in the sense that from it there arises something that only exists in language and thanks to language: a truth. Whereby it is an identification, which is no different in nature for the farm

¹² "Mange tes pieds à la Sainte Menehould". A line from the surrealist play by Guillaume Apollinaire, [Les Mamelles de Tirésias](#). Pieds à la Sainte Menehould is a French provincial recipe for pig's trotters. Louis XVI allegedly failed to escape the guillotine because he could not resist stopping to try pieds à la Sainte Menehould on his flight to the German border.

labourer, who tells you the experience that I just described, and for us who found truth on “a is a”.

It is the same thing, because the starting point of what I will talk about next time will be this: why is it that “a is a” is an absurdity?

Strict analysis of the function of the signifier, which is how I intend to introduce for you the question of signification, starts with this: if “a is a” constituted, as I might say, the condition of a whole age of thought – one could call it the theological era, – of which the Cartesian exploration that I began with marks the term, it is no less true that linguistic analysis is correlative to the advent of another age, characterised by precise technical correlations, including the mathematical advent – I mean the advent in mathematics – of an extended use of the signifier.

We can see that it is to the extent that “a is a” has to be put in question that we can make progress with the problem of identification.

I can say to you straight off that I will make my demonstration turn around the function of *one* and, in order not to leave you completely in suspense and in the hope that each of you will perhaps try to formulate something in the way of what I will say to you about it, I would ask you to refer to a chapter in Saussure’s *Course in Linguistics*. I will read the relevant paragraph :

Applied to units, the principle of differentiation can be stated in this way: the characteristics of the unit blend with the unit itself. In language, as in any semiological system...

that parenthesis will merit discussion,

...whatever distinguishes one sign from the others constitutes it. Difference makes character just as it makes value and the unit.”¹³

Put differently: unlike the sign – and you will see it confirmed if you read this chapter – what distinguishes the signifier is simply being what the others are not. What implies this function of unity in the signifier is precisely being nothing other than difference. It is as pure difference that the unit, in its signifying function, is structured and constituted.

This isn’t a unique feature, constituted in some way from a one-sided abstraction concerning, for example, the synchronic relation of the signifier. As you will see next time, nothing is really thinkable, nothing in the function of the signifier is really thinkable, unless we start from the point, which I formulate as follows: the *one* as such is the Other.

¹³ Ferdinand de Saussure, [*Course in General Linguistics*](#) (W. Baskin, trans.), p. 121.

It is by starting from this, from the fundamental structure of the *one* as difference that we can see appearing the origin, from where the signifier can be seen to constitute itself. So, if I can put it like this, it is in the Other [Autre] that the A of “a is a”, the big A – as one says “the big word” [grand mot], – is set loose [est lâché].

Any fundamental and radical exploration of how identification is constituted has to start from the process of signifying language [processus du langage signifiant]. Identification has nothing to do with unification. It is only by distinguishing identification from unification that one can give to it, not only its essential accent, but also its functions and its varieties.

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE¹⁴

VOICE OF THE DEAD SORCERER

I am dead and cold. Fairies, go away; the one I love, who is more knowledgeable than myself and who did not conceive of me, still keeps watch over my tomb, laden with beautiful presents. Go away. My body will soon rot and I don't want you ever to be able to reproach me for it. I am sad unto death and if my body was alive it would sweat blood. My soul is sad unto death because of my funereal Christmas, that dramatic night when an unreal form, reasonable and lost, was damned in my place.

THE FAIRIES

Let us go elsewhere, since all is accomplished, to meditate on involuntary damnation.

The fairies went away, and the Monster Chapalu, who had the head of a cat, the feet of a dragon, the body of a horse and the tail of a lion, returned, while the Lady of the Lake shivered on the tomb of the sorcerer.

THE MONSTER CHAPALU

I meowed, meowed, I met only barn owls who assured me that he was dead. I will never be prolific. But those who are prolific have qualities. I admit that I have none. I am lonely. I am hungry, I am hungry. Here I discover a quality in me; I am desperately hungry. Let's find something to eat. He who eats is no longer alone.

Some sphinxes had escaped from Pan's pretty flock. They came near to the Monster and seeing its eyes that gleamed and penetrated through the darkness, they questioned it.

THE SPHINXES

Your bright eyes denote an intelligent being. You are multiple like ourselves. Tell the truth. Here is the riddle. It is not deep, because you are but a beast. What is most ungrateful? Guess, monster, so that we have the right to die voluntarily. What is most ungrateful?

THE SORCERER

The wound of suicide. It kills its creator. And I say this, sphinx, as a human symbol, so that you have the right to die voluntarily, you who were always on the verge of death.

The sphinxes that had escaped from the pretty flock of Pan reared up, they turned pale, their smile changed into a terrible and panic dread. Baring their claws each of them climbed to the top of a high tree and threw itself down. The Monster Chapalu had witnessed the swift death of the sphinxes without knowing the reason, because he hadn't guessed anything. He satisfied his extreme hunger by devouring their expiring bodies. The forest became less dark. Fearing the daylight, the Monster Chapalu speeded up the work of his jaws and his licking tongue.

¹⁴ Translation of the end of Act 2 of Guillaume Apollinaire, [L'Enchanteur pourrissant](#) [The Rotting Sorcerer].

And as dawn broke, the Monster Chapalu fled to darker solitudes. At dawn the forest was filled with sounds and shimmering light.

The songbirds awoke and the learned old owl fell asleep.

Of all the words spoken during that night, the enchanter only retained and dwelt on those of the wronged druid who went towards the sea: "I'm learning to become a fish once more". He also remembered and laughed at these words uttered by the meowing Monster Chapalu: "He who eats is no longer alone".

6 December 1961

Let's get back to the idea I brought you last time of making our problem, that of identification, pivot around the notion of *one*. I said that identification isn't simply "making one". I think you will admit that without difficulty.

We start, as is normal to do regarding identification, from the most common mode of access of subjective experience: that expressed by what appears to be the evident fact essentially communicable in the formula which, at first sight, does not appear to give rise to any objections, namely that "a is a".

I said "at first sight" because it is clear that, whatever the degree of belief that this formula seems to carry with it, I am not the first to raise objections to it.

You have only to open the most trifling treatise on logic in order to see what difficulties the *distinguo* of this formula, in appearance most simple, immediately gives rise to.

You could even see that the greater part of the difficulties that require solution in many domains (but, very strikingly, more in logic than elsewhere) have their origin in all the possible confusions that can arise from this formula, which is specially apt to sow confusion.

If, for example, you find it difficult, even tiring, to read a text as exhilarating as Plato's *Parmenides*, it is because you need to reflect a little more on this point of "a is a", and when I said just now that "a is a" is a belief, you need to understand that it's a belief which has certainly not always reigned over our species, because, after all, the "a" had to begin somewhere – I speak here about "a", the letter "a" – and it can't have been easy to attain this kernel of apparent certainty that we find in "a is a" when people didn't have "a".

I will tell you a bit later what path this reflection puts us on: it will be as well to be aware of what is happening with "a" that is new.

For the moment let's settle for what our language allows us to articulate clearly, namely that "a is a" appears to mean something: it makes a "signified".

I declare, subject to certain explanatory conditions that I am going to submit myself to here before you, that "a is a" means nothing. I declare it in full conviction that I won't encounter any opposition from anybody on this point – from anybody in a position of competence, as I have verified from testimonies in the relevant literature, by questioning various mathematicians who are sufficiently familiar with their science to know the present state of things, and by questioning other people in all domains.

This "nothing" is precisely what will be the issue, because it's this "nothing" that has a positive value for telling what the meaning is.

We have in our experience, in our analytic folklore even, something, an image, that has never been sufficiently explored and used, namely the game of the little child so shrewdly observed and interpreted by Freud in the *Fort-Da*.¹

Let's make uses of it for our purposes. In this taking up and throwing away of an object (the child who did it was his grandson) Freud intuited the inaugural gesture. Let's do this gesture again with this little object, a ping-pong ball: I take it, I hide it, I show it to him again. The ping-pong ball is the ping-pong ball, but it isn't a signifier, it's an object. One approach would be to say: "this little *a* is a little *a*".

Between these two moments, which I indisputably identify in a legitimate fashion, there is the disappearance of the ball. Without that disappearance there's no way that I can show it, there's nothing formed on the image plane. The ball is always there and I can fall into a cataleptic trance staring at it.

What's the relationship between the "is" which connects the two appearances of the ball and this intervening disappearance?

On the imaginary plane, you sense that the question is at least posed of the relation of this "is" to what seems to cause it, namely the disappearance, and there you are close to one of the secrets of identification, the secret to which I drew your attention in the folklore of identification, namely, the spontaneous assumption by the subject of the identity of two appearances which are nevertheless quite different.

Remember the story of the deceased farm owner, whom his servant recognises in the body of the mouse. The relationship of "it's him" with "it's him again" is what gives us the simplest experience of identification – its model and register. "Him" and then "him again". What we have here is the dimension of being [être] – what appears in the "him again" is the same being.

As regards the other, that's enough, that will do. For my dog, which I took as term of reference the other day, as I say, it's enough. This reference to being seems to be adequately supported by her sense of smell. The support for being is easily conceivable in the imaginary field. But the question is whether it's just this simple relationship that we have to do with in our experience of identification.

When we talk of our experience of being, there's a reason why the whole thrust of contemporary thought, the thought of our time, is geared towards *Dasein* – the massive chest-of-drawers that I never shift without a certain smile, this fundamental mode of our experience, which has become the prime reference for designating all access to being.²

¹ Freud, *Standard Edition 18*, pp. 14-16 (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*).

² The second part of this sentence is muddled in all versions. I have rearranged it slightly to convey the probable sense.

This is where something else makes us wonder why it is that the scansion where this presence to the world manifests itself isn't simply imaginary: what we refer to isn't the little other, but the most intimate in ourselves, which we try to make the anchoring point, the root, the foundation of what we are as subjects.

Because although we can articulate, as we did, on the imaginary plane, that my dog recognises me as the same, we do not, by contrast, have any indication as to how she identifies herself. In whatever way we may re-integrate her with herself, we know nothing at all, we have no proof, no testimony as to how she grasps this identification.

This is where the function, the value of the signifier as such becomes apparent. Precisely because what is in question is the subject, we have to ask ourselves about the connection between this identification of the subject and a dimension that is different from everything of the order of appearance and disappearance, namely the status of the signifier.

I want to draw your attention to the fact that, as our experience shows us, at least some of the different modes and angles under which we are led to identify ourselves as subjects have need of the signifier for their articulation, even in the form (most often ambiguous, improper, difficult-to-handle and subject to all sorts of reservations and distinctions) that is the "a is a".

And first of all, I want to say, without putting it off any longer... I want to show you that if we have a chance of taking a step further in that direction, it is by trying to articulate this status of the signifier as such.

I say straight away, the signifier is not the sign, and I am going to concentrate on giving an exact formulation of the distinction. By showing where this difference lies we can bring out the fact, already given in our experience, that the subject as such emerges from the effect of the signifier.

Is this a metonymic effect? Is it a metaphorical effect? We don't know that yet, and perhaps there is something that can already be articulated prior to these effects, which allows us to see the dependence of the subject on the signifier emerging, and which allows us to make that dependence into a relationship, a link. This is what we are going to find out by putting it to the test.

To anticipate in a short image what I am trying to make you grasp here, an image to be taken only for its value as a support or as a little story (it may seem at first to be a play on words, which it is), consider the distance that separates, on the one hand, the "pas" in "il y a la trace d'un pas" ["there is a footprint"]³ (I have led you before along this myth-tinted path, which is correlative of the time when the function of the subject as such began to be articulated in

³ Literally "there is the trace of a step" ("pas" = "step").

thought: Robinson finding a footprint [pas], which shows him that he is not alone on the island)⁴ and, on the other hand what the “pas” has become phonetically as the instrument of negation.⁵

These are two ends of the chain that I am asking you to hold before showing you what actually constitutes the chain and that it is between the two ends of the chain, and nowhere else, that the subject can emerge.

By grasping this, we will be able to relativise something in a way that lets you consider the formula “a is a” as a sort of mark, I mean in its character as a belief, as the affirmation of what I will call an ἐποχή [*epokhe*, Greek] – an epoch, moment, parenthesis; a historical term, the field of which we can glimpse as being limited, as you will see.

What the other day I called an indication, and which will remain only an indication, of the identity of this false consistency of “a is a” with what I called a theological era⁶ will, I believe, enable me to take a step in what is at stake concerning the problem of identification, because analysis requires identification to be viewed as transcending a certain path of access to the identical.

This fecundity, this sort of determination, which is suspended from the signified of “a is a”, cannot be supported by its truth, because it is not a true affirmation.

What we need to get to in what I am trying to formulate for you is that this fecundity reposes precisely on the objective fact... I use the word “objective” in the sense that it has, for example, in Descartes’ text: going on a little further in the text the distinction arises, as regards ideas, between their actual reality and their objective reality,⁷ and, of course, the professors serve up very learned volumes, such as a Scholastic-Cartesian index,⁸ in order to tell us something that seems to the rest of us (clever as we are) a bit confusing, namely that this is a legacy of Scholasticism, by means of which everything seems to have been explained, which is just to say that they have avoided the issue, namely why Descartes, the anti-Scholastic, was led to take up these old tools.

It doesn’t seem to occur even to the best historians that the only question of interest is what made him resort to these tools. If he dragged them back to front of stage, it certainly wasn’t in order to do Saint Anselm’s argument over again.⁹

⁴ Lacan, *Seminar 5* (R. Grigg, trans.), seminar of 23 April 1958; Lacan, *Seminar 6* (B. Fink, trans.), seminar of 10 December 1958.

⁵ “ne” before and “pas” after the verb make a negation in French.

⁶ The theme is taken up in the seminar of 13 June 1962 (below).

⁷ René Descartes, *Meditations* (J. Veitch, trans.), Third Meditation, sections 13-22. For an account of the distinction in Descartes see <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes-ideas/#ideasmodes>.

⁸ Etienne Gilson, *Index scolastico-cartésien* [Roussan note].

⁹ Descartes makes his proof of the existence of God in the Third Meditation turn on the distinction between actual and objective reality.

The objective fact that “a” cannot be “a” is what I wanted to make evident to you first of all,¹⁰ so that you understand that the key point is connected with this objective fact, all the way to this false effect of signified, which is really only a shadow and a consequence that leaves us attached to the sort of impulsive gesture contained in “a is a”.

If I say that the signifier is fecund because it is never in any instance identical to itself, you must understand clearly what I mean: I’m not making the point (it’s worth distinguishing it in passing from the point that I am making) that there’s no tautology when someone says that “war is war”. Everyone knows that. When you say “war is war”, you are saying something. You don’t know exactly what, but you can look for it and find it, and find it quite easily, within arm’s reach. It means what starts from a certain moment – that we are in a state of war, which involves some conditions of things being a bit different. It’s what Péguy called “the little pegs no longer fitting in the little holes”.¹¹ That’s a Péguyist definition, which is to say that it’s far from certain. One could maintain the contrary, namely that it’s precisely in order to put the little pegs back in the right holes that a war begins, or, on the contrary that it’s to make new little holes for old little pegs, and so on. Anyway, this is of no interest for us whatsoever, except to note that this pursuit (whatever it is) can be continued with remarkable efficacy by means of the most profound imbecility, and that too is something which ought to make us reflect on the function of the subject in respect of the effects of the signifier.

But let’s take something simple and have done with it. If I say “my grandfather is my grandfather,” you can’t fail to understand that there’s no tautology in it, that “my grandfather” (the first term) is an index usage of the term “my grandfather”, which usage is not much different from his proper name, for example Émile Lacan, nor from “this” in “this is” if I point him out when he enters a room: “This is my grandfather”.

But this doesn’t mean that his proper name is the same thing as the “this”, of “this is my grandfather”.¹² One is stupefied that a logician like Russell could say that the proper name belongs to the same category, to the same signifying class as “this”, “that” or “it”,¹³ on the pretext that they are susceptible of the same functional usage in certain instances.¹⁴ This is a parenthesis, but, like all my parentheses, it is designed to be rediscovered further on, in this case in connection with the status of the proper name, which we won’t talk about today.

In any case, what “my grandfather is my grandfather” means is that the execrable *petit bourgeois* that this man was, this horrible personage thanks to whom I came at an early age to the momentous function of cursing God, this personage is exactly the same as the one who is

¹⁰ Lacan goes back to where he was two paragraphs earlier (“What we need to get to...”), before the parenthesis about Descartes.

¹¹ “Les petites chevilles n’allaient plus dans les petits trous.” I have not been able to trace this phrase that Lacan imputes to the writer Charles Péguy.

¹² “this is my grandfather” in English in the original.

¹³ All three pronouns in English in the original.

¹⁴ Bertrand Russell, [*The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*](#), pp. 28-30.

recorded in the civil register as being proven by the bonds of marriage to be the father of my father, in as much as it is precisely the birth of the latter which is denoted by the civil act in question.

You see then that “my grandfather is my grandfather” is by no means a tautology. This applies to all tautologies and the present case does not by any means give us their univocal formula, because what we have here is a question of a relationship of the real to the symbolic while in other cases there will be a relationship of the imaginary to the symbolic, and you would have to go through the whole sequence of permutations in order to see which are valid.

I don't want to go further with this, which is really a way of disposing of false tautologies that are simply the ongoing, permanent use of the language, because the only reason I am talking about it is to make clear to you that it's not what I mean.

If I say that tautology isn't possible, it's not because the first “a” and the second “a” mean different things. The point is that it is inscribed in the very status of “a” that “a” cannot be “a”.

That was how I ended my discourse the last time, when I drew attention to the place in Saussure where it is stated that “a” as signifier cannot be defined in any way except as not being what the other signifiers are. From this fact, that it cannot be defined except precisely as not being all the other signifiers, there depends this dimension whereby it's equally true that it cannot be itself.

It's not enough to make the point in this opaque fashion, precisely because it surprises and upsets the belief that this is the real support of identity.¹⁵ You must be made to sense it.

What is a signifier?

It's no accident that everybody, and not just logicians, talk about “a” when it is a question of “a is a”. It's because, in order to support what you designate, you need a letter.

I think you will grant me that, but the step is not decisively taken unless my discourse comes back to it and demonstrates it in a sufficiently superabundant manner for you to be convinced of it; and you will be all the more convinced because I am going to try to show you how the essence of the signifier, by which it is distinguished from the sign, is precisely in the letter.

I prepared something for you last Saturday in my house in the country where I have hanging on the wall an example of what is called Chinese calligraphy. If it wasn't Chinese, I wouldn't have hung it on my wall because it's only in China that calligraphy has assumed value as an *objet d'art*.

¹⁵ i.e. the belief that “a = a” is an evident truth and is the essence of identity.

It's the same thing as having a painting, it has the same value. There are the same differences, perhaps even more differences, in our culture between one writing and another as there are in Chinese culture, but we don't attach the same value to them. I will have occasion to show you what masks the value of the letter from us, a value that is particularly well highlighted in the Chinese character because of the particular status that it has.

A few reflections are required on what a Chinese character is before I can properly and exactly situate what I am going to show you. I have alluded on various occasions to the Chinese character and to its status, so you already know that to call it ideographic is far from adequate.

Let me make the point in more detail. It's really what the Chinese character has in common with everything that gets called "ideographic": properly speaking, there isn't anything that merits the term in the sense that people usually imagine it having; I would almost say in the sense, which Saussure's little diagram, with "arbor" and the tree drawn underneath,¹⁶ continues to support through a kind of imprudence that encourages misunderstanding and confusion.

I made two copies of what I want to show you. Someone just gave me a new little tool that some painters find very useful – a sort of thick brush where the ink comes from inside, so that you can draw lines with a special thickness and consistency, thanks to which I copied the shape of the characters on my calligraphy much more easily than I could normally have done. Here in the left column is the calligraphy of this phrase which means: "the shadow of my hat dances and trembles on the flowers of Hai Tang".¹⁷

On the other side, you see the same sentence written in the usual characters, those which are the most standard, those which the novice writes when he is making his characters correctly.

¹⁶ In fact, in Saussure's diagram the picture of the tree is above and "arbor" is underneath ([*Course in General Linguistics*](#) (W. Baskin, trans.), p. 67).

¹⁷ Lacan presumably says "left column" because he produced only the six characters that I have outlined in red, which are part of a longer poem. I take the calligraphy of the whole poem from a Chinese site, [徐渭《草书春园细雨七律诗轴》_徐渭书法欣赏_词典网\(cidianwang.com\)](#), kindly indicated by Will Greenshields, to whom I am also indebted for the match between calligraphic and simplified characters and pinyin (romanization of phonemes). Staferla uses the same calligraphy and the same red-box device, but extends the box down further by one character. Greenshields cites the authority of a Chinese student of literature for ending the box where I end it.

Guy Sizaret has a discussion of this Seminar passage at http://www.lacanchine.com/L_Seminaire_Sizaret61.html.



帽 mào
影 yǐng
时 shí
移 yí
亂 luàn
海 hǎi
棠 táng

These two series are perfectly identifiable, but at the same time they do not resemble one another at all.

What you should notice is that, clearly, it's just to the extent that they don't resemble each other at all that there are quite obviously, from top to bottom, on the right and on the left, the same seven characters, even for someone who had no idea before now, not just about Chinese characters, but even that there were such things as Chinese characters.

If someone comes across this drawing for the first time, somewhere in a desert, he will see that what are on the right and what are on the left are characters and that they are the same succession of characters.

This to introduce you to what makes the essence of the signifier and that I can best illustrate in its simplest form, which we have been referring to for some time as the *einzigster Zug*.¹⁸ This *einzigster Zug* is what gives to this function¹⁹ its value, its act and its mainspring. That is why, in order to dispel any confusion that may remain, I introduce, as the best and closest translation, a term which is by no means a neologism (it is used in what is called "set theory"), namely the word "unary" ["unaire"], which I use instead of "single" ["unique"].²⁰ At least, it will be useful for me to use it today in order to make you feel properly the central point at issue in distinguishing the status of the signifier.

¹⁸ See above, seminar of 22 November 1961, footnote 38.

¹⁹ Presumably the function of the signifier.

²⁰ For the German word "einzigster". "Unaire" ("unary") is not, in fact, a good translation of "einzigster", the meaning of which is "sole" or "unique", but Lacan chooses the French word intentionally.

You might then think that the exemplary function of the unary stroke (whether vertical, “|”, what we call “drawing sticks”, or horizontal, “—”, as the Chinese do) is linked to the extreme reduction, which it offers, of the qualitative difference between its instances. I mean that, if all I need to do is to make a stroke, there do not seem to be many possible varieties or variations, and that would be what constitutes for us the special value of the stroke.

But think again!

I was saying earlier that we don’t get to the heart of what is meant by the formula “there is no such thing as tautology” by pursuing tautology to a place where it isn’t to be found. And similarly here, it isn’t a matter of discerning what I have called the perfectly graspable character of the status of the signifier (whichever it may be, “a” or some other) in the fact that something in its structure eliminates these differences (I call them “qualitative” because that’s the term logicians use when they are defining identity), by the elimination of qualitative differences, their reduction, one might say, to a simplified schema,²¹ as if this would be the key to our apprehension of the letter as the support of the signifier.

That’s wrong. It’s not to do with that.

Because if I draw a line of sticks, however hard I try, it’s absolutely clear that none of them will be the same as any of the others, and it’s even clear that they are all the more convincing as a line of sticks to the extent that I don’t try too hard to make them all rigorously the same.

In the time since I began trying to formulate for you what I am talking about now, I have asked myself, using the means at my disposal, namely those available to everyone, something that, after all, isn’t immediately obvious: when does one see a line of sticks appear?

I have been to a quite extraordinary place, and perhaps what I have to say will turn it from a desert into a metropolis by encouraging you to visit it. The place I mean is the Museum of Saint-Germain.²²

It’s fascinating and exciting, and all the more so if you can find someone who has been there before, because there’s no catalogue or guide and it’s quite impossible to know what’s what and where what is or to find your way about in this series of rooms.

There’s a room named after Piette, who was a justice of the peace and a genius and who made the most prodigious discoveries from pre-history. He discovered some little objects,

²¹ Typescript 1 closes the brackets here, so that the action described in the last phrase (“by the elimination...”) is referred to logicians.

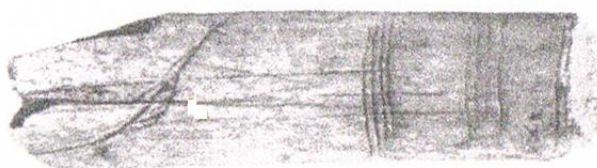
²² Archaeological Museum of Saint-Germain-en-Laye ([National Archaeological Museum, France - Wikipedia](#)).

most of them of very small size, which are among the most fascinating things that you could ever hope to see.²³

To hold in your hand the little head of a woman, which is certainly about 30,000 years old, is quite something, and this head is full of questions.²⁴



You can see there in a glass case (it's very easy to see, because the provisions that this remarkable man made in his will absolutely require that everything be left in the greatest possible disorder with completely out-of-date labels on the objects, although something has been written on a piece of plastic that lets you make out the importance of some of the exhibits)... I can't describe the emotion I felt when, as I was leaning over one of these glass cases, I saw on a thin rib-bone, the rib of a mammal – I am not sure what the animal was or whether anyone would know better than me, probably a roe deer or some member of the deer family, – a series of little sticks: first two, then a small interval and then five, and then it starts again.²⁵



There, I said, addressing myself by my secret or my public name, there's why, in short, Jacques Lacan, your daughter is your daughter, because if we were mute, she wouldn't be your daughter.²⁶ Obviously, this has its advantages, even if we do live in a world that is very like a universal lunatic asylum (which is a no less certain consequence of the existence of signifiers, as you will see).

²³ A selection of objects from the Salle Piette can be viewed at [Réunion des Musées Nationaux-Grand Palais - Search Result \(rmn.fr\)](#).

²⁴ The so-called Venus of Brassempouy ([Venus of Brassempouy - Wikipedia](#)).

²⁵ I take the photograph from Roussan, who describes it as a fragment of an animal's rib from the Lortet cave in southern France, dating from the Magdalenian era. He cites "Clichés de Musées Nationaux, Paris" as the source.

²⁶ A deliberately garbled quote from Molière's *The Physician in Spite of Himself* (M. Bishop, trans.) Act 2, Scene 4, pp. 309-310. Lacan is probably evoking the role of the signifier in kinship structures, as described by Claude Lévi-Strauss.

These sticks appear later, several thousand years later, after men had learnt how to make objects with realistic exactitude: in the Aurignacian era they could make bisons, which the art of the painter still chases after today.

What's more, at that same time people made very small-scale reproductions in bone of something that it might seem they needn't have troubled to make, because the reproduction is of something else in bone that is much bigger: a horse's skull.²⁷



Why make this matchless small-scale reproduction in bone, since one imagines that, at that time, they had other things to be getting on with?

I have some very remarkable engravings at my country house of fossilised skeletons, made by consummate artists, but they are no better than this little reduction of a horse's skull, sculpted in bone, which is of an anatomical exactitude that isn't just convincing: it is rigorous.

Anyway, it's only much later that we find the trace of something which, unambiguously, is the signifier, and this signifier is all alone, because I don't dream of giving (for want of information) a special meaning to the slight increase of the gap that occurs at a certain point in this line of sticks. It's possible, but I can't say anything.

What I can say, though, is that here we have, I don't say the first appearance, but a definite appearance of something that you see to be altogether distinct from what can be called qualitative difference: each of these strokes is by no means identical to its neighbour, but it's not because they are different that they function as different, but because signifying difference is distinct from anything that has to do with qualitative difference, as I have just shown you by means of the little things that I let you look at. Indeed, qualitative difference can sometimes even emphasise signifying sameness.

This sameness is constituted precisely by the fact that the signifier as such serves to connote difference in the pure state, the proof of which is that, at its first appearance, the *one* manifestly designates multiplicity as such. In other words, imagine that we are hunters back

²⁷ [Grotte du Mas-d'Azil — Wikipédia \(wikipedia.org\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grotte_du_Mas-d'Azil)

in the Fourth Magdalenian era and God knows but it can't have been easier to catch an animal back then than it is in our own day for the people we call "bushmen". It was a whole adventure! After you had wounded the beast, you had to track it for a long while until it succumbed to the effect of the poison.

I kill one of them, it's an adventure. I kill another of them, it's a second adventure, which I can distinguish from the first by certain of its features [traits], but which resembles the first by being marked with the same general line [ligne]. At the fourth, there may be some confusion: what distinguishes it from the second, for example? By the twentieth, how will I know where I am, or will I even know that I have made twenty kills?

The Marquis de Sade, holed up with his little page on the Rue Paradis in Marseille, did the same with the "blows" ["coups"], diversely varied as they were, that he scored in the company of this partner, albeit with some female extras, also diversely varied.

This exemplary man, whose relationships to desire must surely have been characterised by some unusual ardour (whatever one might think), apparently marked each of the "blows" (to call them by their name), which he was led to make until he had run up a full collection in this singular probationary retreat, by a stroke on the head of his bed.²⁸

One would certainly have to be well engaged in the adventure of desire, at least judging by what we know about people's ordinary experience, to have such a need to locate oneself in the succession of one's sexual accomplishments. Although it's not unthinkable that, at certain favoured times of life, there might be a lack of definition as to where one has got to in terms of decimal enumeration.

The notch, the stroke as a notch, is something that we can't help recognising as the appearance of something new with respect to what one could call the immanence of any essential action whatsoever.

If we imagine a being who is still lacking such a method of orientation, what is he to do at the end of a short time, a time limited by intuition, in order to avoid feeling bonded [solidaire] to a present that is always facile and renewed²⁹ and where nothing allows him to discern what exists as difference in the real?

²⁸ Gilbert Lély, *The Marquis de Sade. A Biography* (A. Brown, trans.), p. 118; Maurice Lever, *Sade, A Biography* (A. Goldhammer, trans.), p. 200.

²⁹ Typescript 1 has "facile-est renouvelé" which makes no sense. Roussan amends this to "facilement renouvelé" ("easily renewed"). My hypothesis is "facile et renouvelé", which is a homophone of the Typescript 1 version and expresses how the endless present that Lacan is evoking would be devoid of meaning (what English also calls "facile").

It is not at all sufficient to say: “This difference is quite evidently there in the lived experience of the subject, because what could be more like a cycle than the recurrence of needs and of the satisfactions that address them?”³⁰

Nor is it sufficient to say: “But, after all, such and such a person is not me!”

It’s not just because Laplanche has hair like that and I have hair like this, or that he has particular eyes and a quite different smile from me, that he is different.

You will say: “Laplanche is Laplanche and Lacan is Lacan”. But that’s just the question, because in analysis the question is posed whether Laplanche is not the thought of Lacan and if Lacan is not the being of Laplanche, or the other way around.

The question is not adequately resolved in the real. It’s the signifier which settles it. It’s the signifier that introduces difference as such into the real, and precisely to the extent that qualitative differences are not what are at issue.

So the signifier, in its function of difference, is something which presents itself paradoxically as being different from this difference which would be based on resemblance or non-resemblance – as being something else that is distinct. And, I repeat, we can easily suppose that there are beings, which live and get by perfectly well in complete ignorance of this sort of difference, which, for example, is certainly not remotely accessible for my dog.

And that is why apparently (as I will show you, not now, but later, with more detail and articulation) the only thing she doesn’t know is that she herself is.

And we need to work out how “that she herself is” is appended to this sort of distinction, which is particularly manifest in the unary stroke, because what distinguishes the unary stroke is not at all an identity of semblance, but something else.

What is this something else? It’s that the signifier is by no means a sign.

A sign, we are told, is a matter of representing something for someone: the someone is there as a support for the sign. The first definition that one can give of a someone is: someone who is accessible to a sign. It is, so to speak, the most elementary form of subjectivity. There’s no object here yet, there’s something else: the sign, which represents this something for someone.

What distinguishes a signifier from a sign first of all (and this is what I have tried to show you) is that, initially, signifiers only manifest the presence of difference as such and nothing

³⁰ The words from “because...” to the end of the sentence are absent in Typescript 1.

else. So the first thing that the signifier implies is that the relationship of the sign to the thing is erased.

Someone would have to be very smart if he thought he could tell you what the *ones* on the Magdalenian bone were the sign of. And we have come on enough, thank God, since the Fourth Magdalenian for you to have an intuition of something that, permit me to say, has the same kind of naïve self-evidence for you, no doubt, as “a is a”, something you were taught at school, namely that you can’t add together cloths and towels, leeks and carrots, and so on. But this is completely wrong. It only begins to be true based on a definition of addition that assumes, I can assure you, a quantity of axioms that would cover this whole section of the blackboard.

At the level at which things are taken in our own day in mathematical thinking, specifically in set theory, there is no question of setting such exorbitant conditions for the validity of the most fundamental operations, such as a union or an intersection. You can perfectly well add together whatever you want at the level of a certain register, for the simple reason that what is involved in a set is, as one theoretician put it very well when speculating on one of the so-called paradoxes, not a matter of an object or a thing, but very precisely of *one*. That is what is in question in what gets called the “element” of sets.

Not enough attention is given to this in the text I am alluding to, and for a famous reason, namely that this reflection on what a *one* is is not well elaborated even by those who, in the most up-to-date mathematical theory, make the clearest and most manifest use of it.

It is to this *one* as such, as marking pure difference, that we will refer the next time we meet in order to put to the test the relationships of the subject to the signifier. It will first of all be necessary for us to distinguish the signifier from the sign and to show in what sense the step, which is taken, is that of the erased thing.

The different “effaçons”,³¹ if you will permit me the term, in which the signifier emerges will do no less than give us the major modes of manifestation of the subject.

I will indicate or remind you now of the formulas under which, for example, I noted the function of metonymy: the big S function, where a chain that continues, S', S'', S''', ..., gives us the effect that I called the “scrap of meaning” [peu de sens], the minus sign designating, connoting a certain mode of appearance of the signified that results from the function of S, the signifier, in a signifying chain.

$$f(S', S'', S''', \dots) = S (-) s$$

³¹ A word play: “effaçons”, the first person plural of “effacer” (“to erase”) contains the word “façons” (“ways”), which is the word that one would expect here.

We will try substituting *one* for these *S* and *S'*, which is a perfectly proper operation.

You, as people whose practice is based on repetition, know better than anybody: what is at the heart of repetition, of the repetition compulsion, in your experience isn't that it is always the same thing. What is interesting is why something gets repeated – something that, as you know, the subject doesn't have the slightest need of from the point of view of his biological comfort – in the most persistent, most annoying and most symptomogenic repetitions. This is where you should direct your attention in order to detect the incidence as such of the function of the signifier.

How can it happen, this typical relationship to the subject constituted by the existence of the signifier as such, which is the only possible support of what the experience of repetition originally is for us?

Shall I stop there or shall I give you an indication of how the formula of the sign has to be modified in order to grasp, to understand what is at issue in the advent of the signifier?

The signifier, as opposed to the sign, is not that which represents something for someone. It is that which represents the subject for another signifier.

My dog is on the lookout for my signs and then she speaks, as you know. Why isn't her speech a language? Precisely because, for her, I am something that can give her signs but that cannot give her a signifier.

The distinction between speech [la parole], as it can exist at the preverbal level, and language consists precisely in this emergence of the function of the signifier.

13 December 1961

Μονάς ἐστίν, καθ' ἣν ἕκαστον τῶν ὄντων ἐν λέγεται.
Ἄριθμὸς δὲ τὸ ἐκ μονάδων συγκείμενον πλῆθος.¹
Euclid, *Elements*, VII, 1-2.

This sentence, borrowed from the start of the seventh book of Euclid's *Elements*, seemed to me on the whole to be the best I could find to express on the mathematical plane the function, to which I wanted to draw your attention the last time, of the *one* in our problematic.

It's not that I had to search for it, that I had trouble finding something written by mathematicians that was relevant. Mathematicians, at least some of them (those who have led their field in each period), have concerned themselves a great deal with the status of the unit,² but not all of them have offered equally satisfying formulations. It even seems that, in some cases, the definitions they have given are the exact opposite of what is appropriate.

In any case, I'm not unhappy to think that someone like Euclid, whose pedigree in matters of mathematics is indisputable, gives this formula (all the more remarkable for coming from a geometer) of what a unit (the meaning of the word "Μονάς" [*Monas*, Greek]) is.

It's the unit in the precise sense in which I tried to designate it for you last time under the designation of what I called the unary stroke (I will come back later to why I called it that). The stroke as such as the support of difference is indeed the meaning that *monas* has here and it cannot have any other, as the continuation of the text will show us.

Monas, then, is the unit in the sense of the unary stroke which matches and highlights in its functioning that which we came upon last year in the field of our experience, in Freud's own text, as the *einzigster Zug*.³ It is "that by which each entity [étant] is said to be a *one*,"⁴ with the ambiguity that is brought by this ἓν [*hen*], the neuter case of εἷς [*heis*], which means "one" in Greek, being used in Greek as in French to designate the function of the unit as the factor of consistency, by which something is distinguished from what surrounds it and by which it makes a whole, a *one* in the unitary sense of the function. So "it is through the mediation of the unit that each of these beings [êtres] gets to be called 'one',"⁵ the advent in speech ["dire"] of the unit as characteristic of each entity is designated here. It comes from the use of the *monas*, which is nothing other than the single stroke.

¹ "Μονας ἐστίν, καθ' ἣν ἕκαστον τῶν ὄντων ἐν λέγεται. Ἄριθμὸς δὲ τὸ ἐκ μονάδων συγκείμενον πλῆθος" ("A unit is (that) according to which each existing (thing) is said (to be) one. And a number (is) a multitude composed of units") (*Euclid's Elements of Geometry*, J.L. Heiberg (Ed.), R. Fitzpatrick (Ed. and Trans.), p. 194.

² It should be remembered in what follows that "unité" in French means both "unit" and "unity".

³ See above, seminar of 22 November 1961, footnote 38.

⁴ Lacan's translation of the first line of the Euclid quote.

⁵ A slightly amended translation of the first line of the Euclid quote.

It's important that this thing was to be found under the pen of a geometer, i.e. someone who situates himself in mathematics in such a way that (at least, in Euclid's case) intuition keeps all of its original value.

It's true that Euclid is not just any geometer, because we can single him out in the history of geometry as the first to introduce the requirement of proof as against what could be called experience or familiarity with space, a requirement that would be absolutely dominant henceforth.

Let me complete the translation of the quotation: "while number is nothing other than the sort of multiplicity which arises precisely from the introduction of units",⁶ of monads as they are to be understood in Euclid's text.

If I identify this function of the unary stroke, if I make of it the unveiled face of this *einzig* *Zug* of identification, to which we were led by the path we followed last year, we should highlight before going any further (so you know that contact is never lost with the immediacy of our technical and theoretical reference to Freud) that what we have here is the second kind of identification (p. 117 of Volume 13 of Freud's *Gesammelte Werke*).⁷

Freud mentions it as he is concluding his definition of the second kind of identification, which he calls "regressive"⁸ because it is linked to a certain abandoning of the object that he defines as the "loved object", humorously written in Töpfer's drawings with a hyphen, an object that goes from the chosen woman to rare books ("Hah!" as someone close to me remarked, indignant at my bibliophilia).⁹ Freud underlines that the kind of regressive state, from which this identification arises, is always in some measure linked to the abandoning or the loss of this object, and he says it in a way that excites our admiration, as happens whenever a discoverer cites a feature of his experience, which doesn't at first sight appear in any way necessary, which appears to be of a contingent character. And he doesn't justify, except as a fact of his experience, the fact that, in this sort of identification, the ego [moi] sometimes copies the unloved object and sometimes the loved object, but that in both cases this identification is partial, "höchst beschränkte", extremely limited, accentuated as narrow

⁶ A slightly tendentious translation of the second line of the quote from Euclid.

⁷ Freud, *Standard Edition 18*, p. 107; *Gesammelte Werke 13*, p. 117. See above, seminar of 22 November 1961, footnote 38.

⁸ The reference to regression is disguised in the English translation of the Freud passage. The English says that object-choice "is turned back into identification", while the German is "sei zu Identifizierung regrediert", literally "has regressed to identification"; the link with regression is clearer two paragraphs later in the English where Freud writes that the second type of identification "in a regressive way ... becomes a substitute [Ersatz] for a libidinal object-tie, as it were by means of introjection of the object into the ego" (*Standard Edition 18*, p. 107 (*Group Psychology*)).

⁹ The words from "humorously written..." are not present in Typescript 1. Rudolf Töpfer was a Swiss caricaturist; the "objet aimé" ("loved object") features in his illustrated story "[Les amours de Monsieur Vieux Bois](#)", but without a hyphen.

and reduced, that it is “nur einen einzigen Zug” – only a single feature of the person who is taken as object [objectalisé], which is like the “ersatz” (from the German word).¹⁰

It may therefore seem to you that to approach identification through this second type is also to “beschränken”, to limit myself, to reduce the range of my approach; because there is the other identification, the first and singularly ambivalent kind of identification, constructed on the basis of an image of assimilating devourment.¹¹

And what relationship does the second type of identification have with the third: the one that begins immediately after the place I am pointing out (in the next paragraph),¹² the identification with the other through the mediation of desire, the identification that we know well and which is hysterical, but which, as I have taught you and you ought to be sufficiently aware, cannot be properly distinguished until desire has been structured (I don’t think it was done by anyone or anywhere before it was done here) as presupposing in its underpinnings, as a minimum, the whole articulation that we have given of the relations of the subject to the signifying chain, to the extent that this relationship profoundly modifies the structure of every relation of the subject to each of his needs.

It seems to me that, having pointed out to you this partiality of approach, this entry into the problem “by the corner”, so to speak, I also need to legitimise it today, and I hope I can do that quickly, making myself understood without too many detours, by reminding you of something which is a methodological principle for us: namely, that, given our place, our function and what we have to do in our clearing of the ground, we should be distrustful, let us say, of the general, and you can take this as far as you want – distrustful of the genus and even of the class.

It may seem strange to you that someone who accentuates for you the pregnancy, in our articulation of the phenomena we deal with, of the function of language, should set himself apart here from a mode of relation which is quite fundamental in the field of logic. How can one indicate or speak of a logic which, from its beginnings, has to maintain a distrust, which I mean to pose as fundamental, of the notion of the “class”?

This is just the originality, that which distinguishes the field we are trying to articulate here. It’s not some prejudice of principal that brings me to this. It’s the very necessity of our object, which pushes us towards what we have developed over the years, segment by segment, namely a logical articulation, which does more than suggest – which gets closer and closer, specifically this year, I hope, to extracting algorithms that make it possible for me to describe as “logical” this chapter, which we are adjoining to the functions exercised by

¹⁰ Typescript 1 has “la place” instead of “ersatz”. probably the stenographer’s mishearing. Freud uses the word “Erstaz” a couple of paragraphs further on in *Group Psychology* (see above, footnote 8).

¹¹ Freud, [Standard Edition 18](#), p. 105

¹² Freud, [Standard Edition 18](#), p. 107

language in a certain field of the real, the field of which we, as speaking beings, are the conductors.

We should therefore treat with a maximum of distrust any κοινωμία τῶν γενῶν [*koinonia ton genon* (Greek)] to use a term from Plato,¹³ anything that marks community in any genre, and especially in those which are the most original for us.

The three identifications probably do not form a class, but since they nevertheless bear the same name, which brings with it the shadow of a concept, it will be our duty to do justice to that fact. That, I think, is something we are capable of doing if we take care to be accurate in our work.

In fact, we know already that what is a universal function for us always arises at the level of the particular, and we have no reason to be much surprised by this in the field we work in because, as regards the function of identification, we already know (we have worked together long enough to know) the meaning of this formula: what happens, happens essentially at the level of structure.

And structure, whether or not I need to remind you (but I think that today, particularly, before taking another step, I do need to remind you) was specifically introduced by us as a specification, a register of the symbolic.

When we distinguish the register of the symbolic from the imaginary and the real, this isn't an ontological definition. It's worth emphasising the hesitations that may arise from leaving this point, which I have never seen anyone worry about openly, on the sidelines, and that's another reason for dispelling any ambiguity about it. These aren't fields of being [être] that I am separating out.

If from a certain moment onwards, from when these seminars began, I thought it necessary to bring into play this triad of symbolic, imaginary and real, it's because this third element,¹⁴ which had not been sufficiently discerned as such in our experience before, is to my eyes exactly what is constituted by the fact of the revelation of a field of experience. By which I mean the Freudian experience, and I would call it a field of experimentation, which is to say that it is not an *Erlebnis*.

It's a field constituted in a certain way and, to an extent, by an artifice – the artifice that inaugurates the analytic technique as such. It's the complementary aspect of the Freudian discovery, complementary as front is to back – stuck tight to it.

¹³ Plato, *The Sophist*, 254b (“mingling of classes”).

¹⁴ Presumably the symbolic register.

The first thing to have been revealed in this field, as you of course know, is the function of the symbol and at the same time of the symbolic, and, as you also know, these terms had from the start a fascinating, seductive, captivating effect throughout the field of culture, an effect of shock that scarcely any thinker, even the most hostile, was able to evade.

It must be said that it is also a fact of experience that we have lost what I might call the freshness of this time of revelation and of its correlation with the function of the symbol, a freshness that went along with the effect of shock, of surprise, defined by Freud himself as characteristic of the emergence of the relations of the unconscious, those sorts of “flashes” on the *imago* that were characteristic of the time and that showed us new modes of inclusion, imaginary beings [êtres imaginaires], through which, suddenly, something (their meaning, in fact) was made clear by means of a capture that cannot be better qualified than by the term *Begriff*¹⁵ a clinging capture, where planes stick together, a fixation or *Haftung* which is so characteristic of our relation [rapport] in this field of the imaginary, at the same time evoking a dimension of genesis where things are drawn out rather than evolving, a certain ambiguity which allowed the evolutionary schema to be left as present, as naturally implicated in the field of our discoveries.

All that being the case, how can we explain the occurrence of this dead time in the evolution of the doctrine, which has been highlighted by all sorts of theoreticians and practitioners under different headings and titles?

Why did things peter out in the way they did, compelling us to pursue what is our task here, the task in which I try to guide you, of going over our whole dialectic once again using principles that are more dependable?

We should be able to pinpoint the source of this loss of direction, due to which, after a certain time, the intuitions that I have described could only remain alive for us if we referred back to the time of their emergence.

And this is particularly relevant as regards the efficacy of our technique, the effect of our interpretations in what makes them efficacious. Why have the *imagos* that we discovered been rendered banal? Is it only through familiarity?

We have learned to live with these ghosts, we rub up against the vampire, the octopus, we live and breathe in the space of the maternal womb, at least in metaphor. Comedians raise a laugh by making these images live for us in a way that was unheard of in another age, wheeling out the primordial images of analytic revelation and making them into an object for casual amusement. Further on in the same direction come the soft watch and the function of the Great Masturbator, seen in the images of Dali.

¹⁵ Roussan cites the authority of several listeners for the term “*Begriff*”, which is not present in Typescript 1.

Is this the sole reason why our competence in the practical use of these images as revelatory seems to falter? Surely not the sole reason! Because when they are, so to speak, projected like this into the creations of art, they still keep what I would call their impact and their critical power, they keep something of their character of derision or alarm.

But that is not what matters in our relationship to the person who designates them for us in the here-and-now of the treatment. All that remains to us as the purpose of our action in the treatment is the duty of doing some good, and making people laugh is a very occasional and limited expedient.

What we have seen is a relapse or degradation, whereby these images have simply gone back to what designates itself very aptly under the heading of “archetype” – old rope from the accessories shop. That’s a tradition that was well recognised under the heading of “alchemy” or “gnosis”, but which was linked to a very old confusion, in which the field of human thought stayed mired for centuries.

It might seem that I am marking myself off from or putting you on your guard against a mode of comprehension of our reference points, which is that of *Gestalt*. But that’s not quite right. I am far from underestimating the contribution made by the function of *Gestalt* at a moment in the history of thought, but, in order to quickly make clear what I mean, and because what I am doing now is one of those deck-sweepings that I have to carry out from time to time in order to prevent the same confusions from re-emerging, I would make the following distinction.

What is at the heart of some explorations of the field of *Gestalt*, what I would call crystallographic *Gestalt*, is the emphasising of points of junction, of kinship, between natural formations and structural organisations that emerge from and are only definable in terms of signifier combination. Hence the subjective force and efficacy of this point, an ontological point,¹⁶ which gives us something of which there is a real need, namely to know whether there is a relationship that justifies the introduction, ploughshare-like, of the effect of the signifier in the real.

But this doesn’t concern us because it isn’t the field that we deal with. Our job isn’t to consider the degree of naturalness of modern physics, although we may find interest in showing that, historically, it’s precisely when physics has completely neglected the naturalness of things that it has made inroads into the real (I try to show this to you from time to time).

The *Gestalt* I warn you against is quite the opposite of that to which the initiators of theoretical *Gestalt* were attached. It gives a purely confusional reference to the function of

¹⁶ Probably meant in contrast with Lacan’s earlier comment: “When we distinguish the register of the symbolic from the imaginary and the real, this isn’t an ontological definition” (above, p. 57).

the *Gestalt*. It is what I call “anthropomorphic *Gestalt*”, which confuses what our experience brings with the old analogical reference of macrocosm and microcosm, of the universal man. These are registers of limited reach and to the extent that analysis has believed that it could be at home in them, it has only revealed once again their relative barrenness.

That isn't to say that the images, which I evoked above, don't have their weight or that we cannot make further use of them. We should take note of how we prefer to leave them ensconced in the shade. They are scarcely spoken about any more, except from a certain distance. They are there, to use a Freudian metaphor, “like one of these shades, ready to rise up from hell”.¹⁷ We haven't been able to bring them back to life properly. Probably we haven't given them enough blood to drink. But then, so much the better. After all, we aren't necromancers.

This is the right place for a characteristic reminder of what I teach you, which is intended to completely change the face of things, namely to show that what is vital in the Freudian discovery is not this return of the old ghosts, but the emergence of a quite different relation.

By chance this morning I rediscovered, from the year 1946, the little “Presentation on Psychological Causality”,¹⁸ by which I made my return to the psychiatric circle immediately after the War (it was published as part of the *Bonneval Conversations*). It includes a sort of apostil or incidental section, and at the start of a concluding paragraph, five lines before finishing what I had to say about the *imago*, I wrote:

“The aspects of the imago – which are more invisible to our eyes (made, as they are, for the signs of the money changer) than what the desert hunter...”

(worth mentioning because he came up last time, if I remember right),¹⁹

“...knows how to see the imperceptible trace of, namely, the gazelle's footprint on the rock – will someday be revealed to us.”²⁰

For now I want to emphasise the start of the paragraph, “more invisible to our eyes...”. What are these “signs of the money changer”? What “signs”? What “change”? Or what “money changer”?

These signs are exactly what I have called on you to articulate as signifiers, namely these signs as they operate by virtue of their associativity in the chain, of their commutativity, of the function of permutation taken as such.

¹⁷ Probably where Freud discusses “abandoned, overlaid and repressed” wishes of the past that are represented as fulfilled in dreams: “They are not dead in our sense of the word but only like the shades in the *Odyssey*, which awoke to some sort of life as soon as they had tasted blood” (*Standard Edition 4*, p. 249 (*The Interpretation of Dreams*)).

¹⁸ Lacan, *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.), pp. 123-158.

¹⁹ See above, p. 50, seminar of 6 December 1961.

²⁰ Lacan, *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.), p. 157.

And here is where the function of the money changer comes in: the introduction into the real of a change, which is not movement or birth or corruption or any of the categories of change delineated by a tradition that we can call “Aristotelian”, the tradition of cognition [connaissance]²¹ as such, but of another dimension, where the change in question is defined as such in the topological combinatory system [combinatoire] that it enables us to define²² as the emergence of this fact, the fact of structure, and sometimes as degradation, namely a collapse of structure in this field and a return to the capture of the natural image.²³

In short, you may say, what is delineated as such is no more than the functioning framework of “thought”. And why not?

Let’s not forget that this word “thought” is present and accentuated by Freud from the outset (as, no doubt, not being capable of being other than it is) for describing what happens in the unconscious.

Freud certainly wasn’t guided here by the need to preserve the privilege of thought, of some primacy of the mind as such. Far from it: if he could have avoided the term, he would have done.

What does that mean at this level? And why is it that this year I thought it necessary to start out, not even from Plato (not to mention the others), and equally not from Kant or from Hegel, but from Descartes?

I thought it necessary to do so because I want to show that the issue for us in the problem of the unconscious is the autonomy of the subject, which is not merely preserved, but is accentuated in our field as never before. It is accentuated in this way due to the paradox whereby the path-making that we discover is inconceivable unless the subject is its guide, and in all the more sure a fashion because he is the guide without knowing it, without being complicit, *consciuis*,²⁴ because he cannot progress towards anything or in anything except by locating it retrospectively [après coup] because nothing is engendered by him except to the extent that he initially misrecognises it.

This is what distinguishes the field of the unconscious, as revealed to us by Freud. The field is impossible to formalise – to formulate – unless we see that its conceivability always

²¹ French has two words, “connaissance” and “savoir”, that can be translated as “knowledge”. “Connaissance” has strong overtones of conscious experience and roughly coincides with what Bertrand Russell called “knowledge by acquaintance” (Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, pp. 72-93). The usual word for knowledge of facts and also for scientific knowledge and knowing how to do something is “savoir” (noun and verb). I translate “connaissance” as “cognition” or “acquaintance” when the difference is important, as here.

²² In Typescript 1. Roussan has “...in the combinatory system, and the topology that it allows us to define.”

²³ Typescript 1 ends this sentence differently: “...and sometimes as degradation of knowledge [savoir] of the field of structure and a return to the capture of the natural image.” I follow Roussan.

²⁴ Latin.

depends, in the most obvious and tangible way, on preserving this autonomy of the subject, i.e., that by which the subject cannot in any circumstances be reduced to a dream of the world.

I show you the reference and not the presence of this permanence of the subject. Because its presence can only be defined as a function of the reference. I demonstrated and pointed it out to you last time in the unary stroke, this function of the stick that figures the *one* by being nothing more than a distinctive stroke, and all the more distinctive by the erasure of almost everything which distinguishes it, other than being a stroke, accentuating the fact that the more alike it is, the more it functions, not at all as a sign, but as the support of difference.

This only begins to put into relief the dimension that I am trying to punctuate for you. Because, in truth, there is no “more and more”, no ideal of similitude, no ideal erasure of features. This erasure of qualitative distinctions is only there to allow us to grasp the paradox of radical alterity designated by the stroke and it really doesn’t matter much that each of these strokes resembles the other. What I am calling the function of alterity isn’t to do with that.

At the end of the last seminar I said that it is this function, and nothing but this function, which ensures that repetition escapes from the identity of its eternal return in the figure of the hunter making notches for the number... of what? Of strokes by which he has felled his prey. Or the figure of the divine Marquis,²⁵ who shows us that even at the height of his desire he takes care to count his “blows”. What we have here is an essential dimension, which never abandons the necessity that it implies in almost all of our functions.

What is this counting of blows, this stroke that counts? Do you follow me properly here? Grasp carefully what I mean to describe! What I mean to describe is something, whose mechanism we can easily forget. It’s what we have to do with in the repetition compulsion.

As soon as a cycle is a cycle (in whatever way – however truncated, deformed, abraded, – we may define it) and involves return to an end-point, we can conceive it on the model of a need, a satisfaction. This cycle gets repeated. No matter whether it’s exactly the same or whether it has minor differences, all that these minor differences will do is to conserve it in its function of a cycle, as referring to something definable as a certain type, through which precisely all the cycles which came before are identified in that very instant as being, in so far as they are reproduced, properly speaking the same.

Take the digestive cycle as an image of what I am saying. Every time we digest, we repeat digestion. Is that what we are referring to when we speak, in analysis, of the repetition

²⁵ The use of “divine” as a semi-ironic epithet for the Marquis de Sade predates Lacan. It was taken over from the 16th century Italian satirist and pornographer, Pietro Aretino (<https://www.marquis-de-sade.com/2011-03-24-le-divin-aretin/> (in French)). Regarding the “blows” (“coups”), see above, seminar of 6 December 1961, footnote 28.

compulsion? Is it by virtue of a repetition compulsion that we have digestions, which are tangibly always the same digestion?

I won't wait for your answer, since I only mean this as a sophism. There may indeed be upsets in digestion that are due to reminders of previous digestions, which didn't go smoothly: an unpleasant aftertaste or nausea, linked to some contingent linking of a certain food with a certain circumstance. But this doesn't take us a step further towards covering the distance between such a return of the cycle and the function of the repetition compulsion. Because what the repetition compulsion means for us who have to do with it is that if there is a particular cycle (here we have the shadow of the "trauma", which I put in inverted commas since what is important in this instance is not its traumatic effect, but its nature as a unit) that was the cycle designated by a certain signifier, which signifier can only be supported by what we will learn later on to define as a *letter* ("The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious"),²⁶ this signifier being the big A,²⁷ the first [initial] A in so far as it can be numbered [est numérotable], then this cycle, and no other, is equivalent to a certain signifier.

The behaviour repeats itself in order to obtain the re-emergence of this signifier, which is what it is, this number that it finds.

If symptomatic repetition has a meaning for us (towards which I am directing you), reflect on the implications of your own thinking. When you talk about repetition in symptom formation, it's because that which repeats is not there even to merely fulfil the natural function of the sign, which is to represent a thing that would be actualised here, but to present as such the signifier that this action has become.²⁸

I am saying that it's because what is repressed is a signifier that this cycle of real behaviour is presented in its place.

I will stop here, since I set a time limit on what I have to explain to you – a limit that's precise and convenient for a certain number of you. You can count on me to give you the confirmation and the commentaries, which all of this requires, in what will follow and to do so in the most appropriately articulated fashion, however surprising what I have just said may appear, in view of its abruptness.

²⁶ Lacan, *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.), pp. 412-441.

²⁷ An allusion to the "big Other" ("grand Autre").

²⁸ Roussan records seven different versions of this paragraph according to different listeners. I follow Typescript 1, which is identical to the version that Roussan attributes to Monique Chollet.

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I left you last time with a remark designed to make you feel that my discourse hasn't come adrift from its moorings. I said that the importance for us of this year's investigation is to do with the paradox of the repetition compulsion, where you see a cycle of behaviour that is inscribable in terms of the resolution of tension in the couple of need and satisfaction, but where, whatever the function involved in this cycle – however carnal you suppose it to be, – the fact remains that, qua repetition compulsion, its purpose is to make something emerge, to recall it, to make it insist, and this something is nothing other in its essence than a signifier, definable by its function and particularly by the fact that it introduces, into the cycle of its repetitions (always the same in their essence and therefore concerning something which is always the same thing), difference, distinction, unicity.

Something originally happened, which is the whole mystery of the trauma, something which, from that time onwards, took the form “a”, so that the repetition behaviour, however complex and engaged in the animal individuality you suppose it to be, is only there in order to make this sign “a” re-emerge.

Let's say that the behaviour is expressible thereafter as behaviour number such-and-such. The hysterical attack, for example: a particular subject has hysterical attacks, that's what comes out as behaviour number such-and-such. It's only the number that is lost for the subject.

It's precisely to the extent that the number is lost that the behaviour comes out, masked in this function of making the number re-emerge behind what gets called the psychology of the attack, behind its apparent motive, and you know that no one has any trouble finding what looks like a reason: producing the ghost of a motive is what psychology does.

This structural adherence to the signifying function of something that is radically inserted into vital¹ individuality is the analytic experience. What is repressed is the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*,² it is the lost number of behaviour number such-and-such.

Where is the subject in this? Is he³ in the radical, real individuality, the pure passive patient of this capture, in the organism henceforth sucked in by the effects of “it speaks” [“ça parle”], by the fact that a particular living being among others has been summoned to become what Heidegger calls “the shepherd of being”,⁴ having been caught up in the mechanisms of the signifier. Is he, at the other extreme, identifiable with the play of the signifier itself? Is the subject no more than the subject of discourse, somehow torn away from his vital immanence, condemned to hover above it, to live in the sort of mirage entailed by the redoubling by

¹ In the sense of having to do with (animal) life.

² Freud's “*Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*” (“ideational representative”) (Freud, [Standard Edition 14](#), p. 148 (*Repression*)).

³ Typescript 1 has “He is”. I follow Roussan .

⁴ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”, in [Basic Writings](#) (F. Capuzzi, J. Gray, trans.), p. 234.

which he not only speaks everything that he lives, but he lives it by speaking it and what he lives is inscribed in an ἔπος [*epos*, Greek], a saga woven along the entire length of his act?

If our effort this year has a meaning, it is to show how the function of the subject is articulated elsewhere than at one or other of these poles, that it plays between the two of them.

This, I imagine, is what your cogitation always leads you to as a reference point, even if only implicitly; at least I would like to think so after a few years of these seminars.

Is it enough to know that the function of the subject is in between the two – between the idealising effects of the signifying function and this vital immanence, which, I think, you may still too readily confuse, despite all my warnings, with the function of the drive?

This is the issue that we are grappling with and trying to take further, and it's the reason why I thought it good to begin with the Cartesian *cogito* in order to make tangible the field in which we will try to offer more precise articulations concerning identification.

I spoke to you, a few years ago, about Little Hans. You perhaps remember, in the story of Little Hans, the dream that we call the dream of the crumpled giraffe (*zerwutzelte Giraffe*).⁵ This verb “zerwutzeln”, which has been translated “to crumple”, is not a very common verb in the German lexicon. “Wutzeln” is common, but “zerwutzeln” isn't. “Zerwutzeln” means “to make into a ball”.

It's indicated in the text of the dream that there is a paper giraffe next to the big live giraffe, and the paper giraffe can be made into a ball. You know the symbolism, which is played out right through this observation, of the relationship between the big giraffe and the little giraffe. In one of its aspects the little giraffe is the crumpled giraffe, in another it can be conceived as the reduced giraffe, the second giraffe, the giraffe that can symbolise many things.

If the big giraffe symbolises the mother, the other giraffe symbolises the daughter, and the relationship of Little Hans to the giraffe, at that point of his analysis, will tend to be readily incarnated in the living interplay of family rivalries.

I remember the astonishment (I don't think it would be judged appropriate today) that I provoked at that time by drawing out the dimension of the symbolic in action at that point in the Little Hans case, in the psychical productions of the young subject in connection with this crumpled giraffe.⁶

⁵ Freud, [Standard Edition 10](#), pp. 37-39 (*Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy*); *Gesammelte Werke* 7, p. 272.

⁶ Lacan, *Seminar 4* (A. Price, trans.), seminars of 23 March through 26 June 1957.

What could be more indicative of the radical difference of the symbolic as such, than to see something appearing in the observation (certainly not suggested,⁷ because there is no trace at that moment of any such articulation concerning the indirect function of the symbol), something that really incarnates for us and gives an image of the appearance of the symbolic as such in the psychological dialectic.

“Gosh, how did you work that out?” one of you kindly said to me after that seminar. But the surprising thing isn’t that I saw it there, because it could hardly be more obvious in the material itself. What is surprising, rather, is that Freud himself doesn’t pause over it, I mean he doesn’t give all the emphasis that would be appropriate to this phenomenon, to what it materialises to our eyes, as one might say.

This, indeed, is what proves the essential character of these structural delineations: if we don’t make them, mark them, articulate them as energetically as we can, we condemn ourselves, in some degree, to overlook a particular side, a particular dimension of the phenomena themselves.

I am not going to go over the articulation at issue (what’s at stake in the case of Little Hans) again for you now. These things have been published sufficiently and sufficiently well for you to be able to refer to them.

But the function as such – at this critical moment of the child’s radical suspension from the desire of the mother in a fashion that is, one might say, without compensation, recourse or way out – is the device, which I showed you to be that of the phobia. The phobia introduces a signifying mainstay, which enables the subject to preserve what is crucial for him, namely the minimal anchoring, the centring of his being, which allows him not to feel himself a being completely adrift at the whim of the mother. That’s what is at issue.

But what I want to bring out at this level is that, in a production which is eminently little subject to caution – I emphasise that all the more, in as much as nothing of what Little Hans had been directed towards up till then (and, heaven knows, he had been directed) was of a nature to bring him to the field of such an elaboration, – Little Hans shows us here, in a figure that is closed but exemplary, the leap, the passage, the tension between what I defined to begin with as the two extremes of the subject: the animal subject, which represents the mother, but also, with its long neck, the mother in so far as she is (nobody doubts) this immense phallus of desire topped by a voracious grazing mouth; and then, on the other hand, something on a paper surface (we will come back to this dimension of the surface), something which is not entirely without a subjective accent, because we see clearly all that’s at stake here – the big giraffe, when she sees him playing with the small crumpled one, cries out very loudly until finally she grows weary, her cries are exhausted, and little Hans,

⁷ i.e., produced by Hans spontaneously and not as the result of suggestion.

sanctioning in a way the taking possession, the *Besitzung* of what is at issue (the mysterious stakes of the affair) sits down on it, *draufgesetzt*.⁸

This beautiful mechanism should make us sense what is at issue, if it is his fundamental identification, the defence of himself against this original capture in the world of the mother, as no one doubts at the point we have now arrived at in the elucidation of phobia.

Here already we see exemplified this function of the signifier.

This is where I want to pause again today, regarding the point of departure of what we have to say about identification. The function of the signifier as the anchorage of something from which the subject constitutes himself leads me to dwell today for a moment on something which, I think, should come to mind quite naturally, not just for reasons of general logic, but also because of something that you touch on in your experience. I mean the function of the name.

I don't mean the noun,⁹ the name as grammatically defined, what we call the "substantive" in our schools, but the name in the meaning it has in English and in German too – languages that distinguish the two uses. I could say a little more about that, but you understand the difference: the name¹⁰ is the proper name.

As analysts, you know the importance that the subject's name has in every analysis. You should always pay attention to what your patient is called. It's never a matter of indifference. And if you ask for names in an analysis, it is indeed for a much more important reason than the excuse you may give to the patient – that all sorts of things could hide behind the dissimulation or erasure of a name regarding the relations with some other subject that it may bring into play. It goes much further than that, as you should sense, even if you don't know it. What is a proper name? We ought to have a lot to say about this and it's a fact that we can bring a lot of material to the name. We analysts will have a thousand opportunities to illustrate its importance, in supervisions too. But I don't believe that we can give it all the importance it deserves in what we are doing here without referring to what the linguist has to say about it (another instance where we touch on methodological necessity).

I don't mean that we should necessarily submit ourselves to what the linguist says, but we should at least seek corroboration there of what we have to say regarding the function, the definition of this signifier, which has its own originality.

In 1954 there appeared a little factum by Sir Alan H. Gardiner. There are all sorts of works by him and in particular a very good Egyptian grammar (I mean of ancient Egyptian). He is an Egyptologist, but he is also and above all a linguist.

⁸ Freud, *Standard Edition 10*, p. 37 (*Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy*); *Gesammelte Werke 7*, p. 272.

⁹ Lacan uses the English word "noun", since the French "nom" can mean both "name" and "noun".

¹⁰ Lacan uses the English word "name".

Gardiner has written a short book called *The Theory of Proper Names*¹¹ (I bought it when I was on a trip to London). He presents it in a rather contingent fashion. He calls it a “controversial essay” and one could say that this is litotes – it is, in fact, a polemical essay. He wrote it out of extreme exasperation at various pronouncements of a philosopher to whom I do not refer for the first time: Bertrand Russell, who played a vast role in the elaboration of what in our days is called mathematicised logic or logicised mathematics.

In the *Principia Mathematica*, together with Whitehead, he gave us a general symbolism of logical and mathematical operations that you cannot not take into account when you enter that field.

In one of his works,¹² Russell gives a definition of and makes some remarks about the proper name, which are very paradoxical. Paradox is a dimension which Russell, far from disdaining, claims more than his fair share of. The definition and remarks leave Mr. Gardiner literally beside himself.

The quarrel is significant enough for me to think that I should introduce you to it and make some remarks that I think are important. Whom shall we start with, Gardiner or Russell? Let’s start with Russell.

Russell is in the position of the logician. The logician has a position, which doesn’t date from yesterday. He operates a certain mechanism, to which he gives various titles: reasoning or thinking. He discovers in it a certain number of implicit laws. In a first stage he distinguishes these laws: they are laws without which nothing that belongs to the order of reason would be possible. It is in the course of this quite original research, by the reflection of the Greeks,¹³ into the thinking that governs us, that we grasp, for example, the importance of the principle of contradiction.

Once this principle of contradiction had been discovered, something unfolds and is organised around it, which undoubtedly shows that if contradiction and its principle were mere tautology,¹⁴ then tautology would be singularly fruitful, because Aristotelian logic takes more than a few pages to expound.

However, with time, as history turns out, far from logic developing¹⁵ towards an ontology, a radical reference to being [l’être], which would be considered as that towards which these

¹¹ Alan Gardiner, *The Theory of Proper Names: A Controversial Essay*.

¹² Bertrand Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*.

¹³ Typescript 1 has only “by reflection”.

¹⁴ I follow Roussan, who amends “psychologique” in Typescript 1 to same-sounding “si tautologique”, which makes much better sense.

¹⁵ “loin que la logique se développe...” in Roussan. Typescript 1 has “bien que la logique se développe...” (“although logic develops...”). “Loin” could be misheard as “bien” and Roussan cites other listeners and a passage from *Seminar 14* (seminar of 26 April 1967) in support of his choice.

most general laws of the mode of understanding necessary to truth are directed, it moves towards a formalism; and Bertrand Russell, as the leader of a school of thought which is important and decisive in the orientation that it has given to a whole mode of thinking in our time, sets himself the task of putting everything that concerns a critique of the operations brought into play in the field of logic and mathematics into a general formalisation, which is as strict and as economical as can be.

In short, the correlative of Russell's effort – the insertion in mathematics of Russell's effort in this same direction – culminates in the formation of what is called "set theory", the general thrust of which is to reduce the whole field of mathematical experience, accumulated over centuries of development, and I believe that the best definition of it is: to reduce that experience to a play of letters.

We must take this into account as a given in the progress of thought in our time, this "time" being defined as a certain moment of the discourse of science.

In this context, what definition does Bertrand Russell give of a proper name, when he comes to take an interest in the question?

His definition should give us pause because it allows us to grasp (it could be grasped elsewhere, as I will show you later) the share of misunderstanding, let's say, that goes with a certain position, which is the corner into which the whole age-old effort of the elaboration of logic has been driven.

This misunderstanding is precisely the most radical relationship of the thinking subject to the letter. That might sound rather sudden, but the necessity of the presentation makes me state it. Bertrand Russell sees everything, except for the function of the letter. This is what I hope to make you feel and to show you. Have confidence in me and follow what I have to say. You will see how we are going to advance.

What does he give as a definition of the proper name? A proper name, he says, is a "word for a particular",¹⁶ a word used to designate particular things as such, outside any description.

There are two ways of approaching things. They can be described by their qualities, their reference-points, their co-ordinates from the point of view of the mathematician, if I mean to designate them as such. Regarding this point, for example, I can say: it is on the right side of the blackboard, at such and such a height, it is white, and so on and so forth. That is a description, Russell tells us. Then there are ways of designating them outside any description, as particular. That is what I am going to call a "proper name".

¹⁶ Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

The first proper name for Russell – I already alluded to it in my preceding seminars¹⁷ – is “this”: “*this* is the question”.¹⁸ Here we have the demonstrative treated as a proper name. It’s no less paradoxical that Russell coolly envisages the possibility of calling this same point on the wall “John”.¹⁹

Here, it must be admitted, we have a sign of something transgressing experience, since it is rare for us to call a geometric point “John”. But Russell has never shied away from the most extreme expressions of his thought. This is where the linguist becomes alarmed, and all the more so because between these two extremes of Russell’s definition, “words for particulars”,²⁰ there is this altogether paradoxical consequence that, being logical with himself, Russell tells us that we cannot consider “Socrates” to be a proper name, since Socrates has not been a particular for a long while.²¹

I am abbreviating what Russell says, I am even adding a touch of humour, but it really is the spirit of what he tells us, namely that Socrates was for us “the master of Plato”, “the man who drank the hemlock”, etc.²² These are abbreviated descriptions. They are no longer as such what Russell calls “a word to designate the particular in its particularity”.²³

What we see here is a loss of the attachments that linguistic consciousness gives us. If we have to eliminate everything in proper names that can be inserted into a community of the notion, we arrive at a sort of impasse, and it’s against this that Gardiner brings linguistic considerations to bear.

Gardiner the linguist offers a counter-formulation of what seems to him to be characteristic of the function of the proper name. He does so in a way that is not lacking in merit, practical application and proficiency, reflecting a profound experience of the signifier (I told you that a part of his life’s labour has been devoted to a particularly suggestive and rich aspect of that experience, namely the hieroglyph, since he is an Egyptologist).

In order to elaborate this character of the proper name he refers to John Stuart Mill and to a Greek grammarian of the second century before Christ, called Dionysius Thrax. Curiously, he finds in them something which, without leading to the same paradox as Bertrand Russell, takes account of formulations that could at first sight appear, so to speak, homonymic.²⁴

¹⁷ See above, p. 44, seminar of 6 December 1961.

¹⁸ The last five words in English in the original.

¹⁹ Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 28

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 28. The “two extremes” would presumably be calling the point “this” (a word that can designate anything at all) and calling it “John”.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 29. Lacan extrapolates from what Russell actually says.

²² *Ibid.* pp. 28-29

²³ Probably referring to Russell’s phrase, “you cannot ever talk about a particular particular except by means of a proper name” (Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 28), cited by Gardiner (*op. cit.*, p. 58).

²⁴ Probably referring to Gardiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17, where the author says that identical Christian names might have to be treated as mere homonyms (same sound, different words) in order to respect the attachment of each of them to a different object (its bearer).

The proper name, ἴδιον ὄνομα [*idion onoma*, Greek] is only a translation of what the Greeks, and specifically this same Dionysius Thrax, offered in this regard, *idion* being contrasted with κοινόν [*koinon*, “common”].

Does *idion* coincide with “the particular” in the Russellian sense of the term? Certainly not, because Mr. Gardiner wouldn’t have taken it up if it led to agreement with his adversary. Unfortunately, he does not manage to specify the difference here of the term “property” as implied by what the original Greek point of view distinguishes, with the paradoxical consequences that a certain formalism leads to.

But the progress that he obtains by referring right back to the Greeks and then to Mill, who is closer to him, enables him to bring out what operates in the proper name and what it is that enables us to immediately distinguish it, to locate it as a proper name.

Mill, with a good deal of pertinence, emphasises that what distinguishes a proper name from a common noun is something at the level of meaning [sens].

The common noun seems to concern the object in so far as it brings with it a meaning. If something is a proper name it is because it doesn’t bring with it the meaning of the object, but rather something in the nature of a mark made on the object – put onto it, – whereby it will be all the more tightly bonded to the object for being less open (due to the absence of meaning) to any participation in a dimension, by which this object goes beyond itself and communicates with other objects.²⁵

Mill cites a fable from a fairy tale, a phantasy-image. The fairy Morgiana wants to save her protégés from some pestilence, of which they have been marked as victims by a chalk mark on their door in the town. Morgiana helps them to avoid their fate by making the same mark on all the other houses of the same town.²⁶

Here Sir Alan Gardiner has no trouble in showing the misunderstanding implied by Mill’s fable:²⁷ if Mill had had a more complete notion of what was involved in the operation of the proper name, he would not have focused solely on the identificatory character of the mark, but also on its distinguishing character, and the fable would be more serviceable if one were to say that the fairy Morgiana marked the other houses with signs in chalk, but different from the first, so that whoever then came into the town to carry out their mission and looked for the house where they must bring the pestilence to bear would not know how to find the sign they needed, because they didn’t know in advance precisely which sign among others they had to look for.

²⁵ John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, pp. 38-41.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 41. In fact the episode occurs in *The Story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, paragraphs 39-41 (Marjaneh = Morgiana)

²⁷ Gardiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.

This leads Gardiner, in a clear reference to the distinction between signifier and signified, which is fundamental for every linguist, even if he does not advance it as such in his discourse, to remark, not unjustifiably, that the use of the proper name is not so much a matter of the absence of meaning (everything suggests the contrary: proper names often have a meaning; even Monsieur Durand has a meaning;²⁸ Mr. Smith means someone who works metal, but if we find a Mr. Smith who happens to be a smith, his name will not be any the less a proper name for that). What constitutes the use of a proper name, Mr. Gardiner tells us, is that the accent is not on the meaning, but on the sound as distinctive.

This clearly represents a very great advance, which in most cases will allow us to see in practice that something is functioning specifically as a proper name. However, it is rather paradoxical to see a linguist, for whom the first definition of his material, i.e. phonemes, is that they are sounds which are distinct from one another, state that it is just because the proper name is composed of distinctive sounds that we can characterise it as a proper name.

Because, of course, seen from a certain angle, it is obvious that every use of language is precisely based on this, that a language is composed of a material which is just distinctive sounds. And, certainly, this objection is apparent to the author of this elaboration.

It is here that he introduces the subjective notion (“subjective” in the psychological sense) of the attention accorded to the signifying dimension as, here, sound material.

Observe carefully what I am drawing attention to here. The linguist who, true to a principle of method and in common with the mathematician, should strive to set aside (I don’t say to totally eliminate from his field) any properly psychological reference, nevertheless has recourse here to a psychological dimension as such. He says that a word is taken to be a proper name when the subject invests, pays attention to a certain sound difference that it vehicles, and he says that in ordinary discourse, by contrast – in what I am communicating to you now, for example, – I pay absolutely no attention to the sound material of what I am communicating. If I paid too much attention to it, my discourse would quickly dry up and come to a halt.

My prime purpose is to communicate something to you. It is because I think I know how to speak French that the material, which is effectively, in its essence, based on distinctions, comes to me. It is there as a vehicle, to which I pay no attention. I think of the goal that I am moving towards, which is to get across to you certain qualities of thoughts that I am communicating to you.

²⁸ A common French surname, etymologically connected to “durant” (“long-lasting”) [[https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durand_\(patronyme\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durand_(patronyme))].

How true is it that every time we pronounce a proper name we are psychologically aware of the accent put on the sound material as such?

It's not true at all. I no more think of the sound material, "Sir Alan Gardiner", when I talk to you about him than when I am talking about "zerwutzeln" or whatever else. These examples are badly chosen because they are words that I am highlighting as words by writing them on the blackboard. But it is clear that, whatever the value of the claim the linguist is making here, it falls down specifically because the linguist believes that he has no other reference than the psychological to bring into play.²⁹

And what makes it fall down? Precisely the articulating of something which perhaps really is the function of the subject, but of the subject defined, not by anything whatsoever of the order of concrete psychology, but only in so far as we could, as we must, as we will define the subject by its reference to the signifier.

There is a subject, which doesn't coincide with the signifier as such, but which is deployed in reference to the signifier, with features and characteristics that are perfectly articulable and capable of formalisation and that should enable us to grasp, to discern as such the idio-character – I take the Greek reference because I am far from confusing it with the use of the word "particular" in Russell's definition – as such of the proper name.

Let's try now to indicate how I want you to grasp it. I want you to grasp it in the sense, in which I have long made the function of the letter intervene at the level of the definition of the unconscious.

The first time I made this function of the letter intervene, it was in a way that was somehow poetic. The *Seminar on the Purloined Letter*,³⁰ in the very first years of our elaboration, was meant to show you that something, which had to be taken in the literal meaning of the term "letter", because it involved a missive, was something that we could consider as playing a determining role in the psychical structure of the subject.

A fable, no doubt, but one which mapped the most profound truth in its structure as fiction. When I spoke a few years later about the instance of the letter in the unconscious³¹ I placed a much more precise accent via metaphor and metonymy. By setting out from the function of the unary stroke, we are now getting to something that will enable us to go further.

I believe that the only way to define the proper name is by seeing the relationship between the naming utterance and something which, in its radical nature, is of the order of the letter.

²⁹ In fact, Gardiner admits in an afterword that his appeal to psychology on this point was unjustified and he reformulates his definition of the proper name (Gardiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-73), but without offering an alternative explanation of *why* the sound of the name is crucial. Lacan offers the outline of an explanation in the rest of the present seminar.

³⁰ Lacan, *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.), pp. 6-48.

³¹ Lacan, *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.), pp. 412-441.

You will to say to me: there's a big problem with that, because there are lots of people who don't know how to read but who use proper names, and because proper names and the identification they determine existed before the appearance of writing.

Under this heading and register, there is a very good book that has come out, *L'homme avant l'écriture* [Man Before Writing],³² which gives us the latest on what is now known about human evolution before history.

And then how are we to define ethnography, which some people have thought it plausible to describe as being concerned with everything of the order of culture and tradition that happens outside any possibility of documentation by writing?

Is that really true?

There's a book that I can recommend all those who are interested in this to refer to (some people haven't waited for my recommendation). It's the book by James Février called *Histoire de l'écriture* [History of Writing].³³ Do take a look at it over the holidays if you have time.

You will see there, clearly set out, something whose general principle I indicate to you because it is everywhere present but, in a way, not brought out, namely that, prehistorically speaking, if I can put it like that – I mean to the whole extent that the stratigraphic layers of what we find bear witness to a technical and material evolution of human accessories, – everything that we see happening in the advent of writing and, therefore, in the relationship of writing to language... everything happens as follows, and here is the result set out and articulated before you: firstly, we can admit without any doubt that man, ever since he has been man, has had vocal utterance as speech; on the other hand, there is something of the order of these strokes that I told you the emotion and admiration I experienced when I found them marked in little rows on the rib of some antelope – there is in the prehistoric material an infinite number of manifestations of traces which have no other character than of being, like this stroke, signifiers and nothing more.

People talk about ideograms or ideography. What does that mean? What we always see when this label of "ideogram" gets used is something that presents itself as very close to an image, but that becomes an ideogram to the extent that it loses, that it increasingly erases this character of an image.

³² André Varagnac (Ed.), [*L'homme avant l'écriture*](#).

³³ James G. Février, [*Histoire de l'écriture*](#).

This is how cuneiform writing is born: it could be, for example, the limb or head of an ibex, to the extent that from a certain moment it gets to look like this.³⁴

The point is that nothing of its origin is recognisable anymore. The fact that there are transitions only supports what I am saying, namely that what is created, at whatever level we see writing emerge, is a baggage, a battery of something that we can't call abstract (in the sense in which, in our own day, we talk about abstract painting), because these are strokes which emerge from something essentially figurative – that is why it is taken to be an ideogram, – but something figurative that has been erased. I will use the word, which can't help but come to mind here: something that has been *repressed*, even *rejected*.

What remains is something of the order of this unary stroke in so far as it has a distinguishing function – that it can play the role of a mark.

You are not unaware – or you are unaware, it doesn't matter – that at Mas d'Azil, another site explored by Piette, whom I spoke of the other day, stones and pebbles were found on which you see things like this:³⁵



That's in red on pretty pebbles of a pale greenish colour. On another you can actually see this,



which is particularly nice, because this is the sign used in set theory to designate that an element belongs to a set. There's another one that, looked at from a distance, is a dice. You see five points, then on another side you see two points, and then on another side again there

³⁴ Roussan reports differences between listeners as to which cuneiform symbol Lacan produced here. It ought to be the one he refers to seven paragraphs further on (below, p. 76) as “the little cuneiform character that I drew for you earlier” (he has not drawn any other cuneiform symbol), but the symbol he discusses there is not derived from the head of an ibex. I do not insert any symbol in the text here.


³⁵ The photograph of painted pebbles (dating from around 10,000 BC) is from <https://grotte-du-mas-d-azil.arize-leze.fr/Les-collections-Aziliennes.html>. Some of the pebbles are kept at the Archaeological Museum of Saint-Germain-en-Laye [<https://musee-archeologienationale.fr/type-collection/art-paleolithique>]. They are pictured and discussed in Février, *op.cit.*, p. 34 (including the “set theory” pebble, which Lacan mentions next).

are also two points. But it's not a dice like ours, because if you ask the curator to open the glass case, you see that on the opposite side from the five there is a bar, a 1. So it's not exactly a dice, but the way it strikes you at first sight is as a dice. And, in fact, you won't be wrong, because it's clear that a set of movable type (to give it its name)³⁶ is in any case something with a signifying function.³⁷



You will never know what it was used for, whether it was for drawing lots, or as objects of exchange – tesserae, in fact, objects of recognition – or if it served for whatever you care to elucubrate on mystical themes. That doesn't alter the fact that what we have here are signifiers.

That the aforesaid Piette subsequently encouraged Salomon Reinach to spin a mini-delusion on the archaic and primordial character of western civilisation, based on the idea that this is already an alphabet, is another matter. That is to be interpreted as a symptom, but also to be criticised as to its real import.³⁸

There's nothing to justify the idea of an archi-archaic writing, whereby this movable type would have been used to make a sort of cavemen's printing press. That's not the point. The point is this: a particular ideogram means something; if you take the little cuneiform character that I drew for you earlier, , at a very primitive stage of Akkadian writing it stands for the sky, so it is articulated “an” – a subject who looks at this ideogram names it “an” because it represents the sky. But what then happens is that the position is reversed – after a certain time this ideogram of the sky gets used in a syllabic writing to support the syllable “an”, which then no longer has anything to do with the sky.³⁹

³⁶ The French term for movable type, “caractères mobiles” (literally “movable characters”), works better here than the English.

³⁷ I take the photograph from Roussan who gives as his source “Clichés de Musées Nationaux, Paris”

³⁸ Édouard Piette, “Les galets coloriés du Mas d’Azil” *L’Anthropologie, Vol. 7* (1896), pp. 385-427. I could not find a direct use of Piette’s hypotheses in works by Reinach (Roussan cites two works by Reinach, *L’origine des aryens* and *Le mirage oriental*).

³⁹ This is taken from Février’s description of how the Akkadian people took the Sumerian writing system and applied it to their own language (Février, *op. cit.*, p. 109). However, the ideogram Lacan that cites here is *not* the same as “the little cuneiform character that I drew for you earlier” (see above, p. 75).

All ideographic or so-called ideographic writings without exception bear the trace of a simultaneity of what is called the ideographic use and what is called the phonetic use of the same material.⁴⁰

But there's something else that doesn't get articulated and highlighted, something that no one, it seems to me, has paused at before now. Everything goes to show that the signifiers of writing were initially produced as distinguishing marks, and we have historical evidence of this: someone called Sir Flinders Petrie showed that we find, as marks on pottery that has survived from the so-called pre-dynastic period, long before the birth of hieroglyphic characters, practically all of the forms that would subsequently be used, after a long historical evolution, in the Greek, Etruscan, Latin and Phoenician alphabets – everything that interests us to the highest degree as being characteristic of writing.⁴¹

You see what I'm driving at. The admirable achievement of the Phoenicians, first, and then of the Greeks in enabling a notation of the functions of the phoneme that appeared to be as strict as possible with the help of writing has to be seen the other way around: writing as material, as baggage, was there waiting, at the culmination of a process, to which I will return, of formation of the mark which today incarnates the signifier that I am talking to you about. Writing was there waiting to be phoneticised and it is by being vocalised, phoneticised, like other objects, that writing learns, if I can put it like that, to function as writing.

If you read that work on the history of writing⁴² you will find plentiful confirmation of what I am offering to you here as a schema.

Every progress in writing has occurred because a population has tried to symbolise its own language, its own phonematic articulation, using a writing material borrowed from another population, a material that was only seemingly well adapted⁴³ to another language, because it wasn't really any better adapted. Really the material is never well adapted because what relationship is there between writing and⁴⁴ the modulated, complex thing that is a spoken articulation? But adaptation happened by the very fact of interaction between a certain material – in appearance, initially, the least appropriate instrument for the purpose – and the usage that it was given in another form of language, phonematics, syntax, whatever you wish.

⁴⁰ This and what follows concerning Petrie's discovery is presented concisely and with erudition in a BBC radio programme available online: [In Our Time. The Alphabet](#).

⁴¹ W. Flinders Petrie, [The Formation of the Alphabet](#).

⁴² Lacan must mean the book by Février, *op. cit.*

⁴³ “n'était qu'en apparence bien adaptée”. Typescript 1 has “n'était en apparence bien adaptée” (“apparently wasn't well adapted”). The difference is not of great consequence because Lacan's point is that the written material makes a bad fit with *any* spoken language.

⁴⁴ I follow Roussan who inserts “l'écriture et” (“writing and”), which is not present in Typescript 1 but is required by the sense. Its omission is perhaps just possible in speech, though ungrammatical.

So there occurs the transmission of what was initially shaped by the Sumerians, before it gets to the point we are at there, and when it is taken up by the Akkadians, all sorts of difficulties arise from the fact that this material makes a very bad fit with the phonematics that it must enter into, but, once it has entered into it, it seems to influence it.⁴⁵ I will have more to say about this.

In other words, what the advent of writing represents is this: something that is already writing (if we take the isolation of the signifying stroke as its characteristic), being named, is able to serve as a support for that very sound [ce fameux son], on which Mr. Gardiner puts all the emphasis concerning proper names.

Where does this leave us? It leaves us needing to find something that can prove my hypothesis.

There is more than one proof – a little thought finds masses of them, – but the most accessible, the most obvious and the one I will give you straight away is that the characteristic feature of the proper name (I will have to come back to this, and you will see a thousand forms and demonstrations of it) is always more or less linked to this trait of its linkage, not to a sound, but to writing.

One proof of that, the one that I am going to particularly foreground today, is that when we have writings that haven't been deciphered, because we don't know the language which they incarnate, we are stuck until we have a bilingual inscription, and even that doesn't take us much further if we know nothing at all of the nature of the language that is to be deciphered, of its phonetism.

What we need if we are cryptographers and linguists is to discern in this undeciphered text something that is most probably a proper name, and that is because of a dimension to which I am astonished Mr. Gardiner did not have recourse. One would have expected him, as a representative of the science inaugurated and led by Champollion, to remember that the deciphering of Egyptian hieroglyphs began in connection with Cleopatra and Ptolemy, because, "Cleopatra" is "Cleopatra", and "Ptolemy" is "Ptolemy" in every language.⁴⁶

What distinguishes a proper name despite the appearances of minor deviations (Köln gets called "Cologne") is that it is preserved in its structure from one language to another; in its sound structure, no doubt, but this sound structure is distinguished by the fact that we have to respect it among all others, and that is precisely because of the affinity of the proper name with the mark, with the direct designation of the signifier as object.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ See Février, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁴⁶ The deciphering is concisely explained in Ernest Wallis Budge, *The Rosetta Stone*, p. 4 *et seq.*

⁴⁷ I follow Typescript 1 in the phrase beginning "with the direct...". Roussan cites the authority of four listeners for a different version: "à l'accolement direct du signifiant à un certain objet" ("with the direct adhesion of the signifier to a certain object"). Mishearing by the stenographer is very unlikely since the versions are too

And here we seem to fall back with a crash to “word for a particular”.⁴⁸ So am I saying that Mr. Bertrand Russell is right? As you know, certainly not! Because, in between, there is the whole question of the birth of the signifier from [à partir de] that of which it is the sign. What does that⁴⁹ mean? This is where the function of the subject comes in; not the subject in the psychological sense, but the subject in the structural sense. How can we place this subject, under what algorithms (since the question is one of formalisation) can we place him?

Do we have a means, in the order of the signifier, of representing that which concerns the genesis, the birth, the emergence of the signifier itself?

This is the course that my discourse is following and I will take it up next year.

dissimilar and the Typescript 1 version seems quite possible, since how the signifier comes to the place of a particular object (the object (*a*)) is a major theme in coming months of the Seminar and is foreshadowed in the next paragraph (“the birth of the signifier from that of which it is the sign”) and also in the next seminar (below, 10 January 1962).

⁴⁸ In English in the original.

⁴⁹ “elle” (feminine pronoun) most probably referring back to the feminine noun “naissance” (“birth”).

10 January 1962

I have never felt less like giving my seminar. I don't have time to go into the reason why. There are a lot of things to say. There are times when one feels at a low ebb, tired.¹

Let's recap what I said last time, if only to get us started. I spoke to you about the proper name as we had encountered it in our investigation of the identification of the subject – the second, regressive, type of identification with the unary stroke [trait unaire]² of the Other.

We encountered the attention, which the proper name has already solicited from some linguists and mathematicians when they were philosophising. What is the proper name? It's not a question that can be answered straight away but, as we were trying to answer it, we were surprised to come across the function of the signifier, doubtless in the pure state. It was a direction that the linguist himself sent us in when he said that a proper name is something that is validated by virtue of the distinctive function of its sound material.

By saying that, of course, he was only repeating the first premise of the Saussurean analysis of language, i.e., the reference to the distinctive feature, the phoneme, as coupled to the totality of a certain battery, solely as not being what the others are. Here we find this premise designating what was the special feature of the usage of a function of the subject in language: the function of naming by one's own name.³

We certainly couldn't be satisfied by this definition of the proper name as such, but it put us on the track of something, which we were able at least to approach, to circumscribe by saying that it is (in a form, as one might say, that is latent to language itself) the function of writing, the function of the sign in so far as reads itself as an object.

It's a fact that letters have names. We tend to confuse the letters with the simplified names that they have in our alphabet, which seem to coincide with the phonematic utterance, to which the letter has been reduced.

An "a" seems to mean the utterance "a". A "b" isn't, strictly speaking, the utterance "b", because "b" only gets heard if it leans on a vocalic utterance.

¹ These introductory remarks in Roussan are not present in Typescript 1 (Roussan cites the notes of Jean Oury). Lacan may be referring to wrangles over the SFP's admission as member organisation of the IPA, which had intensified in late 1961. His practice and role as training analyst were the main obstacle to admission. The report of the IPO investigators in 1963 can be read at [Turquet.pdf \(b-cdn.net\)](#).

² Freud, *Standard Edition 18*, p. 107 (*Group Psychology*). Lacan uses his tendentious French translation of Freud's "einzigster Zug". See above, seminar of 22 November 1961, footnote 38.

³ There is considerable divergence between different French transcripts of this sentence. I mainly follow Typescript 1.

Let's look at this more closely. We see, for example, that in Greek, α [alpha], β [beta], γ [gamma] and so on are well and truly names and – a surprising thing, – they are names, which have no meaning in the Greek language in which they are formulated.

In order to understand them you have to realise that they reproduce the names corresponding to the letters of the Phoenician alphabet, a proto-Semitic alphabet, which we can reconstruct from a certain number of levels, of strata of inscriptions. We find its signifying forms: these names have a meaning either in textual Phoenician or in this proto-Semitic language (such as we can reconstruct it), from which a certain number of languages are thought to be derived (I don't insist on their detail) whose evolution is closely linked to the first appearance of writing.

It's important here to emphasise that the name of aleph is related to the ox: the first form of א [aleph] supposedly reproduces in a schematic form different positions of the head of an ox. Something of it still remains in our capital A, which has the form of an ox's skull upside down, with the horns extending. Everyone knows too that ב [beth] is the name for a house. Things get more complicated and less promising when you try to make a register, a catalogue of what the names of the other succeeding letters mean.

When we get to ג [gimel], we are tempted to discover in it the Arabic name for a camel, but unfortunately, this is an anachronism: it is roughly in the second millennium before our era that these proto-Semitic alphabets could have been in a position to connote this name, the third letter of the alphabet; but, unfortunately, the camel had not yet made its appearance as a means of transport in these regions of the Near East at that time. So a series of discussions arise as to what this name ג [gimel] could present.⁴

A development has its place here about triconsonantal roots in Semitic languages and about the permanence of this form as the basis of every verbal form in Hebrew. This is one of the traces by which we can see the role of “reading of signs” in the roots of the structure that constitutes language, to the extent that signs appear in a surprising fashion before any use of writing. I pointed this out to you when concluding last time: the same signs that appear in the most widespread alphabets (Latin, Etruscan, etc.), which are direct ancestors of our own, are found, by the most extraordinary mimicry of history, in an identical form as marks on predynastic pottery of ancient Egypt, apparently anticipating their use in these alphabets by about a millennium.

They are the same signs, although it is completely out of the question that they could at that time have been used in any way for alphabetical purposes, since this was long before the birth of alphabetic writing.

⁴ Février, *op.cit.*, p. 227.

You know that, going back even further, I alluded to the famous pebbles which are among the most important discoveries made at the Mas d'Azil cave. A stage of human industry is called the "Azilian" in its honour and marks a point of technical evolution at the end of the Palaeolithic era – not yet, properly speaking, the transition from Palaeolithic to Neolithic, but a pre-transition period. On these pebbles from Mas d'Azil we find analogous signs. As you know, their striking nature and resemblance to the signs of our alphabet led people of no mean intelligence into all sorts of speculation, which could only end in confusion or even ridicule.

But the existence of these signs allows us to put our finger on something radical in what we might call the attachment of language to the real.

That, of course, is a problem that only arises when we have seen the necessity, for understanding language, of ordering it through what we could call a "reference to itself", to its own structure as such, which poses for us what we can almost call "its system" as something that can in no way be put down to a purely utilitarian, instrumental, practical genesis, to a psychological genesis, but which shows language to be an order, a register, a function that we have to learn to see as capable of functioning outside any consciousness on the part of the subject and whose field as such we are led to define as characterised by structural values that are specific to it.

We then have to establish the junction between the functioning of language and something in the real, which bears its mark. Where does the mark come from?⁵ Is it centrifugal or centripetal? This is the problem before which we are, for the moment, not brought to a halt, but pausing.

Because the subject, in respect of something that is a mark, a sign, already reads before there is any question of signs of writing, he perceives that [s'aperçoit que] signs can on occasion carry variously reduced, segmented fragments of his speaking modulation, and that he can then reverse his function and be what one calls the "phonetic support" of the sign.

And you know that this is how phonetic writing is born, that there is no writing that he knows of... more exactly, that everything that is of the order of writing, and not simply of a drawing, is something which always begins with the combined use of these simplified drawings, these abbreviated drawings, these erased drawings, which get variously and improperly described – in particular, as "ideograms".

The combination of these drawings with a phonetic usage of the same signs that have the appearance of representing something, the combination of the two usages, is evident, for example, in Egyptian hieroglyphs.

⁵ The question is not in Typescript 1, but Roussan cites for it the authority of all the listeners whose notes he uses.

We might, indeed, think, just from looking at a hieroglyphic inscription, that the Egyptians took no interest in anything other than the quite limited baggage of a certain number of animals – a great number of them, – a really surprising number of birds (judging by the frequency with which birds figure in inscriptions that need to be commemorated), a plentiful number of tools (agrarian and others) and some signs also, which have no doubt always been useful in their simplified form: the unary stroke first of all, the bar and the multiplication cross, which do not, however, designate the operations which were subsequently attached to these signs.

But then it is perfectly evident from the first glance that this baggage of drawings has no proportion, no congruence with the actual diversity of the objects, which could be validly evoked in durable inscriptions.

What you see, what I am trying to indicate to you here and what it is important to indicate in passing in order to avoid confusions for those who don't have the time to go and look at things more closely is that, for example, we see that the figure of an eagle owl (a night bird that is particularly well drawn and can be picked out in classical stone inscriptions) recurs extremely often.⁶



Why is that?

Certainly not because it is ever the animal itself that is in question; but the name of this animal in the ancient Egyptian language can support the labial utterance “m”, and every time you see this animal figure, what's in question is an “m” and nothing else and, what's more, far from being represented in its purely literal value every time you encounter the owl figure, this “m” is susceptible of something that works roughly like this: the “m” will signify more than one thing; specifically, when we don't have the adjunct of vowel points, when the vocalic supports aren't well specified, we cannot know, any more in Egyptian than in the Hebrew language, exactly how the “m” is completed. But in any case we know quite enough from what we can reconstruct of the syntax to be sure that this “m” can also represent a certain function, which is more or less an introductory function, of the type of “See here...”, a function of attracting attention, a “Here is...” [“voici”].

⁶ The image is from Champollion's *Egyptian Grammar*.

Or again, in other cases, where it probably had to be distinguished by its vocalic support, the “m” can represent one form, not of negation, but of something that has to be specified as a stronger accent of the negative verb, something that isolates negation in a verbal form, in a conjugable form, in a form that isn’t simply “not”, but something like “it is said that no” [“il est dit que non”].

In short, it’s a particular tense of a verb, a verb that we know and which is certainly negative, or, even more exactly, it’s a particular form in two negative verbs – the verb “imi”, on the one hand, which seems to mean “not to be” and the verb “tm”, on the other hand, which would seem to more especially indicate effective non-existence.

The reason I bring this in here is to show that it isn’t by chance that what we come across as we advance in this direction is the import – here incarnated and immediately manifest – of a very primitive coalescence of the signifier with something that immediately poses the question of the nature of negation, to which that something is very close.

Is negation simply a connotation, relating to the question of the moment when a sort of additional index, an added siglum or what’s called a “function word” is introduced in respect of the existence, the exercise, the constitution of a signifying chain, and which ought therefore always to be conceived of as a sort of secondary invention required by the necessities of the utilisation of something which is situated at different levels, at the level of the response, what is made the issue by signifier questioning [interrogation signifiante], “isn’t it there?” [“cela n’y est pas?”], that this “is it not?” [“n’est-ce?”] seems to be manifested in language as the possibility of the pure utterance of the negative, “no”? Or is it in the mark of relationships that negation imposes itself, suggested by the necessity of disjunction: such a thing is not if another thing is, or cannot be together with the other. In short, we certainly know the instrument of negation no less than others,⁷ but if, regarding the genesis of language, one is reduced to making the signifier into something that has to be elaborated little by little starting from the emotional sign, the problem of negation looks like that of a jump or even an impasse.

If, however, we view the signifier quite differently – as something with a genesis that is problematic and that leads us to question a certain existential relationship, which, as such, is already situated in a reference of negativity, – then the mode in which negation appears, the mode in which the signifier of an effective negativity is lived (is able to emerge) is something that takes on a quite different interest and that has the potential to illuminate us when we see that, from the very first problematisation, the structuration of language is identified, as one might say, with the situating of the first conjunction of a vocal utterance with a sign as such, which is to say with something that already refers to a first manipulation of the object: we

⁷ This passage from “at the level of the response, what is made the issue...” is hard to interpret. Roussan reports several slightly different versions by listeners. I follow Typescript 1. Lacan’s point may be connected with what he says about “perhaps nothing” and “nothing perhaps” in the seminar of 21 March 1962 (below).

called it a simplifying manipulation when attempting to define the genesis of the stroke, and what can be more destroyed, more erased than an object?

And if it is from the object that the stroke emerges, the stroke retains something of the object: precisely its unicity. The erasure, the absolute destruction of all other emergences, other prolongations, of all other appendices, of anything that is branched and palpitating, this relationship of the object to the birth of something, which is here called the sign and which is of interest to us as it concerns the birth of the signifier, this is the issue at which we had paused and regarding which, it might be said, we may well have made a discovery, because I believe that it is one: this indication that, at a discoverable time, a historically defined time, something is already there to be read, read with language before there is writing, and that it is by the reversal of this relationship and of this relationship of reading of the sign that writing can then be born by being able serving to connote phonematisation.

But it appears at this level that precisely the proper name, because it specifies, because it identifies the rootedness of the subject, is more specially linked than any other noun, not to phonematisation as such, not to the structure of language, but to that in language which is ready, so to speak, to receive this information from the stroke.

If up to our own day and in our usage the proper name still carries the trace of this in the way that it is not translated from one language to another, but is simply transposed, transferred – that's what is characteristic of it, I am called "Lacan" in every language, and the same goes for you, everyone by your name, – this isn't a contingent fact, a fact of limitation, of impotence, a senseless fact, a fact of nonsense; on the contrary, it is where the very particular property of the proper name in signification resides.

Isn't this of a nature to make us wonder about the radical, archaic point that we must necessarily suppose at the origin of the unconscious, namely the something which makes it the case that, when the subject speaks, he can't help advancing further and further along the chain, in the unfolding of the said [des énoncés], but that, in travelling towards the said, by this very fact, he elides something in the saying [l'énonciation], which is precisely what he cannot know – the name of what he is qua the subject of saying [sujet de l'énonciation]?

In the act of saying [acte de l'énonciation] there is this latent naming, which is conceivable as the primary kernel, as signifier, of what will subsequently be organised as the revolving chain that I have always brought to your attention – the centre, the speaking heart of the subject that we call "the unconscious".

Before we go any further I think I should indicate something, which is only the convergence, the coming to a point of a theme that we have already talked about on several occasions in this Seminar, taking it up at the different levels at which Freud was led to approach it, to represent it, to represent the system, the first psychological system, which he needed to represent in some way in order to give a sense of what is in question – the system articulated as Unconscious-Preconscious-Conscious.

I have used this blackboard on many occasions to set out various elaborations to describe the paradoxes, which Freud's formulations, in the *Entwurf*,⁸ for example, confront us with. I will limit myself today to a topologisation as simple as the one that he gives at the end of the *Traumdeutung*,⁹ showing the layers across which quantities travel, the thresholds, and the eruptions from one level into another, particularly that which interests us: the passage from the unconscious into the preconscious, which is, indeed, a problem.

I note with satisfaction in passing something that is certainly not the least effect which I might expect from the effort of rigour that I encourage you in, that I impose on myself for you here, and that those who listen to me, who hear me, occasionally take to a point which might promise a further advance. In their very remarkable text published in *Les Temps Modernes* on the subject of the unconscious¹⁰ Laplanche and Leclaire (I don't for the moment apportion the share of each of them in the work) wonder about the ambiguity contained in what Freud says about what happens when we talk about the passage of something that was in the unconscious and that goes into the preconscious. Is it only a question of a change of cathexis, they very pertinently ask, or is there a double inscription? The authors don't conceal their preference for the double inscription, as they make clear in their text. But this is a problem that the text leaves open and what we are doing this year may help us to give some answer or at least some precision.

I would suggest the following to you by way of introduction: if we have to consider the unconscious to be the locus of the subject where "it" speaks [ça parle],¹¹ we are now getting to the point where we can say that something, unbeknown to the subject, is profoundly refashioned by the retroactive effects of the signifier implied in speech [la parole]. It's because the subject speaks, for even the least of his words, that he cannot help always naming himself once again, without knowing it and without knowing by what name.

Can we not see that, in order to situate the unconscious and the preconscious in their relationship to each other, we shouldn't locate the boundary somewhere "inside" a subject who would merely be the equivalent of what gets called "the mental" in a broad sense?

The subject that we are interested in, and especially if we try to articulate him as the unconscious subject, implies a different constitution of the frontier, because what interests us in the preconscious is language, the language that we don't only see and hear being spoken, but that punctuates and articulates our thoughts.

⁸ Freud, *Standard Edition 1*, pp. 283-397 (*Project for a Scientific Psychology*).

⁹ Freud, *Standard Edition 5*, p. 541 (*The Interpretation of Dreams*).

¹⁰ Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclaire, "[The Unconscious: A Psychoanalytic Study](#)" in *Yale French Studies* 48 (1972), pp. 118-174.

¹¹ "it" ("ça") here is not meant to refer back to "the subject", but is the usual French translation of Freud's "Es" ("Id").

As you all know, even if I say that the thoughts involved at the level of the unconscious are “structured like a language” – and it’s certainly as being structured, in the final analysis and at a certain level, like a language that they interest us, – nevertheless, the first thing to recognise is that it isn’t easy to make them express themselves in ordinary language.

We have to see that, in relation to the subject of the unconscious that interests us, the articulated language of discourse is outside, and this is an outside that joins to itself what we call our intimate thoughts and the language that circulates outside – that circulates not in an immaterial way, because all sorts of things are there to represent it to us. We know what was perhaps not known by cultures where everything happens in the breath of speech [parole], we who have kilos of language at our disposal and who know, what’s more, how to inscribe the most fleeting speech on discs. We know that what is said, the effective discourse, the preconscious discourse, is entirely homogeniseable as something which takes place outside. Language, in substance, is at large [court les rues] and can be inscribed on a magnetic tape according to need.

The problem of what happens when the unconscious makes itself heard there is the problem of the boundary between this unconscious and this preconscious. How are we to view this boundary?

This is the problem that I am going to leave open for the moment, but what we can state now is that, in passing from the unconscious into the preconscious, what was constituted in the unconscious encounters a pre-existing discourse, so to speak, a play of signs at liberty that does not merely interfere with the things of the real but that is closely woven, like a mycelium, into their gap.

Isn’t this the true cause, in philosophy, of what we can call the idealist fascination and entanglement?¹² If man realises or believes he realises that he never has anything but ideas of things, so that all he is acquainted with as to things is the ideas of them,¹³ it is precisely because, already in the world of things, this parcelling into a universe of discourse is something that it is absolutely impossible to undo.

Putting it bluntly, the preconscious is already in the real, and if the status of the unconscious poses a problem, that’s because it is constituted at a completely different level, at a more radical level of the emergence of the act of saying [l’acte d’énonciation]. There is no objection in principle to the passage of something from the unconscious into the preconscious, which is what tends to manifest itself and the contradictory character of which Laplanche and Leclaire bring out so well. The unconscious has a status as such as something which, by its position and structure, cannot penetrate to the level where it is susceptible of a

¹² “la fascination, l’empêchement idéaliste” in Roussan. Typescript 1, in what must be an extraordinary mishearing, has “la fascination, l’empêchement du petit phi” (“of little ϕ ”, the imaginary phallus).

¹³ “des choses, il ne connaît enfin que les idées”. On the meaning of “connaissance” see above, seminar of 13 December 1961, p. 61, footnote 21).

preconscious organisation,¹⁴ and yet, we are told, this unconscious is constantly attempting, pushing to make itself recognised.

This is assuredly so and there's a good reason for it, namely that the unconscious is, one might say, at home in a universe structured by discourse.

The passage here of the unconscious towards the preconscious is only a sort of normal irradiation effect of what operates in the constitution of the unconscious as such, of what maintains present in the unconscious the primary and radical functioning of the articulation of the subject as speaking subject.

What has to be seen is that the order which is supposed to go from the unconscious to the preconscious and then arrive in consciousness can't be accepted without revision, and one can say that, in a certain fashion, to the extent that we have to admit what is preconscious as defined as being in the circulation of the world, in real circulation, we must take it that what happens at the level of the preconscious is something that we have to read in the same way, under the same structure, as that which I tried to get you to sense at the root-point where something brings to language what one could call its final sanction: this reading of the sign. And, at the present level of the life of the constituted subject – of a subject elaborated through a long history of culture – what happens for the subject is a reading outside, a reading of what is ambient, due to the presence of language in the real.

And the level of the conscious, the level that always seemed to be a problem for Freud (he always said that its definition and more accurate articulation of its economic function was a task for the future), the level that he describes, when his thought was first emerging, in terms of a protective layer that he designates by the term ϕ [phi], is above all something he finds comparable to the thin surface layer of the sense organs, to something that filters, blocks out, sieves, only retains an indication of quality which we can show to be homologous in function with the indication of reality¹⁵ that only gives us a limited taste of the state we are in, just enough to be sure that we are not dreaming, if what's in question is analogous; that it really is the visible that we see.¹⁶ In the same way, in respect of what constitutes the preconscious and makes for us this world closely woven by our thoughts, consciousness is the surface through which the something that is at the heart of¹⁷ the subject, receives, so to speak, its own thoughts, its own discourse from outside.

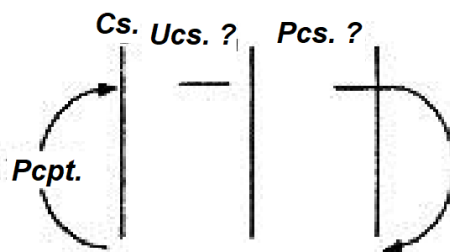
¹⁴ "organisation" in Typescript 1. Roussan has "verbalisation".

¹⁵ The ϕ system and the indications of quality and of reality are developed by Freud in the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (Freud, *Standard Edition 1*, pp. 283-397).

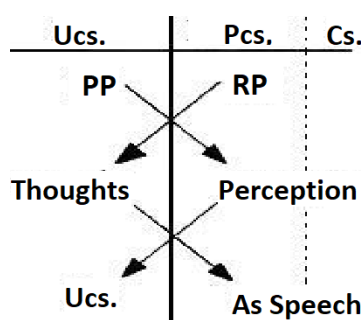
¹⁶ Roussan punctuates differently. I follow Typescript 1.

¹⁷ Typescript 1 has what looks like "auteur de" ("author of") or may be "autour de" ("around", "surrounding"), which Roussan amends to "au coeur de" ("at the heart of"). The logic of the passage suggests that Roussan is correct and that the stenographer misheard.

Consciousness is there so that that the unconscious, one might say, can refuse what comes to it from the preconscious or can choose from it what it needs for its own purposes.¹⁸



So what does this amount to? Here we have the paradox that I have called the intercrossing of systemic functions at this first level of Freud's articulation, which it is so important to recognise.¹⁹



He represents the unconscious as a flux, a world, a chain of thoughts. No doubt the world is also made from the composition of perceptions: the test of reality [test de la réalité]²⁰ is the articulation that perception brings in a world that is ordered, organised.²¹

Inversely, what we find in the unconscious is this signifying [significative] repetition that leads us from something called thoughts, *Gedanken*, which are very well formed, Freud says, to a concatenation of thoughts, which escapes us.

¹⁸ The diagram is as given by Roussan. It is sketched without labels in the notes by Lemoine and Chollet. It is clearly a rejig of Freud's diagram from Chapter 7 of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (*Standard Edition 5*, p. 541). "Pcpt.", "Cs.", "Ucs." and "Pcs." are, respectively, "perception", "consciousness", "unconscious" and "preconscious".

¹⁹ In the diagram "PP" = pleasure principle, "RP" = reality principle. Lacan uses a very similar diagram in *Seminar 7* (D. Porter, trans.), seminar of 25 November 1959, to illustrate the intercrossing of functions between the pleasure and reality principles.

²⁰ Lacan presumably means "reality testing", developed in Freud's metapsychology after 1910, but already present in the 1895 *Project* in all but name as what is carried out by means of "indications of reality" (Freud, *Standard Edition 1*, pp. 325 *et seq.*).

²¹ I follow Typescript 1 in this sentence. Roussan gives a quite different version (without citing any listeners), as follows: "No doubt consciousness is also made up of the consistency of perceptions: the test of reality is the articulation of perceptions between themselves in an organised world."

Now, what does Freud tell us? What does the subject look for at the level of one and the other of the two systems?

He tells us that what we look for at the level of the preconscious is identity of thoughts.²² This is what has been elaborated by this whole chapter of philosophy since Plato:²³ the effort of our organisation of the world, the logical effort, is properly speaking, to reduce the diverse to the identical. It is to identify thought to thought, proposition to proposition in variously articulated relations, which constitute the very texture of what is called formal logic, and this poses the problem – for anyone who considers, in an extremely ideal fashion, that the edifice of science could or should, even virtually, be finalised – of whether every science, every knowledge, every grasping of the world in an ordered and articulated way must not end in a tautology.

There is good reason why you have heard me mention the problem of tautology so often and we certainly won't be able to complete our discourse this year without giving a definitive judgment regarding it.

The world, then, the reality function of which is linked to the perceptual function is, nevertheless, that regarding which we make no progress in our knowledge except by way of the identity of thoughts.

This is in no way a paradox for us, but what is paradoxical is to read in Freud's text that what the unconscious seeks, what it wants, as one might say, the root of its functioning, of its deployment, is the identity of perception,²⁴ which would be senseless unless it meant the following: that the relationship of the unconscious to what it seeks in its own mode of return, is precisely that in the *only once perceived* which is identically identical, as one might say; what was perceived *on that occasion*, the ring that it slipped onto its finger with the stamp of *that very time*.

And that is just what will always be missing. This mark which is the unique mark of the original emergence of an original signifier will always be missing from every kind of other reappearance of what answers to the original signifier, the point where there is the mark that the subject received from whatever is at the origin of the *Urverdrängt*.²⁵ It will be missing from whatever comes to represent what is at the origin. That original signifier presented itself once, at the moment when the point, the something in question that was *urverdrängt* passed to unconscious existence, to an insistence in this internal order which is the unconscious, between, on the one hand, what it receives from the outside world where there are things to

²² Freud, [Standard Edition 5](#), p. 602 (*The Interpretation of Dreams*)

²³ "in Plato" is not in Typescript 1. Roussan cites the notes of three listeners to support its inclusion.

²⁴ Freud, [Standard Edition 5](#), pp. 566, 602 (*The Interpretation of Dreams*)

²⁵ Freud explains the difference between repression ("Verdrängung") and primal repression ("Urverdrängung") at [Standard Edition 14](#), pp. 148-149 (*Repression*) and pp. 180-181 (*The Unconscious*).

be read,²⁶ which²⁷ it is unable to receive except in their difference precisely because it reads²⁸ them in a signifying form [une forme signifiante]. And that [ça] is the reason why it cannot in any way be satisfied by this search as such for perceptual identity, if that [ça]²⁹ is what specifies it as unconscious.

This gives us the triad, conscious, unconscious, preconscious, in a slightly modified order and in a certain fashion, which justifies the formula I tried to give you once before of the unconscious as between perception and consciousness, as one says between skin and flesh [entre cuir et chair].³⁰

Stating this sends us back to the point I started from when I formulated things in terms of the philosophical experience of the search for the subject which we find in Descartes and which is strictly different from anything that had been done at any other moment of philosophical reflexion, because it is the subject himself who is questioned, who seeks to be questioned as such, where what is at stake is the whole truth about the subject, and what is questioned is not the real and appearance – the relation between what exists and what does not exist, between what stays firm and what is fleeting, – but whether the Other can be trusted, whether what the subject receives from outside is, as such, a trustworthy sign.

I have been over the “I am thinking, therefore I am” sufficiently for you to be able to see now roughly how the problem presents itself. This “I am thinking”, which we said is properly speaking senseless (and this is what gives it its value) has no more sense than “I am lying”, but it cannot, when it is articulated, do otherwise than itself realise [mais il ne peut faire, à partir de son articulation, que de s’apercevoir lui-même] that “I am thinking, therefore I am”³¹ is not the consequence that follows from it, but that that³² is what it cannot help but think from the moment when it truly begins to think.

²⁶ Roussan has “lier” (“to bind”), but I follow Typescript 1, which has “lire” (“to read”).

²⁷ The sense seems to require “on the other hand” here since Lacan is marking a contrast between the “outsideness” of things in the world and their necessary subjection to the “signifying form”.

²⁸ Roussan has “lier” (“bind”), but Typescript 1 has “lise”, which is the present subjunctive of “lire” (“to read”). It seems unlikely that the stenographer failed to hear “lier” twice in one sentence (see above, footnote 26), typing a different form of the verb “lire” each time. Lacan is reinforcing the point he made on p. 88 above (“...what happens at the level of the preconscious is something that we have to read...”).

²⁹ Both pronouns [“ça”] in this sentence seem to refer back to “reading in a signifying form”.

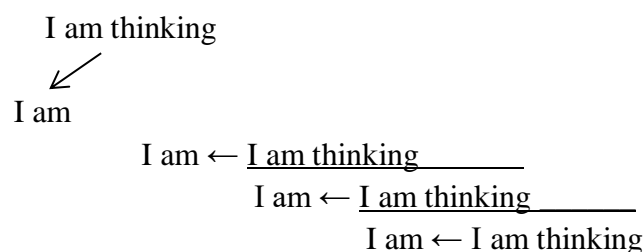
³⁰ “entre cuir et chair” is a French idiom meaning a place that is barely distinguishable because it is between two substances that can barely be distinguished. Lacan uses it elsewhere to make the same metapsychological point (e.g., below, p. 399, seminar of 27 June 1962; *Seminar 9* (D. Porter, trans.), pp. 51, 61, seminars of 9 and 16 December 1959. Porter translates as “between glove and hand”).

³¹ I follow Typescript 1 here. Roussan (without citing listeners) has “...that ‘therefore I am’ is not the consequence...”. This might appear more logical, but the Typescript 1 version is supported by Lacan’s point, made more emphatically in the next paragraph, that the *cogito* does not work as premise (“I am thinking”) and consequence (“therefore I am”), but by producing a “signified”, namely that of “I am thinking” referring back to “I am”. The Lemoine notes follow Typescript 1.

³² i.e., “I am thinking, therefore I am”. Roussan misses out the three words “...that is what...”, which are in Typescript 1 and which seem to fit with Lacan’s argument (see previous footnote). So Roussan has “...but that it cannot help but think...”

So it is in so far as this impossible “I am thinking” passes to something which is of the order of the preconscious that it implies as signified (not as consequence, as ontological determination) that this “I am thinking” refers back to an “I am”, which, thereafter, is no more than the X of this subject that we search for, i.e., of what there is at the beginning in order for the identification of this “I am thinking” to be produced.

Notice that this continues, that there is a series: if I am thinking that I am thinking that I am (I am not being ironical now),³³ if I am thinking that I cannot do otherwise than be a thinking-about-being [un pense-à-être]³⁴ or a thinkingbeing [êtrepensant], the “I am thinking”, which is here the denominator, easily sees the same duplicity reproduced, namely that I cannot do otherwise than realise that, thinking that I am thinking, the “I am thinking” which is at the end of my thinking – on my thinking – is itself an “I am thinking” which reproduces the “I am thinking, therefore I am”.³⁵



Does this go on *ad infinitum*? Certainly not: it is also one of the most common types of philosophical exercise, when you have begun to establish a formula like that, to apply that what one was able to retain from it in terms of an effective experience is, in a certain way, indefinitely multipliable, like in a play of mirrors.

There is a little exercise that I set myself to at one time: my little personal sophism, concerning the assertion of anticipated certainty, with the game of disks, where it is by noting

³³ Perhaps a reference back to the passage about “to think-be” (above, p. 19, seminar of 22 November 1961) where he *was* being ironical.

³⁴ Roussan has “pensêtre”.

³⁵ The diagram below is not in Typescript 1, but is in the Lemoine and Chollet notes and is used by Roussan, who has directional arrows instead of dashes in Lemoine and Chollet. Its interpretation is not obvious, but may be as follows: the “I am thinking” which, as Lacan says, is “at the end of my thinking – on my thinking” would be the “I am thinking”, which is directly above the uppermost fraction line (his use of the word “denominator” would be highly misleading in this regard) and the “I am” that it points to would be the “signified ... that this ‘I am thinking’ refers back to an ‘I am’ ” (see the previous paragraph). The adjacent, stand-alone combination of “I am thinking” and “I am”, joined by an oblique arrow, would be meant to indicate that this signified is what the “I am” here really amounts to. This would be the “salutary” outcome of what Lacan in the previous paragraph called “this impossible ‘I am thinking’ ”. Meanwhile, the “I am ← I am thinking” underneath the fraction line and the next-down repetition under another fraction line would be meant to represent an alternative, potentially “pernicious” outcome – the reproduction of “I am ← I am thinking” (but *not* as signified), threatening an infinite regress. But this regress does not have to occur: Lacan’s reference below to the “Logical Time” sophism and the development leading to the “periodic function” at the very end of this week’s seminar indicate how the regress is avoided and even how both its threat and its avoidance are essential to the “salutary” outcome.

what the two others do that a subject has to deduce the mark, even or odd, that is on his own back,³⁶ i.e., something very close to what is involved here.

It can be easily seen in the articulation of this game that, far from the hesitation... which, indeed, can perfectly well occur, because if I see the others take too quickly the same decision that I want to take, namely that I am marked with a disk of the same colour as them, if I see them draw their conclusion too quickly, I will precisely draw the conclusion... I may see a hesitation arise for me, namely that if they saw so quickly who they were it is because I myself am distinct enough from them to locate myself [pour me repérer], because, logically speaking, they must have the same reflexion. We will see them oscillate too and say to themselves, "Let's think again", so the three subjects have the same hesitation together, and one can easily show that it is only after three hesitating oscillations that they will really have been able to figure out (and will certainly have figured out, as it were, in full)³⁷ through the scansion of their hesitations, the limitations of all the contradictory possibilities.

There is something analogous here: all the instances of "I am thinking, therefore I am" cannot be included indefinitely in an "I am thinking". Where is the limit? That's what we cannot say and know so easily straight away. But the question that I am posing...³⁸ or more exactly the one that I am asking you to follow, because you will perhaps be surprised, but, in what follows you will see something added that can modify and ultimately make operable what seemed to me at first to be only a kind of game, or even what is called a mathematical recreation.³⁹

If we see that something in the Cartesian apprehension, which is surely terminated in its utterance [énonciation] at different levels... because, equally, there is something that cannot go any further than what is inscribed here, and he⁴⁰ has to make something intervene which doesn't come from the pure elaboration, "what can I base myself on?", "what is trustworthy?". He will be led, like everybody else, to try to manage with what gets read [ce qui se lit]⁴¹ outside. But in the identification that is made with the unary stroke, isn't there enough to support this unthinkable and impossible point of "I am thinking", at least in its form of radical difference?

³⁶ The "Logical Time" sophism is from 1945 and the best-known version is in Lacan, *Écrits* (B. Fink, Trans), pp.161-175. But Lacan here employs terminology from a reuse of the sophism in *Seminar 2* (S. Tomaselli, trans.), pp. 287-290, including the mistake of saying that the mark is on the prisoner's *back*, which would make the game unplayable.

³⁷ There are two pages missing from Typescript 1 (from here to the paragraph below that begins "I will skip over for today...").

³⁸ This sentence is ungrammatical because nothing is predicated of "the question that I am posing". He may mean the question stated at the end of the next paragraph ("But in the identification that is made with the unary stroke, isn't there...?").

³⁹ These comments anticipate the mathematics that he will introduce a few paragraphs further on.

⁴⁰ Presumably Descartes.

⁴¹ Roussan reports two alternatives to "ce qui se lit": "ce qui se vit" ("what gets experienced") and "ce qui sévit" ("what is rampant"). "What gets read" seems more likely in view of the discussion above of what is received "from the outside world where there are things to be read" (above p. 92) and the next paragraph below.

If it is through *one* that we figure this “I am thinking”, in so far as it interests us only for what it has to do with what happens at the origin of naming as it concerns the birth of the subject (the subject is what names itself), if naming is initially something that has to do with a reading of the stroke *one*, designating absolute difference, then we can ask ourselves how to encrypt [comment chiffrer] the sort of “I am”, which is constituted here, in a certain way retroactively, just by the reprojected of what is constituted as signified of “I am thinking”, namely the same thing, the unknown [inconnu] of what is at the origin in the form of the subject.

If the i^{42} here, in the definitive form that I will leave to it,

$$i + \frac{1}{i + \frac{1}{i + \frac{1}{i + 1}}}$$

is something which is supposed here in a total problematic, namely that it is equally true that it is not because it only is by thinking about thinking, but is nevertheless the indispensable correlative (this is what gives the Cartesian argument its power) of every apprehension of a thought as soon as it becomes concatenated [dès lors qu'elle s'enchaîne], this path is open for it towards a *cogitatum* of something which is articulated: *cogito ergo sum*.

I will skip over the intermediary steps for today because you will see subsequently where they come from and that, in any case, I had to pass by way of them to get to the point I got to.

There is something which is at once paradoxical and (why not say) amusing, but, I repeat, if this has an interest, it is in so far as it is operant.

A formula like this [$i + 1$ ”, etc., shown above] in mathematics is what is called a “series”. I will pass over here the question that anyone who is practised in mathematics may immediately ask: if it is a series, is it a convergent series? What does that mean? It means that if, instead of having little i you had 1 everywhere:

$$1 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{1 + 1, \text{etc.}}}}$$

a rearrangement would immediately make you see that this series is convergent, which is to say that, if I remember right, it is equal to something like:

⁴² “ i ” standing for “inconnu” in the previous sentence. It is probably also meant to stand for one part of the Lacanian term “ $i(a)$ ”.

$$\frac{1 + \sqrt{5}}{2}$$

The important thing is that, if you carry out the operations in question, you have values which, if you set them out, will have more or less this form,

$$1 + 1 = 2, \quad 1 + \frac{1}{1+1} = \frac{3}{2}, \quad 1 + \frac{1}{1+\frac{1}{1+1}} = \frac{5}{3}, \quad \text{etc.}$$

until they come to converge on a perfectly constant value which is called a limit.

Finding a convergent formula in the preceding formula would be all the less interesting for us because it would mean that the subject is a function that tends towards perfect stability.

But what is interesting (and here I make a jump because I see no other way of lighting my lantern than by projecting the spot of light and then coming back to the lantern) is that if you give to i the value it precisely has in the theory of numbers, where it is called “imaginary” (note that it isn’t only the homonymy, which justifies this methodical extrapolation, this jump and the confidence I am asking you to grant me), this imaginary value is: $\sqrt{-1}$ [square root of minus one].

You know enough elementary arithmetic to be aware that the square root of minus one isn’t any real number. There is no negative number, minus none, for example, which could in any way take the function of being the root of any number of which the root of minus one would be the factor.

Why? Because if something was the square root of a negative number, then its value squared would be a negative number, but no number squared can give a negative number, because every negative number squared becomes positive. This is why $\sqrt{-1}$ is nothing but an algorithm, but useful nonetheless.

If you define as a “complex number” any number composed of a real number “a” to which there is joined an imaginary number, i.e., a number which cannot possibly be added to it because it’s not a real number and which is made of the product of $\sqrt{-1}$ and “b”, you can carry out all the operations and with the same success with this complex number that you could carry out with real numbers.⁴³

⁴³ For a quick idea of what Lacan is talking about here and in the next couple of paragraphs, see <https://www.mathsisfun.com/numbers/imaginary-numbers.html> and <https://www.mathsisfun.com/numbers/complex-numbers.html> .

And once you have started on this path you will not only have the satisfaction of seeing that this works, but you will make discoveries, namely that numbers constituted in this way have a value that allows you to operate in a purely numerical fashion with what are called vectors, i.e., with magnitudes which not only have a value that can be variously represented by a length, but that, thanks to the complex numbers, you can also indicate the direction of the vector and, in particular, the angle that it makes with another magnitude.

So that in terms of what you can do with it, $\sqrt{-1}$, which isn't a real number, proves to be astoundingly more powerful than anything that you had at your disposal by limiting yourself to the series of real numbers. This in order to introduce you to the nature of this little i .

And if you supposes that what we are trying to connote here in a numerical fashion is something that we can operate on by giving it this conventional value of $\sqrt{-1}$, then, just as we applied ourselves to elaborating the function of unity as a function of radical difference in the determination of the ideal centre of the subject called the ego-ideal, we can then go on to extract from this connotation, $\sqrt{-1}$, all the ways in which it can be of operational use to us, for the good reason that we will identify the value of $\sqrt{-1}$ with what we have previously introduced in our personal notation as φ , i.e., the imaginary function of the phallus.

But, for the moment, the utility of its introduction at this level can be seen by putting $\sqrt{-1}$ everywhere where you saw little i . You then see a function emerge that isn't at all a converging function, but is a periodic function which is easily calculable: it's a value that is renewed, so to speak, every third time in the series. The series is defined like this:

$$i + 1,$$

the first term in the series,

$$i + \frac{1}{i + 1},$$

the second term in the series, and

$$i + \frac{1}{i + \frac{1}{i + 1}},$$

the third term.

You will find periodically (every three times in the series) the same value, these same three values that I am going to give you.

The first is $i + 1$, the enigmatic point, which we are at, wondering what value we can give to i in order to connote the subject as the subject before any naming (the problem that interests

us). The second value that you will find, $i + 1/(i + 1)$,⁴⁴ is strictly equal to $(i + 1)/2$, and this is interesting, because the first thing we encounter is that the essential relation of this something that we are looking for as the subject before it names itself to the use it can make of its name quite simply to be the signifier of what there is to be signified, i.e., precisely of the question of the signified of this addition of itself to its own name, is to split,⁴⁵ to divide in two, so that what remains is only a half (literally $(i + 1)/2$) of what was there present.

As you can see, my words are not prepared, but they are well calculated and these things are the fruit of an elaboration, which I have criss-crossed by thirty-six different entry points, with a certain number of checks, and with a certain number of connections to what is to come later.

The third value, when you stop the series there, will be quite simply 1, which in many ways can have for us the value of a sort of confirmation, as a closing of the loop.

The point is that, if it's in the third time, the moment of the "I am thinking" to the extent that it is itself object of thought and takes itself as object (a time to which, curiously enough, no philosophical meditation has encouraged us to give special thought), that we seem to attain the famous unity, whose satisfying character for defining anything whatsoever is assuredly in no doubt, we may well ask ourselves whether it is the same unity as we had at the beginning, in the primordial identification that starts things off.

In any case, I must leave the question open for today.

⁴⁴ The number 1 as numerator and $i + 1$ as denominator (I use brackets in this and the next two formulae for the sake of clarity).

⁴⁵ Lacan's invented word is "splitter", creating a French infinitive from the English verb "split". The word is omitted in Typescript 1, but Roussan cites the notes of several listeners in its support.

17 January 1962

I don't think, paradoxical though the symbolisation on which I ended my discourse last time may at first appear – making the mathematical symbol of the root of minus one into the support of the subject, – that it can all have come as a complete surprise to you.

I mean that, thinking back to the Cartesian enterprise itself, one cannot¹ forget what the enterprise led its author to.

He² sets off at a brisk pace towards the truth and, for him unlike for us, this truth is by no means placed in the parenthesis of a dimension which distinguishes it from reality. This truth towards which Descartes advances with a conquering stride is precisely that of the thing. And where does it lead us? To emptying the world so far as to leave nothing more of it than this emptiness which is called “extension”.

How is this possible?

As you know, he chooses as his example: melt a block of wax.³ Is it by chance that he chooses this material or is he drawn to it because it is the ideal material for receiving the divine seal, the divine signature? By the quasi-alchemical operation that he carries out before us he makes the wax vanish, to no longer be more than pure extension – nothing more on which the impression can be made of that, precisely, which has been elided in his enterprise.⁴ There is no longer any relationship between the signifier and any natural trace, if I can put it like that, and particularly the natural trace *par excellence* constituted by the imaginary of the body.

That is certainly not to say that this imaginary can be radically rejected. But it is separated off from the play of the signifier. It is what it is: an effect of the body, and as such impugned as a witness to any truth. There is nothing to be done but to live with it, with this imaginary (theory of the passions), but it is certainly not for thinking with.

Man thinks with a discourse reduced to the evidences of what is called “the natural light”,⁵ namely an algebra, a logistical group which, consequently, could have been different if God had so wished.

What Descartes was not then able to see is that we can so wish in God's place, that some 150 years after he died set theory would be born (he would have loved it) where even the numbers one and zero are the object of a literal definition, of a purely formal axiomatic definition –

¹ Typescript 1 does not have “ne” (“not”) and so means “can forget”, which seems wrong.

² i.e., Descartes. Typescript 1 has “We...”. I follow Roussan

³ René Descartes, *Meditations* (J. Veitch, trans.), Second Meditation, sections 11, 12.

⁴ Roussan version. Typescript 1 has “...nothing more that could be imprinted if precisely in his enterprise”, which seems incomplete.

⁵ Descartes, *op. cit.*, particularly the Third Meditation.

neutral elements. He could have done without the truthful God, and the deceitful God could only have been one who cheated when solving the equations themselves.

But nobody has ever seen that: there is no miracle in the combination, other than the meaning that we give to it and every time we give it a meaning, it is suspect. That is why the Word [le Verbe] exists, but not Descartes' God. For Descartes' God to exist, we would need at least some proof of his creative will in the sphere of mathematics. But God didn't invent transfinite numbers – we did. This is why, as we know from history, the great mathematicians who opened up this sphere beyond divine logic – Euler first of all – were very frightened. They knew what they were doing. What they encountered was not the emptiness of extension of Descartes' enterprise, which ultimately (despite Pascal) no longer frightens anyone because people are encouraged to colonise it ever further, but the emptiness of the Other, which is a much more terrifying place because there has to be someone there.

This is why, in getting as close as possible to the question of the meaning of the subject as evoked in the Cartesian meditation, even if I am trespassing on ground that has been trodden so many times that it may appear to have become the preserve of certain people, I don't think I am doing something which can fail to be of interest, even to those same people, because the question is topical, more topical than any other, and it is has particular relevance, as I think I will be able to show you, in psychoanalysis.

Today I am going to bring you to a consideration, not of the origin, but of the position of the subject in so far as, at the root of the act of speech [parole], there is something, a moment, where it⁶ is inserted into a structure of language, and I am trying to get closer to this structure of language as it is characterised at this original point, to define it around a theme, which can be imaged as being incarnated or encompassed in the idea of an original contemporaneity of writing and of language itself, to the extent that writing is signifying connotation, that speech does not create it, but rather reads it, and that the genesis of the signifier at a certain level of the real, which is one of its axes or roots, is for us undoubtedly what is most important for connoting the emergence of the effects called “effects of meaning” [effets de sens].⁷

What the subject projects in front of⁸ him, *nachträglich*,⁹ by the very fact of engaging himself in shared discourse through speech, first in a stammering, then playful or even confusional way, what he projects backwards by his act, is the place where something is produced, towards which we have the courage to advance in order to question it in the name of the formula, “Wo Es war, soll Ich werden”,¹⁰ which we would tend to push towards a formula

⁶ “elle” (the feminine singular personal pronoun) could refer back to “position”, “root” or “speech”. “Speech” is perhaps most likely, in view of what Lacan said of the ability of his dog to “speak” without possessing language (above, seminar of 29 November 1961).

⁷ In several places in this paragraph Roussan's version amends what look like mishearings in Typescript 1. The amendments all seem necessary in order to make sense.

⁸ Roussan has “behind”, but does not cite sources to support the amendment.

⁹ One of Lacan's favourite German words. It might be translated “retroactively”.

¹⁰ “Where id was, there ego shall be” (Freud, [Standard Edition 22](#), p. 80 (*New Introductory Lectures*)).

with a very slightly different accent in the sense of a “being having been” [étant ayant été], of a *gewesen*,¹¹ which subsists in as much as the subject, advancing on this path, cannot fail to know that a profound reversal of his position is required in order for him to grasp himself in that place.

Already there, something points us towards something which, for being inverted [d'être inverse], suggests to us the remark that a question has always lain hidden in the phenomenon of negation, in negation as such – in its existence.

What does negation suppose? Does it suppose the affirmation on which it is based? No doubt. But is this affirmation, for its part, simply the affirmation of something real which would simply quashed [ôté]?¹² It is not without surprise (not without malice either) that we find some lines under the pen of Bergson, where he protests against any idea of nothingness, expressing a position that conforms perfectly with a thought that is fundamentally attached to a sort of naive realism:

“...there is more, and not less, in the idea of an object conceived as ‘not existing’ than in the idea of this same object conceived as ‘existing’; for the idea of the object ‘not existing’ is necessarily the idea of the object ‘existing’ with, in addition, the representation of an exclusion of this object by the actual reality taken in block.”¹³

Can we be satisfied by such a localisation of negation? Let's look for a moment at negation itself. Can we be satisfied, in the simple experience of its use, of its employment, by such a localisation of its effects?

This is something that we ought to approach along all the paths of a linguistic enquiry. Indeed, we have already advanced along these paths and, if you remember, we have for some time past made reference to the very suggestive, if not illuminating, remarks of Pichon and Damourette, in their collaboration on a grammar which is very rich and rewarding to consider, a grammar, specifically, of the French language, where they point out that there is not, properly speaking, any negation in French.¹⁴

What they mean by negation is this simplified form of radical ablation, as expressed at the end of certain German sentences, where the term “nicht” occurs in surprising fashion at the conclusion of a sentence that has been pursued in a register that allowed the listener to remain up to the last moment in the most complete indetermination and, fundamentally, in a position of belief, and where the “nicht” erases the sentence, so that the whole signification of the sentence is excluded.

¹¹ Past participle of German “sein” (“to be”).

¹² Roussan cites the authority of several listeners for “ôté”. Typescript 1 has “donné” (“given”).

¹³ Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (A. Mitchell, trans.), p. 302.

¹⁴ Jacques Damourette, Edouard Pichon, *Des mots à la pensée* (Chapter 7, “Negation”).

Excluded from what? From the field of admissibility of truth. The division, the split of negation, which is most usual in French, between “ne”, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, an auxiliary word (“pas”, “personne”, “rien”, “point”, “mie”, “goutte”) that occupies a position in the utterance which remains to be specified with respect to the foregoing “ne”, suggests to Pichon the pertinent remark that, if we look carefully at how “ne” and the auxiliary can be used separately from each other, it makes sense to attribute to one of these functions a signification called “discordant” and to the other a signification called “exclusive”. Exclusion from the real would be the job of “pas” or “point”, while the “ne” would express this dissonance, which is sometimes so subtle that it is only a shadow, particularly in the famous “ne”, called “expletive”, which, as you know, I have made much of in a first attempt to point out in it something like the trace of the subject of the unconscious – the “ne”, called “expletive”, the “ne” of “je crains qu’il ne vienne” [“I fear lest he come”].

You can immediately put your finger on the fact that this means nothing other than “je crains qu’il vienne” [“I fear he might come”].¹⁵ It expresses the discordance of your own feelings with respect to this person, it carries in a way a trace that is all the more suggestive for being incarnated in its signifier, because in psychoanalysis we call it “ambivalence”. “Je crains qu’il ne vienne” does not so much express the ambiguity of our sentiments as, by this addition, it shows how much, in certain types of relation, the distinction can reappear – emerge, be reproduced, be marked in a gap – between the subject of the act of saying [énonciation] as such, and the subject of the said [énoncé], even if he¹⁶ is not present at the level of the said in a manner that designates him.

“Je crains qu’il ne vienne” adverts to a third person. How would it be if the sentence was, “je crains que je ne fasse” [“I fear lest I do it”], which is unlikely to be said, even though it is conceivable? Who would be at the level of the said [énoncé]?¹⁷ Although this doesn’t really matter; the fact is that he can be designated and you see that I can bring him in at the level of the said,¹⁸ and a subject, masked or not at the level of saying, represented or not, leads us to pose the question of the function of the subject, of its form, of what supports it, and not to be mistaken – not to believe that it is simply the “je”, the shifter,¹⁹ which, in the formulation of the said, designates him as he who speaks in the instant that defines the present. The subject of saying [sujet de l’énonciation] perhaps always has another support. What I have articulated, moreover, is that this little “ne”, which we grasp here in its expletive form, is an exemplary case of that support. Which is not to say, of course, that we should recognise this exceptional phenomenon as its exclusive support.

¹⁵ Roussan has “j’espérais qu’il vienne” (“I was hoping that he would come”), which makes little sense in the context. Typescript 1 has what looks like “jçérains qu’il vienne”. “Jçérains” is not a possible combination in French and the “-ains” suggests a typo for “je crains” (“I fear”). The sentences “je crains qu’il vienne” and “je crains qu’il ne vienne” can indeed be near synonyms in modern French.

¹⁶ I think that “he” here refers to the subject of saying (who is not designated as such in Lacan’s sample sentence, but is connoted by the “ne”).

¹⁷ I follow Roussan’s version of these two sentences. Typescript 1 makes little sense.

¹⁸ The sentence up to here is slightly different in Roussan. I follow Typescript 1.

¹⁹ “the shifter” is not in Typescript 1. Roussan cites three listeners in its support.

The use of language offers me something that I can bring out for you in a very banal way, and not so much in Pichon's distinction, which I don't find sustainable as far as its descriptive term, because, phenomenologically, it is based on the idea – inadmissible for us – that one can somehow fragment the movements of thought. What I want to bring out hasn't always been how it is: in archaic periods the form I am going to formulate for you now was the more common. All languages experience an evolution, a kind of sliding of the forms of negation, which linguists try to characterise, and I will perhaps talk later about the general direction in which this sliding occurs, as described by specialists, but for the moment let's take the simple example that offers itself to us. Your linguistic awareness gives you an immediate appreciation of the originality, in the current use of language, of the distinction between two equally admissible, equally acceptable, equally expressive, equally common formulae: that of "je ne sais" and "j'sais pas".²⁰

You see, I think, immediately what the difference between them is, the difference of accent. The "je ne sais" is not without mannerism, it is literary. It is better, all the same, than "jeunes nations" ["young nations"] but it is of the same order. They are both Marivaux, if not rivals [rivaux].

What the "je ne sais" expresses is essentially something quite different from the other code of expression, the "j'sais pas". It expresses oscillation, hesitation, even doubt. I mentioned Marivaux on purpose: "je ne sais" is the standard formula for veiled avowals on the stage.

Compare the "je ne sais" with what you get if you amuse yourself by writing out "j'sais pas" (with the ambiguity given by my play on words),²¹ noting the assimilation that it undergoes from the neighbourhood of the initial "s" of the verb, the "j" of "je" which becomes an aspirated "che" and thereby an unvoiced sibilant, and the "ne" which is swallowed and disappears, so that the whole sentence comes to rest on the heavy "pas" of the occlusive which ends it.

The expression will only take on its slightly derisory, even vulgar accent precisely from its discordance with what will have been expressed. The "j'sais pas" marks, as I might say, something where, on the contrary, the subject collapses or falls flat. "How could that have happened to you?", a person in authority asks, after the person in question has been involved in some wretched misadventure, to which the person responds: "j'sais pas". A hole, a gap opens up, and what disappears at the bottom of the hole is the subject himself.

But here the subject no longer appears in his oscillatory movement, in the support given to him for his original movement, but on the contrary, in the form of a statement. His ignorance,

²⁰ Both are colloquial variants of the standard expression: "Je ne sais pas" ("I don't know"). "Je ne sais" is refined and slightly disingenuous, and might be translated "I can't tell". "J'sais pas" is coarse and categorical, something like "Dunno".

²¹ It is not clear what play on words Lacan is referring to ("Marivaux-rivaux" does not seem relevant).

expressed and assumed, is, rather, projected and stated: something that presents itself as a “not being there” projected onto a surface, onto a plane where it is recognisable as such.

What we come to along this path, in these remarks which are verifiable in a thousand ways, and by all sorts of other examples, is, at the very least, the idea of a double aspect. Is this double aspect really one of opposition, as Pichon gives to understand, and can we resolve the actual mechanism of negation by taking the investigation further?

We can remark first of all that the “ne” of these two terms²² seems to undergo the attraction of what one could call the “front group” of the sentence, in so far as the “ne” is held and supported by the pronoun form: this front group in French is remarkable in the formulae which gather it together, such as “je ne le” and “je le lui”.²³ This grouping before the verb certainly reflects a profound structural necessity. The fact that the “ne” comes to join it is not, I would say, what appears most remarkable to us. What appears most remarkable to us is that by coming to join it, the “ne” accentuates what I would call “significantisation”.²⁴ Because it’s no coincidence that I found my example of an isolated use of the “ne” at the level of “je ne sais”, “je ne puis”²⁵ – a certain category of verbs where the subjective position itself, as such, is situated and inscribed. There is, indeed, a whole register of verbs whose usage brings to our notice that their function changes profoundly depending on whether they are used in the first or the second or the third person.

“I believe it is going to rain” [“Je crois qu’il va pleuvoir”] doesn’t distinguish an act of belief from my saying that it is going to rain. “I believe it is going to rain” simply connotes the contingent character of my forecast. Notice that things change if I move to other persons. “You believe it is going to rain” makes much more of an appeal to something: I appeal to the testimony of the person to whom I address myself. And “he believes it is going to rain” gives more and more weight to the subject’s adherence to his belief.

The introduction of the “ne” will always be easy when it joins itself to these three pronoun supports²⁶ of the verb, which here has a varied function: from the nuance of saying [nuance énonciative] as far as the said [énoncé] of a position of the subject, the weight of the “ne” will always be to bring the verb back towards the nuance of saying.

²² i.e., the two terms “ne” and “pas”.

²³ “je”, “le” and “lui” are all pronouns (respectively, “I”, “it/him”, “to it/to him/to her”). French says, for example, “I give it to him” (“je le lui donne”) instead of “I give it to him” and, in a negative phrase, “ne” comes between the subject pronoun (“je”) and the direct- or indirect-object pronoun or pronouns (“le”/“lui”).

²⁴ The word, which I keep as in French, is a neologism (I follow Typescript I; Roussan has the word “subjective” at the end of the sentence). Lacan uses “significantisation” again in the next year’s Seminar (seminar of 13 March 1963), as can be clearly heard on the audio recording, where Lacan emphasises each syllable of the word, repeated twice http://www.valas.fr/IMG/mp3/lacan_angoisse_13_3_63_14.mp3 (time interval 27.15-28.00 minutes), although the official French edition (*le Séminaire livre X. L’angoisse*) and published English translation (Lacan, *Seminar 10* (A. Price, trans.) p. 176) have, respectively, “signifiantisation” (without “c”), and “signifierization”.

²⁵ “I can’t”, without the final “pas” of standard French negation,

²⁶ i.e. “I”, “you” and “he/she”,

“Je ne crois pas qu’il va pleuvoir” [“I don’t believe it is going to rain”] is even more linked to the character of dispositional suggestion, which is mine. It may have absolutely nothing to do with a non-belief, but simply with my good mood. “I don’t believe it is going to rain”, “I don’t believe it’ll rain”, means that things look pretty good.

Similarly, joining “ne” to the two other formulations, which happen to distinguish two other persons, will tend to “je”-ise what is involved in the other formulae: “tu ne crois pas qu’il va pleuvoir” [“you don’t believe it is going to rain”], “il ne croit pas qu’il doive pleuvoir” [“he doesn’t believe it should rain”]. Introducing them²⁷ in the first member of the phrase with the adjunction of this little negative particle draws them towards the “je”.²⁸

Does this mean that, over against this, we have to make the “pas” into something which connotes the pure, brute fact of privation? This would certainly be the thrust of Pichon’s analysis, in so far as he groups examples that give every appearance of it. But I don’t think so, for reasons which pertain first of all to the very origin of the signifiers we are dealing with. We have the historical genesis of how they were introduced into the language.²⁹ Originally, “je n’y vais pas” [“I am not going there”] can be accentuated by a comma: “je n’y vais pas, pas un seul pas” [“I am not going there, not even a step”],³⁰ so to speak; “je n’y vois point, même pas d’un point” [“I don’t see at all, not even a speck”]; “je n’y trouve goutte” [literally, “I can’t find a drop there”], “il n’en reste mie” [literally, “there isn’t a crumb of it left”].

This is definitely a matter of something which, far from being at its origin the connotation of a hole of absence, expresses, on the contrary, reduction – disappearance, no doubt, but not complete disappearance, leaving behind it the furrow of the tiniest, the most evanescent stroke [trait].

In fact these words,³¹ which are easy to restore to their positive value (they are still used with this value today), receive their negative charge from the sliding towards them of the function of the “ne”, and even if the “ne” is elided,³² what operates is still the charge that the “ne” exercises on these words. We can feel something of the reciprocity, so to speak, of the “pas” and the “ne” in what happens when we invert their order in a sentence. So, taking an example from logic: “Pas un homme qui ne mente” [“There’s not a man who doesn’t lie”], where it is the “pas” which opens fire. What I mean to point out, to make you grasp, is that, when it

²⁷ i.e., “you” and “he/she”

²⁸ In this sentence Roussan takes “je sais” in Typescript 1 as a mishearing of “c’est”, making much better sense.

²⁹ A brief overview of the history of two-part negation of verbs in French, which Lacan refers to in what follows, can be found in Alfred Ewart, *The French Language* (pp. 259-262). A more detailed discussion can be found in Angus Grieve-Smith, “[Modeling the Semantic and Pragmatic Evolution of ne ... pas in French](#)”, *CMLF 2010*.

³⁰ I follow Roussan who reports several different versions in the notes of listeners. Typescript 1 has “je n’y vais pas à pas”, which makes little sense.

³¹ “pas”, “point”, “goutte”, “mie”.

³² “est élidé” (Roussan). Typescript 1 has “était vidé” (“was emptied”). The two versions sound very similar.

opens the phrase, the “pas” by no means plays the function which would be attributable to it, according to Pichon,³³ if this function was the one expressed in the following formula: I arrive somewhere and find that, “il n’y a ici pas un chat” [“there’s not a soul here”].³⁴

Just between us, allow me to point out in passing the illuminating, privileged, even intensifying value of the usage of such a phrase: “pas un chat” [“not a cat”]. If we had to make a catalogue of the means of expressing negation, I would propose including this type of expression as a support for negation. Such expressions certainly constitute a special category. What does a cat have to do with it? But we will leave that on one side for the moment.

“Pas un homme qui ne mente” shows its difference from this concert of lack – something that is at an altogether different level and that is sufficiently indicated by the use of the subjunctive.³⁵ The “pas un homme qui ne mente” is at the same level as what motivates, what defines all the most “discordant” forms, to use Pichon’s term, that we could attribute to the “ne”, from “je crains qu’il ne vienne” [I fear lest he come] to “avant qu’il ne vienne” [“before he comes”], to “plus petit que je ne le croyais” [“smaller than I thought”] or “il y a longtemps que je ne l’ai vu” [“It’s been a while since I saw him”], which pose (I say this in passing) all sorts of questions which, for the moment, I must leave on one side.

I would remark in passing what is supported by a formula such as “il y a longtemps que je ne l’ai vu”: you can’t say it about someone who is dead or has gone missing; “il y a longtemps que je ne l’ai vu” supposes that the next encounter is always possible.³⁶

You see how carefully the examination, the investigation of these terms has to be handled. Our experience offers us matrix entries that are rich in a different way from than anything that has been done by philosophers, from Aristotle to Kant. You know what these matrix entries are called: privation, frustration and castration.³⁷ We will try to apply these matrix entries, confronting them with the signifying support of negation that we are going to try and identify.

“There’s not a man who doesn’t lie” [“Pas un homme qui ne mente”]. What is suggested to us by this formula, “homo mendax” [“man is a liar”, “man is mendacious”, Latin], by this judgment, this proposition that I present to you in the form of universal affirmation, the form I alluded in my first seminar of this year in connection with the classic use of the syllogism,

³³ i.e. the foreclosive function (Lacan, above, calls it “exclusive”), that Damourette and Pichon attribute to “pas” as opposed to the discordant function, which they attribute to “ne”. See: Jacques Damourette, Edouard Pichon, *op. cit.*

³⁴ Literally “there’s not a cat here” (French idiom).

³⁵ “mente” is the third-person singular present subjunctive tense of “mentir” (“to lie”).

³⁶ It is hard to think of an English translation that captures this.

³⁷ Seminars of 5 December 1956 and 12 December 1956; the “matrix” in which these terms are “entries”, is first used at the start of the seminar of 12 December 1956 (Lacan, *Seminar 4* (A. Price, trans.), p. 51). The matrix is used again in Lacan, *Seminar 5* (R. Grigg, trans.), seminars of 15 January, 12 March, 18 June 1958; and in Lacan, *Seminar 6* (B. Fink, trans.), seminar of 29 April 1959.

“All men are mortal, Socrates...” etc., the transference function of which I noted in passing?³⁸

I believe that we can get something from approaching this function of negation, at the level of its original, radical usage, by a consideration of the formal system of propositions as Aristotle classified them in the categories described as universal affirmative and negative and of the particular, also called affirmative and negative.³⁹

We should say straight away that, despite appearances, the so-called opposition of propositions, which is the origin of the whole of Aristotle’s analysis – of his whole mechanics of the syllogism – presents a great number of difficulties, and to say that the most recent developments in logic have clarified these difficulties would certainly be to say something, which the whole of history belies. On the contrary, the only thing (and a remarkable thing) that history reveals is the appearance of uniformity in the adherence⁴⁰ that these so-called Aristotelian formulae met with up to Kant, because Kant kept up the illusion that they were an unassailable edifice.

It is, for example, undoubtedly worth pointing out that the accent on their affirmative and negative function is not articulated as such by Aristotle himself and that it is much later that this accent is placed, probably by Averroes. I say that in order to show you that a proper evaluation of these propositions is no simple matter.

I will briefly run through the function of these propositions for those who need to be reminded.

“Homo mendax”, staying with the example that I chose, “homo”, and even “omnis homo”, “omnis homo mendax”: “every man is a liar”. What is the negative formula? “Homo omnis non mendax” [“Every man is not a liar”] works in many languages and can suffice. I mean “omnis homo non mendax”⁴¹ means that it is true of every man that he is not a liar. But, for clarity, we use the term “nullus” [“not any”], so “nullus homo mendax” [“not any man is a liar”, “no man is a liar”].

That is what is usually connoted by the letters, respectively “A” and “E”, of the universal affirmative and the universal negative.⁴²

³⁸ Above, p. 10, seminar of 15 November 1961.

³⁹ This is the so-called AEIO system, summarised at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Categorical_proposition#:~:text=The%20Ancient%20s%20such%20as,%2C%20I%2C%20and%20O .

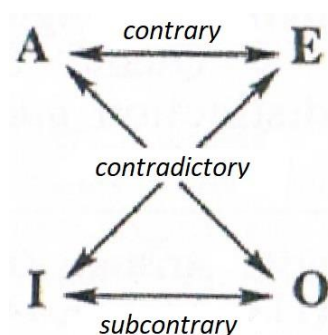
⁴⁰ “l’adhésion” (Roussan). Typescript 1 has “la liaison” (“linkage”), but that fits badly with “meet with” and “l’adhésion” could be misheard as “la liaison”.

⁴¹ Equivalent to the preceding (word order is fluid in Latin).

⁴² See above, footnote 39 .

What happens at the level of particular affirmatives? We are interested in negation, so we can introduce them here in a negative form: “Non omnis homo mendax”, “not every man is a liar”, by which I make a selection and find that there are men who are not liars.⁴³ This doesn’t really mean that someone in particular, “aliquis” [“someone”], cannot be a liar. “Aliquis homo mendax” [“some man is a liar”] is the particular affirmative, usually designated in the classical notation by the letter “I”. Here the particular negative [O], the “non omnis” [not all], as expressed by “nullus” [“not any”], will be “non nullus non mendax” – “it is not the case that there is not any man who is not a liar”. In other words, to the whole extent that we have chosen to say that “not all men are liars”, this expresses it in another fashion, namely that “it is not the case that there is no one who is not a liar”.

The terms organised in this way are distinguished in the classical theory by the following formulae, which put them reciprocally in what are called positions of contraries or of subcontraries.⁴⁴



That is to say that the universal propositions [A and E] oppose each other at their own level as not being capable of being true at the same time. It cannot be true at the same time that every man is a liar and that no man is a liar, while all the other combinations are possible. It cannot be false at the same time that there are some men who are liars [I] and that there are some men who are not liars [O].⁴⁵

The so-called contradictory opposition is that by which the propositions in each one of these quadrants are diagonally opposed because each excludes, if it is true, the truth of that which is opposed to it as contradictory, and, if it is false, the falsity of that which is opposed to it as contradictory. If there are men who are liars [I], that isn’t compatible with there being no man who is a liar [E]. Inversely, the relationship is the same between the particular negative [O] and the universal affirmative [A].

⁴³ Lacan here introduces the particular negative, traditionally called “O”.

⁴⁴ This is the so-called “square of opposition” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Square_of_opposition).

⁴⁵ The first of the last two sentences refers to A and E, which cannot be *true* together (they are “contraries”), and the second refers to I and O, which cannot be *false* together (they are “subcontraries”). This is explained in context at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Square_of_opposition.

What can I propose to make you grasp what it is at the level of Aristotle's text that has always, in its historical development, presented itself as a quandary concerning the definition as such of the universal?

Observe first of all that if I have introduced for you the "non omnis homo mendax" ["not every man is a liar", O], the "not all", with the "not", bearing on the notion of the all, as defining the particular, this isn't to say that what I have done is legitimate, because Aristotle stands opposed to it in a fashion which is contrary to all the speculation regarding formal logic that came afterwards, namely a development, an explanation "in extension" that presents the symbolisable framework⁴⁶ in the form of a circle, a zone in which the objects constituting its support are assembled.

Aristotle, before the *Prior Analytics*, at least in the book which comes before it in the grouping of his works, and which seems to precede it logically if not chronologically, which is called *De Interpretatione*, remarks, to the astonishment of historians, that it is not on the qualification of universality that the negation should bear.⁴⁷ It is therefore "some man is a liar" that is in question – some man, whom we have to question as such.

So the qualification of "omnis", of allness, of the parity of the universal category is what is in question here. Is it something that is at the same level, at the level of existence of that which can support or not support the affirmation or negation? Is there a homogeneity between the two levels? In other words, is what is in question in the difference between the universal and the particular something that simply supposes the collection as made [comme réalisée]?

Upsetting the thrust of what I am trying to explain to you, I am going to propose something that is designed to respond to what? To the question that links the definition of the subject as such to the definition of the order of affirmation or of negation, into which the subject enters in the operation of this propositional division.

The classical teaching of formal logic says (and there is a certain piquancy in who it comes from – I will tell you in a minute) that the subject is taken from the angle of quality and that the attribute, which you see here incarnated by the term "mendax" ["mendacious", "lying"], is taken from the angle of quantity.⁴⁸ In other words, all of them, or several of them, or just one of them are in the *one*. Kant keeps this in his ternary division in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.⁴⁹ This raises serious objections among linguists.

⁴⁶ In Typescript 1. Roussan notes that "carcasse" ("framework") may be a mishearing of "classe" ("class").

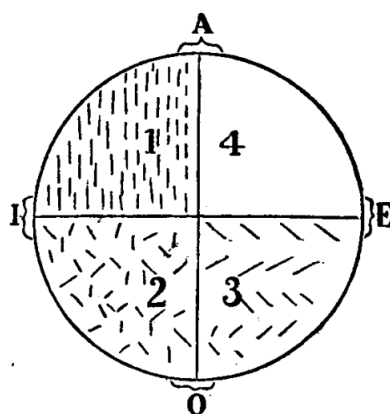
⁴⁷ According to the classical scholar Jacques Brunschwig, Lacan's attribution of this point to Aristotle is based on a misunderstanding of chapter 10, 20a 5-10 of *De Interpretatione* (<https://www.freud-lacan.com/getpagedocument/7138> (in French)), but the point Lacan is making does not have to stand or fall by whether or not Aristotle agreed with it.

⁴⁸ Lacan has these the wrong way around. In the "classical teaching" it is the subject who is taken from the angle of "quantity" (universal or particular) and the attribute from the angle of "quality" (negative or affirmative) (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Square_of_opposition and Apuleius, *The Metamorphosis or Golden Ass and Philosophical Works of Apuleius* (T. Taylor, trans.), pp. 376-377).

⁴⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (N. Kemp-Smith, trans.), pp. 104-119.

When you look at things historically, you see that this quality/quantity distinction has an origin: it appears for the first time, paradoxically enough, in a little treatise on the doctrines of Plato, although it is the Aristotelian statement of formal logic which is reproduced there, in an abbreviated form and not without a didactic emphasis, and the author is none other than Apuleius.⁵⁰ This treatise has a singular historical function, namely to have introduced a categorisation, that of quantity and quality, of which the least one can say is that it became established and remained for a long time in the analysis of logical forms.

Here is the model around which I am asking you to centre your reflection today.⁵¹



[Diagram from *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, Volume 2, Sections 2.456*, reproduced by Lacan]

Here we have one quadrant with vertical strokes [1 in the figure above]. The function “stroke” will take the function of the subject and the function “vertical”, which is chosen simply as support, that of attribute. I could have said that I was taking the term “unary” as attribute, but I make them vertical for the sake of the representation and imaginability of what I want to show you.

Here, we have a segment where there are vertical strokes [2], but also oblique strokes; and here [4] we have no strokes.

What this is meant to illustrate is that the universal-particular distinction, as a couple distinct from the affirmative-negative opposition, is to be considered as of a completely different register from that which commentators from Apuleius onwards have thought necessary to

⁵⁰ Apuleius, *op.cit.*

⁵¹ This model and the lexis-phasis distinction that follows is taken from the American logician, Charles Peirce: *The Collected Paper of Charles Sanders Peirce, Volume 2, Sections 2.455-2.460*. In the classic square (see above, p 107) the four types of proposition A, E, I and O would coincide, respectively, with the sectors (Lacan sometimes calls them “quadrants”) 1, 4, 2 and 3. But Peirce and, following him, Lacan amend this so that each type straddles two sectors.

direct, with more or less skill, into the highly ambiguous, slippery and confusing formulae which are called respectively quality and quantity, and to oppose it in these terms.⁵²

We will call the universal-particular opposition an opposition of the order of λέξις [*lexis*, Greek], from λέγω [*lego*], “to say” [dire],⁵³ and also “I select”, linked precisely to this function of extraction, of signifier choice, which is the terrain, the gangway, along which we are advancing at present.

This to distinguish it from φάσις [*phasis*, Greek],⁵⁴ namely from something that presents itself here as speech [une parole], “yes” or “no”. I commit myself as to the existence of this something, which is made the issue by the initial *lexis*.

And indeed, as you will see, of what will I be able say that “every stroke is vertical”? Of course, of the first sector of the dial, but observe that I can also say it of the empty sector because if I say that “every stroke is vertical”, it means that when there is no vertical, there is no stroke.

In any case, it is illustrated by the empty sector: the empty sector not only does not contradict, is not contrary to the affirmation, “every stroke is vertical”, but it illustrates it. There is no vertical stroke in this sector. So the first two sectors [1 and 4] illustrate the universal affirmative.

The negative universal will be illustrated by the two right-hand sectors [3 and 4], but what is in question there will be formulated as: “No stroke is vertical”. There is no vertical⁵⁵ stroke in these two sectors.

What is to be noticed is the sector in common [4], which is covered by both of these two propositions, which according, to the formula – the classical doctrine – appear incapable of being true at the same time.

What will we find, following our rotational movement, which got off to such a good start, here [O], as a formula, and also here [I]. that can designate the two other possible two-by-two groupings of the quadrants?

⁵² Lacan seems to mean that the register of the universal-particular distinction, properly understood, stands opposed to the register in which the quantity-quality distinction has traditionally been understood.

⁵³ Typescript 1 has “lire” (“to read”), but that is not among the meanings of the Greek verb, the basic meaning of which is to lay out or to gather (something), and by extension to say (something). Roussan cites three listeners in support of “dire”. Lacan takes this straight from Peirce: “Let us say Universals and Particulars differ in *Lexis*, Affirmatives and Negatives in *Phasis*. *Lexis* and *Phasis* are tell-way and say-way. *Lexis* is from λέγειν, to pick out and also to tell; it is the mode of picking out or reckoning. *Phasis* is saying in the sense of ‘What do you say? Yes or no?’ ” (Peirce, *op.cit.*, Section 2.455).

⁵⁴ See previous footnote.

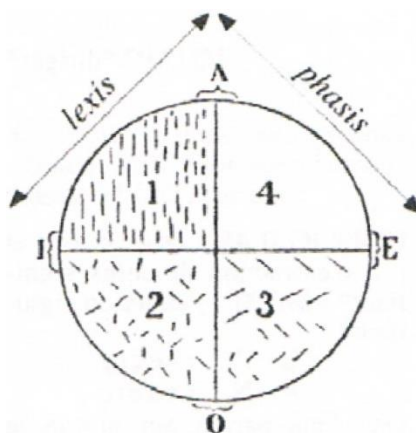
⁵⁵ Typescript 1 does not have “vertical”. I follow Roussan by inserting it.

Here, we will see the true⁵⁶ of these two quadrants in an affirmative form: “there are...”. I say it in phasic form, I note the existence of vertical strokes: “there are vertical strokes”, “there are some vertical strokes”, which I can find either here [1] always, or here [2] in good cases.

If we try here to define the distinction between the universal and the particular, we see which two sectors [2 and 3] correspond to the particular saying [énonciation]. There there are strokes that are not vertical, “non nulli non verticaleas” [“not none are not vertical”, Latin].

Just as, earlier, we were suspended for a moment on the ambiguity of this repetition of negation, the “not.. not”, the supposed cancellation of the first negation by the second negation is very far from necessarily being the equivalent of “yes” and this is something which we will have to come back to later.

What does all that mean? Of what interest can the use of such an apparatus be to us? Why am I trying to detach for you the level of lexis from that of phasis? I will come straight to the point without beating about the bush and I will illustrate it.



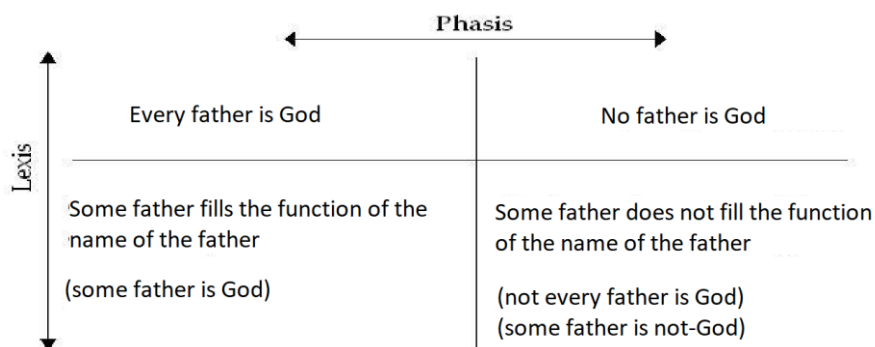
What can we say, we analysts? What does Freud teach us about what is called a “universal proposition”, since its meaning has been completely lost precisely since a formulation that can serve as a chapter-heading to Euler’s formulation, which manages to represent to us all the functions of the syllogism by a series of little circles, excluding one another, or overlapping, or intersecting,⁵⁷ in other words (directly stated) in *extension*, to which there is opposed *intension* [compréhension], which would be defined simply as I don’t know what

⁵⁶ Typescript 1 misses out “the true”, making the sentence senseless. I follow Roussan

⁵⁷ The circles by means of which Euler expounds syllogisms can be perused at <http://www.17centurymaths.com/contents/euler/lettersvol1/plate3figs.pdf>. They illustrate what the mathematician explains in *Letters of Euler on Natural Philosophy Addressed to a German Princess, vol. 1* (Rev. H. Hunter, trans.) (<http://www.17centurymaths.com/contents/euler/lettersvol1/letters101to108.pdf>), which Lacan discusses below (seminar of 11 April 1962); particularly in letters 101-108.

inevitable manner of understanding. Of understanding what? That the horse is white? What is there to understand?⁵⁸

What we can bring that renews the question is this: I say that Freud propounds, advances⁵⁹ the following formula: “the father is God” or “every father is God”.



The result, if we maintain this proposition at the universal level, is the proposition that there is no other father but God, who, on the other hand, as to existence, is rather *aufgehoben*, put in suspense, or even in radical doubt by the Freudian reflexion.

The issue here is that the type of function, which we introduce with the name of the father, is this something that, at one and the same time, has its universal value, but that leaves to you, to the other, the responsibility for determining whether or not there is a father of this sort.

If there is none, it is still true that the father is God. Simply, the formula is only confirmed by the empty sector of the dial, so that, at the level of phasis, we have: there are fathers who more or less fill the symbolic function that we have just stated⁶⁰ as such, as being that of the name of the father: “there are some who” and “there are some who... not”.

But that there are some “who... not”, who are “not” in all cases, which is supported here by this sector [3], is exactly what gives us a basis and support for the universal function of the name of the father; because, grouped with the sector where there is nothing [4], it is precisely these two sectors, taken at the level of lexis, which, because of this latter sector that is supported and that complements the other, give its full import to what we can say [énoncer] as universal affirmation.

⁵⁸ “Comprehension” means “understanding” (from “comprendre”, to understand), but it also the French for what in English is called “intension” in the philosophical pair, “extension-intension”, which in French is “extension-compréhension” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extensional_and_intensional_definitions).

⁵⁹ “avance” in Roussan. Typescript 1 has, charmingly, “en France”.

⁶⁰ Typescript 1 has “que nous devons dénoncer” (“that we must denounce”), which Roussan amends very plausibly to “que nous venons d’énoncer”.

I am going to illustrate it in another way, because, up to a certain point, the question could be posed as to its value, I mean with respect to a traditional teaching, which ought to be what I brought the last time concerning the little *i*.

Here the teachers wonder: “What are we going to say?” The teacher, he who teaches, has to teach what? What others have taught before him. Which is to say that he bases himself on what? On what has already undergone a certain lexis.

What results from every lexis is precisely what is important for us on this occasion, at the level I am trying to sustain you at today: the letter. The teacher is lettered: in his universal character, he is the one who bases himself on the letter at the level of a particular said [énoncé]. We can say now that he can be it half-and-half: he can be not entirely letter. The result will be that we cannot say, all the same, that any teacher is illiterate [illettré] – there will always be a few letters in his case.

It nevertheless remains that if there happened to be an angle under which we could say that ultimately there are some who, from a certain angle, are characterised as giving rise to a certain ignorance of the letter,⁶¹ this would not prevent us, for all that, from closing the loop [boucler la boucle] and from seeing that the return and the foundation, as one might say, of the universal definition of the teacher is very strictly the following: that the identity of the formula that the teacher is he who is identified to the letter imposes – requires even – the comment that there can be illiterate teachers [professeurs analphabètes].⁶²

The negative sector [4], as essential correlative for the definition of universality, is something that is profoundly hidden at the level of the primitive lexis. This means something: in the ambiguity of the particular support that we can give in the engagement of our speech [parole] to the name of the father as such, it nevertheless remains that we cannot bring it about that anything which is drawn into the atmosphere of the human, if I can put it like that, can, so to speak, consider itself as completely disengaged from the name of the father; that even here,⁶³ where there are only fathers, for whom the function of the father is, if I may express myself in this way, one of pure loss, the father not-father, the lost cause, on which I ended my seminar of last year, it is nevertheless as a function of this failure, in relation to a first lexis which is that of the name of the father, that this particular category is judged.

Man cannot prevent his affirmation or his negation, with everything that it engages (“this man is my father” or “this man is his father”), from being entirely attached to a primitive lexis, which, of course, is not about the everyday meaning, the signified of the father, but about something to which we here are trying to give its true support and which, even in the eyes of teachers, who, as you see, would be in great danger of being always left in some

⁶¹ Typescript 1 does not have “of the letter”. I follow Roussan, although he does not cite notes of listeners.

⁶² See also: Lacan, *Seminar 2* (S. Tomaselli, trans.) seminar of 11 May 1954 (pp. 206-207).

⁶³ In sector 4 of the dial.

suspense as to their real function, must justify me trying to give, even at their level of teachers, an algorithmic support to their existence as such as subjects.

24 January 1962

I feel a certain difficulty in coming back with you to these subtle, light traces that I am following, after spelling things out the way I had to do yesterday evening.¹ What matters to us, for the continuation of our seminar, is that what I said yesterday evening obviously concerns the function of the object, of the little *a*, in the identification of the subject, and that is something which is not immediately within our grasp, which is not going to be resolved immediately, and regarding which, yesterday evening, I gave, as I might say, an anticipatory hint by making use of the theme of the three caskets.

This theme of the three caskets does a lot to clarify my teaching, because if you open what is bizarrely called *Essais de psychologie appliquée*² and read the article on the three caskets, you will be left a bit puzzled and you won't be quite sure what our father Freud is getting at.

Yesterday evening, I identified the three caskets with demand, a theme to which, I believe, you are long accustomed, and said that in each of the three caskets (without this there wouldn't be something that had to be guessed, there would be no problem) there is little *a*, the object which is – to the extent that it interests us analysts, but by no means necessarily – the object that corresponds to demand. By no means necessarily the contrary either³ because, without that, there wouldn't be any difficulties.

This object is the object of desire, and where is desire? It is outside, and where it really is, the decisive point, is you, to the extent that your desire must not be deceived as to the object of the subject's desire. If this wasn't how things are, there would be no merit in being an analyst.

Something else I would say to you in passing is that, speaking to an audience that was supposed to be without prior knowledge, I emphasised something that I perhaps haven't marked enough with the soles of my big, heavy boots when I am here, namely that the system of the unconscious, the ψ [psi] system, is a partial system.

Once again, I repudiated – with energy rather than reasoned arguments, because I had to go quickly – the reference to totality, a repudiation which doesn't rule out talk about the partial. I insisted on the extra-flat character of this system, on its character as surface, which Freud insists on with all his might all of the time. One cannot fail to be astonished that this should have engendered the metaphor of “depth-psychology”. It just so happens that, shortly before

¹ This sentence in Roussan is not in Typescript 1. The reference is to a talk given by Lacan on 23 January 1962 entitled “De ce que j'enseigne” (“About what I teach”) at a meeting of the psychiatry group, Évolution psychiatrique. The French text (reconstructed from notes by Michel Roussan) can be found at <https://www.freud-lacan.com/getdocument/28696>.

² A selection of Freud's works translated into French by M. Bonaparte and E. Marty (Paris, Gallimard, 1933). Lacan is referring to *The Theme of the Three Caskets* in Freud, *Standard Edition 12*, pp. 291-301.

³ This puzzling phrase is the same in all versions. Lacan apparently means that little *a* neither necessarily corresponds nor necessarily does not correspond to demand.

coming here, I found a note that I had copied from *The Ego and the Id*: “The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface.”⁴ A throwaway remark [C’est un rien]! When people read Freud they always read him, as I might say, with a deaf ear.

Let’s take up our pilgrim’s staff and start again from where we had got to, from where I left you last time, on the idea that negation, which is somewhere at the heart of our problem – the problem of the subject, – isn’t the simplest thing to handle, even as regards its phenomenology. It is present in lots of places and it always slips through our fingers. You saw an example of that last time, regarding the “non nullus non mendax” [“it is not the case that no man is not a liar”], when I put in the “non”, took it out and put it back in again.⁵ It happens every day. It was pointed out to me since the last seminar that in the discourses of the person whom someone, in a note to⁶ my poor dear friend Merleau-Ponty,⁷ referred to as “the great man who governs us” [“Le grand homme qui nous gouverne”],⁸ we have heard “one cannot not think that things will work out without detriment” [“on ne peut pas ne pas croire que les choses se passeront sans mal”]. How is this to be understood, what does he mean? What is interesting is not so much what he means as that we understand very well exactly what he means and that if we analyse it logically we see that he says the opposite. It is a very pretty formula that you always slip into when you say to someone, “You aren’t someone who’s not unaware that...” [“vous n’etes pas sans ignorer”].⁹ It’s not you who are wrong, it’s the relationship of the subject to the signifier that emerges from time to time.

These aren’t just trifling paradoxes, slips, that I am pointing out here in passing. We will rediscover these formulae at various turns in the road and I think I can give you the key to why “you cannot be unaware...” means what you want it to mean.

To help you find your bearings, I can tell you that it’s by exploring this that we will find the right weight, the right inclination of the scales on which I place for you the relationship of the neurotic to the phallic¹⁰ object when I tell you that, in order to capture this relationship, you have to say: “he is not without having it” [“il n’est pas sans l’avoir”].¹¹

⁴ Freud, *Standard Edition 19*, p. 26 (*The Ego and the Id*)

⁵ Lacan apparently did this accidental double-take in the previous week’s seminar when writing “non nullus non mendax” on the blackboard (above, p. 107, seminar of 24 January 1962).

⁶ Roussan misses out “in a note to”.

⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty died of a heart attack in May 1961.

⁸ The French President of the time, Charles de Gaulle. “Le grand homme” can also mean “the big man”: de Gaulle was 196 cm (6’5”) tall.

⁹ Where the speaker actually means “you know perfectly well”. The backfiring use of the negative in this phrase is apparently a common mistake among native speakers of French. See, for example <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/vous-netes-pas-sans-ignorer-que>.

¹⁰ Typescript 1, puzzlingly, has “s’incline” (“leans”, apparently referring back to the scales), instead of “phallic”.

¹¹ Cf. Lacan, *Seminar 6* (B. Fink, trans.), seminar of 11 February 1959.

That certainly doesn't mean that he has it. If he had it, there would be no question. In order to understand this, let's start with a short reminder of the phenomenology of our neurotic as regards the point we have got to – his relationship to the signifier. In the last few seminars I have started to make you see what there is of writing, of original writing in the matter of the signifier.

It must have occurred to you that this is what the obsessional subject deals with all the time: “*ungeschehen machen*” [German], making something not have happened.¹² What does that mean, what is it about?

Clearly, it can be seen in his behaviour: what he wants to extinguish is what the chronicler writes throughout the whole length of his story, the chronicler that he has inside him. He wants to erase, scratch out, extinguish the chronicles of the whole business. What is it that touches us in Lady Macbeth's words when she says that all the waters of the sea would not wash away this little spot,¹³ if not some echo that guides us to the heart of our subject?

Clearly, what is at issue in his way of behaving – his erasing and scratching out what has been inscribed – is the erasure of the signifier. But what is much less clear to us, since we know a little bit more about it than the others, is what he is trying to achieve by doing this. This is why it is instructive to continue along the road that we are on, the road I am leading you by, concerning: where does a signifier, as such, come from?

If this has such an essential relationship with the foundation of the subject, if there is no other subject thinkable than this X, this something natural in so far as it is marked by the signifier, there must be some mechanism that explains it.

We are not going to settle for this sort of blindfolded truth. It's clear that we must find the subject at the origin of the signifier itself. “To pull a rabbit out of a hat...”, I started a scandal with my specifically analytic remarks and the poor dear man, now deceased, so touching in his fragility, was literally exasperated by my insistence in giving this reminder (because it is a useful formula at that time) that “to pull a rabbit out of a hat you have first to put it in”.¹⁴

The same goes for the signifier, and it is what justifies the definition I give of the signifier, its distinction from the sign, that the sign represents something for someone, while the signifier

¹² Freud, [Standard Edition 10](#), pp. 191, 235-236 (*Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*); Freud, [Standard Edition 20](#), pp. 119-120 (*Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*).

¹³ Lacan confuses lines spoken by Macbeth after murdering King Duncan and lines spoken by Lady Macbeth later in the play (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act II, Scene 2 and Act V, Scene 1).

¹⁴ Alain Lecat suggests that Lacan may be referring to the psychoanalyst Maurice Bouvet, president for a period in the 1950s of the Société psychanalytique de Paris (rival organisation to Lacan's Société française de psychanalyse) and deceased relatively young in 1960 due to illness.

is articulated differently – it represents the subject for another signifier.¹⁵ You will see this sufficiently confirmed at every step, so that you don't let go of the solid hand-rail.

So, if the signifier represents the subject in this way, how does it do it? Let's go back to our starting point, to our sign, to the elective point at which we can grasp it as representing something for someone by being a *trace*. Let's start from the trace in order to track down what we are looking for. A footprint, a trace: Robinson finds Friday's footprint on his island. He experiences a powerful emotion, his heart races at the sight of this footprint. None of this teaches us anything, even if Robinson's racing heart leads to a lot of stamping around the footprint: this could happen at any crossing point of animal tracks. But if, arriving at the scene, I find the traces of an attempt to wipe out the footprint, or even if I don't find any trace of the effort, but I have come back because I know (I'm not proud of it) that I myself left a footprint, and I find that it has been well and truly erased, without there being any correlatives suggesting that such erasure is attached to a general erasure of configurative features, then I am sure that I am dealing with a real subject. Notice that, in this disappearance of the trace, what the subject is trying to make disappear is his own passage as subject. The disappearance is redoubled by the disappearance, which is attempted, of the act of making disappear.

This isn't a bad clue for recognising the passage of the subject in his relationship to the signifier, because you already know that everything I teach you about the structure of the subject, as we try to articulate it starting out from this relationship to the signifier, converges towards the emergence of these moments of fading that are specifically linked to this eclipse-like pulsation of that which only appears in order to disappear and reappears in order to make disappear once again that which is the mark of the subject as such.¹⁶

That said, if, the trace having been erased, the subject puts a ring [un cerne] around the place where it was – something that concerns [concerne] him from then on, the marker of the place where he found the trace – there you have the birth of the signifier. This whole process involves the return of the last moment onto the first, so there cannot be any articulation of a signifier without these three moments. Once the signifier has been constituted, there are necessarily two others before. A signifier is a mark, a trace, a writing, but it cannot be read alone. Two signifiers is a muddle, a random jump [un pataquès, un coq à l'âne].¹⁷ Three signifiers is the return of what is at issue – namely of the first. When the *pas* [step, footprint] of the trace is transformed, in the vocalisation of whoever reads it, into “pas”, this “pas”, provided one forgets that it means *pas*, can first serve in what is called the phonetism of writing, to represent “pas”, and thereby to eventually transform the trace of *pas* into the no trace [“pas de trace”].

¹⁵ This definition of the signifier is repeated by Lacan throughout his teaching, e.g., below, p. 172, seminar of 14 March 1962; *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.) p. 713; *Seminar 11* (A. Sheridan, trans.) p. 207; *Seminar 20* (B. Fink, trans.) p. 49.

¹⁶ Roussan has “...and reappears in order to disappear once again, which is the mark of the subject as such”. I follow Typescript 1.

¹⁷ Neither of the English terms fully captures the meaning of “pataquès” and “coq à l'âne”.

I think you can hear in passing the same ambiguity I made use of when I spoke to you, in connection with jokes based on word play, of the “pas de sens” [“no meaning”/“step of meaning”], playing on the ambiguity of the word “sens”,¹⁸ and the jump, the breakthrough that takes hold of us when we start to joke, when we don’t know why a word makes us laugh – this subtle transformation, this stone [pierre] that is rejected, but which then, taken up again, becomes the cornerstone [pierre d’angle], and I am happy to make a play on words with “ $\pi.r$ ” [sounds like “pierre”], the formula of the circle, because, as I told you the other day when I brought in the $\sqrt{-1}$, that formula is what measures, so to speak, the vectorial angle of the subject to the thread of the signifying chain.¹⁹ This is where we are suspended and where we have to get a bit used to moving about – on a substitution, whereby that which has a meaning is made equivocal and finds its meaning again. We have to locate the subject, in its diverse functions, in the interruptions of the ceaselessly turning articulation of the play of language.

My illustrations are never bad for adapting a mental eye, in which the imaginary plays a large role. So, even though it’s a detour, I don’t think it will do any harm if I briefly follow up a little remark, simply because I find it at this level in my notes.

I have spoken to you on more than one occasion, with reference to the signifier, of the Chinese character,²⁰ and I am very keen to dispel the idea you may have that it originates from an imitative figure. I have chosen a particular example just because it suited me best. It is the first that is articulated in the examples of archaic forms in the work by Karlgren called *Grammata Serica*, which means precisely “Chinese signifiers”. The first one that he makes use of, in its modern form, is 可, the character *kè*,²¹ which means “power” [pouvoir] in the *Shuowen*,²² which is an erudite work, precious for us because of its relatively ancient character, but already very erudite, which is to say that it is laced with interpretations, of which we may have more to say.

¹⁸ I could not find any play on the ambiguity of “sens” in Lacan’s main discussion of “pas de sens” (Lacan, *Seminar 6* (B. Fink, trans.), seminars of 4, 11 December 1957). “Sens” can mean “meaning” and also “direction”.

¹⁹ $\pi.r^2$, i.e. $22/7$ times the square of the radius of a circle = the area of that circle; $2\pi r$ = the circle’s circumference. But Lacan must be referring here to the circle produced by Euler’s formula with use of the imaginary unit, $\sqrt{-1}$ (Euler’s formula is explained simply at <https://www.mathsisfun.com/algebra/eulers-formula.html>; see also, above, seminar of 20 December 1961, footnote 43).

²⁰ Typescript 1 does not reproduce the Chinese characters, which Lacan presumably drew on the blackboard. I follow Roussan, who was apparently assisted in the reconstruction by Guy Sizarat (Sizarat says so in an extensive commentary on this Seminar passage at http://lacanchine.com/L_Seminaire_Sizarat62.html (page 3)).

²¹ Bernhard Karlgren, *Grammata Serica Recensa*, p. 19, symbol 1a. Karlgren is also the author of an excellent introduction to the Chinese language and the character system, *Sound and Symbol in Chinese*.

²² A description in English of the *Shuowen* can be found at <https://web.archive.org/web/20131114082944/http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Science/shuowenjiezi.html>,

There seems no reason not to trust the root which the commentator²³ gives and which is very pretty, namely that the character schematises the impact of the column of air as it pushes, in the guttural occlusive,²⁴ against the obstacle created by the back of the tongue pressed against the palate. This explanation is all the more seductive because, if you open a work on phonetics, you will find an image more or less like this, 丁, used to translate the functioning of the occlusive.²⁵ And you can see that 可 isn't a bad choice to depict the word "power" – the possibility, the axial function introduced into the world by the advent of the subject in the midst of the real. The ambiguity is total because a very large number of words are articulated in Chinese as *kě*, where this, 丁, will serve as the phonetic. But you have 口, *kou*, which completes it,²⁶ as offering up [présentifiant] the subject to the signifying framework, and which – without any ambiguity and in all the characters – is the representation of the mouth.

Put the sign 大 above it, which is the sign *dà* meaning "big". It clearly has something to do with the small human form, generally without arms, 人. But here, because it has to do with one who is big, it has arms. This has nothing to do with what happens when you have added this sign to the preceding signifier.²⁷ 奇 is read *ji*, but it keeps the trace of an ancient pronunciation, which is attested by the use of this term for rhymes in ancient poems, namely those of the *Shijing*,²⁸ which is one of the most extraordinary examples of literary misadventure, because its destiny was to become the support of all sorts of moralising elucubrations, to be the foundation of a whole, very convoluted teaching of the mandarins on the duties of sovereigns, the people and *tutti quanti*, even though it was evidently a book of love songs of peasant origin.

A little experience of Chinese literature... I am not making out that mine is very great; I am no Wiegier, who, when he alludes to his experience of China... I am referring to [il s'agit de] a paragraph that you can find in the books of Père Wiegier, which are easy to get hold of.²⁹ In any case, I am not the only one to have shone a light on this path. There is Marcel Granet, whose fine books on the dances and legends, and on the ancient feasts of China are well worth a look. With a little effort you can familiarise yourself with this truly fabulous

²³ i.e., the lexicographer-author of the *Shuowen*.

²⁴ See above, p. 30, seminar of 29 November 1961, Lacan's comments on occlusives as what distinguish mastery of language from the "speech" that his dog is capable of.

²⁵ Lacan's comments in these two sentences are borne out by: Léon Wiegier, [Chinese Characters](#) (L. Davrout. Trans.), pp. 27 (symbol I), 152 (symbol A), 153 (symbol I).

²⁶ i.e., as completing 丁 to make 可.

²⁷ Lacan seems to mean that the meaning of 大 has nothing to do with the meaning produced when you add it to 可 and obtain 奇.

²⁸ [The Book of Odes](#) (B. Karlgren, trans.).

²⁹ There seem to be at least two false starts in this sentence. Lacan may mean that his assessment of the *Shijing* is taken from Léon Wiegier, a French Jesuit missionary who wrote many books about China and its language.

dimension, which demonstrates what one can do with something that reposes on the most elementary forms of signifying articulation.

It so happens that the words in this language are monosyllabic. They are superb, invariable, cubic – you can't go wrong. It really can be said that they are identified with the signifier. You have groups of four verses, each composed of four syllables.³⁰ Things are simple. When you look at them and think how anything can be made out of that – even a metaphysical doctrine that has no relationship with the original signification – it expands your mind, for those whose mind needs expanding.

For centuries they have taught morals and politics on the basis of jingles that, taken together, mean: “I would really like to have sex [baiser] with you”. That is no exaggeration – go and see.

This 奇 means *ji*,³¹ of which the commentary says:³² “great power”, “enormous”. This, of course, has absolutely no relation with this conjunction.³³ *Ji* doesn't mean “great power” so much as it means the little word for which there isn't really anything satisfactory in French and I have to translate it by “impair”³⁴ in the sense that it can have of sliding, fault, failure, of something which doesn't work, which limps – so nicely captured in English by the word “odd”.³⁵

And, as I was saying a moment ago, this is what brought me to the *Shijing*. Because of the *Shijing*, we know that it was very close to *kě*, 可, at least because there was a guttural in the ancient language, which gives the other implantation of the usage of this signifier, 奇, to designate the phoneme *qi*.³⁶ If you put 木, which is a determinative for “tree” and designates everything made of wood, in front of it, you then have a sign, 椅, that designates a chair. That is pronounced *yǐ*. And so on – it continues like that and there's no reason why it should stop. If instead of the sign for “tree”, you put here the sign, 马, *mǎ*, for “horse”, you get 骑, which means “sit astride”.

³⁰ This describes the verses in the *Shijing*.

³¹ Lacan returns to what he was discussing four paragraphs earlier.

³² Lacan presumably means the (sometimes dubious) gloss on characters by the lexicographer-author of the *Shuowen*.

³³ i.e., the conjunction of 可 and 大.

³⁴ “Impair” in French means “odd”, but almost exclusively in reference to the number system.

³⁵ Bernhard Karlgren, *Grammata Serica Recensa*, p. 19, symbol 1s.

³⁶ Lacan means that rhymes in the *Shijing* suggest that 奇, now pronounced *ji*, originally had a guttural sound close to that of 可 (now pronounced *kě*), and this is the origin of a purely phonetic use of 奇 to designate the guttural sound *qi*. As he goes on to explain in the next sentence, this purely phonetic use has given rise to compounds using 奇 such as 骑 (“sit astride”) which is pronounced *qi*, and also 椅 (“chair”), which, however, is pronounced *yǐ*.

I think this little detour is useful for making you see that the relationship of the letter to language is not something, which should be considered in an evolving line. You don't set out from a dense, tangible origin and then distil an abstract form from it. There is nothing resembling anything that can be conceived of as parallel to what is called the process of the concept, or even merely of generalisation. What you have is a series of alternations where, so to speak, the signifier keeps striking the flux of the mill stream with the blades of its mill, each time bringing up with its wheel something that drips and pours, before it falls back again, becoming richer, adding complication, without us ever being able, at any moment, to grasp what dominates – a specific point of departure or something equivocal.

This brings us to the step I want to take with you today. A good part of the illusions that stop us in our tracks, imaginary adherences (never mind that everyone has their feet more or less stuck in them, like flies on a flypaper – analysts shouldn't) are precisely linked to what I will call "the illusions of formal logic".

Formal logic is a very useful science (that is an idea that I tried to highlight for you the last time), provided that you understand that it perverts you in the sense that, because it is formal logic, it should constantly prohibit you from lending the slightest meaning to it. That, of course, is the position that people have come to with time. But, I can assure you, that is terribly difficult for the heavyweight, serious, courageous, honest men of symbolic logic, as we have known it for the last fifty years, because it is not easy to construct a logic as it has to be – if it really is to live up to its title of formal logic, – basing oneself strictly on nothing but the signifier, forbidding any relation with and therefore any intuitive support from what may arise from the signified in case we make mistakes.

In general, this is how people take their bearings: "I must have gone wrong, because if this is right, then anything goes... my grandmother with her head the wrong way around." But what does that matter to us? That, in general, is not what we have to be guided by, because we are very intuitive. If you do formal logic,³⁷ you have to be.

What is amusing is that the basic book of symbolic logic, the *Principia Mathematica* of Russell and Whitehead, gets to something that is very close to being the goal, the sanction of a symbolic logic worthy of the name – to encompass all the needs of mathematical creation, – but the authors stop short because they judge that the paradox called "Bertrand Russell's paradox"³⁸ represents a contradiction that puts the whole of mathematical logic into question.

This paradox affects the value of what is called "set theory". What distinguishes a set from a definition of class remains quite ambiguous, because what I am going to tell you and what is generally admitted by every mathematician is that what distinguishes a set from the form of definition called a "class" is that the set will be defined by formulae called "axioms", which

³⁷ A typescript page is missing, from here to "There is absolutely no other specification of the logic..." below.

³⁸ Usually called simply "Russell's paradox".

will be presented on the blackboard in symbols reduced to letters with the addition of some supplementary signifiers that indicate relationships.

There is absolutely no other specification of the logic, which is called symbolic, as opposed to traditional logic, except for this reduction to letters. I guarantee you that, and you can take it as given without me needing to provide examples.

What, then, is the virtue (there must be one), whereby this one difference has enabled a heap of consequences, the impact of which on the development of what is called “mathematics” is not inconsiderable, compared with the apparatus that had been available for centuries, whereby the compliment paid to this apparatus, of not having shifted from Aristotle to Kant, is turned against it?

The fact that the compliment is turned and that things have begun to move along so quickly – the *Principia Mathematica* add up to two very, very big volumes, albeit of only very slight interest – means that the previous apparatus, for some reason, was singularly stagnant. So, then, what is it about Russell’s paradox that puzzles the authors? Russell’s paradox is this: we can talk about [on parle de] the set of all the sets which do not comprehend themselves.³⁹ This may at first seem rather dry to you and I must clarify a little. I say straight away: if I ask you to take an interest in it (I hope you will take an interest), I do so in view of the fact that – precisely because this concerns the signifier and, consequently, concerns not comprehending – there is a very close relationship (and not just homonymic) with the position of the analytic subject, in so far as he also, in another sense of the word “comprehend” (and if I say “not comprehending”, it is so that you can comprehend in all ways), does not comprehend himself.

Touching on this is not without value, as you will see, because by going this way we will be able to criticise the function of our object.⁴⁰ But let’s pause for a moment on these sets, which do not comprehend themselves.

When we communicate, we can’t help making concessions to intuitive references, because you already have intuitive references, so the only thing to do is shove them out of the way and put others in their place. You have the idea that there is a class and that there is a class of mammals, so I will ask you to take a different reference.

When you enter into the category of sets, you have to refer to bibliographic classification, which some people are so fond of – a classification using decimals or something else. When you have something written, it has to be put somewhere, one must know how to find it

³⁹ The more usual expression of the paradox is “are not members of themselves”, i.e. “do not include themselves”, but “do not comprehend themselves” (the literal translation of Lacan’s “ne se comprennent pas eux-mêmes”) has the ambiguity, in English as in French, which Lacan needs in this paragraph.

⁴⁰ Lacan perhaps means the object *a*, which he comes to at the end of the present seminar.

automatically. Let's therefore take a set which is included⁴¹ in itself, let's take, for example, the study of the humanities in a library classification. Clearly, it will have to include works by humanists about the humanities. The set of the study of the humanities has to include all works concerning the study as such of the humanities.

But consider now sets which are not included in themselves. This is no less conceivable, it is even what is most usual. And since we are set theorists and since there is already a class of the set of sets which include themselves, there is really no objection to us creating the opposite class (I use "class" here because it is where we will find the ambiguity), namely the class of sets which do not include themselves, the set of all the sets, which do not include themselves. This is where the logicians begin to rack their brains. They say to themselves: "Does this set of all the sets which do not include themselves include itself or doesn't it?" Both ways, it collapses into contradiction. Because if it includes itself, as it seems it ought, we are in contradiction with the start point, which said that we were dealing with sets which did not include themselves. On the other hand, if it doesn't include itself, how can we except it from precisely what this definition gives us, namely that it doesn't include itself?

This may seem rather childish to you, but the fact that logicians, who are not the sort of people to pause at a trifling [vaine] difficulty, are so struck by it as to be brought to a stop, and if they sense something here, which they can call a contradiction that puts their whole edifice in question, it is because there is something here that has to be resolved and that concerns – mark my words – nothing other than the one thing that the logicians in question did not see, namely that the letter they make use of is something which in itself has capacities, a mainspring, to which they do not seem to be at all accustomed.

Because, if we illustrate this as an application of our statement that what is in question is just the systematic use of a letter to reduce, to reserve for the letter its signifying function in order to make the whole edifice of logic rest on it, we get to the very simple idea that this comes down to what happens when, if we speculate about the alphabet, we make the letter "a" stand for all the other letters of the alphabet.

It's either one thing or the other. You can enumerate the other letters of the alphabet from "b" to "z", so that the letter "a" will stand for them unambiguously without being included in itself. But, clearly, by standing qua letter for these letters of the alphabet, "a" will, quite naturally, I would not even say enrich, but complete the series of letters at the place from which we have withdrawn, excluded it, simply because, if we set out from the fact (our starting point as regards identification) that "a" is not at all "a", then there is no difficulty here: the letter "a" inside the parenthesis where all the letters that it has symbolically subsumed are set out, is not the same "a" and, at the same time, it is the same.

⁴¹ I use "include" (not "comprehend") to translate "comprendre" in the discussion of sets from here on, because it is more understandable.

There is no difficulty here whatsoever, and the difficulty should be all the less since the people who see a difficulty are precisely those who invented the notion of a set in order to address the shortcomings of the notion of a class, and who therefore suspected that there must be something else in the function of the set than in that of the class.

But this interests us, because what does it mean?

As I indicated to you yesterday evening,⁴² when the metonymical object of desire – what it is in every object that represents this elective little a , in which the subject loses himself – has its birth as metaphor [vient au jour métaphorique], when we substitute it for the subject who has left himself out [est venu à se syncoper], who has disappeared (no trace, S barred), we reveal⁴³ the signifier of this subject, we give it its name: the good object, the breast of the mother, the mammary.

That is the metaphor in which, we say, all the articulated identifications of the subject's demand are caught up. The subject's demand is oral: the mother's breast takes them up in its parenthesis. It is the a , which gives their value to all these units which are added together in the signifying chain: $a(1 + 1 + 1\dots)$.⁴⁴

The question we have to ask is: to establish the difference between this use that we make of the mammary, and the function that it takes, for example, in the definition of the class of mammals. The mammal is recognised by the fact that it has mammaries.

(Just between us, it's quite strange that we are so ill-informed about what each mammal species does with their mammaries. Much remains to be done in order to bring the ethology of mammals up to date: like formal logic, it's a subject that hasn't come on much since Aristotle. His *History of Animals* is an excellent book.)

But is that what the signifier "mammary" means for us, in so far as it is the object around which we substantiate the subject in a certain type of relations that are described as pregenital?

It is quite clear that we make a completely different use of it, a use that is much closer to the manipulation of the letter \in ⁴⁵ in our set paradox. To show that, consider this: " $a(1 + 1 + 1)$ ".

Is the breast itself there among the 1's of demand, the specific signifying power [signifiante] of which we have revealed, or not? In other words, when we talk about oral fixation, is the

⁴² *De ce que j'enseigne* ("About what I teach"), see above, seminar of 24 January 1962, footnote 1.

⁴³ "révérons" in Roussan. Typescript 1 has "reverrons" ("we will see again"). I assume a mishearing.

⁴⁴ Roussan inserts here the formula " $a(+1 + 1 + 1)$ ". There is no sign of it in Typescript 1 but its insertion here seems appropriate to Lacan's point. The formula is also absent from Typescript 1 when Roussan gives it again, a few paragraphs further on, but a gap preceded by the words "To show that, consider this" suggest that Lacan did write something on the blackboard at that point.

⁴⁵ Fifth letter of the Greek alphabet, used in set theory to designate set membership ("is a member of").

latent breast, the actual breast, the one that makes your subject go “ah, ah, ah!”, the mammalian breast?

It is quite obvious that it is not, because your oral types, who adore breasts, adore them because these breasts are a phallus. And the possibility that the breast can also be a phallus is even what makes Melanie Klein have the phallus appear so quickly, as quickly as the breast, from the outset, telling us that, after all, the phallus is a little breast, which is more handy, more portable, nicer.

You see clearly that making these structural distinctions gets us somewhere, because the repressed breast re-emerges, comes out in the symptom, or even simply in something that we haven't qualified in any other way – the function on the scale of perversity (yet to be produced) of this something else which is the evocation of the object-phallus.⁴⁶

It is written like this:⁴⁷

$$\frac{\$}{\text{breast}} \nearrow \frac{\text{breast } (a)}{\text{phallus}}$$

What is a ? Let's put in its place the little ping-pong ball, i.e., nothing, anything at all, any support whatsoever of the alternating play of the subject in the *Fort-Da*. There you see that what is at stake is strictly nothing other than the passage of the phallus from $+a$ to $-a$ ⁴⁸ and, there, we are in the relation [le rapport] of identification because we know that what the subject assimilates is him [lui] in his frustration, we know that the relation of $\$$ to this $1/A$ ⁴⁹ (him [lui], 1, assuming the signification of the Other as such) is intimately connected with the realisation of the alternation, a to $-a$: this product of a times $-a$, which formally makes a $-a^2$.

We come to grips with why a negation is irreducible. When there is affirmation and negation, the affirmation of the negation gives a negation, and the negation of the affirmation also gives a negation. We see there, coming out in this same formula of $-a^2$, the necessity of the bringing into play, at the root of this product, of $\sqrt{-1}$.

The issue isn't simply the presence or the absence of little a , but the conjunction of the two – the cut. The issue is the disjunction of a and $-a$, because that is where the subject as such comes to reside, where the identification has to be made with⁵⁰ this something, which is the object of desire. This is why, as you will see, the point I have brought you to today is an articulation that will be of service to you in what follows.

⁴⁶ I follow Roussan's punctuation of this sentence, which makes better sense than that in Typescript 1.

⁴⁷ The diagram is from Roussan. Typescript 1 has the same, but without the breast as denominator on the left and without the arrow.

⁴⁸ Typescript 1 has only “the passage of the phallus to $-a$ ”.

⁴⁹ In fraction form, with 1 as “numerator” and A as “denominator”.

⁵⁰ I follow “a à se faire avec” in Roussan. Typescript 1 has “a affaire avec” (“has to do with”).

The next seminar will be on 21 February.

21 February 1962

I left you the last time on the apprehension of a paradox concerning the modes of appearance of the object. This theme, starting from the object as metonymic, posed the question of what we did when we made this metonymic object appear as the common factor of this line called that of the signifier [cette ligne dite du signifiant], whose place I designated as that of the numerator in the great Saussurean fraction: signifier over signified.

This is what we were doing when we made it appear as a signifier – when we designated this object as the object of the oral drive, for example. This new type designated the genus of the object; so, in order to make you grasp it, I showed you how the manner of use of the signifier in mathematics, in set theory, brings something new to logic and that this manner of use is unthinkable unless we put the famous paradox called Russell’s paradox at centre stage, as constitutive. I did this so that you could put your finger on what I started out from, namely that the signifier as such not only is not subject to what is called the law of contradiction, but is even, properly speaking, its support, namely that “a” is useable as a signifier to the extent that “a” is not “a”.¹

From which it followed that, when we consider the object of the oral drive to be the primordial breast, the question could be asked, regarding this generic mammary of analytic objectalisation [sic]: in this context, is the real breast mammary?² And my answer was no, and that had to be the answer because, when the breast is drawn into oral eroticism, is eroticised, that means that it is something completely different from a breast, as you are well aware, and someone came up to me after the lesson and asked: “In that case, is the phallus phallic?”

What we have to say³ is that because the signifier “phallus” operates as revelatory of the meaning of the signifying function at a certain stage, because the phallus comes to the same place in the symbolic function where the breast was, and because the subject is constituted as phallic, the penis, which is inside the parenthesis of the set of objects which have attained the phallic stage for the subject, not only is not more phallic than the breast is mammary, but much more serious issues arise at this level, namely that the penis, a part of the real body, falls under the threat which is called “castration”.

The signifying function of the phallus is what makes the real penis vulnerable to the threat of what was first understood as a threat in analytic experience, namely the threat of castration.

This the path I am leading you along, and I am now showing you its objective and its purpose. What we have to do is to carry out this purpose step by step and thereby reach what

¹ Typescript 1 has “ ‘a’ is not ‘b’ ”. Roussan does not cite listeners in support of his version, but it seems necessary for the point that Lacan is making.

² “mammary” here is an adjective, not a noun.

³ Roussan has “Certainly not! Or more precisely...” before the words “what we have to say”.

I have been preparing and approaching little by little since we started out this year, namely the privileged function of the phallus in the identification of the subject.

Let's be clear: the reason why we are talking this year about identification and why, from a certain point in the Freudian opus, the question of identification comes to the foreground, comes to dominate and remodel the whole Freudian theory, is that (I most blush to have to say it), from a certain point onwards – for us after Freud and for Freud before us – the question of the subject gets posed as such, namely: “Who, who is there, who functions, who speaks?” And “Who...?” lots of other things as well.

This was, after all, to be expected in a technique that, putting it crudely, is a technique of communication, of addressing each other and, in a word, of relation [de rapport]. We were always going to need to know who is speaking to whom.

That's why, this year, we are doing logic. I can't help it: it's not down to whether I like doing it or not. I don't dislike it. Others may not like it. But what's for certain is that it is inevitable.

The question is *what* logic this leads us to. I try to take as many shortcuts as possible, I assure you that I don't roam where I please. As you have already seen, I have shown you where we stand with respect to formal logic and that we certainly have a thing or two to say about it.

You remember the dial diagram that I constructed for you⁴ to various ends and that we will perhaps need to refer back to more than once, although, in view of the pace we need to maintain in order to reach our destination this year, that may have to remain a proposition left in suspense for months or years, for the ingenuity of those who take the trouble to go back over what I teach you.

Certainly, though, it isn't just formal logic that we are dealing with. Is it transcendental logic, as it has been called since Kant (I mean, as it was properly constituted by Kant)? In other words, the logic of the concept? Certainly not that either! It is even quite striking to see the extent to which the notion of the concept seems to be absent from the functioning of our categories.

What we are doing (for the moment it's really not worth trying very hard to pin it down too precisely) is a logic, concerning which some say that I have tried to construct a sort of elastic logic. But that's not sufficient to constitute something that's very reassuring for the mind. We are doing a logic of the function of the signifier, because I maintain that, without this reference (constituted as primary, fundamental) of the relationship of the subject to the signifier, it is unthinkable even that we could locate the error, which the whole of analysis has progressively got drawn into and which arises precisely from its failure to carry out this

⁴ Above, seminar of 17 January 1962.

critique of transcendental logic in the Kantian sense, a critique that is strictly necessitated by the new facts that analysis has advanced.

I will tell you something that has no historical importance in itself, but that I think I can nevertheless communicate to you by way of a stimulus: this⁵ had led me, for the long or short time during which I have been separated from you and from our weekly encounters, to put my nose once again, not into the *Critique of Practical Reason* (as I did two years ago) but into the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Since it so happened that I had only remembered to take my German copy with me, I didn't reread the whole thing, but only the chapter called "Introduction to the transcendental analytic".⁶

I deplore the fact that the 10 or so years, during which I have addressed myself to you, do not seem to have had much effect in propagating the study of German among you. This always surprises me and is one of the little things, which sometimes make me reflect on my own image as being like that of the character in the well-known surrealist film, *Un Chien Andalou*, who drags a piano behind him by two ropes, with two dead donkeys (no allusion meant) laid out on the piano. That aside, I encourage those who do know German to re-open the chapter I referred to in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It will certainly help them to assess correctly the sort of reversal that I am trying to articulate for you this year.

But in a certain sense (this is only an indication and not a universal key),⁷ I think I can remind you very simply that the essence is the radically other, eccentric fashion in which I am trying to make you apprehend a notion that dominates the whole structuring of the categories in Kant, whereby he only puts the purified, completed, final full-stop to what had dominated philosophical thought up to when he completes it: the function of *Einheit* [unity] which is the foundation of every synthesis, of the "synthesis *a priori*", as he puts it, and which does indeed seem to impose itself, through its progress that starts out from the Platonic mythology, as the necessary path.

The *One*,⁸ the big *One* that dominates all thinking from Plato to Kant, the *One*, which, for Kant, as synthetic function, is the model of that which, in every *a priori* category, brings with it, he says, the function of a norm, to be understood as a universal rule.

Well, let's say, to add the tangible culmination to what I have been articulating for you since the start of this year, that the function of the *one* in identification, as structured and decomposed by an analysis of the Freudian experience, is not that of *Einheit*. Rather, it is

⁵ i.e., the critique of transcendental logic in the Kantian sense.

⁶ There is no such chapter in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Lacan may mean Kant's introduction to the whole work or he may mean everything up to the "Transcendental Analytic": Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (N. Kemp-Smith, trans.), pp. 41-62, or pp. 41-101.

⁷ The preceding words, from "But in a certain sense...", are not in Typescript 1.

⁸ Here and in the following paragraphs it is hard to decide whether to write "One" (emphasis on wholeness), "one" (what I have used for more or less neutral contexts in the Seminar so far) or "1" (the differential element). I move between the alternatives as seems appropriate.

what I have tried since the beginning of the year to make you sense as the original accent of what I have called “the unary stroke”, namely something quite different from the circle, which gathers together, which is the arrival point of the summit of the whole logical formalisation at a level of imaginary intuition – the Euler circle,⁹ – something quite different from that, and namely what I have called for you a “1”: this stroke, this thing impossible to localise, this aporia for thought, consisting in the fact that anything whatsoever, the more it is purified, simplified, reduced, with sufficient obliteration of its appendices, can end up reduced to that: a 1.¹⁰

What is essential to it, what constitutes the originality of the existence of this unary stroke and of its function, of its introduction (I leave open the question, “Introduced by whom?”, because it is not so clear that it is by man, though it is possible from a certain angle, and in any case proposed by us, that it is what man emerged from), the paradox of this 1, is that the more it is like itself – I mean the more any diversity of its appearances is erased – the more it supports, the more it “one-carnates” (if you will pardon me the expression) difference as such.

We consider that, thanks to this reversal of position around the *one*, we pass from the Kantian *Einheit* to *Einzigkeit*, to unicity expressed as such. This is the purpose for which, in order to help you “catch desire by the tail” (to borrow the title of a literary improvisation by Picasso that I hope you are familiar with), I have set out this year from the second form of identification – the function of the unary stroke, – and not from the first form of identification defined by Freud, which is not easy to handle, that of *Einverleibung*, the devouring of the enemy, the adversary, the father.¹¹

But you see where the reversal is. If the function we give to the *one* (the term “function” seems best because it is the most abstract, flexible and, strictly speaking, most signifying, it’s just a big F) is no longer that of *Einheit*, but of *Einzigkeit*, then we have moved over – and we shouldn’t forget that this is the novelty of analysis – from the virtues of the norm to the virtues of the exception.

Something you have at least surmised, and with good reason, is that we manage the tension of this thought by saying: “the exception proves the rule”. Like a lot of idiocies [conneries], it is a profound idioy. You just have to know how to tease it out. If I had done no more than to

⁹ In Roussan. Typescript 1 has only “the circle”.

¹⁰ Roussan has (without citing listeners): “this stroke, this thing impossible to localise, this aporia for thought, consisting in the fact that, the more it is purified, simplified, reduced to anything whatsoever, with sufficient obliteration of its appendices, it can end up reduced to that: a 1.” But Typescript 1 makes good sense and is a restatement of the point that Lacan made in the seminar of 10 January 1962 (above, pp. 84-85) : “...what can be more destroyed, more erased than an object? And if it is from the object that the stroke emerges, the stroke retains something of the object: precisely its unicity.”

¹¹ Where the object is “assimilated by eating” (“durch Essen einverleibte”); Freud, [Standard Edition 18](#), pp. 105-107 (*Group Psychology*).

make this idiocy shine forth, like one of the lights you see on police cars, that would already be a small gain at the level of logic.

But obviously it is a lateral benefit. You will see this, especially if, perhaps, some of you were to put your mind someday to giving in my place a brief résumé of how the Kantian analytic needs to be repunctuated.

You would be right in thinking that we have the beginnings of that when Kant distinguishes the universal and the particular judgment and when he isolates the singular judgment by showing its profound affinities with the universal judgment.¹² I mean that, although everyone had already known that before, Kant showed that it is not enough to gather them together, because the singular judgment has its independence. There is something here like a hint to be taken up, the beginnings of the reversal that I am talking about.

This is only an example. There are many other things in Kant which make a start at this reversal and it is curious is that it had not been done before.

I alluded here the time before last to something that greatly upset the linguist, Mr. Jespersen (it proves that linguists are by no means infallible).¹³ He finds it paradoxical that Kant puts negation under the rubric of categories designating qualities, making it, so to speak, the second moment in the categories of quality, the first being reality, the second negation and the third limitation. This surprises Mr. Jespersen, in the very long work on negation that he published in the *Annals* of the Danish Academy, and we are surprised that he is so surprised by it.¹⁴

We are all the more surprised because the whole purpose of his long article on negation, from beginning to end, is to show us that, linguistically, negation is something that can only be sustained by, as I might say, a perpetual raising of the stakes. So it doesn't seem at all a simple thing to put it under the rubric of quantity, where it would be confused purely and simply with what it is in quantity, namely zero.

But I have already given you enough indications about this and I can give the reference to those who are interested: this major work of Jespersen really is something to be reckoned with.

If you open the dictionary of Latin etymology by Ernout and Meillet¹⁵ and look up the article "ne" you will grasp the historical complexity of the problem of how negation functions, namely the profound ambiguity, by which, having been this primitive function of discordance on which I have insisted, and also on its original nature, negation always needs the support of

¹² Kant, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-107.

¹³ Above, p.109; seminar of 17 January 1962.

¹⁴ Kant, *op.cit.*, pp. 111-115; and Otto Jespersen, *Negation in English and Other Languages*, pp. 69-71, 92.

¹⁵ Alfred Meillet, Antoine Ernout, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*, pp. 432-433.

something which is precisely of the nature of the *one* that we are trying to get to grips with here, and that, linguistically, negation is never a “zero”, but a “not one”.

To see the truth of that, consider, for example, how the Latin “non”, which looks like the most simple form of negation in the world, is already a “ne oenum”, with “oenum” in the form of “unum”, i.e. a “not one” (as mentioned in the work, which was published by the Danish Academy during the 1914 War and is therefore difficult to find).¹⁶ Then, with time, the fact that it’s a “not one” gets forgotten and another “one” gets put after it and the whole history of negation is the history of this consumption by something, which is where? That is what we are trying to pin down: the function of the subject as such.

This is the great interest of Pichon’s remarks, which show us that, in French, you see the two elements of negation – the relation of the “ne” with the “pas” – at play so well that you could say that French has this privilege (albeit not unique among languages) of showing that there is no real negation in French.¹⁷ What is curious, though, is that Pichon doesn’t see that, if this how things are, it must go a little bit further than the field of the French domain, so to speak.

It is, indeed, very easy to see that it is necessarily the same everywhere, in all sorts of forms, given that the function of the subject is not suspended at its root to the diversity of languages. It is very easy to see that “not”, at a certain moment in the evolution of the English language, is something like “nought”.¹⁸

Let’s go backwards so that I can reassure you that we are not losing sight of where we are going. Let’s start again from last year, from Socrates, Alcibiades and the gang, who, I hope, gave some entertainment at the time.

What we have to do is to link up the logical reversal concerning the function of *one* with something that we have been dealing with for a long time past, namely desire.

Things might have got a bit vague for you in the time since I last talked about it, so I am going to offer a little reminder. I think that, in the course of this year’s exposition, now is the right time to do it.

So, as regards desire, you remember (it was a chain of reasoning) that it was by way of desire that I introduced the question of identification last year. It was when I came to speak, regarding the narcissistic relation, about what has to be constituted for us as a consequence of the equivalence put forward by Freud between narcissistic libido and object libido.¹⁹

¹⁶ Jespersen, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁷ Jacques Damourette, Edouard Pichon, *Des mots à la pensée* (Chapter 7, “Negation”). See above, p. 100, seminar of 17 January 1962.

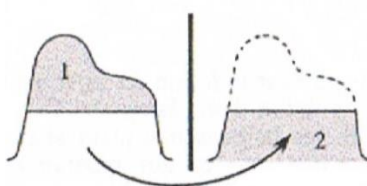
¹⁸ Jespersen, *op. cit.*, p. 16; <https://www.etymonline.com/word/nought>.

¹⁹ Lacan, *Seminar 8* (B. Fink, trans.), seminars of 21, 28 June 1961.

You remember how I symbolised it at the time, with a little intuitive schema, something that speaks for itself [qui se représente], not a schema in the Kantian sense.

Kant is a very good reference. In French he is grey. Messrs. Tremesaygues and Pacaud have achieved the *tour de force* of making *The Critique of Pure Reason* – which it is not absolutely unthinkable to say, from a certain angle, can be read as an erotic book – into something utterly monotonous and dusty.²⁰ Perhaps, thanks to my commentaries, you will be able, even in French, to restore to it the kind of spice, which it is no exaggeration to say that it contains. In any case, I had always allowed myself to be persuaded that it was badly written in German, mainly because Germans, with certain exceptions, have the reputation of writing badly. But that is not true: *The Critique of Pure Reason* is as well written as Freud's books, which is no mean feat.

The schema is the following:²¹



The issue was what Freud tells us about at this level of *On Narcissism: An Introduction*, namely that we love the other from the same wet substance, of which we are the reservoir, which is called “libido”, and it is because it is here [1 in the figure above] that it can be there [2 in the figure], i.e., surrounding, swamping, wetting the object in front of it.

The reference from love to wetness isn't mine: it's in the *Symposium*, on which we gave a commentary last year.²²

The moral is this metaphysics of love (because that's what it's about), the fundamental element of the *Liebesbedingung*, of the condition for loving:²³ in a certain sense, I love (what we will here call “love”, and you also have to work out what there is left over, beyond “love”... so what is called “love” in a certain way) only my body, even when I transfer this love onto the body of the other.

²⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique de la raison pure* (A. Tremesaygues and B. Pacaud, trans.).

²¹ This diagram was already used at the start of the seminar of 15 November 1961 (above) and also in earlier seminars in June 1961.

²² Agathon says in his praise of Eros: “Youngest, then, and most delicate is he, and withal pliant of form ...” The Greek adjective, translated “pliant”, is “ὕγρὸς” (“hugros”), the primary meaning of which is “wet” or “moist” (Plato, *The Symposium* (R.G. Bury, trans.), 196a).

²³ Sigmund Freud, *Standard Edition 11*, p. 165 (*A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men*); *Standard Edition 14*, p.101 (*On Narcissism: An Introduction*).

Of course, a good dollop of it remains on my own body. That is even indispensable, if only (in the extreme case) at the level of what has to function autoerotically, namely my penis, if we simplify by taking the androcentric point of view, and this simplification has nothing wrong with it, as you will see, because that isn't what interests us. What interests us is the phallus.

Now, what I have proposed to you (implicitly, if not explicitly, in the sense that it is more explicit now than last year) is that – in relation to what I love in the other who is subject to this hydraulic condition of the equivalence of the libido, whereby when it rises on one side it rises on the other – what I *desire*, which is different from what I feel, is that which, as pure reflection of what in me remains invested in any case, is precisely missing in the body of the other to the extent that the other's body is constituted by this impregnation by the wetness of love.

From the point of view of desire, at the level of desire, this body of the other, at least however little I love it, only has value precisely for what it lacks, and it is for that very reason that I was going to say that heterosexuality is possible.

Because, let's be clear, if it is true, as analysis teaches us, that some people are frightened by the fact that the woman is, from the penile point of view [du point de vue pénien], effectively castrated, if what we say about that isn't all nonsense... and it isn't nonsense at all, because it is patent; we see it all the time in the neurotic and it is our discovery, we are sure of it because it is where mechanisms operate with such subtlety that there is no other possible hypothesis to explain how the neurotic, hysteric or obsessional, constitute their desire, and that will lead us this year to fully articulate the meaning of the desire of the hysteric and of obsession, and to do so quickly, because I would say that, up to a certain point, it is an urgent matter.

This is how things are for some people, and not just for the neurotic; it is even more conscious in the homosexual than in the neurotic. The homosexual tells you himself that being confronted by pubes without a prick²⁴ has an effect on him, a very painful effect. It is precisely because of this that we can't trust him too far, and we are right not to do so,²⁵ and it is for this reason that I take my reference from the neurotic.

All that said, the fact remains that there are, nevertheless, a good number of people who are not frightened by it, and, as a consequence, it's not crazy to think, putting it simply (I have to approach things this way because nobody has said it like that before, and when I have said it two or three times I think it will become quite obvious to you), that beings who can have a normal, satisfying relationship – a relationship of desire, I mean – with the partner of the

²⁴ “d'être devant ce pubis sans queue” in Roussan. Typescript 1 has “de penser qu'il n'a pas de pénis” (“to think that he has no penis”), which seems unlikely in the context.

²⁵ On the reason for this, see *Seminar 5* (R. Grigg, trans.), pp. 190 *et seq.*, seminar of 29 January 1958.

opposite sex not only are not frightened by it, but it is just what they find interesting, the point being that just because the penis is not there doesn't mean that the phallus is not there.

I would even say: quite the contrary. And this enables us to rediscover, at a certain number of crossings of the paths, specifically, that what desire seeks in the other is not so much the desirable as the desiring, i.e., what the other lacks, and you should remember that this is the first aporia, the ABC of the question as it is articulated when you open the famous *Symposium*, which seems to have travelled down the centuries only for people to construct theology around it. I try to make something else of it, namely to let you see that what is in fact being talked about there, line by line, is Eros.

I desire the other as desiring, and when I say as desiring, I don't say, I deliberately don't say, "as desiring *me*", because it is me who desires, and desiring desire, this desire could only be desire for me if I rediscover myself at this turn where, of course, I am, namely if I love myself in the other, in other words if it is myself that I love. But in that case I abandon desire.

What I am emphasising is the limit, the frontier that separates desire from love, which, of course, is not to say that they don't condition each other in all sorts of ways. That is even the essential drama and I think it ought to be the first remark you make to yourself about your experience as an analyst, it being well understood that – like in many other matters at this level of human reality – it is often the common man who is closest to what I would call "the bone".

What is to be desired is obviously always what is lacking, and that is why in French desire is called "desiderium", which means regret.²⁶

This connects with what I emphasised last year as the key point, always looked for by the ethics of passion, which is to bring about, I don't say a synthesis, but a conjunction, regarding which we have to ask whether it isn't structurally impossible and doesn't remain an ideal point outside the limits of the working drawing, and which I have called "the metaphor of true love".²⁷ It would be the famous equation: ἔρῶν [*eron*, "lover", "desirer", Greek] and ἐρώμενος [*eromenos*, "beloved", "person desired"], the lover substituting himself, the desirer substituting himself for the desired at this point, and through this metaphor becoming equivalent to the perfection of the lover, as described in the *Symposium* – this reversal of the whole property of what one could call "the natural loveable",²⁸ the forcible tearing away in love, which puts everything that one can be as desirable oneself beyond the reach of cherishing, as I might say.

²⁶ "Desiderium" is a Latin, not a French word. Both Typescript 1 and Roussan have "in French", suggesting that Lacan made a slip here. Making the same point in *Seminar 10*, he correctly calls "desiderium" a Latin word (*Seminar 10* (A.R. Price, trans.), seminar of 28 November 1962).

²⁷ Lacan, *Seminar 8* (B. Fink, trans.), seminar of 8 February 1961.

²⁸ "L'aimable naturel" in Roussan. Typescript 1 has "naturelle" preceded by a gap.

This is the “noli me amare” [“do not love me”, Latin], the true secret, the true last word of the ideal passion of courtly love, which is so far removed from the present day as to have become confusional, and which I purposely placed at the horizon of what I articulated last year, preferring to substitute for it, as more topical and more exemplary, the order of experience (by no means ideal, but perfectly accessible), which is our own, by the name of transference, and which I illustrated – or rather, pointed out as already illustrated – in the *Symposium* in the paradoxical form of the strictly analytic interpretation given by Socrates at the end of the long, crazily exhibitionistic declaration (the analytic rule applied with no holes barred), which is the discourse of Alcibiades.²⁹

You no doubt remember the irony implicit in something, which isn't concealed in the text, namely that the person whom Socrates desires there and then, for the beauty of what he had to say, is Agathon, the spinner of idiocies [déconnographe], the pure spirit, the one who speaks about love in a way... in the way, in which, no doubt, love ought to be spoken of, comparing it to peace on the waves,³⁰ in a frankly comic tone, but without doing it on purpose and without even noticing it. So what does Socrates mean? Why wouldn't Socrates love Agathon if stupidity is precisely what Socrates (like Monsieur Teste) is lacking: “Stupidity isn't my strong point”.³¹

It is a teaching, because what it means, and this is spelt out to Alcibiades, is: “My handsome friend, talk on, because you love him too. That whole long discourse was for Agathon. The only difference is that you don't know what is at stake: your strength, your mastery, your wealth play games with you.”

And, indeed, we know enough about the life of Alcibiades to know that he wasn't lacking much in the most extreme order of what one can have. In his own way, very different from Socrates, he also was nowhere, even though he was received with open arms wherever he went, because people were always more than happy to make such an acquisition. A certain ἀτοπία [*atopia*, “placelessness”, Greek] was his lot. He was simply too large to accommodate anywhere.³² When he went to Sparta, he considered that he did a great honour to the King of Sparta (Plutarch says it in so many words)³³ by getting his wife pregnant. That is just to give you the style of the man; it's actually the least thing. There are some really tough men. To finish him off they had to surround him with fire and bring him down with arrows.³⁴

²⁹ I follow Typescript 1. Roussan has “...the strictly analytic interpretation given by Socrates at the end of the long, crazily exhibitionistic declaration, in essence: the analytic rule applied with no holes barred to what is the discourse of Alcibiades”. But it seems clear that “the analytic rule applied with no holes barred” is just the discourse of Alcibiades.

³⁰ Eros makes “Peace among men, and a windless waveless main; Repose for winds, and slumber in our pain”, Plato, *The Symposium*, 197c (R. G. Bury, trans.).

³¹ Paul Valéry, *Monsieur Teste* (J. Mathews, trans.), p.8.

³² The last two sentence are not in Typescript 1.

³³ Plutarch, *Lives* (B. Perrin, trans.), in 11 volumes, vol. 4, p. 65.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114. The sentence is not in Typescript 1.

But that's not what's important for Socrates. The important thing is to say: "Alcibiades, work a little on your soul," which,³⁵ believe me, I am fully convinced does not have at all the same meaning for Socrates as it had after the development by Plotinus³⁶ of the notion of the One.

If Socrates replies to him, "I know nothing except, perhaps, about the nature of Eros,"³⁷ it is, indeed, because the eminent function of Socrates is to have been the first to have conceived what was the true nature of desire.

And that is precisely why, for a good number of centuries, from that revelation up until Freud, desire as such in its function (desire as the very essence of man, as Spinoza says,³⁸ and everyone knows what that means; man in Spinoza being the subject, desire is the essence of the subject) remained a function that was half, three-quarters, four-fifths obscured in the history of knowledge.

The subject in question, the one we are on the track of, is the subject of desire and not the subject of love, for the simple reason that one cannot be the subject of love: one is ordinarily, one is normally, its victim, which is completely different.

In other words, love is a natural force. That is the justification of what gets called Freud's "biologising"³⁹ viewpoint. Love is a reality. That's why I say to you, "the Gods are real". Love is Aphrodite – she who strikes. It was a well-known fact in antiquity. Nobody was surprised by it.

Permit me a very nice play on words. It comes from one of my most divine obsessionals, who is far advanced in his analysis.⁴⁰ A few days ago he produced for me: "the terrible doubt of the hermaphrodite" ["l'affreux doute de l'hermaphrodite"].⁴¹ I mean, the least I can do is to give it some thought, now that things have happened that have made us slide from Aphrodite to terrible doubt.

I mean: there is much to be said in favour of Christianity. I can't overstate how much I support it, and especially as regards the extraction of desire as such.

I don't want to deflower the subject too much, but I am determined to do all I can to make you see that, all the same, in order to obtain this most praiseworthy of ends, love has suffered the sad fate of being made into a commandment: it's a heavy price to pay for the inauguration of the investigation of desire.

³⁵ i.e., the soul.

³⁶ "plotinien" in Roussan. Typescript 1 has "platonicien" ("platonian"), which is surely a mishearing.

³⁷ "I set up to understand nothing but love matters", Plato, *The Symposium* (R.G. Bury, trans.), 177e.

³⁸ Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics* (A. Boyle, trans.), pp. 128, 156.

³⁹ Typescript 1 has "topologising", but that makes little sense in the context.

⁴⁰ The last phrase is not in Typescript 1.

⁴¹ "affreux doute" and "-aphrodite" are near-homophones in French.

Of course, we analysts need to know how to summarise a little the question of what we have well and truly advanced about love, namely that it is the source of all evils. The mother's love, etc.

That makes you laugh.⁴² The least observation⁴³ shows you that the love of the mother is the cause of everything. I don't say that we are always right, but this is the concourse where we carry out our daily manège. It is the outcome of our everyday experience.⁴⁴

So the point to be made is that, when we investigate what the subject is in analysis⁴⁵ – what the subject is to be identified with, albeit in an alternating manner, – it has to be the subject of desire.

On that I will take my leave of you today, but first let me remark that although, certainly, we have the wherewithal to do it⁴⁶ much better than the thinker whom I am going to name, we are not we are not completely in no-man's-land.⁴⁷

I mean that, immediately after Kant, there was someone else, called Hegel, who took up the question, and the whole of his *Phenomenology of Spirit* sets out from there – from *Begierde* [desire].⁴⁸ Hegel's only fault was to have no knowledge of the mirror stage, even though it is possible to say where it would fit in.

Hence the irreducible confusion,⁴⁹ which puts everything under the aspect of the master-slave relationship and makes this move inoperative [et qui rend inopérante cette démarche], so that we have to start again from that point on.

Let's hope that, helped by the genius of our master, we can do justice to the question of the subject of desire in a way that is more satisfactory.

⁴² The last two sentences are not in Typescript 1.

⁴³ Roussan has "conversation".

⁴⁴ Roussan's version. Typescript 1 has only "I don't say that we are always right, but it is along those lines."

⁴⁵ Typescript 1 has "what the subject is in love" ("amour").

⁴⁶ "it" presumably referring to the investigation of what the subject is in analysis.

⁴⁷ "no-man's-land" in English in the original. The context suggests that Lacan chose the wrong English expression and meant "uncharted territory".

⁴⁸ "from *Begierde*" is not in Typescript 1.

⁴⁹ Typescript 1 has "conclusion".

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It may seem that I am spending rather a lot of time here on what are called (God's curse on the name!)¹ "great philosophers". But the fact is that they articulate (not necessarily alone, but eminently) what one might well call a research that is marked by the pathos of always coming back – if one gives it consideration through all its twists and turns, its more or less sublime objects – to this radical knot that I am trying to undo for you, namely desire; it is to this, I hope, by enquiring into it if you are willing to follow me, that I can restore decisively its property as an unsurpassable point, unsurpassable in the very sense that I mean when I tell you that each one of those who can be described by this name of "great philosopher" cannot be surpassed on a certain point.

I think I have the right to take on such a task, with your assistance, because desire is our business as psychoanalysts. I believe also that I am required to persist with it, and to ask you to do so with me because it is only by rectifying our perspective on desire that we can maintain the analytic technique in its primary function, the word "primary" to be understood in the sense of what appeared first in history, and there was no doubt about it at the outset: it had a function of truth.

This, of course, is why we are called on to question this function at a more radical level, a level that I am trying to show you by articulating what is at the basis of analytic experience; namely that, as men, I mean as desiring beings, we are enslaved, whether we know it or not, whether or not we believe that we want to be, to this function of truth.

Because I hardly need to remind you that the conflicts, the impasses, which are the stuff of our praxis, cannot be objectified unless the place of the subject as such is made to intervene in their operation, the subject as tied into the structure of experience. This is the meaning of identification as it is defined by Freud.

Nothing is more precise, nothing is more demanding than calculation of the situation around the subject [conjuncture subjective] when one has found what I can call, in the proper sense of the term – the sense in which it is employed in Kant, – its "practical reason". I prefer to call it that than to say its "operational" aspect, because of what the term "operational" has implied for some time now: a certain avoidance of what is fundamental.

In this regard, remember what I taught you two years ago about this practical reason in so far as it concerns desire. Sade is closer to it than Kant, even though Sade who, one could say, is almost driven mad by his vision, can't be understood unless he is measured against Kant's yardstick, which is what I tried to do.²

¹ These words are not in Typescript 1

² Lacan, *Seminar 7* (D. Porter, trans.), pp. 76-80, 188-190; Lacan, *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.), pp. 645-668.

Remember what I said to you about the striking analogy between the total exigence of the freedom of *jouissance* in Sade³ and Kant's universal rule of conduct. The function on which desire is founded in our experience manifestly has nothing to do with what Kant distinguishes as the *Wohl*, opposing it to the *Gut*, to the good – nothing to do, let's say, with well-being, with the useful.⁴ We then see that this goes further, that this function of desire has nothing, in general, to do with what Kant calls (in order to relegate it to a second rank in the rules of conduct) the “pathological”.⁵

Therefore, for those who don't have a clear recollection of the sense in which Kant employs this term, for whom it could lead to a misunderstanding, I will try to translate it by saying the “protopathic”, or again, more generally, what there is in experience that is “human, all too human” – limits connected with convenience, comfort, dietary matters. It could even go so far as to imply tissue thirst.

Let's not forget the role, the function that I give to anorexia nervosa as among the first effects where we can sense this function of desire, and the role that I gave to anorexia nervosa as an example in order to illustrate the distinction between desire and need.⁶

So, remaining far away from the function of desire, we could talk about convenience, comfort, concession. Not, though, you will say, about compromise, because compromise is something we talk about all the time. But the compromises that the function of desire has to make are of a different order from those linked, for example, to the existence of a community founded on vital association, and it is in this latter form that we most often have need to evoke, to acknowledge, to explain the function of compromise.

You know well that at the point we have got to, if we follow Freudian thinking all the way, these compromises concern the relationship of a death instinct⁷ with a life instinct, both of which are no less strange when considered in their dialectical relationships than in their definition.

To begin again (as I always do at some point in each of the weekly discourses that I address to you), let me remind you that this death instinct isn't a gnawing worm, a parasite, a wound, not even a principal of contrariety – something like *Yin* as opposed to *Yang*, an alternating element. In Freud the articulation is clear: it is a principle that envelops the whole of the detour of life, which life, which detour only find their meaning by rejoining it.

³ “qui est dans Sade” in Roussan. Typescript 1 has “qui, ensemble”, which produces an ungrammatical sentence without clear meaning. Spoken quickly, the first could be misheard as the second.

⁴ “Wohl” (German) means, approximately, “well-being and “the useful”. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Practical Reason* 9 (M. Gregor, trans.), Part 1, Book 1, Chapter 2, pp. 50-51.

⁵ Lacan has “pathologique”, which, in French as in English, usually denotes morbidity, but Kant (as remarked by a recent translator of his work) uses the German “pathologisch” in the sense of “dependent on sensibility” (*The Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 17) and this is the sense that Lacan intends here.

⁶ Lacan, *Seminar 8*, (B. Fink, trans.), p. 201, seminar of 15 March 1961; Lacan, *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.) p. 524.

⁷ Lacan uses the (French and English) word “instinct”, not “pulsion” (“drive”).

The frankly scandalous nature of it partly explains why some people distance themselves from it, because here we are, brought back – despite all positivist principles – to what is, strictly speaking, the most absurd metaphysical extrapolation, disdaining all the accepted rules of prudence.

The death instinct in Freud is presented as that which, for us, I believe, takes its place as equivalent to what we here will call the signifier of life,⁸ because Freud tells us that what is essential to life, reinscribed in the framework of the death instinct, is nothing other than the intent, necessitated by the law of pleasure, to accomplish, to repeat always the same detour to return to the inanimate.

The definition of the life instinct in Freud – it is worth coming back to and reaccentuating this – is no less strange and “atopical”,⁹ since, as should always be emphasised, it is reduced to Eros, to the libido.

Note carefully what that means. I will accentuate it in a minute through a comparison with the Kantian position. But you already see here the point of contact to which we are reduced as regards the relation to the body. What is at issue is a choice, as is evident from the fact that, in the theory, this gets materialised in these figures, about which you have to remember that, at one and the same time, they are new and what difficulties, what aporias, what impasses even, they oppose to our efforts to justify them, even to situate them, to give an exact definition of them.

I think that the function of the phallus, as that around which this Eros, this libido, gets articulated, designates sufficiently what I mean to highlight here. What, taken together, do all these figures (using again the term that I just used) that we apply regarding Eros, have to do, what do they have in common (for example, to make the distance apparent) with the concerns of an embryologist, who is undeniably concerned with the life instinct when he asks himself what is the organising factor in growth, in the mechanism of cellular division, the segmentation of skin layers, morphological differentiation?

One is surprised to find it written somewhere or other by Freud that analysis has led to some kind of biological discovery. As far as I remember, he sometimes writes that in the *Abriss*.¹⁰ What had bitten him when he wrote that, I ask myself: what biological discovery has been made in the light of analysis?

⁸ Staferla (not Roussan) inserts “[φ]” here, which is not in Typescript 1.

⁹ “atopique” in Roussan. Lacan frenchifies the word Greek word “atopos”, which means “strange” or (literally) “placeless” (see above, p. 136, seminar of 21 February 1962, where he uses the Greek noun). Typescript 1 omits the word.

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, [Standard Edition 23](#), p. 195 (*An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*).

And, since we are highlighting the limitation, the elective point of our contact with the body (to the extent that it is, of course, the support, the presence of this life), is it not striking that, in order to reintegrate the function of the preservation of this body into our calculations, we had to go via the ambiguity of the notion of narcissism, an ambiguity that has been sufficiently designated, I think (without us having to connect the ambiguity in some other way with the very structure of the narcissistic concept and the equivalence it involves to the linkage to the object)¹¹... that has been sufficiently designated, I say, by the accent placed, since *On Narcissism*, on the function of pain. That first article (excellently translated, reread it) suggests that pain isn't a signal of damage but an autoerotic phenomenon.¹² As I mentioned recently in a casual conversation with someone who is listening, in connection with a personal experience: the experience of one pain erases that of another pain. I mean that it is difficult to suffer two pains at the same time: one of them takes over and makes you forget the other, as if the libidinal cathexis, even when it is on one's own body, was subject to the same law – I will call it the law of partiality – that guides the relation to the world of objects of desire. Pain is not simply, as its technicians tell us, exquisite by nature; it is privileged, it can be a fetish.

I say this in order to get us to the point, which I already articulated in a recent lecture (not here),¹³ that it is important for what we are doing to ask what the subjective organisation designated by the primary process means as regards what is and what is not its relationship¹⁴ to the body. This, I would say, is where the reference to, the analogy with the Kantian investigation will be of service to us.

I apologise with all humility to those who have an experience of the Kantian texts that gives them the right to some marginal observations if I go rather quickly when I make reference to what, for us, is essential in the Kantian exploration. We cannot¹⁵ dwell on these meanders and that may, on certain points, be at the expense of rigour, but is it not also the case that, by following them too much, we might lose something huge in the contours of the exploration? I refer here to the Kantian critique and, specifically, to the critique called “of pure reason”.

So then, I believe I have the right to say something that would be accepted by anyone who has simply read the aforesaid *Critique of Pure Reason* once or twice with intelligent attention, something, moreover, which is not contested by any commentator: that the categories described as those of pure reason undoubtedly require, in order to function as such, the foundation of what is called pure intuition, which is presented as the normative – I will go

¹¹ This parenthesis is ungrammatical, but fairly clear in Typescript 1 (with amendments from sources cited in Roussan).

¹² Sigmund Freud, *Standard Edition 14*, pp. 183-84 (*On Narcissism*).

¹³ “De ce que j’enseigne” (“About what I teach”), <https://www.freud-lacan.com/getdocument/28696> (see above, seminar of 24 January 1962, footnote 1).

¹⁴ i.e., the relationship of the primary process (clear from gender agreement in the French).

¹⁵ Typescript 1 has “We can” (“Nous pouvons”). Roussan’s insertion of a “ne” (“not”) lends sense to the sentence, which is otherwise self-contradictory.

so far as to say obligatory – form of all sensible apprehensions, of any sensible apprehensions whatsoever.¹⁶

That is why this pure intuition, which is ordered in the categories of space and of time, is designated by Kant as excluded from what one can call the originality of sensible experience, of *Sinnlichkeit*,¹⁷ which is the only source of any affirmation whatsoever of palpable reality, such affirmations nevertheless remaining subject in their articulation to the categories of the aforesaid pure reason, without which they not only could not be uttered, but could not even be perceived. That being the case, everything is dependent on the principle of the so-called *synthetic* function, which means nothing other than the unifying function and which is, one might also say, the common term of all the category functions, the common term, which is ordered and disaggregated in the very suggestively articulated table that Kant gives or rather in the two tables that he gives – the forms of the categories and the forms of judgment,¹⁸ – and which establishes this pure intuition as absolutely necessary, by right, in so far as it marks, in the relationship to reality, the spontaneity of the subject.¹⁹

It is possible to reduce the Kantian schema to the *Beharrlichkeit*, the permanence, the retention – empty, but possible – of anything in time. This intuition, which is pure by right, is absolutely required by Kant for the functioning of the categories; but the existence of a body, in so far as it is the foundation of *Sinnlichkeit*, sensibility, is not required at all.²⁰

No doubt, this won't get us far with what one can validly articulate as a relationship to reality, because, as Kant emphasises, the use of these categories of the understanding will only concern what he will call “empty concepts”.

But when we say that this won't get us far, it is because we are philosophers, and even Kantian philosophers. If, like most people, we are not, then this goes very far, and the whole effort of philosophy consists in countering a whole series of illusions, of *Schwärmereien* as they are called in philosophical and particularly in Kantian language,²¹ of bad dreams (Goya tells us at around the same time that “the sleep of reason produces monsters”), the theologising effects of which show us the exact contrary, namely that this goes very far, since, through the mediation of a thousand fanaticisms, it leads straight to bloody violence,

¹⁶ What Kant means by “forms of pure intuition” (space and time) and “categories of pure reason”, and the relation between them, can be gleaned from Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (N. Kemp-Smith, trans.), pp. 65-67, pp. 92-97.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 106-119

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-155, where Kant uses “spontaneity” in this sense, and also on p. 111, when he is introducing the “categories”.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 180-187, where Kant introduces the “schema” as a bridge between the categories and intuition, particularly p.184 where he discusses the “vanishing point” of sensation and says that “The schema of substance is the permanence [Beharrlichkeit] of the real in time”.

²¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Book 1, Chapter 3, pp. 69-71 (*Schwärmerei* translated as “enthusiasm”).

which still constitutes, with the greatest of ease, it has to be said, an important part of the fabric of human history, despite the presence of philosophers.

That's why it is not at all indifferent to show where the frontier passes of what is effective in experience, despite all the theoretical purifications and moral rectifications.

It is quite clear, in any case, that Kant's transcendental aesthetic cannot be accepted as tenable, despite what I called the unsurpassable character of the service that he renders us in his critique, and I hope to make you sense what that service is precisely by showing you what needs to be put in its place. Because if something needs to be put in its place, which functions while preserving something of the structure that Kant articulated, that proves that he at least glimpsed – that he profoundly glimpsed – the said thing.

The Kantian aesthetic is absolutely untenable for the simple reason that, for Kant, it is fundamentally based on a mathematical argumentation that belongs to what one could call “the geometrising era of mathematics”. It is because Euclidian geometry is uncontested at the time when Kant is pursuing his meditation, that he finds it sustainable that there are certain intuitively evident facts in the spatio-temporal order. One only has to open his text in order to gather examples that a moderately advanced student of maths nowadays would find easy to refute. Kant proposes as an example of a fact, which does not even require demonstration, that only one straight line can pass through two points. Everyone knows – since our mind has adapted quite easily to the imagining, to the pure intuition of curved space thanks to the metaphor of the sphere – that many more than one straight line, and even an infinity of straight lines can pass through two points.

Or when he illustrates the “leere Gegenstand ohne Begriff” (the “empty object without concept”) in his table of “Nichts”, of nothings, by the extraordinary example of a rectilinear figure with only two sides,²² here is something which might seem to Kant, though no doubt not to everyone at his time, to be the perfect example of a non-existent and indeed unthinkable object. But the least usage, I would say, of even the quite elementary experience of a geometer – the investigation of the path described by a point on a rolling circle, what is called Pascal's cycloid – will show you that a rectilinear figure, as something that makes the permanence of contact between two lines or two sides into an issue, is primordial, essential to any kind of geometrical comprehension, and that it is a genuine conceptual articulation and even a perfectly definable object.

Even the affirmation that only the synthetic judgment is fruitful may, since the logicising of mathematics, be considered subject to revision. The most recent, most advanced critique of the foundations of arithmetic can certainly prove that the supposedly barren *a priori* analytic judgment, namely what we will call, quite simply, the purely combinatory usage of elements extracted from the primary position of a certain number of definitions, has its own fecundity.

²² Immanuel Kant, [*Critique of Pure Reason*](#) (N. Kemp-Smith, trans.) p. 295.

The same logicising exploration seems to have shown that there is, in the final analysis, a necessarily unprovable residue in the field of mathematical creation, as demonstrated with as yet unrefuted rigour by Gödel's theorem, but the fact remains that it is by way of formal demonstration that this certainty is acquired, and when I say "formal" I mean the most expressly formalist procedures of logicising combination.

What does that mean? Does it mean that this pure intuition, as Kant presents it at the end of a critical progress concerning the required forms of science, teaches us nothing?

It certainly teaches us to discern its consistency and also its possible disjunction from, precisely, the so-called synthetic exercise of the unifying function of the term of unity qua constitutive in every formation using the categories and – once we have revealed the ambiguities of this function of unity – it shows us the choice, the reversal we are led to, under the solicitation of various experiences.

Obviously, it is only our own which matters to us here.

But what is more significant than anecdotes, accidents, even exploits, is to take note of the slenderness in Kant of the point of conjunction between the functioning of the categories and sensible experience; the choke point, so to speak, where it can be asked whether the existence of a body, certainly absolutely necessary in fact [en fait] could not be put in question in the Kantian perspective, as to whether it is required by right [en droit].²³

In our time, the situation of the lost child who is the cosmonaut floating weightless in his capsule seems designed to give immediacy to this question. I won't put weight on the remark that, as it seems, tolerance to weightlessness for a very long period has not yet been put to the test. But, nevertheless, the organism's surprising tolerance of the state of weightlessness encourages us to pose a question.

Dreamers wonder about the origin of life. Some of them say that it began to fructify quite suddenly on our globe, while others say that it must have come from a germ that arrived from astral spaces. I can't tell you how indifferent that kind of speculation leaves me. But if an organism, whether a human, a cat or the lowliest representative of animate life, can manage so well in the state of weightlessness, is it not essential for life, putting it simply, to be equipollent in respect of any possible effect of the gravitational field?

Of course, the cosmonaut is still subject to the effects of gravity; simply it is gravity, which does not weigh on him. So then, in his weightless state, enclosed, as you know, in his capsule

²³ This paragraph and the start of the next are crazily punctuated in Typescript 1. Roussan's version, which I have followed, makes more sense.

and sustained, cocooned all around by the folds of this capsule, what does he transport with him of an intuition, pure or not, but phenomenologically definable, of space and of time?

The question is all the more interesting because, as you know, it is one we have come back to since Kant. I mean that the exploration, which is qualified as phenomenological, has refocused our attention on the fact that what one can call the naive dimensions of intuition, particularly of spatial intuition, are not so easily reducible, even to an intuition as purified as one can possibly think, and that up, down and left retain all of their importance in fact, but also by right [en fait, mais même en droit], for the most critical thinking.

What happened, for Gagarin, Titov or Glenn, to their intuition of space and time at moments when, certainly, they must have had other things on their mind? It would not, perhaps, be altogether uninteresting to have a brief phenomenological dialogue with one of them while he is up there. Naturally, it wasn't thought to be the most pressing matter in these experiments and there is time to come back to it.

What I would note is that, however things stand on these matters, regarding which we are nevertheless keen to get answers from *Erfahrung*, from experience, he at least was not incapable of what I will call "pressing the buttons", because it is clear, at least for the last of them I mentioned,²⁴ that he obeyed commands at certain moments and even made decisions from inside. So he remained in full possession of the means of effective combination.

No doubt his pure reason was powerfully supplemented by a whole complex paraphernalia, which must have lent the experiment its final efficacy. Nevertheless – for all that we can suppose and as far as we can suppose the effect of the combinatory construction in the spacecraft, and even of the preparatory learning and repeated instructions in the exhausting training programme imposed on the pilot, and for all that we can suppose him to have been integrated with what one could call the pre-installed automatism of the machine, – just the fact that he had to push a button the right way while knowing why it was right makes it extraordinarily significant that such an exercise of combinatory reason is possible in conditions which could perhaps be taken even further towards the extremes of constraint and paradox imposed on the conditions of the natural motor functions.

But we can already see that things have been taken very far²⁵ as to a double effect, characterised, on the one hand, by the liberation of said motricity from the effects of gravity, on which, in normal conditions, it would be no exaggeration to say that this motricity leans, while, correlatively, things²⁶ only function thanks to the fact that the aforesaid motor subject is literally imprisoned, captured by the carapace, which alone guarantees the containment, at any time during the flight, of the organism in what one could call its "elementary solidarity".

²⁴ See the account of Glenn's flight in the orbiting spacecraft at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercury-Atlas_6

²⁵ i.e., in the first manned space flights.

²⁶ Typescript 1 has "les jambes" ("his legs"), which is a surprising mishearing for "les choses" ("things") in Roussan, which I follow.

Here, therefore, the body has become, I might say, a sort of mollusc torn away from its vegetative implantation. The carapace²⁷ becomes such a dominant guarantee of the maintenance of this solidarity, of this unity, that we may well think that, ultimately, it is that in which the unity consists, and that we see here, in a sort of exteriorised relationship, the function of this unity as the veritable container of what one might call the “living pulp”.

The contrast between this corporeal position and the pure function of a reasoning machine – the pure reason, which alone remains efficacious and from which alone we expect some efficacy, on the inside – is here exemplified and underlines all the importance of the question that I posed earlier as to whether or not spatio-temporal intuition, in the sense that I defined by what I will call “the false geometry of Kant’s time”, is still there.²⁸ Is this intuition still there? I have a strong tendency to think that it is.

This false geometry is still there, as stupid and idiotic as ever, because it is effectively produced as a sort of reflection of the combinatory activity, but a reflection which is nonetheless refutable. Because, as the meditation of mathematicians has proved, we are no less liberated from gravity here on earth than up there where we follow our cosmonaut. In other words, this supposed pure intuition arises from the illusion of deceits attached to the combinatory function itself, deceits that can perfectly well be dissipated, even if it²⁹ is more or less tenacious. It is, I might say, no more than the shadow of number [l’ombre du nombre].

But, of course, in order to be able to affirm that, we need to have based number itself on something other than this intuition. Besides, even if we suppose that our cosmonaut does not keep this Euclidean intuition of space and the even more questionable intuition of time, appended to it in Kant, namely of something that can be projected onto a line, what will that prove? It will merely prove that he is still capable of pushing the buttons correctly without having recourse to their schematism.³⁰ It will merely prove that what is already refutable here is also refuted there, along with intuition itself,³¹ which, you may well say, somewhat reduces the import of the question that we want to ask him.

And that is why there are other more important questions to ask him, specifically our questions, and in particular: what, in the weightless state, becomes of a sex drive which is in the habit of manifesting itself by appearing to defy gravity? And whether the fact that he is entirely glued inside a machine, in the material sense of the word, which so evidently incarnates and manifests the phallic phantasy, does not have the effect of alienating him from

²⁷ i.e., the spacecraft.

²⁸ i.e., for Gagarin, Titov and Glenn in orbit.

²⁹ i.e., the illusion (by gender agreement in the French)

³⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (N. Kemp-Smith, trans.), pp. 180-187.

³¹ “réfuté là autant que l’intuition elle-même” in Typescript 1. Roussan has “réfuté là-haut dans l’intuition elle-même” (“refuted up there in intuition itself”) which would be indistinguishable to the ear, except for the extra word “que” (in Typescript 1, not in Roussan). The Typescript 1 version seems acceptable since Lacan said in the last couple of paragraphs that “spatio-temporal intuition” or “false geometry” is “refutable”.

his relationship to the functions of weightlessness that are natural to male desire? Here, then, is another question, which, I believe, we have every right to stick our nose into.

Coming back to number, you may be surprised that I make it into an element so obviously detached from pure intuition, from sense experience. I am not going to give you a seminar here on *The Foundations of Arithmetic* – the English title of Frege³² – to which I beg you to refer, because it is a book as fascinating as the *Martian Chronicles* and where you will see that it is, in any case, evident that there is no possible empirical deduction of the function of number. But, since I don't intend to give you a lecture on that subject, I will content myself (because it fits into what we have been talking about) with bringing to your attention that, for example, the five points you see arranged in this way on one side of a dice



are certainly a figure, which can symbolise the number five, but you would be completely wrong to believe that the number five is in any way given by this figure. I don't want to tire you by infinite detours, so I think the quickest thing to do is to ask you to imagine a conditioning experiment that you might carry out on an animal. It is quite usual to investigate an animal's faculty of discernment in some situation, consisting of objectives to be attained, by presenting it with various forms. You will not, in any case, expect the animal to react in the same way to this layout,



constituting a figure, as it reacts to this figure,



which is still a five, or to this one,



which is also a five, this time a pentagon. If ever an animal reacted in the same fashion to these three figures, you would be astounded, because you would then be convinced that the animal knows how to count. But you know that it doesn't know how to count.

Certainly, this isn't a proof of the non-empirical origin of the function of number. As I say, that deserves a detailed discussion, and the only genuine, serious and sensible reason that I

³² Gottlob Frege, [*The Foundations of Arithmetic*](#) (J. Austin, trans.).

can give you for interesting yourselves in it is that it is surprising how few mathematicians are really interested in it, even though, of course, only mathematicians have treated it properly.

So, if you are interested, it would be a mission of mercy. Visit the sick, take an interest in uninteresting questions. Isn't this just our function, seen in a certain way?

If you do take an interest, you will see that the unit³³ and zero, which are so important for every rational constitution of number, are what are most resistant to any attempt at an experimental genesis of number, particularly if you want to give a homogenous definition of number as such, reducing to nothing all the geneses of number that one might try to give based on an agglomeration and the abstraction of difference starting from diversity.³⁴

Here we see the value of the fact that I was led to articulate (following strictly the thread of the Freudian approach, in a fashion that appeared to me necessary) the function of the unary stroke, which shows the genesis of difference in an operation that one can declare to be in the nature of an ever greater simplification. So a path that leads to the line of sticks (to the repetition of the apparently identical) creates, extracts what I call, not the symbol, but the entry into the real of absolute difference as inscribed signifier, and that is the meaning of the "primacy of writing", the form of this stroke that is repeated by the primitive hunter.

Moreover, you will find in Frege's text that the best analysts of the function of the unit, namely Jevons and Schröder, emphasised the function of the unary stroke in the same way as I am doing,³⁵ although Frege himself does not follow that path, for want of an adequate theory of the signifier.

What we have to articulate here is that by reversing, as I might say, the polarity of this function of the unit, by abandoning the unifying unit, *Einheit*, in favour of the distinctive unit, *Einzigkeit*, I am enabling you to define, to articulate step by step, the solidarity between the status of the subject as bound to this unary stroke and the fact that this subject is constituted in his structure where the sexual drive has its privileged function among all the afferences of the body.

Today I am going to put the last touch to the first fact – the subject's linkage to this unary stroke, – considering that the road thus far has been sufficiently articulated. I do it by reminding you that the fact, so important in our experience and highlighted by Freud, which he calls the "narcissism of minor differences",³⁶ is the same thing as what I am calling the function of the unary stroke, because it is nothing other than the absolute difference that I talk to you about, this difference detached from all possible comparison. It is starting from this

³³ "Unité" can also mean "unity".

³⁴ Frege, *op.cit.*, pp. 29-30, 44-51.

³⁵ Frege, *op.cit.*, pp. 46-48.

³⁶ Freud, [Standard Edition 21](#), p. 114 (*Civilization and its Discontents*).

minor difference, to the extent that it is the same thing as the big “I” – the ego-ideal – that the whole perspective of narcissism can be accommodated: the subject constituted, or not, as bearer of this unary stroke.

This lets us take a first step today towards what we will do in the next lesson, namely a reprise of the functions of privation, frustration and castration. By taking them up again we will be able to glimpse where and how the question is posed of the relation between the world of the signifier and what we call the “sexual drive” – the privilege and prevalence of the erotic function of the body in the constitution of the subject.

Let’s make a first approach and take a first nibble at this question starting from privation, because it is the simplest. There is some “minus *a*” in the world, an object that is missing at its place [qui manque à sa place], which is the most absurd conception there could be, given the meaning of the word “real”. What can possibly be missing in the real?

The difficulty of this question is the reason why, in Kant, you still find hanging about, so to speak, well beyond pure intuition, all these leftovers which shackle him with theology, under the name of a cosmological conception. “In mundo non est casus”, he reminds us: there is nothing casual, no chance. “In mundo non est fatum”: there is nothing that is fated, that goes beyond a rational necessity. “In mundo non est saltus”: there are no leaps. “In mundo non est hiatus”.³⁷ And the great refuter of metaphysical imprudences takes on board these four denials, regarding which I ask you whether, in our perspective, they can be anything other than an inversion of what we deal with all the time: cases, in the actual sense of the term, a “fatum” as such, because our unconscious is an oracle, as many hiatuses as there are distinct signifiers, and as many jumps as there are metonymies produced.

It is because there is a subject who marks or doesn’t mark himself with the unary stroke, who is 1 or -1, that there can be a minus *a*, that the subject can identify himself with the little ball of Freud’s grandson and especially with the connotation of its lack: there is not; *ens privativum*.³⁸ Certainly, there is an empty place and that is where the subject starts from: “leere Gegenstand ohne Begriff”.³⁹

Of the four definitions of nothing, which Kant gives and which we will take up the next time, it is the only one that holds up rigorously: here there is a nothing.

³⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (N. Kemp-Smith, trans.), pp. 248-249.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 295, except that Kant does not have an *ens privativum* [privative entity] (here or anywhere else in the *Critique of Pure Reason*) but a *nihil privativum* [privative nothing]. Lacan’s “slip” may be intentional since he is criticising Kant in these paragraphs. Discussions of this question include: Guy le Gaufey, “Towards a Critical Reading of the Formulae of Sexuation” (Trans., C. Gallagher), p. 9 *et seq.*; Tom Dalzell, “Kant’s Nothings and Lacan’s Empty Object”; and Christian Fierens, “The Act of Saying Not all...”; all published in *The Letter. Irish Journal for Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 39 (2008).

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 295, “empty object without a concept”.

Notice that in the table I gave you⁴⁰ of the three terms – castration, frustration, privation, –

Agent	Lack	Object
Real father	<i>Castration</i> : symbolic debt	<i>Imaginary</i> : phallus
Symbolic mother	<i>Frustration</i> : imaginary hurt	<i>Real</i> : breast, penis
Imaginary father	<i>Privation</i> : real gap	<i>Symbolic</i> : child

the counterparty, the possible agent, the subject who is imaginary and from whom privation, the utterance [énonciation] of privation can come, is the subject of imaginary omnipotence, in other words of the inverted image of impotence: *ens rationis*, “leere Begriff ohne Gegenstand”,⁴¹ pure concept of possibility.

This is the frame where the “ens privativum” is situated and appears. Kant does not hesitate to ironise about the purely formal usage of the formula which seems to be self-evident: everything real is possible. Who will deny it? Of course it is! And he takes the further step of pointing out to us that, therefore, some real is possible, but that can also mean that some possible is not real, that there is some possible which isn't real.⁴²

What is important for us to see – no less important than the philosophical abuse that can be made from it and that is here denounced by Kant – is that the possible, which is at issue, is none other than the possible of the subject.

The subject alone can be this negativised real of a possible that is not real. So we see the constitutive -1 [minus one] of the *ens privativum* linked to the most primitive structure of our experience of the unconscious, which is not that of the forbidden, nor of the “said that not” [“dit que non”], but of the “not said” [“non-dit”], of the point where the subject is no longer there to say whether he is no longer master of this identification to the 1, or of this sudden absence of the 1 which, as you notice, here finds its force and its root:⁴³ the possibility of “hiatus”, “saltus”, “casus”, “fatum” is precisely that in which I hope to show you, starting from the next session, what⁴⁴ other form of pure and even spatial intuition is particularly involved in the function of the surface in so far as I believe it to be capital, primordial, essential for any articulation of the subject that we will be able to formulate.

⁴⁰ The same matrix/table that Lacan referred to above, p. 105, seminar of 17 January 1962 and footnote 37. I show the table here for reference.

⁴¹ “Entity of reason, ‘empty concept without object’” (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (N. Kemp-Smith, trans.), p. 295).

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 250

⁴³ Slight differences in wording and punctuation give a quite different version of these words in Roussan, as follows: “..or of this sudden absence of the 1 which could mark him. Here is found his force and his root. The possibility...”. Instead of “vous le remarquez” (“as you notice” or literally “you notice it”) Roussan has “pourrait le marquer” (“could mark him”), followed by a full stop and then a short sentence where “sa” is taken to mean “his” rather than “its”. The alternative version is presumably from Typescript 2, since Roussan does not cite the authority of listeners

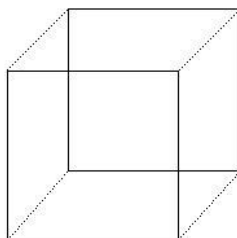
⁴⁴ The last page of Typescript 1 (from this word on) is missing.

7 March 1962

Pulling together the difficult thoughts we are led to and on which I left you last time, when I began to approach the central point of the structure of the identification of the subject by way of privation, I felt drawn to start off with some introductory remarks (it is not my habit to take up *ex abrupto* where I left off). These remarks echoed some of those strange personages of whom I spoke the last time and who are called philosophers, great or small. The remark was more or less the following: that the subject makes mistakes is assuredly the inaugural experience for us all, analysts as much as philosophers. But the interest of this experience to us lies manifestly and, I would say, exclusively, in the fact that the subject can express himself [il peut se dire]. And expressing himself proves to be infinitely fruitful, and more especially fruitful in analysis than elsewhere, at least one likes to think so.

And let's not forget the remark, which has been made by eminent thinkers, to the effect that, if what is at issue here is the real, the path called "rectification of the means of knowing" risks (at the very least) distancing us indefinitely from what we want to attain, namely the absolute. Because if it is a matter of the real, full stop, then the absolute is what is at issue. The intention is to reach a goal that is independent of all the moorings we may have in the course of our research. That is just what one calls the absolute: cast away all moorings and all extra loads.¹ The criteria of science always tend to establish a technique [une façon] that carries an extra load, at least in the philosophical perspective (I do not refer here to those scientists who, contrary to what is believed, have hardly any doubts, thanks to which we can be more sure that they at least approach the real).

We need to make a number of remarks in the philosophical perspective of the critique of science, and the term that we should most distrust if we are to make progress in this critique is the term "appearance", because appearance is far from being our enemy, I mean when the issue is that of the real. It wasn't me who incarnated what I am telling you in this simple little image:²



¹ As Roussan points out in a note, "absolute" derives from Latin "absolutus" ("freed", "unrestricted"), the past participle of "absolvere" ("to set free").

² The so-called Necker cube: the picture can be seen in two ways depending on which of the two squares with solid lines the viewer sees as nearest. Roussan suggests Ludwig Wittgenstein (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 5.5423 [<http://people.umass.edu/klement/tlp/tlp.pdf>]) as Lacan's reference (usefully read starting from 5.541).

It is precisely in the appearance of this figure that the reality of the cube is given to me, that it immediately strikes me as reality. If I reduce this image to the function of an optical illusion, I simply turn away from the cube, from the reality that this artifice is designed to show you.

The same goes for the relation to a woman, for example. Every scientific investigation of this relationship will tend, when all is said and done, towards formulae like that which you surely know, from *Colonel Bramble*, where the object in question, the woman in question, is reduced to what it is from the scientific point of view – an agglomeration of albuminoids,³ – which is clearly out of joint with the world of feelings that are attached to the aforesaid object.

It is nevertheless quite clear that what I will call, if you permit, “being made dizzy by the object” [le vertige d’objet] in desire, this kind of idol, this adoration, which can prostrate us or, at least, leave us weak in the presence of a hand... or, to make myself more clearly understood on this subject, which is given to us in experience – it doesn’t have to be a hand. Some less terminal place, a little further up, a touch of down on the forearm can suddenly assume a unique flavour that makes us tremble before this pure apprehension of her existence.

It is quite obvious that this has more to do with the reality of the woman than any elucidation of what is called “sexual attraction”, because explaining sexual attraction is, in principle, a matter of challenging its deceits [son leurre], which deceits are its very reality.

So, if the subject makes a mistake, he may well be right from the point of view of the absolute. But even so, and even for us who deal with desire in our work, the word “mistake” keeps its meaning.

Allow me to tell you what my own conclusion is – to give you the fruit of a reflection on this matter, which I intend to pursue today and try to show its justification. My conclusion is that, if the term “mistake” has a meaning for the subject, in any domain and not just in ours (a daring affirmation, but I dare to make it because I have “done the circuit” [fait le tour]⁴ – an expression I will come back to – of the question), what is at issue can only be a mistake in the subject’s counting.

Put differently, any subject who does not count cannot make a mistake. This is not obvious. You have to have explored a certain number of avenues in order to realise that this is what you believe to be the only way through the impasses and diverticula that people have been drawn into regarding this question. It is where I have got to and I ask you to follow how I got there.

³ André Maurois, *The Silence of Colonel Bramble*, p. 103.

⁴ “done the round” would be a better translation, but “circuit” gives the coincidence that Lacan wants with his discussion of the torus later in the present seminar.

The implication, of course, is that the activity of counting begins for the subject early on. I have carried out an ample rereading of someone for whom, as everyone knows, I don't have particular leanings, despite the great esteem and respect that his work merits and his incontestable charm as a person. I am referring to Monsieur Piaget and I do not mean to discourage anyone from reading him. I have reread his work called *The Child's Conception of Number*.⁵

It is a confusion to think that one can detect the moment when the function of number appears in a subject by asking him questions, which, in a way, imply their answer, even if these questions are asked through the mediation of a material that one perhaps imagines to exclude the directed character of the question.

It must be said that, ultimately, this approach is a deceit. It is not at all sure that the child's apparent ignorance is not a consequence of the very conditions of the experiment. But the robust way, in which it is done, means that there is much to be learned, not so much from the modest findings regarding supposed stages in the acquisition of number by the child as from the pertinent thoughts of Monsieur Piaget, who is certainly a much better logician than psychologist, concerning the relations between psychology and logic.

This is what makes a work called *Classes, relations et nombres*⁶ (unfortunately impossible to find, it was published by Vrin in 1942) particularly instructive, because it highlights the structural, logical relationships between classes, relations and numbers, namely everything that one claims to rediscover subsequently, or in advance, in the child, which manifestly was already constructed *a priori*. And, as was to be expected, the experiment only shows us what had been put together at the start in order to find it there.⁷

I mean this as a parenthesis to confirm that the subject counts well before he applies his talents to any collection, even though, of course, making collections is one of his first concrete, psychological activities. But he is implicated as subject in what is called the relationship called "computation" [comput],⁸ in a way that is much more radically foundational than people want to imagine, starting from the functioning of his sensorium and motricity.

Again, here, the genius of Freud surpasses what I might call the deafness of those whom he addresses to the whole import of the indications that he gives them, which go in one ear and

⁵ Jean Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Number*.

⁶ Jean Piaget, *Classes, relations et nombres*

⁷ It is hard to make out from these sentences (slightly different in Typescript 1 and Roussan, but ambiguous in both) whether Lacan means that Piaget thinks he finds these logical relationships in the mind of the young child or that they are really there. Perhaps both (judging by what he has just said and by the next couple of paragraphs).

⁸ "Comput" in French means the system for calculating the date of moveable feasts in the church calendar and, more generally, a "set of rules that make it possible to determine a date"

(<https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/comput>). Lacan uses the term in a broader sense here.

out the other, no doubt justifying the appeal to a mystical “third ear” by Mr. Theodor Reik,⁹ who can’t be said to have been brilliantly inspired on the day he coined the term, because what use is a third ear if you hear nothing with the two you already have?

What is the use of the sensorium, according to Freud? Isn’t its sole function to show us that what is already there in the subject’s counting is actually real, that it really exists? In any case, this is what Freud says: it is with the sensorium¹⁰ that the judgment of existence¹¹ begins – its purpose is to check the accounts, which is a strange position for someone whom people attach to the mainstream of 19th century positivism.

So let’s resume where we left off, because what is at issue is counting and the basis and foundation of counting for the subject, namely the unary stroke.¹² And let’s not jump to conclusions, just because the function of counting begins so early, about what the subject may know of a higher number. It is difficult to imagine that two and three don’t follow on fairly soon, but when we are told that some so-called primitive tribes at the mouth of the Amazon only recently discovered the virtue of the number four and built altars to it, what strikes me is not the picturesque aspect of this as a “story about savages”. It even seems to me to be self-evident, because if the unary stroke is what I tell you it is, namely difference, and difference which not only supports but presupposes the subsistence alongside it of one plus one and one more (where the plus is only meant to mark the radical subsistence of this difference), the problem is precisely how it is that you can add them together; in other words, how “two” and “three”, taken that way, can have a meaning raises a lot of problems. But that is not surprising: if you take things the other way around, if you start out from three, as John Stuart Mill did,¹³ you will never be able to rediscover one – it’s the same difficulty.

I say in passing that we here – with our habit of questioning the facts of language in terms of the effect of the signifier and of finding this effect at the level of metonymy – will find it simpler than a mathematician to ask our student to recognise, in every signification of number, an effect of metonymy, arising, as from its elective point, from nothing more than the succession of an equal number of signifiers. The number three, for example, is able to make sense just because something happens, which makes sense of the mere succession in extension X of a certain number of unary strokes. This decides whether it makes sense, whether it has a meaning or not. Writing the word “and” in English is perhaps the best way we have of showing the emergence of the number three, because it has three letters.¹⁴

⁹ Theodor Reik, *Listening with the Third Ear*.

¹⁰ The French has only “c’est avec lui” (“it is with it”), but syntax and gender agreement suggest that Lacan means the sensorium.

¹¹ Sigmund Freud, *Standard Edition 19*, pp. 235-237 (*Negation*). The translation in the *Standard Edition* obscures Freud’s meaning in this passage.

¹² These four words are not in Typescript 1.

¹³ John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, pp. 189-191. See also Gottlob Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic* (J. Austin, trans.) pp. 9-12.

¹⁴ Frege, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

We don't need to ask so much of our unary stroke, because we know that at the level of the Freudian deduction, if you will allow me this formula, the unary stroke designates something that is radical for this original experience: it is the unicity [unicité] as such of the circuit [tour] in repetition.

I think I have stressed sufficiently to you that the notion of the function of repetition in the unconscious is absolutely distinct from any natural cycle, in the sense that what is accentuated is not its return, but what is sought by the subject is his signifying unicity, in as much as one of the circuits of repetition, so to speak, has marked the subject, who begins to repeat that which, certainly, he will only ever be able to repeat, because this will never be anything but a repetition, but with the objective, the design, of making what was primitively unary re-emerge from one of the circuits.

In view of what I have just told you, I don't need to emphasise that this already operates before the subject knows how to count properly. In any case, nothing suggests that he needs to count very far the circuits of what he is repeating, because he repeats without knowing it.¹⁵ It is nevertheless true that repetition is rooted in this original unary [cet unaire], which adheres tightly to and is co-extensive with the very structure of the subject in so far as the subject is thought of as repeating in the Freudian sense.

What I am going to show you today, by means of an example and a model that I am going to introduce, is that the subject doesn't need to know how to count for it to be possible to state and prove that his making a mistake in the count is a foundational necessity of his function as subject. There is no need for him to know how to, or even to try to count for this counting mistake to be constitutive of him as subject. The subject, as such, is the mistake.¹⁶

If things are how I am telling you, you may well think that, on such a basis, this mistake can last a long time, and that is quite true. So much so that the effect is not just at the level of the individual: it has effects for the most radical features of what is called "thought".

Let's take up for a moment the theme of thought, regarding which caution is advised and regarding which, as you know, I am cautious. It is not at all certain that one can validly refer to it in a way that would be considered as a dimension that can be called "generic". But let's take it like that, nevertheless:¹⁷ "the thought of the human species".

¹⁵ Typescript 1 has, more simply, "...to count very far the circuits of what he repeats without knowing it".

¹⁶ Roussan and Typescript 1 both have, "En tant que telle, elle est l'erreur" where "telle" and "elle", both being of feminine gender, would have to refer back to "erreur" (the only feminine noun in what precedes), so the meaning would be, "It," i.e., the mistake, "as such, is the mistake", which would be a gratuitous tautology. In Typescript 1 someone has handwritten "tel, il" above "telle, elle", suggesting that these words should be masculine and thereby agree with "il" ("he" i.e., "the subject") in what precedes. Indeed, "tel" is indistinguishable to the ear from "telle" and "il" could be misheard as "elle", so I suppose that the stenographer misheard what Lacan said.

¹⁷ A page is missing in Typescript 1, from here to "under the pen of Hamilton".

Clearly, I have my reasons, since the beginning of my discourse this year, for having raised on more than one occasion, in an inevitable fashion, the function of the class and its relation to the universal, even to the point that it is, in some way, the other side and the opposite of this whole discourse that I am trying to bring home for you.

In this connection, remember what I tried to show you in connection with the exemplary little dial, on which I tried to re-articulate for you the relation of the universal to the particular and of propositions – affirmative and negative, respectively.

Unity [unité]¹⁸ and totality appear here in the tradition as going together, and it is not by chance that I keep coming back to this in order to break apart [éclater] their fundamental category. Unity and totality: they go together, linked to each other in a relationship that could be called one of inclusion, totality being totality in respect of units [unités], but where the unit is what founds totality as such by drawing unity towards this other meaning (opposed to the one that I distinguish) of being the unity of a whole.

It is around this that the misunderstanding comes about in what is called the logic of classes, the age-old misunderstanding of extension and intension,¹⁹ which the tradition seems to have made more and more of, if, looking at things in the perspective, for example, of the mid-19th century under the pen of someone like Hamilton,²⁰ you can see that it was only clearly articulated from Descartes onwards (as you know, the Port-Royal logic is modelled on the teaching of Descartes).

But then, that's not even true, because this opposition between extension and intension has been around for a long time – ever since Aristotle himself. What one can say is that it causes us ever greater unresolved difficulties as regards the handling of classes, whence all the efforts that logic has made to shift the core of the problem elsewhere: into propositional quantification for example.

But why not see that a new departure is offered to us in the structure of the class itself if we substitute a relation of exclusion as the radical support in place of the relation of inclusion? In other words, if we consider as logically original, in respect of the subject, something, which is not my discovery and which is within the range of an average logician, namely that the true foundation of the class is neither its extension nor its intension, but that the class always presupposes classifying [la classe suppose toujours le classement].²¹

¹⁸ As noted above (seminar of 13 December 1961, footnote 2), the French word “unité” means both “unity” and “unit”. In this paragraph I use both translations, as seems appropriate.

¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extensional_and_intensional_definitions.

²⁰ Sir William Hamilton, *Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic*, p.101 *et seq.*

²¹ Typescript 1 has “...ni son extension, ni sa compréhension de la classe. Supposons toujours le classement...”, which makes little sense. I follow Roussan who has “...ni son extension, ni sa compréhension: que la classe suppose toujours le classement...”. So the stenographer would have heard “que” for Lacan’s “de”, misheard “suppose” as “supposons”, and punctuated wrongly, which is possible.

Putting it differently (lighting my lantern straight away), take mammals, for example. They are what one excludes from vertebrates by the unary stroke “mammary”. What does that mean? It means that the original fact is that the unary stroke can be lacking – first of all, there is the absence of the mammary, and one says, “the mammary *cannot* be missing.” That is what constitutes the mammal class.

See what really goes on here. Open some treatises, do the rounds of the thousand little aporias which formal logic offers and you will see that this is the only possible definition of a class if you really want to guarantee its universal status, which simultaneously constitutes both the possibility of it not existing, its possible non-existence with this class – because you can just as validly, flunking the universal [manquant à l’universel], define the class with no individual, and it will just as much be a class universally constituted – and also the conciliation of this extreme possibility with the normative value of every universal judgment, which cannot but transcend every inference that is inductive (that is drawn from experience).

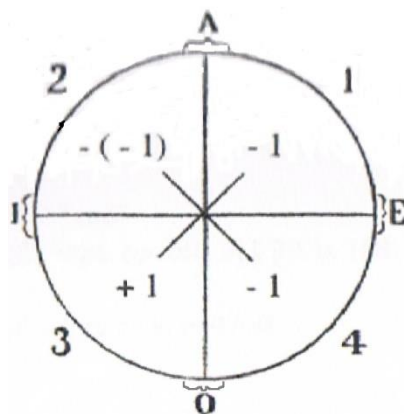
That is the import of the little dial, which I gave you regarding the class to be constituted among others, namely the vertical stroke.²²

Initially the subject constitutes the absence of such a stroke. As such, he is himself the top quadrant on the right. If you will allow me to go so far: the zoologist doesn’t carve out the mammal class in the supposed totality of the maternal mammary; it is because he detaches himself from the mammary²³ that he can identify the absence of the mammary. The subject as such is –1 [minus 1] and starting from there, from the unary stroke as excluded, he decrees that there is a class where, universally, there cannot be absence of the mammary: – –1 [minus minus 1]. And that is the starting point, from which everything falls into place: in particular cases, in whatever comes along [le tout venant], it²⁴ either is there or it isn’t [il y en a ou il n’y en a pas].

²² Above, seminar of 17 January 1962, p.109 *et seq.*

²³ Typescript 1 has only “he detaches the mammary” (without “himself from”). Roussan cites the notes of Claude Conté, Irène Roubleff and Jean Oury in support of the reflexive, which casts the zoologist (misheard as “sociologist” in Typescript 1) as the subject. The version is supported by Lacan’s comment, “if you will allow me to go so far”. The zoologist is indeed a mammal.

²⁴ i.e., the mammary.



An opposition of contradiction is established diagonally, and this is the only true contradiction that subsists at the level of the establishment by the unary stroke of the universal-particular, negative-affirmative dialectic.

So everything is ordered in whatever comes along at the lower level: it either is there or it isn't. And this can only exist thanks to the constitution, by the exclusion of the stroke, of the upper storey, where we have everything-being-valid or being-valid-as-everything [du tout valant ou du valant comme tout].

So it is the subject, as was to be expected, who introduces privation and does so by the act of saying [énonciation], which is essentially formulated as, "Might there not be a mammary?" ["Se pourrait-il qu'il n'y ait mamme?"], where the "ne" is not negative, but is strictly of the same nature as what is called "expletive" in French grammar: "Might there not be a mammary?" A possible "not"... "nothing perhaps".

This is the beginning of every saying [énonciation] of the subject concerning the real.

In the first quadrant²⁵ the issue is to preserve the rights of the "nothing" on the top storey, because it is what creates the "perhaps", the possibility, on the bottom storey. Far from one being able to say as an axiom – this is the astounding error of the whole abstract deduction of the transcendental – that all of the real is possible, it is only by starting from the possible "not" that the real takes its place.²⁶

What the subject seeks is this real precisely as possible "not". It is the exception, and this real certainly exists. What one can say is that, precisely, there is only a possible "not" at the origin of all saying [énonciation], but this is seen from the fact that the saying starts out from the said [énoncé] of "nothing".

²⁵ The top-right quadrant, marked "1" in the figure above.

²⁶ Lacan is referring back to his criticism of Kant (above, pp. 150-151, seminar of 28 February 1962). What he said there supports the translation (here, two paragraphs above and below) of "pas possible" as "a possible 'not'", rather than as "not possible".

This is already assured and clarified in my triple enumeration – privation, frustration, castration, – which I promised the other day that we would develop. Some people are uneasy because I haven't made room for *Verwerfung*.²⁷ It is there beforehand, but it is impossible to start out from it in a deducible²⁸ fashion. Saying that the subject constitutes himself initially as –1 [minus one] lets you see that, as one would expect, it is as *verworfen* [rejected (German)] that we will rediscover him, but, in order to grasp the truth of this, we are going to have to go a heck of a long way round [faire un sacré tour].²⁹ This is what I am going to try to start doing now.

In order to do it, I must unveil the dispositions that I announced (I tremble somewhat at the prospect, as you can imagine) and propose to you one of my turns [mes tours], which has, of course, been prepared well in advance. I mean that if you look in my Rome report, you will already find its place indicated somewhere there, where I speak of the structure of the subject as a ring.³⁰ Then later, last year, in connection with Plato, and not unrelated to what I am tinkering with just now, namely the inclusive class, you saw all the reservations that I felt it necessary to make regarding the different myths³¹ that are so intimately linked to Platonic thinking about the function of the sphere.

The sphere, this obtuse object, as I might say: you only have to look at it to see – a fine shape, perhaps, but how stupid! It is, of course, cosmological. Nature is supposed to show us a lot of spheres, though not actually so many when you look closely, and we cling to the ones that she shows us. The moon, for example, though we could actually make much better use of the moon if we took it as an example of a unary object. But let's not go into that.

Nostalgia for the sphere is what makes us follow von Uexküll who drags into biology the metaphor of the *Welt* (*innen-* and *um-*) [of the world (inner and surrounding) (German)] as what is supposed to constitute the organism.

Is it altogether satisfying to think that, in order to define the organism, we must be satisfied with the correspondence, the coaptation of this *innen* and *um*? No doubt there is a profound insight here, because this is indeed where the problem lies already at the level where we operate, which is not that of the biologist but of the analyst of the subject.³²

I would ask: what is the *Welt* doing in all this?

²⁷ The German word means “rejection” but was often used by Lacan (from *Seminar 3* onwards) to express something essential to the psychotic structure, and translators often use the English word “foreclosure”. Here Lacan seems to treat it as something universally human.

²⁸ In Roussan. Typescript 1 has “déductive” (“deductive”).

²⁹ Here and two sentences further on Lacan plays with the homonyms “tour” (“turn”, here “way round”) and “tore” (“torus”).

³⁰ Lacan, *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.), pp. 263-264.

³¹ Roussan has a further three words, “in the *Symposium*”, at the end of this sentence.

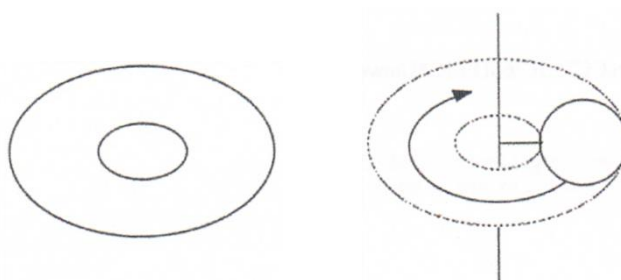
³² Lacan may mean a contrast between the “biologist of the subject” and the “analyst of the subject”, since the notion of the animal as a subject was important to the biologist von Uexküll (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jakob_Johann_von_Uexk%C3%BCll).

In any case, since we need to pay some kind of homage in passing to the biologists, I would ask, if the spherical image is to be considered as radical here, why the blastula needs to turn into a gastrula and then still isn't happy until it has redoubled its stomatic orifice with another hole on the backside, and why, at a certain stage of development of the nervous system, it presents itself as a trumpet, open to the outside at both ends. No doubt, this trumpet closes itself, it is even very well closed, but, as you will see, this needn't discourage us in the slightest, because I am going to abandon this path, which is called the path of *Naturwissenschaft*, without further ado.

This is not what interests me now and I am resolved to move the question elsewhere, even if, by doing so, I may appear to you to be putting myself, if you will allow a pun, "dans mon tort/tore" [in the wrong/in my torus].³³

Because the torus is what I am going to talk about to you today. From today on, as you see, I deliberately open the "era of presentiments". I want to look at things, for a certain time, under the double aspect of "à tort/tore et à raison" [rightly and wrongly/by means of the torus and of reason] and quite a few others that are offered to you. Let's now clarify what I am going to tell you.

I think you know what a torus is. I am going to make a rough image of it for you. It is something you can play with when it is made of rubber. It is easy to handle, it can be deformed, it is round, it is solid. The geometer describes it as a figure of revolution generated by revolving a circumference around an axis situated on the same plane as that circumference. The circumference goes around until, in the end, you are surrounded by the torus.



I think it has even been called a "hula hoop". I should underline that I am talking about the torus in the strict geometrical sense of the term, according to the geometrical definition which makes it a surface of revolution – the surface of revolution of a circle around an axis, such that a closed surface is generated.

³³ Here and in the next paragraph I use slashes to bring out Lacan's French puns.

This is important because it links up with something that I said to you in a special lecture, outside the series I am giving here,³⁴ but that I have referred to since, namely the accent that I mean to put on the surface in the function of the subject.

In our time, it is fashionable to envisage loads of spaces with masses of dimensions. I should say that, from the viewpoint of mathematical reflection, this does not merit unreserved belief.

The philosophers, the good ones, those who have a good smell of chalk about them, like Monsieur Alain, will tell you that even the third dimension is very suspect from the point of view that I was putting forward earlier about the real. In any case, believe me, two dimensions are enough for the subject. This explains my reservations about the term “depth psychology” and it won’t prevent us from giving a meaning to this term.

I am going to define the subject as this “infinitely flat being”, which, I think, made you laugh in maths classes when you were doing philosophy – the “infinitely flat subject”,³⁵ as the teacher said to a rowdy class (and me among them, I didn’t listen to everything). So we are going to move forward with this infinitely flat subject, as we may conceive him if we are to give its true value to the fact of identification as Freud presents it. And this will bring a lot of advantages, as you will see, because the reason why I am asking you to think specifically in terms of a surface is because of the topological properties that it can demonstrate to you.

It’s a good surface, as you see, and it couldn’t be the surface it is unless there was an interior. So, never fear, I am not asking you to do without volume or solidity or this complement of space, which you surely need in order to breathe. But I do simply ask you to take note that if you don’t prohibit yourself from entering into this interior, if you don’t accept that my model is designed to be of service only at the level of the properties of the surface, you will miss the whole point, because the advantage of this surface depends entirely on what I am going to show you about its topology, on what is original about it from a topological point of view, compared, for example, to a sphere or a plane. And if you start weaving things on the inside, by drawing lines from one side to the other of this surface, based on the appearance it has of being opposite to itself, you will lose all of its topological properties.

I will show you the core, the spice and the savour of these topological properties. They consist essentially in a support-word that I allowed myself to introduce as a riddle at the lecture of which I spoke earlier,³⁶ and this word, which could not have appeared to you at that time with its real meaning, is “loop” [lacs].³⁷ You see how I reign over my words for a

³⁴ “De ce que j’enseigne” (“About what I teach”), <https://www.freud-lacan.com/getdocument/28696> (see above, seminar of 24 January 1962, footnote 1).

³⁵ “Let us imagine to ourselves a world only peopled with beings of no thickness and let us suppose these ‘infinitely flat’ animals are all in one and the same plane”, Henri Poincaré, *Science and Hypothesis*, pp. 37-38.

³⁶ *Op. cit.*, “De ce que j’enseigne”.

³⁷ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loop_\(topology\)#:~:text=In%20mathematics%2C%20a%20loop%20in,equal%20to%20its%20terminal%20point.&text=The%20set%20of%20all%20loops,the%20loop%20space%20of%20X](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loop_(topology)#:~:text=In%20mathematics%2C%20a%20loop%20in,equal%20to%20its%20terminal%20point.&text=The%20set%20of%20all%20loops,the%20loop%20space%20of%20X).

certain time as we move forward: for a certain time I assailed your eardrums with the word “lacuna” [lacune], and now “lacuna” reduces to “loop” [lacs].

The torus has this considerable advantage over the undeniably tasty surface called a sphere, or quite simply over a plane, of not being at all homogeneous with respect to the loops, whatever loops they may be (loop [lacs] is lattice [laxis]), that you can trace on its surface.

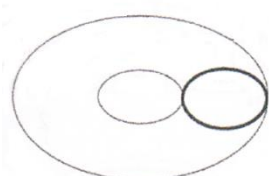
In other words, on a torus as on any other surface, you can make a little ring and then shrink it down, bit by bit, to nothing, to a point. Notice that, whatever the loop that you locate in this way in a plane or on the surface of a sphere, it will always be possible to reduce it to a point.

Kant tells us that there is a transcendental aesthetic, and I believe it. But I believe that his is not the right one, because, firstly, it is the transcendental aesthetic of a space that isn't a space, and, *secundo*, it makes everything depend on the possibility of reducing anything at all that is traced on the surface, which characterises this aesthetic, such that it can be brought to a point, so that the totality of the inclusion that a circle defines can be reduced to the vanishing unity of a point, to which the circle contracts. It is the aesthetic of a world where everything can be folded away into everything, so you always believe that you can have everything in the palm of your hand; in other words, that whatever you draw there, you can produce this sort of collapse, which, when signifiers are involved, will be called tautology.

Everything disappearing into everything, the problem arises: how can it be that one is able, using purely analytic constructions, to develop an edifice, which rivals the real as well as mathematics rivals the real?

I propose to admit, in a fashion which, no doubt, involves a concealment – something hidden that will have to be carried forward and rediscovered everywhere where it is – that we assume there to be a topological structure, of which it can be shown why it is necessarily that of the subject, which structure entails that certain of its loops cannot be reduced. This is the whole interest of the model of my torus.

You can see just by looking at it that a certain number of circles can be traced on the torus. I will call this one [the circle in bold in the figure below], when it closes on itself, a “full circle”.



It's just a matter of giving it a name. That makes no hypothesis about what there is inside it – it's just a label, no worse than any other, all things considered. I hesitated a long time,

discussing it with my son: perhaps you could call it “the engendering circle”, but God knows where that would lead us!

Think now of any synthetic saying [énonciation]: “synthetic”, because what is surprising about them is that, even though they can be said *a priori*, they seem to contain something (one doesn’t know where or what), and this is what is called “intuition”, the basis of which one looks for in the transcendental aesthetic. Suppose then that every synthetic saying – there are a certain number of them at the origin of the subject, and that constitute him – unfolds according to one of these circles, called a “full circle”. This is the best image for us of that which, in the ring [boucle] of this saying, is captured as irreducible.

That is far from being all that I have to say. Because, if it was, then I could have limited myself to the example of an infinite cylinder and because it wouldn’t take us very far.

What we have here is an intuitive metaphor – a geometrical metaphor, we could say. Everyone knows the importance of the battle between mathematicians that rages, specifically, around elements of this space. Poincaré and others maintain that there is an irreducible intuitive element, while the school of axiomaticians claim that we can entirely formalise the whole development of mathematics, starting from axioms, definition and from elements, namely that we can tear it away from any topological intuition.

Monsieur Poincaré fortunately understands very well that it is in topology that one finds the essence of the intuitive element, and that one cannot dissolve it away. I would say more: without intuition, one cannot do the science that is called topology, one cannot begin to articulate it, because it is a great science.

There are major fundamental truths linked to this construction of the torus and I am going to make you put your finger on something. You know that you can draw any geographical map, however complex, on a sphere or a plane, such that four colours are enough to fill in its domains in a way that prevents any of them being confused with its neighbour.³⁸

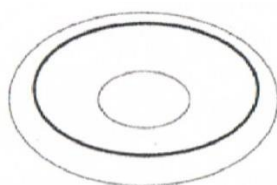
If you find a very good proof of this fundamental truth and take it to the right place, you will receive a prize, since the proof has not yet been found. On the torus – you can’t see it experimentally, but it can be proved – seven colours are necessary in order to solve the same problem. In other words, on the torus you can define up to seven domains with the tip of a crayon, but not one more, these domains being defined as each one having a common border with all the others. If you have a bit of imagination, in order to see them completely clearly, you will draw these domains as hexagons. It is very easy to show that you can draw seven hexagons on the torus and not one more, each one having a common border with all the others. I apologise for going into this, my intention being to give a little consistency to my object. The torus is not a just bubble or a breath of air. As you see, one can speak about it,

³⁸ The four-colour theorem, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_color_theorem

although entirely (as one says in classical philosophy) as a construction of the mind. It has all the resistance³⁹ of something real.

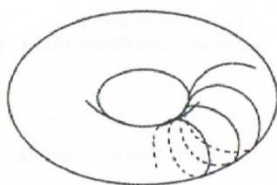
Most of you may say: “It is not possible!”. So long as I haven’t shown it to you, you have a right to object that it is not possible. Why not six, why not eight?

Let’s go on. This ring here is not the only one that interests us as irreducible. There are others that you can draw on the surface of the torus [the circle in bold on the figure below], which we will call “empty circles”, and the smallest of them is what we can call the most internal of those circles [coincides with the third, smallest circle in the figure below]. They go around the hole and you can do lots of things with them. What is certain is that they are apparently essential.



Now that you have your torus, you can deflate it like a balloon and put it in your pocket, because it’s not of the nature of this torus to be always completely round, completely regular. What matters is this holed structure. You can re-inflate it whenever you need it, but it can also be twisted, like the little giraffe of little Hans when he made a knot of its neck.

There is something that I want to show you right away. If it is true that the synthetic saying [l’*énonciation synthétique*] is maintained in the *one* of the circuits, in the repetition of this *one*, shouldn’t that be easy to illustrate? I only have to continue what I drew for you at first in full and then with a dotted line,⁴⁰ and that will produce a reel:



Here then is the series of circuits which make it that, in unary repetition [la *répétition unaire*], what comes back is what characterises the primary subject in his signifying relation of repetition automatism.

³⁹ In Typescript 1. Roussan has “consistance” (“consistency”). Lacan used “consistance” earlier in the paragraph and the word does not sound very much like “résistance”.

⁴⁰ In the last-but-one drawing Lacan must have drawn the part of the “full” circle that would not be visible to the viewer (where it goes under the torus) as a broken line.

Why not push the reel effect as far as it will go, until, snake-like, it bites its own tail (not an image to be studied as an analyst, and which exists under the pen of Mr. Jones)?⁴¹

What happens at the end of this circuit? It closes. And we find here the possibility of reconciling what is supposed and implicated as eternal return by *Naturwissenschaft* with what I underline concerning the necessarily unary function of the circuit.

This doesn't show up here, in the way I am representing it to you, but already there, at the beginning, to the extent that the subject goes through the succession of circuits of his demand, he has necessarily gone wrong by one in his count, and we see the unconscious –1 reappearing here in its constitutive function.

This for the simple reason that the circuit he cannot count is the one that he has made in making a circuit of the torus, and I am going to illustrate it for you in an important way that will introduce you to the function we are going to give to the two types of irreducible loops – full circles and empty circles, regarding which you will guess that the latter must have something to do with the function of desire.

Because, compared to these circles which succeed one another – the succession of full circles, – you can see that the empty circles, which are, in a way, caught in the rings of the full circles and which unify all the circles of demand, must have something to do with the object little a ⁴² – the object of metonymy in so far as it is this object.

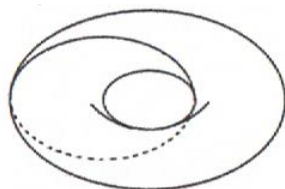
I don't say that it is desire, which is symbolised by these circles, but the object as such, which is proposed to desire.

I say this by way of showing you the direction we will take in what follows. It's just a first small beginning. I want to show you something else, to conclude, so that you don't go away with the feeling that this sort of missed circuit, which, it might seem, I am trying to get you to accept by sleight of hand, is an artifice.

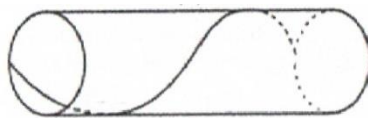
I will show it to you in connection with a single circuit on the full circle. I will show it to you by a drawing on the blackboard. I can draw a circle that sets out to make a circuit of the thickness of the torus. It goes on the outside of the central hole then comes back from the other side.

⁴¹ Perhaps a reference to Ernest Jones' paper, "Snake symbolism in dreams: a rejoinder", *Psyche* 6(89), 1926

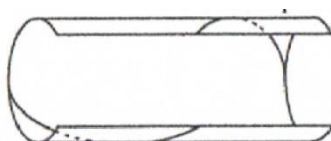
⁴² Typescript 1 has only "the little object" (without " a "). I follow Roussan, who cites the notes of several listeners.



A better way to make you see it is if you take the torus and a pair of scissors, and cut it along one of the full circles, so that it is undone like a black pudding [boudin] open at both ends.

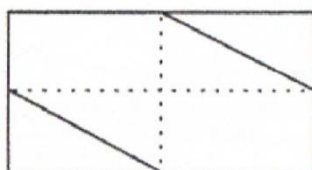


Then you take the scissors again and cut it lengthways, so it can be opened up completely and spread out.



You then have a surface, which is equivalent to that of the torus. It is sufficient, for that to be the case, that we should have defined the surface in such a way that each point of its edges has an equivalence implying continuity with a point of the opposite edge.

What I have drawn for you is projected on the unfolded torus like this:



This is how something, which is just a single loop, can be represented on the torus that has been suitably cut by two scissor cuts. And this oblique line defines what we can call a third type of circle, precisely the circle that interests us as regards this sort of possible property that I am trying to articulate as structural of the subject, where, even though he has only made one circuit, he has nevertheless well and truly made two, namely the circuit of the full circle of the torus and, at the same time, the circuit of an empty circle; and this circuit, missing from the count, is precisely that which the subject includes in the necessities of his own surface due to being infinitely flat, and which subjectivity can only grasp by a detour: the detour of the Other.

The point is to show you how one can imagine it in a particularly exemplary fashion thanks this topological artifice, to which, as you may well suppose, I accord a little more weight than simply that of an artifice.

My answer to a question, which I was asked about the root of -1 [$\sqrt{-1}$] as I introduced it into the function of the subject, comes down to the same thing and for the same reason. “By articulating things like that,” I was asked, “do you intend to make manifest something other than a pure and simple symbolisation, replaceable by anything else whatsoever – something that attaches more radically to the very essence of the subject?”

To which I replied: “Yes, that is how you should understand what I have been developing for you.”

And it is what I propose to develop further using the form of the torus.

14 March 1962¹

In the dialogue that I am pursuing with you, there are necessarily *hiatus* [hiatuses], *saltus* [jumps], *casus* (occasions), to say nothing of *fatum* [fate].² In other words, the dialogue gets interrupted by various things. For instance, yesterday evening, at the scientific meeting of the Society, we heard the interesting and important paper by Lagache on sublimation. This morning I wanted to start out from it, but, on the other hand, on Sunday I had started from somewhere else, from a remark of sorts on the nature of the research that we are pursuing here.

Obviously, it is a research that is conditioned. Conditioned by what? For the moment, by a certain perspective [visée] which I would call the perspective of an erotic [une érotique].³ I consider this to be legitimate, but not because we are, by nature, essentially destined to do it just by being on the road where it is required.

I mean that we are on this road in something like the way in which those who, down the centuries, meditated on the conditions of science were on the road of what science actually achieves (hence my reference to the cosmonaut, which is pertinent), to the extent that what science achieved certainly wasn't necessarily that which, up to a certain point, it had expected, even though the phases of its research were abolished, refuted by its success.

It is certain that among people [les gens], using that term in the broadest sense... unless we use it in a slightly narrower sense, that of the gentiles [les gentils],⁴ which would obviously leave open the curious question of the gentiles defined with respect to x (you know where this definition of the gentiles comes from), which would leave open the curious question of how it happens that the gentiles represent, as I might say, a secondary class in the sense I was using last time of something founded on a certain prior definition.

This wouldn't be a bad approach, all the same, because, in this perspective, the gentiles are Christianity, and everyone knows that Christianity as such is notorious for its relationship to the difficulties of the erotic, that the trouble the Christian has with Venus is something which can hardly be missed, even though people pretend to be easy going about it.

If the basis of Christianity is the Pauline revelation, namely a certain essential step taken in relation to the father, if the relationship of love for the father is Christianity's essential step, if it really goes beyond the chief thing in the Semitic tradition, that fundamental relationship to

¹ Typescript 1 of this week's seminar is available on the site of the École lacanienne via the link for the 11 April seminar (<https://ecole-lacanienne.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/1962.04.11.pdf>) (as of November 2022).

² Lacan translates only the third of these four Latin words, taken from Kant. See above, p. 150, seminar of 28 February 1962.

³ Here and in subsequent instances in this seminar "une érotique" may need to be understood as "a theory of the erotic".

⁴ The word "gentile" comes from Latin "gens" ("family" and, by extension, "nation" or "ethnos"), which is also the origin of the French word "gens" ("people").

the father, that original *baraka*, to which Freud's thought is clearly attached, albeit in a contradictory, maledictory way (and we cannot doubt that it does go beyond, because, while the reference to the Oedipus complex may leave the question open, the fact that Freud ended his discourse on Moses in the way he did leaves no doubt that the foundation of the Christian revelation is this relationship of grace, which Paul makes into the successor of the law)⁵ the difficulty, then, is the following: that the Christian does not live up to this revelation (and with good reason), but that, nevertheless, he lives in a society, whose principles, even reduced to their utmost lay form, nevertheless issue directly from a catechism which is not unrelated to this Pauline revelation.

And since the meditation on the mystical body is not within everyone's reach, a gap is left open such that the Christian finds himself in practice reduced to something that is not very normal or fundamental – a state of no longer really having any access to *jouissance* as such other than making love [faire l'amour]. This is what I call his trouble with Venus. Because, of course, with the way he is situated in this order, things work out quite badly overall.

What I am saying is very tangible, for example, when one goes outside the boundaries of Christianity, into areas dominated by Christian acculturation. I don't mean areas, which have been converted to Christianity, but those which have experienced the effects of Christian society.

I won't soon forget a long conversation that I had one night in 1947 with someone who was my guide on a trip to Egypt. He was what is called an Arab. His functions and the zone where he lived made him an excellent example of our category. This effect of promotion of the erotic question was very clear in his discourse. He was certainly prepared by all sorts of very antique resonances of his own sphere to put his *jouissance* in the foreground of the question of the justification of existence; but the way in which he incarnated it in the woman had all the characteristic impasses of everything that is most blatant in our own society. Specifically, the requirement of novelty, of an infinite succession, due to the essentially non-satisfying nature of the object, was the essential feature, not just of his discourse, but of his practical life.

So, as one would have said in another vocabulary, he was a personage essentially torn away from the norms of his tradition. What are we to think of these norms, as regards the erotic? In other words, do we need, for example, to offer a justification for the survival, through even our most revolutionary transformations, of marriage as an institution?

I don't think there is any need for all the efforts made by someone like Westermarck to justify the institution of marriage by all sorts of arguments, from nature or tradition. It justifies itself by the simple fact of its persistence, which we cannot fail to observe (and in a form very clearly marked by petit bourgeois traits) in a society that initially believed that it

⁵ Sigmund Freud, [Standard Edition 23](#), pp. 88-90 (*Moses and Monotheism*).

could go further with a questioning of fundamental relationships, I mean in Communist society. It seems very certain that the necessity of marriage has not even been touched by the effects of that revolution.

So is this the domain we are called upon to shed light on? I absolutely think not. The necessities of marriage are, for us, a social feature of our conditioning and they leave completely open the problem of the dissatisfactions which result from it, namely the permanent conflict with the effects, the repercussions of this law (of marriage), which are the lot of the human subject just because he is human.

What is our evidence for this? Quite simply, what we come up against when we deal with desire, I mean the fact of the existence in societies of neurosis, whether or not those societies are well organised, whether the necessary constructions for the habitat of individuals are provided more or less abundantly. And neurosis is not rarer in places where the most satisfactory conditions of life are provided, nor where tradition is most well established. Far from it.

What does neurosis mean? What authority, as I might say, does neurosis have for us? This authority is not tied simply to the pure and simple existence of neurosis. The position is too facile of those who attribute the effects of neurosis to a sort of displacement of human weakness, when they shift onto the neurotic the deficiencies of the social organisation as such by saying that the neurotic is “poorly adapted”. What’s the proof of that?

It seems to me that the claim, the authority of what we can learn from the neurotic lies in the structure that he reveals to us. What he fundamentally reveals to us, once we realise that his desire is just the same as ours (and with good reason), what he reveals little by little to our research, what gives the neurotic his dignity, is that he wants to know.

And, in a way, it is the neurotic who inaugurates psychoanalysis. As everyone knows, the inventor of psychoanalysis is not Freud, but Anna O. and lots of others behind her – all of us.

What does the neurotic want to know? I will slow down here, to make sure that you hear properly, because every word counts. He wants to know what there is that is real in that of which he is the passion, what there is that is real in the effect of the signifier. This, of course, supposes that we have advanced far enough to know that what is called desire in the human being is unthinkable except in this relationship to the signifier and the effects that are inscribed in it.

This signifier that he himself is, by his position, i.e., as a living neurosis, if you refer to my definition of the signifier (and, inversely, its applicability is what justifies it), is that by which this cryptogram, which is a neurosis, makes the neurotic as such a signifier and nothing more.

Because, precisely, the subject that he serves is elsewhere – it is what we call his unconscious. And this is why the neurotic, qua neurosis, is a signifier, according to the definition that I give you of the signifier – because he⁶ represents a hidden subject.

But what does he represent it for? For nothing else than another signifier.⁷

What justifies the neurotic as such, the neurotic in so far as analysis “valorises” him (I allow the term borrowed from yesterday’s discourse by my friend Lagache), is the extent to which his neurosis contributes to the advent of the discourse that is needed for the final constitution of an erotic.

He, of course, knows nothing of that and is not looking for it. And we too don’t need to look for it, except to the extent that you are here and I am giving you explanations about this needed advent of an erotic, which makes it thinkable that the human being could make the same breakthrough in this domain (why not?) and which, moreover, culminates in this bizarre moment of the cosmonaut in his shell.

Based on that you may well think that I am not trying even to glimpse what a future erotic might offer.

What is for sure is that the only people who have dreamt fittingly about it, namely poets, have always arrived at rather strange constructions.

And if a certain prefiguring of it can be found in something I spent much time on (the outlines of an erotic, which may be given in certain paradoxical points of the Christian tradition, such as courtly love),⁸ my purpose then was to emphasise to you the quite bizarre singularities, which those who were my listeners will remember, of certain sonnets by Arnaut Daniel, for example, which open up to us some very curious perspectives on what the relationship between the lover and his lady effectively represented.⁹

This is by no means unworthy of comparison with what I am trying to situate as an extreme point regarding aspects of the cosmonaut. Certainly, the attempt may seem to involve a degree of mystification and, in any case, it fell short,¹⁰ but it is highly illuminating when we come to situate, for example, what is to be understood by sublimation.

I pointed out yesterday evening that sublimation, in Freud’s discourse, comes with a contradiction, namely that *jouissance*, the aim of *jouissance*, subsists and is in a certain sense

⁶ “il”, by which Lacan could also mean “it”, referring to the signifier.

⁷ “A signifier is what represents a subject for another signifier” (see above, p. 117, seminar of 24 January 1962).

⁸ Lacan, *Seminar 7* (D. Porter, trans.), seminars of 10 February, 9 March 1960.

⁹ The sonnet, which advises against anilingus with the lady due to possible unpleasant surprises, is cited by Lacan in *Seminar 7* (D. Porter, trans.), p. 162. It can be accessed at http://www.trobar.org/troubadours/arnaut_daniel/arnaut_daniel_07.php.

¹⁰ See above, p. 147, seminar of 28 February 1962.

realised in every activity of sublimation. There is no repression, no erasure, not even a compromise with *jouissance*; there is a paradox, a detour, and it is by ways that appear contrary to *jouissance* that *jouissance* is obtained.

This is only thinkable if the medium that intervenes in *jouissance* – the medium that gives access to its essence, which, as I showed you, can only be the Thing [la Chose] – has to be a signifier. Whence the strange aspect, which, to our eyes, the lady assumes in courtly love. We can't bring ourselves to believe it, because we can no longer identify, to that degree, a living subject with a signifier – a person called Beatrice with wisdom and with what was, for Dante, the whole, the totality of knowledge.

It is not ruled out by the nature of things that Dante could have slept with Beatrice. That changes absolutely nothing in the matter. It is thought that he didn't. But it is not fundamental to the relationship.

Having set out these indications, we ask: what defines the neurotic? The neurotic undertakes a curious retransformation of that of which he suffers the effect. The neurotic, in fine, is an innocent: he wants to know. He sets off in the most natural direction for someone who wants to know and, naturally, he is thereby misled.

The neurotic wants to turn the signifier back into what it is the sign of. The neurotic doesn't know, and with good reason, that it is qua subject that he fomented the advent of the signifier, the signifier being the principal erasure [effaçon]¹¹ of the Thing, and he doesn't know that it is him, the subject, who by erasing [effaçant]¹² all the features of the Thing, makes the signifier.

The neurotic wants to erase this erasure, to make it not have happened. This is the most profound meaning of the overall, exemplary behaviour of the obsessional. What he always comes back to, without, of course, ever being able to abolish its effect, because every one of his efforts to abolish it only reinforces it, is to make this advent to the function of the signifier not have occurred, and to rediscover the real that was there at the origin – what all this is the sign of.

I leave this here as an indication, a start that we can come back to in a more generalised and also more diversified way according to the three kinds of neurosis (phobia, hysteria and obsession) after I have completed the circuit, which is the purpose of this preamble – the purpose of bringing me back to my discourse.

¹¹ “Effaçons” would be the first person plural of the verb “effacer” (“to erase”). Lacan makes it into a noun, evoking “façon” (“way”). He made the same wordplay in the seminar of 6 December 1961 (above, p. 53 and footnote 31).

¹² Sounds indistinguishable from “effaçon”.

The detour I am making is well designed to situate and at the same time to justify the double aim of the research, which we are pursuing this year on the ground of identification. Double in the sense that, firstly, although our research may appear to some to be extremely metapsychological, it is impossible to investigate identification other than along the path we have chosen, because analysis is only conceivable in this most “eschatological” (if I may say) perspective of an erotic; but, secondly, it is also impossible to investigate identification unless we maintain, at least at a certain level, an awareness of the sense of this perspective, which is for you to be able to appropriately do in your practice what you have to do, namely (of course) not to preach an erotic,¹³ but to deal with the fact that, even for the most normal people, within the full, entire and well-meant application of the norms, it still doesn’t work.

Not only is it the case that, as Monsieur de La Rochefoucauld said, there are good marriages but no delicious ones. We can add that things have deteriorated a little further since then, because there are no longer even any good ones, I mean from the point of view of desire.

It would be a little improbable if such remarks could not be highlighted in a company of analysts.

This doesn’t make you into the propagandists of a new erotic. It sets out what you have to do in each particular case: you have to do exactly what everyone has to do for himself and for which he has more or less need of your help, namely (pending the appearance of the cosmonaut of the future erotic) to find makeshift solutions.

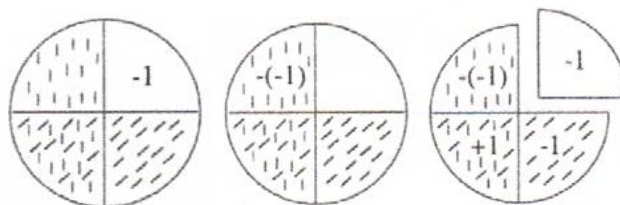
Let’s pick up again where we left off last time, at the level of privation. I hope that I made myself understood concerning this subject by symbolising it by -1 [minus one], the circuit that necessarily isn’t counted, that, at best, is counted as minus when the subject has made the circuit of the round, the circuit of the torus [le tour du tour, le tour du tore].

When I straight away tightened the thread that links the function of this -1 to the logical foundation of any possibility of a universal affirmation, namely the possibility of founding the exception (and this is what requires the rule: the exception doesn’t prove the rule, as gets said, but requires it; the exception is the true principle of the rule)... when, in short, I drew my little dial to show you that the only genuine guarantee of the universal affirmation is the exclusion of a negative characteristic [trait]¹⁴ (“there is no man who is not mortal”), I may have given rise to a confusion, which I now mean to rectify so that you know upon which terrain of principle I am asking you to advance.

¹³ Here, particularly, “une érotique” needs to be understood as a theory (or, perhaps, practice) of the erotic.

¹⁴ The same word which I have elsewhere rendered as “stroke” when translating “trait unaire” (“unary stroke”).

I gave you this reference, but it is clearly not to be taken as a deduction of the whole process starting from the symbolic.¹⁵ At this level, the empty quadrant of my dial, the quadrant where there is nothing, must be considered as detached.



The -1 that the subject is at this level is in no way subjectivised – there is not yet any question of either knowing or of not knowing.

For something in the nature of this advent to occur, a whole cycle has to be completed [bouclé], of which privation is only the first step.

The privation in question is a real privation which, with the support of intuition, I may well be allowed, since all I am doing is following in the steps of tradition and the purest tradition: Kant is allowed what is essential in his procedure and I am looking for a better foundation of the schematism.¹⁶ I have forced the mechanism of this real privation in order to make it tangible and intuitive for you.¹⁷

It is only after a long detour that the knowledge of his original rejection can arise for the subject. And I can tell you straight away: enough things will have happened in the meantime to ensure that, when it comes to light, the subject will not only know that this knowledge rejects him, but also that this knowledge is itself to be rejected because it will prove to always be either beyond or short of what needs to be attained for the realisation of desire.¹⁸

In other words, if ever the subject succeeds in what has been his goal since the time of Parmenides, namely to make the identification, to affirm that it is τὸ αὐτό [*to auto*, Greek], the same, νοεῖν καὶ εἶναι [*noein kai einai*], to think and to be, at that moment he will find himself irremediably divided between his desire and his ideal.

¹⁵ This and what follows seems to echo Lacan's point made near the end of the previous seminar in the two paragraphs beginning "My answer to a question..." (above, p. 168, seminar of 7 March 1962).

¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (N. Kemp-Smith, trans.), pp. 180-187, and above, seminar of 28 February 1962, p. 143 and footnote 20.

¹⁷ I follow Typescript 1 in these two sentences. Roussan has a significantly different version, with a first sentence that seems ungrammatical (the relative clause is incomplete) and, in the second sentence, "forgé" ("forged") instead of "forcé" ("forced") in Typescript 1. So: "The privation in question is a real privation for which, with the support of intuition which I may well be accorded a right to, since all I am doing is following in the steps of a tradition and the purest tradition. Kant is accorded what is essential in his procedure and I am looking for a better foundation of the schematism in order to make it tangible and intuitive for you. I have forged the mechanism of this real privation."

¹⁸ This seems to relate to Lacan's comment on "Verwerfung" in the seminar of 7 March 1962 (above, p. 160 and footnote 27).

This, I may say, is designed to demonstrate what I might call the objective structure of the torus in question. And why should I be refused this use of the word “objective”, since it is classic in the domain of ideas and was still used up until Descartes?¹⁹ So, at the point we have got to, and in order not to come back to it any more, the real in question is perfectly tangible, and that is all there is to it.

What led us to the construction of the torus at the point we have got to is the need to define each of the circuits as a *one* that is irreducibly different. For this to be real, namely for this truth (which is symbolic since it presupposes computation, counting) to be grounded, to be introduced into the world, it is necessary and sufficient that something should have appeared in the real, which is the unary stroke.

This *one*, which gives to the ideal all its reality (the ideal is all the real that there is in the symbolic) is such that, at the origins of thinking – what people call the origins of thinking, at the time of Plato and in Plato’s work, without going back further – it entailed adoration, prostration: the *one* was the good, the beautiful, the true, the supreme being.

The reversal that we are called upon to make in the face of this consists in grasping that, however legitimate this adoration may be from the point of view of an affective elation,²⁰ it remains the case that this *one* is nothing more than the reality of a rather stupid stick. That is all.

As I told you, the first hunter, who made a notch on an antelope’s rib in order to remember that he had hunted ten, twelve or thirteen times... he didn’t know how to count, remember, and that is precisely why he needed to make these strokes so that that the ten, twelve or thirteen – all of the times – didn’t get mixed up with each other,²¹ as they well might.

So we start from the level of the privation in question, whereby the subject at first objectively is this privation in the thing, this privation that he does not know is of the uncounted circuit. And we start from there in order to understand (we have other elements of information) what happens in order for the subject to be constituted as desire and for him to know the relationship that this constitution has with this origin, in so far as it²² can allow us to begin to articulate some symbolic relationships more adequate than those previously put forward concerning the structure of desire in the subject.

¹⁹ See above, p. 42 and footnote 7, seminar of 6 December 1961.

²⁰ In Roussan. Typescript 1 has “relation” (“relation”).

²¹ I follow Roussan who has “fois” (“times”) instead of “file” (“line” in the sense of several individualas standing in a line) in Typescript 1. As Roussan pointed out in remarks on my translation of this week’s seminar: “it is not a matter of a line of kills, but of each one of them among the others”. In Typescript 1, “file” is typed above a crossed-out word, suggesting uncertainty as to what Lacan said here.

²² “elle” (feminine pronoun) probably refers back to “origin”. “Relationship” (“rapport”) is a masculine noun in French.

This doesn't however make us presume as to what will be kept of the notion of the function of the subject when we have put him into the equation of desire. This is what we have to go through with him according to a method, which is really only that of experience. The subtitle of Hegel's *Phenomenology* is "Wissenschaft der Erfahrung" – "Science of Experience".²³ We are following an analogous path with the different data that are offered to us.

The next step (I could just as well not put a chapter heading here, I do it for didactic purposes) is that of frustration. It is at the level of frustration that, with the introduction of the Other, the possibility of a new and essential step for the subject is introduced.

The 1 of the single circuit, the 1 that distinguishes each repetition in its absolute difference, doesn't drop into the subject's lap from heaven, even if its support is nothing but the real stick. It comes from an experience that is constituted for the subject we are dealing with by the existence, before he was born, of the universe of discourse and by the necessity, which this experience supposes, of the locus of the Other with a big O, as I have previously defined it.

This is where the subject will conquer the essential, what I called the "second dimension", which is a radical function of his own location in its structure, if we metaphorically call this second dimension the structure of the torus (metaphorically, but not without claiming by this metaphor to attain the very structure of the thing), a structure that is special because it constitutes loops that are irreducible to a point – loops that don't vanish.²⁴

This irreducibility of the two dimensions is necessarily incarnated in the Other because, if it is anywhere tangible, it can only be so in the symbolic, and that is because the subject is only the subject for us in so far as he speaks. It is in the experience of the symbolic that the subject must encounter the limitation of his displacements, the limitation which first makes him enter into the experience of the apex or irreducible angle of this duplicity of the two dimensions.

As you will see, this is where the schematism²⁵ of the torus will serve me best, based on the experience that is highlighted by psychoanalysis and the observation that it gives rise to.

The subject can attempt to say the object of his desire. He does nothing but that. It is more than an act of saying [énonciation]: it is an act of imagining. It sets off in him a manoeuvre of the imaginary function, and this function necessarily reveals itself as soon as frustration appears.

²³ "Wissenschaft der Erfahrung des Bewußtseins" ("Science of the Experience of Consciousness"). See [The Phenomenology of Spirit](#) (T. Pinkard, trans.), pp. xvi-xx, 47, 58.

²⁴ See above, pp. 165-166, seminar of 7 March 1962.

²⁵ Probably meant in the Kantian sense (Immanuel Kant, [Critique of Pure Reason](#) (N. Kemp-Smith, trans.), pp. 180-187).

You know the importance, the accent that I have placed (following others, and specifically St. Augustine) on the moment of awakening of jealous passion in the constitution of this type of object, the same that we have constructed as underlying each of our satisfactions. The little child is prey to jealous passion before his brother who, in an image, crystallises the possession of this object, the breast, which until then had only been the object that was underlying, elided, masked for him behind this return of a presence linked to each of his satisfactions, the object which, in this rhythm where the necessity of his first dependency was inscribed and felt, had only been the metonymic object of each of these returns.

Here it is suddenly produced for the child in the illumination of this new something, which is desire, the effects of which are apparent from his mortal pallor.²⁶ Desire of the object as such, resonating to the very foundations of the subject, shaking him far beyond his constitution as satisfied or unsatisfied, as suddenly threatened in the most intimate parts of his being, as revealing his fundamental lack, and this in the form of the other, making apparent both metonymy and the loss that it conditions.

This dimension of loss which is essential to metonymy, the loss of the Thing [chose] in the object [objet], is the true meaning of this theme of the object as lost and never refound, the theme which is the basis of the Freudian discourse and which is ceaselessly repeated.

One step more: as you know, if we push metonymy further, it is the loss of something essential in the image, in this metonymy called the ego [moi], at this point of the birth of desire, at this point of pallor which makes St. Augustine pause before the infant at the breast as Freud did before his grandson eighteen centuries later.²⁷ It is wrong to say that the being of whom I am jealous, the brother, is my like-being [semblable]: he is my image in the sense in which this image is the founding image of my desire. This is the imaginary revelation and it is the meaning and the function of frustration.

All this is already known and I only recite it as the second source of the experience, after real privation comes imaginary frustration. But, just as I have tried today to situate for you how real privation is involved in what interests us, namely in the foundation of the symbolic, so we now have to see how this fundamental, revelatory image of desire is placed in the symbolic. This placement is difficult. It would of course be quite impossible if it was not the case that (as I have reminded and repeated long enough for you to have it fixed in your head) the Other and the discourse where the subject has to place himself had been there waiting for him since forever – since before his birth – and that he is spoken to, at least by his mother, by his caregiver.

The mainspring here (it is the ABC, the infancy of our experience, but, for some time now, people have been unable to get beyond it for want precisely of knowing how to formalise it as

²⁶ “I have watched and experienced for myself the jealousy of a small child: he could not even speak, yet he glared with livid fury at his fellow nursling” (St. Augustine, *Confessions* (M. Boulding, trans.), p. 46).

²⁷ Freud, *Standard Edition 18*, pp. 14-16 (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*).

ABC) is the intersection, the naive exchange that is produced between desire and demand through the dimension of the Other.

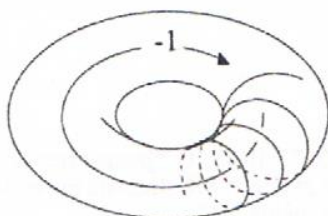
As you know, this is the trap which the neurotic can be said to have got caught in from the outset. He will try to make the object of his desire pass into demand, to obtain from the Other, not the satisfaction of his need (what demand is made for), but the satisfaction of his desire, namely to have the object of his desire, which is precisely what cannot be demanded.

This is the origin of what is called dependence in the relationship of the subject to the Other. By the same token the neurotic will try, even more paradoxically, to give satisfaction by conforming his desire to the demand of the Other. And there is no other meaning (no other correct articulation) of the existence as such of the super-ego, which is the discovery of analysis and of Freud. There is no other correct definition, I mean no other definition that avoids confusional slippages.

I think, without going any further, that the practical, day-to-day, specific resonances, the impasse of the neurotic, are primarily (before the problem of the impasses of his desire) this impasse, which is tangible at every moment, grossly tangible, and which you see him run up against time after time. I would express it concisely by saying that he has to have the sanction of a demand for his desire.

What is it that you refuse to him, if it isn't just what he expects from you: that you will demand that he should get on and desire? Not to mention what he expects from his spouse, his parents, his offspring and from all the conformisms that surround him. What does this enable us to construct and to grasp?

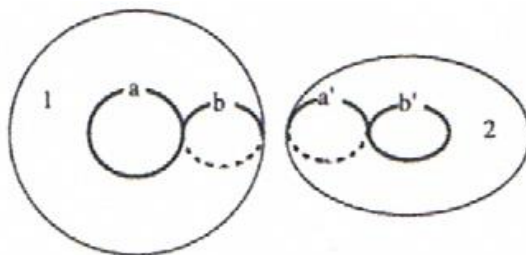
If it is the case that demand is renewed by the circuits made by the full circles, all the way round, and by the successive returns necessitated by the resurgence of need, but need that is locked²⁸ by the loop of demand, and if it is the case, as I gave you to understand, that we can say that the elided circle, the circle that I simply called the empty circle (so that you could see what I mean with respect to the torus), passing through each of these returns, comes to materialise the metonymic object beneath all these demands,



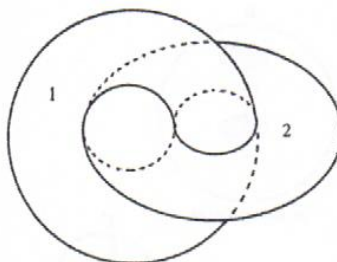
then there is an imaginable topological construction of another torus [2 in the figure below], which has the property of allowing us to imagine the application of the object of desire – the

²⁸ I follow “enserrée” (“locked”) in Typescript 1. Roussan has “insérée” (“inserted”).

internal empty circle [a] of the first torus [1] – onto the full circle [a'] of the second [2], the circle that makes a ring [un boucle] (one of these irreducible loops).

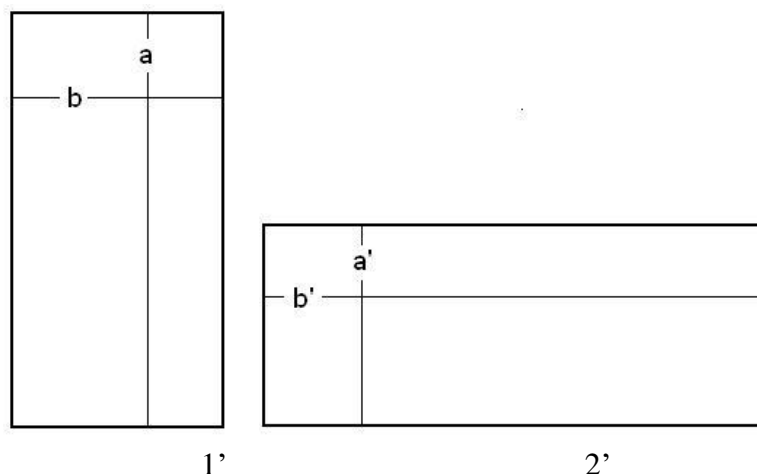


Inversely, the circle on the first torus, the circle of a demand [b], is superimposed on the empty circle [b'] of the second torus [2], the torus that is here a support for the other – the imaginary other of frustration, – by which it fills the function of showing this inversion: desire in one, demand in the other; demand of one, desire of the other. And this knot captures the whole dialectic of frustration.



This possible dependency of two topologies, that of one torus on that of the other, really expresses nothing other than the goal of our schema as supported by the torus. I would say that if the space of Kantian intuition has to be put in a parenthesis, cancelled out, *aufgehoben* as illusory thanks to the new scheme that we are introducing here, because the topological extension of the torus lets us do it, we can be sure of the permanence, of the solidity, I might say, of the volume of the system just by considering the properties of the surface, without needing recourse to the intuition of depth.

What you see and what this images is that, by keeping ourselves, to the whole extent that our intuitive habits allow us, within these limits, what results is that, since all that happens between these two surfaces is a substitution by a bi-univocal application – albeit inverted, because once it is cut, it will be in this direction [1' in the figure below] on one of the surfaces and in this other direction [2'] on the other, –



it is nevertheless the case that what this makes apparent is that, from the viewpoint of the space that is required, these two spaces, the interior and the exterior, once we refrain from granting them any substance other than topological, are the same.

You will see this already expressed in a key sentence of my Rome report...²⁹ The use that I thought possible to make of it³⁰ for you, namely that the property of a ring [anneau], whereby it symbolises the function of the subject in his relationships to the other, comes from its interior and exterior space being the same. The subject then constructs his exterior space on the model of the irreducibility of his interior space.

But what this schema shows clearly is the lack of some ideal harmony, which might be sought, of object to demand or of demand to object – an illusion, which, I think, is sufficiently demonstrated by experience for us to have felt the need to construct this necessary model of their necessary discordance.

We know the source of this illusion and, if I seem to be advancing at a slow pace, believe me – no stagnation is superfluous if we are to assure ourselves of the next steps.

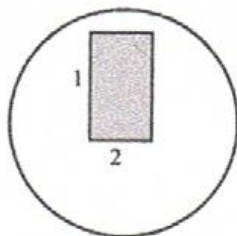
What we know already and what is intuitively represented here is that the object itself, as such, qua object of desire, is the effect of the impossibility of the Other to respond to demand. This is seen here manifestly in the sense that, whatever may be his desire, the Other cannot meet the aforesaid demand, that he necessarily leaves the greater part of the structure open, in other words that the subject is not enveloped, as is believed, in the all; that at the level, at least, of the subject who speaks, the *Umwelt* does not envelop his *Innenwelt*.

²⁹ Lacan, *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.), pp. 263-264. I follow Roussan who has “phrase clef” (“key sentence”) here where Typescript 1 has “phrase que les” (“phrase that the”) followed by a blank space. “Que les”, said quickly, sounds indistinguishable from “clef”.

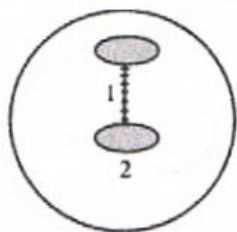
³⁰ It is unclear what “it” refers to here. Probably the inside-outside coincidence associated with the torus and the ring.

If we were looking for a way to imagine the subject in relation to the ideal sphere, which has always been the intuitive and mental model of the structure of a cosmos, it would rather be to represent the subject – if you will allow me to push, to exploit my intuitive image, and you will see that there is more than one way of doing it – by the existence of a hole in the aforesaid sphere and its supplementation by two sutures.

Suppose that the subject is to be constituted on a cosmic sphere. The surface of an infinite sphere is a plane: the plane of the blackboard extended indefinitely. Here is the subject, a quadrangular hole,



like the general configuration of my “skin” from a minute ago,³¹ but this time in the negative. I stitch one edge to the other, but with this condition that they are two opposite edges and that I leave the other two edges free. This gives the following figure:



So the void is filled in here, but there are two holes left in the sphere of infinite surface. You have only to pull on each of the edges of these two holes to make the subject on the surface of the infinite sphere³² as effectively constituted by what is still a torus even though it has a bag [besace] of infinite radius. It is a handle emerging on the surface of a plane.



³¹ Lacan must be referring to the cut and flattened out tori (1' and 2' in the last-but-one figure) forgetting that he has not yet compared this treatment of the torus to pegging out an animal skin on the ground (see below, p. 241, seminar of 11 April 1962).

³² Roussan has only “on the infinite surface”.

That, at maximum, is the relationship of the subject with the Great All [le grand Tout]. We will see the applications that we can make of it. What is important to grasp here is that, for this mapping of the object onto demand [recouvrement de l'objet à la demande], if the imaginary other is³³ thus constituted in the inversion of the functions of the circle of desire and that of demand, then, for the satisfaction of the desire of the subject, the Other³⁴ must be defined as without power.

I insist on this “without” [sans], because it brings a new form of negation, where the effects of frustration are indicated as such. “Without” [sans] is a negation, but not just any negation: it is a link-negation and in English it materialises the conformist homology of the two relationships of the two signifiers: “within” and “without”.³⁵ It is a linked exclusion, which already in itself alone indicates its reversal.

Let's take one more step, that of the “not without” [“pas sans”]. The Other certainly enters into the naive perspective of desire as being without power, but what really links him to the structure of desire is the “not without”. He is not without power either.

This is why this Other, whom we have introduced as a metaphor of the unary stroke that we find at his level and that he replaces in an infinite regress because he is the locus where the 1s (all different from one another) succeed each other, the 1s of which the subject is only the metonymy... this is why this Other as *one*³⁶ [Autre comme un] (the play on words is part of the formula that I use here to define the mode in which I introduce him)³⁷ turns out, once the necessity of the effects of imaginary frustration has been gone around [bouclée], to have this unique value, because he alone is not without: not without power. He is at the possible origin of desire posed as condition, even if this condition remains in suspense.

For this, he is “as not *one*” [“comme pas un”]: he gives the -1 of the subject another function, which is first incarnated in the dimension that this “as” situates well enough for you as being that of metaphor.

The level of metaphor, the level of the “as not *one*” and everything that will subsequently remain suspended from it as what I have called the absolute conditionality of desire, is what we will be dealing with next time. So we will be dealing with the level of the third term,³⁸ of the introduction of the act of desire as such, of its relation to the subject, on the one hand. And also with the root of this power and the rearticulation of the phases of this power,

³³ I follow Roussan by inserting “is” (“est”) here. Typescript 1 does not have it.

³⁴ I use capital “O” for “Other” from here to the end of this seminar. Typescript 1 has this and all the following occurrences of “autre” (“other”) with a small “a”. Roussan begins to use capital “A” from “This is why this Other...” (two paragraphs down).

³⁵ Lacan uses the English words “within” and “without”.

³⁶ As in the translation of an earlier passage (see above, p. 129 and footnote 8, seminar of 21 February 2022), I alternate here between (strictly signifier) “1” and (more neutral) “one” as seems appropriate.

³⁷ The play is on the words “Autre comme un” (“Other as one”), which sound exactly the same as “Autre commun” (“common/shared Other”).

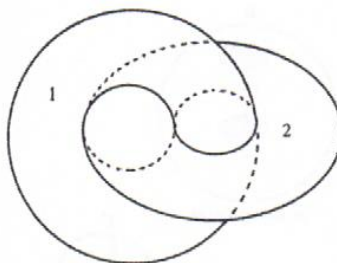
³⁸ Typescript 1 does not insert a comma here.

because, as you see, I shall have to go back over the “not possible” [“pas possible”] to mark the path that has been travelled in the introduction of these terms, “power” and “without power”.

I stop here for today, bearing in mind that we will have to pursue this dialectic next time.

21 March 1962

I left you the last time with this symbolic embrace of two toruses which incarnates in an imaginary way the relationship of inversion, so to speak, experienced by the neurotic, where we see – tangibly, in the clinic – that (apparently, at least) he tries to found, to establish his desire in a dependency on the demand of the Other.



Certainly, there is something here that is grounded in this structure, which we call that of the speaking subject – the structure, for which I am fomenting for you this topology of the torus, which I believe to be very fundamental.

It¹ has the function of what elsewhere in topology is called the “fundamental group” and this will be the question to which, after all, we will need to indicate a response.

I hope that when the time comes to give this response, it will already have been superabundantly prefigured.

Why, if this is the fundamental structure, has it been so profoundly ignored for so long – since always – by philosophical thought? If this is how things are, why has it been the other topology, that of the sphere, which has traditionally dominated all the elaborations of thought concerning its relationship to the thing?²

Let’s pick up where we left off last time, when I was indicating to you what our experience as such implies. This knot with the Other, as it is imaged here, as it is presented to us as a first tangible approximation – perhaps one that is too easy (we will see that it certainly is too easy) – involves a relationship that misleads [un rapport de leurre].

Let’s go back to the present, to what is articulated in this relationship to the Other. We know what it is. How could we not know, when we are the very support of its pressure every day in analysis, when the neurotic subject, with whom we have fundamentally to deal, presents himself as requiring us to give the answer, even if we teach him the value there is in suspending this answer.

¹ Masculine pronoun (“il”), so must agree with “torus” (“le tore”).

² This sentence is missing in Typescript 1.

The answer regarding what? This is what justifies our schema when it shows us desire and demand substituting one another: the answer is about the neurotic's desire and its satisfaction.

I will almost certainly be limited today, by the time at my disposal, to properly articulating the co-ordinates from which this demand made on the Other is suspended, this demand for a response, the true and ultimate explanation of which (any other approximation is insufficient) is what Freud pinpoints as *versagen*: *Versagung*, retraction or deceitful speech [la parole trompeuse], the breaking of a promise; at the limit, the *vanitas*, bad speech [la mauvaise parole], and I would remind you here of the ambiguity that links the word “blasphemy” to “blame” (via all sorts of intriguing transformations).³ I won't pursue that.

The essential relationship of frustration, the frustration we have to deal with, to speech [la parole] is the point to emphasise, to maintain as radical, without which our concept of frustration is degraded and degenerates until it is reduced to lack of gratification with regard to what, in the final analysis, can only be conceived of as need.

Now, we can't fail to remember what the genius of Freud originally tells us about the function of desire – what he set out from when he made his first steps, leaving aside the letters to Fliess and beginning with *The Interpretation of Dreams* and not forgetting that *Totem and Taboo* was his favourite book. What the genius of Freud tells us is this: that desire is fundamentally, radically structured by this knot that is called the Oedipus complex and from which it is impossible to eliminate this internal knot that I am trying to do justice to by means of these figures, this internal knot called the Oedipus complex as essentially being what? As essentially being a relationship between a demand, which takes on such a privileged value that it becomes the absolute commandment – the law – and a desire, which is the desire of the Other, the Other at issue in the Oedipus complex.

This demand is articulated as follows: you shall not desire her who has been my desire. This, in its essential structure, is what founds the beginning of the Freudian truth and it is there, starting from there, that any possible desire is in a way obliged to take this sort of irreducible detour – something like the impossibility in the torus of reducing the loop on certain circles makes it that desire has to include in itself this void, this specific internal hole, this relationship to the original law.

Let's not forget the steps that are required in the Freudian dialectic for the founding of the first relationship, around which, for Freud, all the *Liebesbedingungen*,⁴ all the determinations of love, are capable of being articulated (we forget it all too easily). It is in this relationship to the Other, the father who has been killed, beyond his death in the original murder, that this supreme form of love is constituted.

³ Lacan discusses blasphemy in the seminar of 18 June 1958 (*Seminar 5* (R. Grigg, trans.), pp. 445-446).

⁴ “Necessary conditions for loving” (Freud, [Standard Edition 11](#), p. 165 (*A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men*); [Standard Edition 14](#), p.101 (*On Narcissism: An Introduction*)).

The paradox, by no means concealed, even if it is elided by the veil over the eyes that always seems to accompany the reading of Freud on this point, is that – and this is an indispensable moment – after the murder of the father there arises this supreme love for the father (even if this isn't sufficiently explained to us, it is sufficient for us to be able to retain the moment as essential in what we can call the mythical structure of the Oedipus complex), which is precisely what makes the death in the original murder into the condition of his absolute presence from that time onwards.

So, essentially, death, by playing this role, showed that it alone can establish the father in this sort of reality – no doubt the only absolutely durable reality – of being as being absent. There is no other source for the absoluteness of the original commandment.

This is where the field is constituted in which the object of desire takes shape, in the position that we already know it to require at the imaginary level alone, namely a third position.

The dialectic of the relationship to the other as a transitive relationship – the imaginary relationship of the mirror stage – has already taught you that it constitutes the object, which interests the human being, as linked to his like-being [semblable]. The object a is related to this image that includes it and which is the image of the other at the level of the mirror stage: $i(a)$.

But this interest is, in a way, only a form; it is the object of the neutral interest around which even the dialectic of Monsieur Piaget's enquiry can be arranged, by foregrounding the relationship that he calls that of "reciprocity", which he believes he can join to a radical formula of the logical relationship.

The ternarity of the emergence of the object is instituted by this equivalence, this identification with the other as imaginary, but it is an insufficient, partial structure, a structure that we should ultimately find as deducible⁵ from the institution of the object of desire at the level at which I am articulating it for you here today.

The relationship to the Other is not at all this imaginary relationship founded on the specificity of the generic form, because the relationship to the Other is specified by demand, which elicits from this Other, the Other with a big O, its "essentialness", as I might say, in the constitution of the subject, or, to take up again the form that is always given to the verb "intéresser",⁶ its "inter-essentiality" to the subject.

So the field in question cannot in any way be reduced to the field of need and of an object which may, at the limit, impose itself as the object of subsistence for the organism in rivalry with his like-beings (that will be the direction to find our recourse for ultimate rivalry). This

⁵ I follow "déductible" in Roussan. Typescript 1 has "déductive", which makes much less sense and could be a mishearing of "déductible".

⁶ French "intéresser" (to interest) derives from Latin "interesse" ("to be between").

other field, which we are defining and for which our image of the torus is designed, is another field, a field of the signifier, a field of the connotation of presence and absence, where the object is no longer object of subsistence, but of the ek-sistence⁷ of the subject.

We could explain it by saying that it is a certain necessary place of the subject's ek-sistence and that it is the function to which the little *a* of the first rivalry is elevated and brought.

We have ahead of us the road that we still have to travel, from the summit I brought you to last time of the dominance of the Other⁸ in the institution of the relationship of frustration. The second part of the road should lead us from frustration to this still-to-be-defined relationship which constitutes the subject as such in desire, and you know that it is only there that we will be able to properly articulate castration. So we will not, in the final analysis, know what this place of ek-sistence means until we have travelled this road.

What we can, what we must do now is to remind the philosopher, who is the least familiar with our experience, and whom we so often see removing himself from his own discourse, of this singular point, this question: why is it that the subject has to be represented – and I mean in the Freudian sense, represented by an ideational representative⁹ – as excluded from the very field in which he has to act, in what we could call Lewinian¹⁰ relationships with others as individuals? We have to be able to explain why it is that, at the level of structure, the subject has to be represented somewhere as excluded from this field in order for him to intervene in this same field.

Because, after all, all the reasonings that the psycho-sociologist draws us into in his definition of what I have just called a Lewinian field are always presented with a complete elision of this necessity that the subject be, let's say, in two topologically defined places, namely, in this field but also essentially excluded from this field, and yet the psycho-sociologist manages¹¹ to articulate something, and something which stands up. Everything which, in thinking about the behaviour of man as observable, comes to be defined as apprenticeship and, at the limit, as objectification of apprenticeship, namely montage, forms a discourse which stands up and which, up to a certain point, explains a whole lot of things, but it doesn't explain why the subject functions, not with, as I might say, this simple use, but in a double use, which deserves consideration and which, though presented to us fleetingly, can be felt in so many ways that, really, you only have to bend down in order to gather up proofs of it.

⁷ A deformation of the word "existence" intended to express an essential outsideness of the existence in question (Greek "ek", meaning "out of", "away from").

⁸ Roussan has "autre" ("other" with small "o"), but the "privation, frustration, castration" table (above, p. 151) and remarks in the previous seminar (above, p. 178) suggest that Lacan meant "Autre".

⁹ Freud, *Standard Edition 14*, p. 147 (*Repression*)

¹⁰ Kurt Lewin was a social psychologist.

¹¹ Typescript 1 and Roussan have only "and that he manages", which would strictly mean that the *subject* manages; but the context and the next sentence suggest that the psycho-sociologist is meant. I add him in to make this clear.

It's this and nothing else that I am trying to get you to feel, for example, every time that I touch in passing on the traps of double negation and that "I don't know that I want..." ["je ne sache pas que je veuille"]¹² isn't heard in the same way as "I know that I don't want..." ["je sais que je ne veux pas"]¹³.

Reflect on these inexhaustible little problems, because the logicians of language exercise themselves with them and their stammerings are more than instructive. As often as there are words floating about and even writers who allow things to converse as they flow from their pen, you will find it being said (I already insisted on it, but it can't be repeated too often), "You aren't someone who's not unaware that..."¹⁴ when what is meant is "You know perfectly well that..."

The double plane on which this operates is that it is self-evident that someone could write like that, and that it has happened. I was reminded of it recently in a text of Prévert, by which Gide was astonished: "Was he playing the fool or does he really know what he is writing?" He wasn't playing the fool, it just flowed from his pen, and all the critique of logicians won't make it happen¹⁵ – if we are engaged in a genuine dialogue with someone, so that, in some way, there is a certain essential condition in our relationship, which I hope to get to later, that something should be established between us as ignorance – that, when I talk to him, I will make the slip, however learned and purist I may be, of saying "You aren't someone who's not unaware that..."

One day when I was talking to you here, I nearly quoted what I had just read in *Le Canard enchaîné* at the end of one of these virtuoso pieces under the by-line of André Ribaud, entitled "La Cour": "il ne faut pas se décombattre" (in a pseudo-Saint-Simon style, like Balzac writing in a 16th century language entirely invented by himself) "de quelque défiance des rois."¹⁶ You understand perfectly what that means. Try to analyse it logically and you see that it means the exact opposite of what you understand, and you are naturally quite within your rights to understand what you understand because it is in the structure of the subject.

¹² Both verbs in the present subjunctive.

¹³ Both verbs in the present indicative. The difference is subtler than what English can express.

¹⁴ "Vous n'êtes pas sans ignorer" (see above, seminar of 24 January 1962).

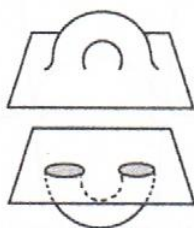
¹⁵ The meaning of the sentence clearly requires "won't stop it happening". Lacan seems to act out the point he is making.

¹⁶ "La Cour" ("The Court") was a rubric that ran from 1961 to 1964 in the satirical magazine *Le Canard enchaîné* mocking Charles de Gaulle's absolutist style in the French presidency. André Ribaud was the pseudonym of the journalist Roger Fressoz. Roussan traces Lacan's quote to *Le Canard enchaîné*, 03-01-62, p.3, where Ribaud spins some spoof history: Louis XVIII is an anonymous literary hobbyist providing a regular court chronicle to a boulevard newspaper; one of the chronicles is so scurrilous that the chief of police cracks down on the newspaper; the editor protests that the author is the King himself, but is disbelieved and the King does nothing to save him. The moral of the story is: "Il ne faut jamais se décombattre de quelque défiance des rois", literally "One should never disengage [se décombattre] from a measure of distrust of kings". Since a double negative is equivalent to an affirmative, this should have the same meaning as "Il faut se combattre de quelque défiance des rois", but since "se combattre de" has the sense of "do battle with" or "resist", the phrase without the double negative would mean the opposite of what was intended.

The fact that the two negations, which are superimposed here,¹⁷ not only do not cancel each other out, but effectively sustain one another depends on a topological duplicity, such that “il ne faut pas se décombattre” is not said on the same plane, so to speak, as the “quelque défiance des rois”: the saying and the said [l’*énonciation* et l’*énoncé*], as always, are perfectly separable, but here the gap between them explodes.

As you will see, the torus can be of use to us as a bridge – adequate for showing us what the redoubling, the ambiguity of the subject consists in once the redoubling has come into the world. But it is perhaps not a bad thing to consider what there is that goes with this topology and that is absolutely obvious. In our everyday experience, the experience of the subject, when we speak of commitment, do we really need to take the less initiated on major detours, like those I am taking you on for the needs of our cause, in order to make clear that committing yourself implies the image of a corridor, with entrance and exit, where the way out behind you is closed, and that it is in the relation to this closing to yourself of the way out that the final term of the image of commitment is revealed?

Do we really need much more than this? A whole literature that culminates in the work of Kafka lets us see that all we need to do is turn over what, apparently, I didn’t give a clear enough image of last time when I showed you the particular form of the torus as a handle standing out from a plane, where the plane is just a particular case of an infinite sphere enlarging one side of the torus.



Just turning it upside down, belly up, like the surface of the earthly field where we disport ourselves, is enough to show us the reason why man presents himself to us as what he was and perhaps what he remains: a burrow animal [un animal de terrier], a torus animal.

All these architectures are not without something that should give us pause, for their affinity with something which must go further than the simple satisfaction of a need, for an analogy which is obviously irreducible, impossible to exclude from anything which, for him,¹⁸ is called interior and exterior, and that both of them come out on each other and command each other – what I just called the corridor, the gallery, the underground. *Notes from the Underground* is the title Dostoevsky gives to this extreme point where he punctuates the palpitation of his final question.

¹⁷ “décombattre” being treated as a negation of “combattre” (“to combat”).

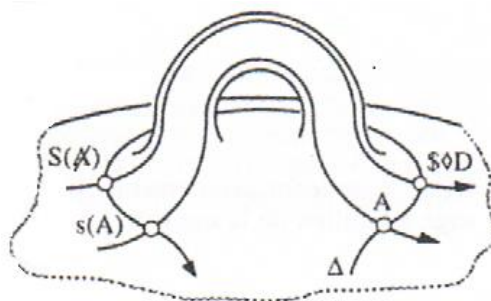
¹⁸ Presumably refers back to “man” (in the last sentence).

Is this something that can be exhausted in the notion of a socially useful instrument? Of course, like our two tori, the function of the social agglomerate and its relationship to pathways, whose anastomosis simulates something which exists in the innermost part of the organism is a prefigured object of questioning for us. It's not our privilege: the ant and the termite know it. But the badger in his set, that Kafka tells us about,¹⁹ precisely is not a social animal.

What does this reminder mean for us, at the point we have got to, if it's not that – this structural relationship being so natural that, if we think about it, we find its roots plunged everywhere very deep into the structure of things – the fact that when thought organises the relationship of the subject to the world it so abundantly misrecognizes it²⁰ down the ages poses the question of why repression, or let's at least say misrecognition [méconnaissance], has been taken so far?

This brings us back to our starting point – the relationship to the Other, which I have called, founded on, a certain misdirection [leurre] that now has to be articulated in a quite different place from this natural relationship, because we see the degree to which it eludes thought, the degree to which thought refuses it.

We have to start from elsewhere, from the position of the question to the Other, the question about desire²¹ and its satisfaction. If there is a misdirection, it must have to do in some way with what I called earlier the “radical duplicity of the position of the subject” and that is what I want to make you sense at the level of the signifier as specified by the duplicity of the position of the subject, and I ask you to follow me in considering the difference, for which the graph that I used with you for a certain time in my discourse is essentially designed.²² This difference is called the difference between the message and the question. This graph could be very well inscribed here, in the very gap through which the subject links himself doubly to the plane of universal discourse.²³



¹⁹ Franz Kafka, ‘The Burrow’, in *The Complete Stories* (W. Muir and E. Muir, trans.), pp. 325-359.

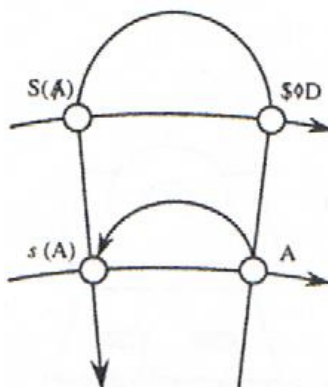
²⁰ i.e., thought misrecognises the relationship.

²¹ Roussan has “son désir” (“his desire”).

²² The “graph of desire”, first introduced in the early part of *Seminar 5* (R. Grigg, trans.) and deduced step by step in *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.), pp. 671-702.

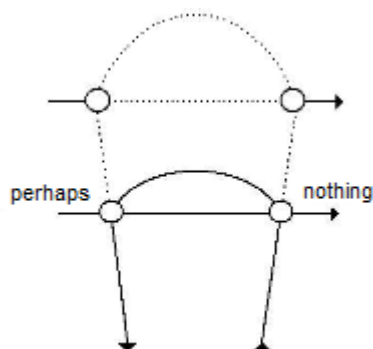
²³ Roussan compiles the following diagram, which combines the graph of desire with the torus by means of a “handle” emerging from the surface of a sphere, using sketches in the notes of three different listeners of what Lacan apparently drew on the blackboard at this point (Roussan (Ed.), *L'identification*, pp. 151, 156).

Today I am going to inscribe on it²⁴ the four meeting points, which you already know: A... s(A),²⁵ the signification of the message in so far as it is the return, coming from the Other, of the signifier that resides there; $\$ \diamond D$, the relationship of the subject to demand, as specifying the drive; and S(A), the signifier of the Other, in that the Other, ultimately, can only be formalised, be made significant [se significantiser] as himself marked by the signifier, in other words as imposing on us the renunciation of any metalanguage.²⁶



The gap that we need to articulate here is entirely suspended in the form in which, ultimately, this demand to the Other to respond alternates, oscillates in a succession of returns between the “nothing, perhaps” and the “perhaps nothing” [le “rien peut-être” et le “peut-être rien”].

What we have here is a message.



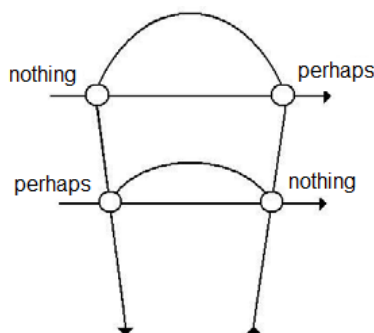
It opens onto what appeared to us as the opening constituted by the entry of a subject into the real. We are here in accord with the most certain elaboration of the term of possibility: *Möglichkeit*. The possible is not on the side of the thing, but on the side of the subject. The message opens onto the term of the eventuality constituted by an expectation in the

²⁴ i.e., on the graph.

²⁵ “A” standing for “Autre” (“Other”), also in the diagrams above and below.

²⁶ It is unclear whether or not the three diagrams that follow and that I take from Roussan were produced by Lacan. Most probably, he pointed out the places he refers to (“A”, “s(A)”, etc., and then “perhaps” and “nothing”) on the graph that he had imposed on the torus in the last (reconstructed) diagram.

constituting situation of desire that we are trying to get to grips with here. “Perhaps”, the possibility, is anterior to this nominative “nothing” which, at the extreme, takes on the value of a substitute for positivity. It is a point and only a point. The place of the unary stroke is reserved there in the void that can respond to the expectation of desire. It is a completely different thing from the question articulated as “Nothing, perhaps?”, from the “perhaps” at the level of demand put in question (“What do I want?” speaking to the Other).



The “perhaps” comes here in a position homologous to that which constituted the eventual response at the level of the message. “Perhaps nothing” is the first formulation of the message. “Perhaps nothing” can be a response, but is it the response to the question “Nothing, perhaps?”? It most certainly is not. Here²⁷ the enunciative²⁸ “nothing” as posing from the start the possibility of there being no grounds [la possibilité du non-lieu] for concluding – as anterior to the aspect of existence, to the power of being – this enunciative at the level of the question assumes all the value of a substantification of the nothingness of the question itself.

The phrase, “Nothing, perhaps”, opens onto the probability that nothing determines it as question, that nothing is determined at all, that it remains possible that nothing is sure, that it is possible that one cannot conclude except by recourse to the infinite anteriority of Kafka’s *Trial*, that there is pure subsistence of the question with the impossibility of concluding.

Only the eventuality of the real allows something to be determined and what we have to deal with at the level of the question itself is the nomination of the nothingness of the pure subsistence of the question.

“Perhaps nothing” could have been a response at the level of the message, but the message precisely was not a question. “Nothing, perhaps” at the level of the question only gives a metaphor, namely that the power of being is from beyond. Any eventuality there has already disappeared, and any subjectivity too; there is only an effect of meaning, an infinite forwarding [renvoi] of meaning to meaning. Except that we analysts are accustomed by

²⁷ i.e., in the question.

²⁸ “énonciative” evoking “énonciation”, which is one side of Lacan’s contrasting pair, “énonciation-énoncé” (“saying-said”).

experience to structure this forwarding on two planes, and that is what changes everything, namely that metaphor for us is condensation, which means two chains, and that metaphor makes its appearance in an unexpected fashion right in the middle of the message, that it also becomes the message in the middle of the question, that the question of “family” begins to be articulated and the “million” of the millionaire emerges right in the middle,²⁹ that the irruption of the question in the message occurs by it being revealed to us that the message manifests itself right in the middle of the question, that it comes to light on the path where we are called to the truth, that it is through our question about the truth – I mean the question itself and not the response to the question – that the message comes to light.

This is the precise point – precious for articulating the difference between saying and said [la différence de l'énonciation à l'énoncé] – that we needed to pause over for a moment. This possibility of the “nothing”, if it is not preserved, is what prevents us – despite this omnipresence which is at the source of every possible, specifically subjective articulation – from seeing this gap, which is precisely what is equally incarnated in the passage from the sign to the signifier, where we see appearing what distinguishes the subject in this difference. At the end of the day, is he sign or signifier? And sign of what? He is precisely the sign of nothing.

If the signifier is defined as representing the subject proximally to [auprès de]³⁰ another signifier, we have an indefinite forwarding of meanings, and if this signifies something, it is because the signifier signifies, proximally to the other signifier, this privileged thing that the subject is qua nothing.

This is where our experience allows us to put in relief the necessity of the path by means of which any reality is supported in the identifiable structure which enables us to pursue our experience.

So the Other does not give any response except that nothing is sure, but this has only one meaning: that there is something that he wants to know nothing about, and that something is precisely this question. At this level the powerlessness of the Other is rooted in an impossible, which is the same as that along the path of which the question of the subject already led us.

“Not possible” was the emptiness where the unary stroke, in its dividing value, emerged. Here we see this impossible take shape [prendre corps] and join together what we saw earlier defined by Freud’s definition of the constitution of desire in the original prohibition. The powerlessness of the Other to respond is due to an impasse and it is an impasse that we are

²⁹ Freud, *Standard Edition 8*, p.16 (*Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*). Lacan discusses this joke and Freud’s treatment of it at length, relating it to his own graph of desire, in *Seminar 5* (R. Grigg, trans.), seminars of 6 and 13 November 1957.

³⁰ An interesting variant of Lacan’s favourite definition of the signifier (see above, seminar of 24 January, footnote 14).

familiar with. It is called the limitation of his knowledge. “He did not know that he had died”, that he only came to this absoluteness of the Other through death that was not accepted, but undergone, and undergone by the desire of the subject.³¹

This, as I might say, the subject knows: that the Other must not know it; and that the Other demands not to know it. This is the privileged part in these two distinct demands, that of the subject and that of the Other: desire is defined as the intersection of that which, in the two demands, is not to be said. It is only by starting from there that demands can be set free, which are capable of being formulated everywhere else than in the field of desire. So desire is established at first, by its nature, as that which is hidden from the Other by structure.

It is precisely what is impossible for the Other that becomes the desire of the subject. Desire is constituted as the part of demand, which is hidden from the Other. This is where the Other, who guarantees precisely nothing qua Other, qua locus of speech [parole], takes on his edifying role. He becomes the veil, the covering, the source of the occultation of the very place of desire. This is where the object goes to cover.

If there is an existence which is constituted first, it is that existence, and it substitutes itself for the existence of the subject himself because the subject, qua suspended from the Other, remains equally suspended from the fact that, on the side of the Other, nothing is sure, except precisely that the Other hides, covers something which is this object, this object which is still perhaps nothing because it is going to become the object of desire.

The object of desire exists as this very nothing, of which the Other cannot know that that is all there is to it. This nothing gains consistency as hidden from the Other; it becomes the envelope of every object before which the subject’s question itself comes to a halt, because the subject then becomes nothing but imaginary.

Demand is set free from the demand of the Other to the extent that the subject excludes this not-knowing on the part of the Other [ce non savoir de l’Autre]. But there are two possible forms of exclusion. There is the form that says, “I wash my hands of what you know or don’t know and I act, and ‘You aren’t someone who’s not unaware that...’ shows just how much I don’t care whether you know or don’t know”. But there is also the other way, which says, “It’s absolutely imperative that you should know,” and that is the way chosen by the neurotic and it is why he is, as I might say, marked in advance as your victim.

For the neurotic, the right way to resolve the problem of the field of desire as constituted by this central field of demands, which intersect and therefore have to be excluded, is for you to know. If that wasn’t the case, he wouldn’t enter psychoanalysis.

³¹ The reference is to a patient’s dream discussed by Freud (*Standard Edition 12*, p. 225 (*Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning*)) and then repeatedly by Lacan in his seminars from November 1958 to March 1959 (Lacan, *Seminar 6* (B. Fink, trans.)). See also above, p. 17, seminar of 22 November 1961, footnote 10).

What is the Rat Man doing when he gets up at night like Théodore?³² He shuffles in his slippers to the corridor to open the door to the ghost of his dead father in order to show him what? That he has a hard-on.³³ Isn't this the revelation of a fundamental behaviour? For want of having the capacity (because the Other is judged incapable of anything) the neurotic wants the Other to, at least, know. I spoke to you earlier about commitment: the neurotic, contrary to what is believed, is someone who commits himself as subject. He denies himself the double issue of the message and the question; he puts himself in the balance to decide between "Nothing, perhaps?" and "Perhaps nothing", he poses himself as the real³⁴ in face of the Other, namely as impossible.

Of course this will be clearer to you if you know how it happens.

I had a reason today for evoking the image of the Freudian Théodore in his nocturnal, phantasmic exhibition. There really is a medium – better said, an instrument – for this incredible transmutation from the object of desire to the existence of the subject, and that instrument is the phallus. But that must be kept for next time.

Today I am simply noting that, phallus or not, the neurotic enters the field as that which, in the real, is specified as impossible.

This isn't exhaustive, because we can't apply this definition to phobia. We will only be able to do that next time, but we can apply it very well to the obsessional. You won't understand anything about the obsessional unless you remember the dimension that he incarnates as himself being too much, which is his form of the impossible, and as soon as he tries to come out of his ambush position as a hidden object, he has to be the nowhere object. Hence the obsessional's almost ferocious keenness to be everywhere, in order, precisely, to be nowhere.

The obsessional's taste for ubiquity is well known, and if you don't locate it you will understand nothing about most of his behaviour. At least, because he can't be everywhere, he will try to be in several places at once, so that in any case he can't be laid hold of anywhere.

The hysteric has another approach, which is of course the same, because it is the root of the obsessional approach, even though it is less easy, less immediate for understanding. The hysteric can also pose herself as real qua impossible. Her trick is that this impossible will subsist if the Other admits her as sign. The hysteric puts herself forward as the sign of something in which the Other could believe; but in order to constitute this sign, she is perfectly real, and this sign must at all costs impose itself and mark the Other.

³² Georges Courteline, *Théodore cherche des allumettes*.

³³ Freud, *Standard Edition 10*, pp. 204, 302-303 (*Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*).

³⁴ "comme le réel" in Typscript 1. Roussan has "comme réel" ("as real").

So this is the arrival point of this structure, this fundamental dialectic resting entirely on the final failure of the Other as guarantee of what is sure. The reality of desire is established and takes its place there by the mediation of something, the paradox of which we can never emphasise too much – the dimension of the hidden, which is indeed the most contradictory that the mind can construct when what is at issue is truth.

What could be more natural than³⁵ the introduction of this field of truth, if not the position of an omniscient Other, to such a degree that the sharpest, the keenest philosopher cannot sustain the very dimension of truth, except by supposing that what enables it to stand up is this science of the one who knows everything.

And yet nothing of the reality of man, nothing of what he seeks or what he follows can be sustained except by this dimension of the hidden, in so far as it infers³⁶ the guarantee that there is indeed an object which exists and which it provides by reflection. Ultimately, this dimension of the hidden is what gives its only coherence to this other problematic... the source of all belief and, eminently, of the belief in God is that we move in a dimension where, even though the miracle that he must know everything is what gives Him, in a way, His whole subsistence, we act as if he always knew nothing about nine tenths of our intentions. “Not a word to the Queen Mother”³⁷ is the principle upon which every subjective constitution is unfolded and moves.

Is it not possible that a behaviour could be conceived, which measures up to this authentic status of desire, and is it even possible for us not to see – despite appearances, despite the age-old chit-chat of the moralist, – that nothing, not a single step in our ethical behaviour can be sustained without an exact mapping of the function of desire?

Can we really content ourselves with examples as derisory as that which Kant offers when, to reveal for us the irreducible dimension of practical reason, he gives as an example that the honest man, even at the height of his happiness, will at least for a moment consider whether he might not renounce this happiness in order not to bear false witness against an innocent man for the benefit of the tyrant?³⁸

³⁵ “que” in Roussan, Typescript 1 has “à” (“to”).

³⁶ “infère” in Roussan. Typescript 1 has a gap instead of this word. The meaning of the sentence seems to need “implique” (“implies”) or something similar.

³⁷ “Pas un mot à la reine-mère”. The title of a French comedy film made in 1947.

³⁸ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Practical Reason* (M. Gregor, trans.), p.27.

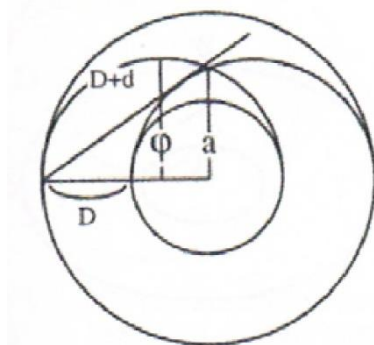
The example is absurd because, in our own day, but just as much in Kant's day, isn't the question altogether elsewhere? Because, yes, the just man will balance on the scales whether or not he should or shouldn't bear false witness in order to save his family. But what does that mean? Does it mean that he could bear *true* witness – denounce his friend as a Jew, when he really is one – if by doing that he abetted the tyrant's hatred of the innocent man?

Isn't this where the moral dimension begins? It isn't a matter of knowing what duty we should or shouldn't perform vis-à-vis the truth, or whether our behaviour falls under the universal rule, but whether or not we should satisfy the desire of the tyrant.

That is where the scales of ethics are really located. And it's at this level (without bringing in any dramatism from outside, which we don't need) that we also have to do with what, at the end of analysis, remains suspended from the Other. It's to the extent that the measure of unconscious desire at the end of analysis still remains implicated in this place of the Other, which we incarnate as analysts, that Freud, at the end of his work, can mark the castration complex as irreducible, as unassumable for the subject.

I will articulate this next time, so that you can at least glimpse that a proper definition of the function of the phantasy and of its assumption by the subject perhaps allows us to go further in the reduction of what has appeared in experience up to now as a final frustration.

28 March 1962



This schema isn't the object of my discourse today. Its purpose is only to make you grasp the intent, to serve as a reference point that shows you the use to us of the topology of this surface,¹ the surface called a torus, to the extent that its constituting inflection, that which requires these rounds and abouts, is what can best give us an idea of the law to which the subject is submitted in the processes of identification.

Of course, this will only be finally apparent to us when we have effectively done the round of everything that the torus represents and seen how well suited it is to the dialectic proper to the subject qua dialectic of identification.

So, as a reference point and so that, when I highlight a particular point, when I accentuate a particular aspect, you register at each moment the degree of orientation, the degree of relevance of what I am putting forward at that moment with respect to a certain goal to be attained, I will say to you that, at the limit, what can be inscribed on this torus, in so far as it can be of use to us, will be symbolised more or less in the way that this form, these circles drawn on it and these letters next to each of these circles will designate for you.

The torus, no doubt, appears to have a privileged value. But don't go thinking that it is the only form of non-spherical surface that can be of interest to us. If you have some leanings, some facility for it, I can't encourage you enough to take a look at what is called algebraic topology and the forms that it offers you – in comparison, if you like, with classical geometry, the geometry you have in the seat of your pants [au fond de vos culottes] from secondary education – as an exact analogy for what I am trying to do for you on the symbolic plane: what I have called an elastic logic, a supple logic.

This is even more manifest for the geometry in question because the geometry of algebraic topology presents itself as the geometry of shapes made of rubber. Authors may talk of "rubber" (the English word) in order to give the reader a better idea of what is involved.

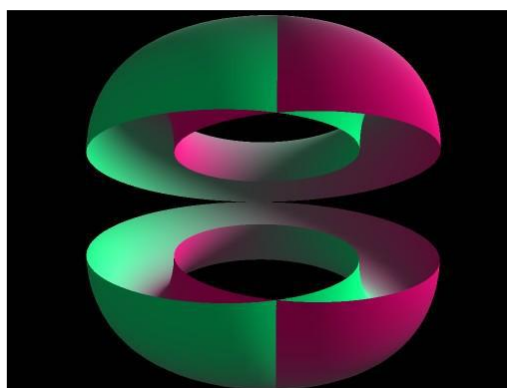
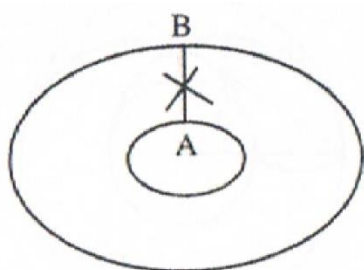
¹ Typescript 1 begins the seminar in the middle of this sentence (omitting what comes before) and makes the sentence into a question, thus: "What use to us is the topology of this surface...?"

These are figures which can be deformed and which maintain their constancy throughout all deformations. The torus does not have to present itself in its filled-out shape.

You can see that there is a whole field here, open to the most exorbitant invention, and don't assume, however ingenious you may be, that the imagination lends itself willingly to these surfaces, which we are defining, which we need to define, the ones that essentially interest us (closed surfaces, because the subject presents himself as something closed)... to the forging of these supple, complex forms, which coil around themselves and knit themselves together. You only have to try accustoming yourself to the theory of knots to see how difficult it is to represent to yourself even the simplest combinations and even this won't get you far because it can be proved that any closed surface, however complicated, can always be reduced by the appropriate procedures to something that can go no further than a sphere with some appendices, including those which, in the case of the torus, are represented as a handle, a handle added to a sphere – what I recently drew on the blackboard for you, – a handle sufficing to transform the sphere with the handle into a torus from the viewpoint of its topological value.

So everything can be reduced to the form of a sphere with a certain number of handles, plus a certain number of other forms. I hope that in the session before the holidays I will be able to initiate you to an amusing form, of which, I think, most of you here do not even suspect the existence! It is what is called in English the “cross-cap” or it can be referred to by the French word “mitre”.

Think of a torus which would have as a property the inversion of its surface at some part of its round, I mean that at a place here between two points, A and B, the outside surface crosses... the surface which is in front crosses the surface which is behind, the surfaces intersect each other.²



² The diagram on the left below is given by Roussan, that on the right by Staferla. The Staferla diagram gives a better idea of what is meant, but fails to show that a representation of what happens would need to have the whole surface converging to and then re-emerging from a single point (marked by the cross on Roussan's version). Indeed, this is impossible to represent.

I can only give you a brief indication of it here. It has very curious properties and perhaps it can even be quite exemplary for us, because it is a surface that has the property that the external surface is, if you like, in continuity with the internal side by passing to the inside of the object, so that it can come back in a single circuit on the other side of the surface where it started from.

This is something that can be produced very easily³ and the simplest way of doing it is to take a strip of paper, twist it, and stick one end to the other by the reverse side.



You will see that it is a surface which effectively has only a single face, so something that walks along it never, in a certain sense, meets any limit, but passes from one side to the other without your being able to grasp at any instant where the conjuring trick has taken place.

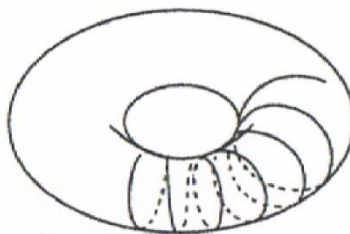
So there is the possibility of that form on the surface of any sphere that is being used to produce, to simplify a surface, however complex. To that we add the possibility of holes. You cannot go further than that: however complex the surface you imagine, I mean, for example, however complex the surface may be that you want to make, you will never be able to find anything more complex than that. So there is a certain naturalness in the reference to the torus as being intuitively the most simple, the most accessible form.

This can teach us something. I told you the signification that we could give, by convention, by artifice, to two types of circular loops that have a certain privilege.

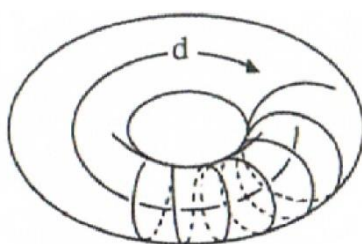
There is the loop which goes around what could be called the generating circle of the torus (if it is a torus of revolution).⁴ It can be indefinitely repeated, in a certain way the same and always different, by which it is well designed to represent to us signifying insistence and particularly the insistence of the repetitive demand of the neurotic.

³ By “this” Lacan means only a continuous inside-outside surface, not the full specifications of the cross-cap

⁴ i.e., a “rubber-ring” torus, “generated by revolving a circumference [a circle] around an axis situated on the same plane as that circumference” (see above, p. 161, seminar of 7 March 1962.), as opposed, for example, to a torus consisting of a vast sphere with a handle, which Lacan described later (above, p. 182).

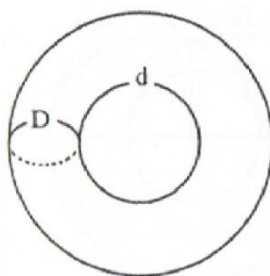


On the other hand, there is what is implied by this succession of circuits, namely a circularity that is accomplished, but that is unnoticed by the subject, offering us an evident passive⁵ and, if you like, maximally intuitively graspable symbolisation of what is implied in the very terms of “unconscious” desire, in that the subject follows the ways and paths of that desire without knowing it.



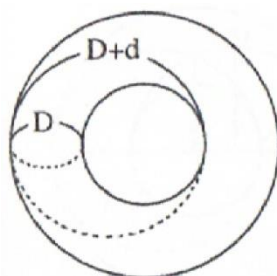
Through all these demands this unconscious desire is, in a way, by itself the metonymy of all of them, and you see here the living incarnation of these references that I have made you sensitive to, accustomed you to throughout my discourse, namely those of metaphor and metonymy.

Here metonymy finds, in a way, its most tangible application as being manifested by desire to the extent that desire is what we articulate as supposed in the succession of all the demands in so far as they are repetitive. So we have something where you see that the circle described here deserves to be labelled with the symbol “D”, the symbol of demand. This something as it involves the inside circle must have something to do with what I will call metonymical desire.



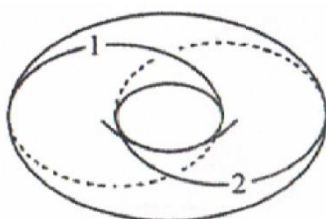
⁵ “passive” in Typescript 1. Roussan notes a possible mishearing of “facile” (“easy”).

These circles that we can make include a privileged circle, which is easy to describe. It is the circle which, starting from the outside of the torus finds the means of completing itself, not simply by clenching the thickness of the torus (the torus as a handle) and not simply by passing through the central hole, but by taking in the central hole while passing through it.



This circle has the privilege of doing both things at once. It passes through it⁶ and it takes it in. So it is made from the addition of these two circles, which is to say that it represents $D + d$, the addition of demand and desire. In a certain way it allows us to symbolise demand along with the desire that underlies it.

What is the interest of this? The interest is that, if we arrive at an elementary dialectic, namely that of the opposition of two demands, if I symbolise the demand of the Other by another analogous circle inside this same torus, with the “either... or...” which that entails for us (“either what I demand, or what you demand”), there is a non-coincidence of the demands.⁷



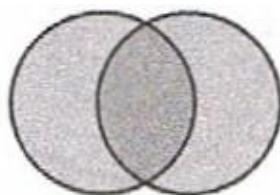
We see this all the time in everyday life. This reminds us that, in the privileged conditions, at the level where we look for it,⁸ question it in analysis, we have to remember the ambiguity there always is in the very usage of the term “or”, the term of the disjunction symbolised in logic as: “ $a \vee b$ ”. There are two usages of this “either..., or...”. It is not without reason that logic makes much of it and, as I might say, makes an effort to always preserve for it the values of ambiguity, precisely in order to show the connection of an “either..., or...” that is

⁶ i.e., through the central hole.

⁷ “there is non-coincidence of these demands” is not in Typescript 1. Roussan finds it in the notes of two listeners (Claude Conté and Paul Lemoine). In any case the point seems to be what is shown on the diagram – that two (many, in fact) $D + d$ circles can be drawn on the torus, which do not touch or overlap. I take the diagram from the seminar of 11 April 1962 (below, p. 245).

⁸ “it” apparently refers forward to “ambiguity”.

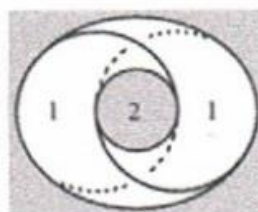
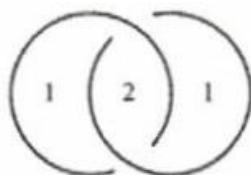
inclusive with an “either..., or...” that is exclusive. The “either..., or...” concerning, for example, these two circles...



...can mean two things. The choice between these two circles. But does that simply mean that, as regards the position of the “either..., or...”, there is exclusion? No. What you see is that the circle in which I am going to introduce this “either..., or...” includes what is called “intersection”,⁹ symbolised in logic by “ \cap ”.

The relation of desire to a certain intersection involving certain laws is not called upon simply to serve up, “matter of fact”,¹⁰ what one could call the contract, the accord between demands.

Given the profound heterogeneity which there is between this field [1 in the figures below] and that one [2], it¹¹ is sufficiently symbolised by the following: here [1] we are dealing with the closure of the surface and here [2], properly speaking, with its internal void.



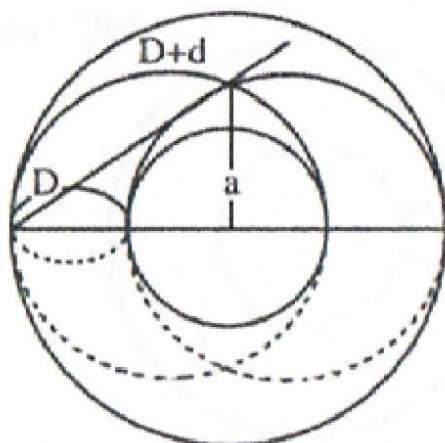
This offers a model that shows us that what is at issue is something other than grasping the part, which the demands have in common. In other words, we need to know the extent to which this form can allow us to symbolise as such the constituents of desire, in so far as desire, for the subject, is this something that he has to constitute along the path of demand.

⁹ The darkly shaded sector in the last figure.

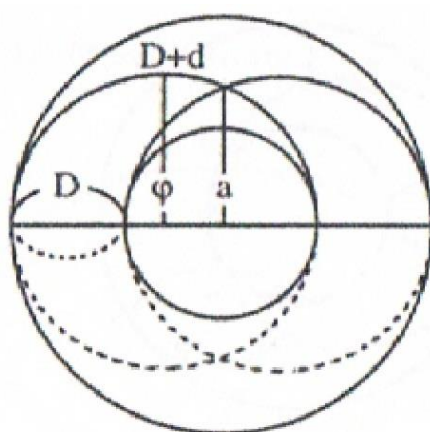
¹⁰ In English in the original.

¹¹ Apparently “the relation of desire to a certain intersection involving certain laws” referred to in the previous sentence.

What I want to bring to your attention is that there are two points, two dimensions that we can privilege in this circle with its special significance in the topology of the torus. On the one hand there is the distance that connects the centre of the central void to this point, which can be defined as a sort of tangency thanks to which a plane cutting the torus will allow us to distinguish this privileged circle in the simplest way. This will give us the definition, the measure of the little a qua object of desire.



On the other hand, because it¹² is only locatable, definable, with respect to the very diameter of this exceptional circle, the radius – half of this diameter, if you like – can be seen as the mainspring, the final measure of the relation of the subject to desire, namely little φ qua symbol of the phallus.



This is where we are headed and this is what will take on its meaning, its applicability and its import from the path that we will have travelled to get there, in order to make this image itself more manageable and tangible for you and, up to a certain point, suggestive of a genuine structural intensity.

¹² Apparently referring back to “little a ” in the previous sentence.

Having said that, it is of course understood that it is only the subject – what we have to deal with in our partner who summons us, what we have before us in the form of this summons, and what comes to speak before us, what we can define and punctuate as the subject, – who identifies himself. It is worth reminding ourselves of this because, after all, it is easy for our thinking to slide. If we don't dot the i's, you might be tempted to say that the drive identifies itself or that an image identifies itself. But self-identification [s'identifier] cannot be properly talked about, the term "identification" is only introduced into Freud's thought from the point when, in a certain degree (even if this is not articulated in Freud), this identification is considered as the dimension of the subject, although that is not to say that it doesn't lead us much further than the subject.

The proof (there's no knowing if what I remind you of here is in the antecedents, the premises, or the future of my discourse) is that the first form of identification, the one that gets referred to so carelessly, with such pitiful parroting, is the identification that, we are told, incorporates, or (adding a confusion to the imprecision of the first formula) introjects. Let's settle for "incorporates", which is best.¹³

How can one even begin by this first form of identification when such a formula doesn't give you the slightest indication, the slightest reference point, other than vaguely metaphorical, as to what it can even mean? Either the words have no meaning or they have one, and if what is discussed is "incorporation", it is because something must happen at the level of the body.

I don't know if I will be able to push things far enough this year. I hope so, all the same – we have time enough before us, coming back from our point of departure, to give its full meaning and its true meaning to this incorporation of the first identification.

As you will see, the only way to bring it into play is to reach it via a theme which has been elaborated before, and since the most ancient, mythical and even religious traditions, under the term of "the mystical body".

It is impossible not to go right back to the primitive Semitic conception: there is a bodily identity between the age-old father and all those who are descended from him. But, at the other end, there is the notion that I have just called by its name, that of the mystical body – a body from which a church is constituted. And it's not by accident that, in order to define for us the identity of the ego [moi] in its relationships with what he calls *Massenpsychologie*, Freud refers to the corporality of the Church.¹⁴

¹³ Freud, *Standard Edition 18*, p. 105 (*Group Psychology*): "It [identification] behaves like a derivative of the first, *oral* phase of the organization of the libido, in which the object that we long for and prize is assimilated by eating and is in that way annihilated as such." The German verb that Strachey translates "assimilate" is "einverleiben", which would be more accurately translated as "incorporate".

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 93 *et seq.*

But how can I get you to start from there without giving rise to all sorts of confusions and without making you think that (as the term “mystical” strongly suggests), this lies along quite different paths from those along which our experience would wish to draw us?

It is only retroactively, returning, in a way, to the necessary conditions of our experience, that we will be able to introduce ourselves to the antecedence suggested by any attempt to tackle the reality of identification in its fullness.

The approach that I have chosen in the second form of identification is not accidental. It is because this identification is graspable through an approach via the pure signifier, because it offers us an angle from which to grasp in a clear and rational way what is meant by the identification of the subject in so far as the subject brings into the world the unary stroke, or rather that the unary stroke, once it has been detached, makes the subject appear as “he who counts” in the double sense of the “counts”.¹⁵

The breadth of the ambiguity that you can give to this formula, will have its full meaning for you: he who actively counts, no doubt, but also he who counts, quite simply, in reality, he who really counts, and he will obviously take some time to find where he is in his count, exactly the time that we will take to go through everything that I have just designated for you here.

Remember Shackleton and his companions in the Antarctic, several hundred kilometres from the coast, explorers submitted to the greatest frustration, not only due to the deprivations, more or less elucidated at the time (the text is already about 50 years old), of a special diet that was still being tested, but who were, as we could say, disoriented in this still virgin landscape, a landscape not yet inhabited by the human imagination (once the human network has made pathways the landscape is no longer empty, but to begin with it is empty).¹⁶ He tells us in his notes, which make very peculiar reading, that they always counted themselves one more than they really were, that they couldn't get it right. They were always asking themselves what had happened to the missing person, who was only “missing” because every effort they made at counting suggested that there was one more.¹⁷

You touch there the appearance in the naked state of the subject who is nothing more than that – than the possibility of one more signifier, of a one more, due to which he himself concludes that there is one that is missing.

¹⁵ “in the double sense of the ‘counts’” is not in Typescript 1.

¹⁶ The words after “in this still virgin landscape” are not in Typescript 1, although there is an erasure of one (illegible) word.

¹⁷ Roussan has a comma after “more” followed by the words “so one less”. In this paragraph Lacan is thinking of Ernest Shackleton's report of an eerie experience when struggling with companions across glaciers and cliffs on the island of South Georgia, after escaping by boat from Antarctica: “it seemed to me often that we were four, not three” (Sir Ernest Shackleton, *South: The Story of Shackleton's Last Expedition, 1914-1917*, p. 211).

If I remind you of this it is simply to highlight (in a dialectic that implies the most extreme terms) where our path lies, and where you may think and ask yourselves whether we are not forgetting certain reference points. You may, for example, even wonder what relationship there is between the path that I have made you travel and these two terms, which we have had to deal with (constantly, but at different moments), of the Other and the Thing.¹⁸

Of course, the subject himself in the final analysis is destined for the Thing, but his law, more exactly his *fatum*, is that he can only trace this path by passing via the Other in as much as the Other is marked by the signifier, and it is on the near side [dans l'en-deçà] of this necessary passage via the signifier that desire and its object are constituted as such. The appearance of this dimension of the Other is the emergence of the subject.

I cannot remind you too much of this, in order to give you the sense of what is at issue here, the paradox of which, I think, must be sufficiently articulated for you in the fact that desire (understood in the most natural sense) must and can only be constituted in the tension created by this relationship to the Other, a tension that originates from the advent of the unary stroke, in so far as, initially, at the start, it always erases this something of the Thing, something other than this 1 and which has been forever irreplaceable.¹⁹

And we find there, from the first step – I point this out to you in passing, – the formula... the end part of Freud's formula: "there I must come" [là je dois advenir].²⁰ The origin²¹ should be replaced by: "Wo Es war, da durch die Eins" (not "durch den Ein")²² – by the one as 1, the unary stroke, – "werde Ich", "the I will come" ["advindra le Je"].

¹⁸ "Thing" ("Chose") with a capital letter evokes "das Ding", which Freud discusses in *The Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895) and also in *Negation* (1925), and which Lacan considered at length in the early part of *Seminar 7* (D. Porter, trans.).

¹⁹ This paragraph is ungrammatical in Typescript 1 and Roussan cites several differing versions from the notes of various listeners. His main version takes "est" ("is") of Typescript 1 in the sentence which I have put at the end of the previous paragraph, "The appearance of this dimension of the Other is the emergence of the subject", to be a mistake for "et" ("and", the sounds of the French words are indistinguishable) and he therefore takes this sentence to be the opening phrase of the new paragraph, obtaining "The appearance of this dimension of the Other and the emergence of the subject, I cannot remind you of it too much in order to give you the sense..." where "it" ("le") would refer back to one or both of "appearance" and "emergence" in the opening phrase. But this is problematic since "appearance" and "emergence" are both feminine nouns, while "le" is a masculine pronoun. Taking the phrase to be a complete sentence (with "est" and not "et") ending with a full stop makes it possible for "le" to refer back to the idea of the sentence as a whole and not to "appearance" and "emergence" in particular, in which case the masculine pronoun is appropriate. I also follow Typescript 1 at the end of the paragraph (about the unary stroke), where Roussan's version is somewhat different, but the difference is not great.

²⁰ The second part ("soll Ich werden") of Freud's formula: "Wo Es war, soll Ich werden", Freud, *Gesammelte Werke 15*, p. 86 (translated by James Strachey, "Where id was, there ego shall be", Freud, *Standard Edition 22*, p.80 (*New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*))

²¹ Lacan seems to mean the first part of the formula.

²² "Eins" in German is a noun meaning "the number one" or "one o'clock", while "ein" is the numeral as adjective ("one shoe", etc.) and also has implications of wholeness and totality. "Eins" is a feminine noun in German, so I use the feminine definite article "die", though Typescript 1 and Roussan (and perhaps Lacan) have the masculine article. "Ein" cannot be a noun at all, though Lacan, perhaps rhetorically, forces it to be one here, preceding it by the definite article, which I make masculine. Lacan's point seems to be that "eins" (the numerical unit) and not "ein" (wholeness) is what is needed in the expansion of Freud's formula, emphasising

The whole of the path is already laid out at each point of the path. This is where I tried to leave you suspended last time by showing you the progress that is necessary at this moment, in so far as it can only be established by the actual dialectic [la dialectique effective] that is accomplished in the relation with the Other.

I am astonished that my carefully designed articulation of “nothing, perhaps “ and “perhaps nothing” seemed to fall on deaf ears. What is needed in order to make you sensitive to it? Perhaps my text at this point – the specification of their distinction as message and question, then response, but not at the level of the question, but rather as suspension of the question at the level of the question – was too complex to be simply understood by those who did not note down the details in order to come back to it.

But, disappointed though I may be, it is necessarily me who is in the wrong, so I am coming back to it and, in order to make myself understood, shall I not suggest to you today the necessity of coming back to it just by asking you: do you think that “Nothing is sure” [“Rien de sûr”], as an utterance [énonciation], can seem to you to lend itself to the slightest slippage, the slightest ambiguity with “Surely nothing” [“Sûrement rien”]?

It’s not the same thing at all! The difference is the same as between “Nothing, perhaps” and “Perhaps nothing”.

I would even say that the first one, “Nothing is sure”, has the same quality as “Nothing, perhaps” of undermining the question at its origin. And in the “Surely nothing” there is the same virtue of response, eventual response no doubt, but always anticipated with respect to the question, and this, it seems to me, is easy to put your finger on if I remind you that it is always before any question and for reasons of safety, as I might say, that one learns to say in life, when one is little, “Surely nothing”.

That means “surely nothing other than what is already expected”, namely what one can in advance consider as reducible to zero, like the loop. What Freud articulates for us at this juncture is the anxiety-calming quality of *Erwartung*.²³ When you’re like that you’re relaxed [tranquille], but you’re not always like that.

So what we see is that the subject, in order to find the Thing sets out at first in the opposite direction, and there is no way of articulating these first steps of the subject, except by a “nothing” which it is important to make you feel in this same dimension, at once metaphorical and metonymical, of the first play of the signifier, because every time that we analysts have to do with this relationship of the subject to the nothing, we tend to slide between two approaches. There is the usual approach, which tends towards a nothing of

the distinction he made repeatedly in the foregoing seminars (e.g., the start of the seminar of 29 November 1961, seminar of 21 February 1962).

²³ See Lacan, *Seminar 8* (B. Fink, trans.), seminar of 14 June 1961.

destruction; this is the *Hassen*,²⁴ the interpretation of aggressivity [aggressivité] considered as purely reducible to the biological power of aggression, which is in no way sufficient, other than by degradation, to support the tendency to nothing as it arises at a certain necessary stage of Freud's thought (just before he introduces identification) in the death instinct [l'instinct de mort]. The other approach is a nullification that would be assimilable to the Hegelian negativity.

The nothing that I am trying to make plausible for you at this initial moment in the establishment of the subject is something else. The subject introduces the nothing as such and this nothing has to be distinguished from any being of reason, which would be that of classical negativity, and from any imaginary being, which would be that whose existence is impossible – the famous centaur which stops logicians, all logicians, and even metaphysicians, in their tracks at the start of their road towards science. Nor is it the *ens privativum*,²⁵ which is, properly speaking, what Kant, in the definition of his four nothings (that he makes so little of) admirably calls the *nihil negativum*, namely, to use his own terms, “leere Gegenstand ohne Begriff”²⁶ – an empty object, but, we must add, without a concept, without any possibility of being grasped in the hand.

It was to introduce that that I had to put before you again the network of the whole graph – the constitutive network of the relationship to the Other with all its resonances.

I would like to pave your way with flowers on the path I am going to lead you on. I am going to try to do that today – to mark my intentions – by telling you that it is by starting from the problematic of the beyond of demand that the object is constituted as object of desire. I mean that it is because the Other does not give an answer (except “nothing, perhaps”, “the worst is not always sure”), that the subject will find in an object the exact virtues of his initial demand.

You should understand that it is in order to pave your way with flowers that I recall these truths of everyday experience, the significance of which is not sufficiently recognised, and try to make you sense that it is not chance, analogy, comparison, or just flowers, but profound affinities, which will lead me to point out to you the ultimate affinity of the object with this Other (with a capital O), as manifested, for example, in love, and that the famous speech of Eliante in *Le Misanthrope*, taken from the *De natura rerum* of Lucretius,²⁷

²⁴ Typescript 1 has this German word, meaning “to hate” or “hatred” hand-written above the typed word “fachen”, which is not a French word and may well have been the stenographer's attempt to render the unfamiliar German word. Roussan supposes “fâcheuse” (“annoying”), giving “This is the annoying interpretation of aggressivity...”

²⁵ Lacan repeats the mistake or slip that he made when discussing this passage in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* on 28 February 1962 (see above, p. 150, footnote 38).

²⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (N. Kemp-Smith, trans.) p. 295.

²⁷ Molière, *The Misanthrope and Tartuffe* (R. Wilbur, trans.), p. 69; Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* (W. Leonard, trans.), Book 4, Line 1160 *et seq.*

The pale-faced lady's lily-white, perforce;
 The swarthy one's a sweet brunette, of course;
 The spindly lady has a slender grace;
 The fat one has a most majestic pace;
 The plain one, with her dress in disarray,
 They classify as beauté négligée.

is nothing other than the sign, impossible to erase, of the fact that the object of desire is constituted only in the relationship to the Other because he²⁸ himself originates from the value of the unary stroke [trait]. The object has no privilege except in this absurd value given to each stroke [trait], of being a privilege.²⁹

What more could be needed to convince you of the structural dependence of this constitution of the object, the object of desire, in relation to the initial dialectic of the signifier when the dialectic runs up against the non-response of the Other, if not the path³⁰ we have already followed of Sadean research, which I showed you at length³¹ (if it has been lost, you should know at least that I have committed to going back over it in a preface that I have promised for an edition of Sade),³² where we can't miss what I am calling here the structuring affinity of this journey towards the Other as determining any institution of the object of desire, because in Sade we see at every moment a mixing, a weaving together of invective (I mean invective against the Supreme Being, his denial being only a form of invective, even if it is the most authentic denial) with what I would call not so much the destruction of the object as its simulation, because you know the exceptional resistance of the victims of the Sadean myth to all the ordeals that the text of his novels puts them through.

And then what? What is meant by the sort of transference to the mother, incarnated in nature, of a certain and fundamental abomination of all his acts? Should this dissimulate from us what is involved? We are actually told that what is involved, in imitating her in his acts of destruction and by pushing them to the final term by an effort of will, is to force her to recreate something else. What does that mean?

It means restoring to the Creator his place.

Ultimately, Sade said it without knowing it. He articulates, by what he says [par son énonciation]: "I give to you your abominable reality, to you, the Father, by substituting myself for you in this violent action against the mother."

²⁸ the Other.

²⁹ Lacan here is using to the full the ambiguity of "trait" in French, which means both "stroke"/"line" and "characteristic"/"trait".

³⁰ These words refer back to the start of the sentence. Lacan means: "What more could be needed ... than the path we have already followed..."

³¹ Lacan, *Seminar 7* (D. Porter, Trans).

³² Lacan, "Kant with Sade" in Lacan, *Écrits* (B. Fink. Trans.) pp. 645-668.

Of course, the mythical restitution of the object to the nothing is not aimed solely at the privileged victim, who is ultimately adored as object of desire, but at the very multitude, the millions of everything that is. Think of the anti-social plots of Sade's heroes. This restitution of the object to the nothing essentially simulates the annihilation of signifying power.

This is the other contradictory term of this fundamental relationship to the Other as instituted in Sadean desire, and it is sufficiently indicated in Sade's final testamentary wish, which aims precisely at what I have specified for you as the second death, the death of being itself, because Sade specifies in his will that, despite the fact that he is a writer, there should literally remain no trace of his tomb and, intentionally, of his memory and that a thicket should be planted over the place where he is interred.³³

That there should remain "no trace" of him as a subject indicates where he wants to assert himself: very precisely as what I called the "annihilation of signifying power".

If there is something else that I need to remind you of here, in order to convey adequately the legitimacy of the necessary inclusion of the object of desire in this relation to the Other as implying the mark of the signifier as such, I will point it out to you, no so much in Sade as in one of the most sensitive recent, contemporary commentaries on him, indeed one of the most illustrious commentaries. This text, which appeared immediately after the War in an issue of *Les Temps Modernes*, was recently republished thanks to the efforts of our friend Jean-Jacques Pauvert in the new edition of the first version of *Justine*. It is the preface by Paulhan.³⁴

We cannot be indifferent to such a text, if you follow the detours of my discourse here, because it is striking how, just by the rigour of a rhetorician (you will see that there is no other guide to the discourse of Paulhan, author of *The Flowers of Tarbes*),³⁵ he extracts with great subtlety, from everything that had been said before now about the meaning of Sadeanism, what he calls the complicity of the Sadean imagination with its object, namely the view from the exterior, the approach by a literal analysis, the surest, the strictest possible view of the essence of masochism, about which Paulhan says nothing,³⁶ except to make us sense very clearly that this is the path, the last word of Sade's enterprise. Paulhan doesn't propound this understanding clinically and, as it were, from outside, even though the result is manifest from the outside: it would be hard to do a better job of offering oneself to all sorts of maltreatment by society than Sade did all the time. But this isn't the essential thing, the essential thing being left suspended in this text of Paulhan, which I beg you to read, which proceeds by way of a purely rhetorical analysis of the Sadean text to make us sense, only

³³ The Marquis de Sade, *Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom and Other Writings with Introductions by Jean Paulhan and Maurice Blanchot* (R. Seaver, A. Wainhouse, trans.), p. 157.

³⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 3-36

³⁵ Jean Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes* (M. Syrotinski, trans.).

³⁶ Lacan means that Paulhan says nothing about the "essence" of masochism. Indeed, Paulhan, having concluded that masochism is Sade's key theme, admits that the phenomenon is "impenetrable to my intelligence" (de Sade, *op. cit.*, p. 34).

behind a veil, the point of convergence as situated in this perfectly manifest reversal based on the most profound complicity with that of which the victim, ultimately, is only the symbol, marked by a sort of absent substance that is the ideal of Sade's victims. It is as object that the Sadean subject cancels himself out, by which he effectively coincides with what is shown phenomenologically in the texts of Masoch, namely that the end, the high point of masochistic enjoyment [*jouissance*] is not so much in offering itself as support to some bodily pain or other, but in this singular extreme that you will always find in the texts, great and small, of the masochistic phantasmagoria – this annihilation, in essence, of the subject in so far as he makes himself into a pure object.

The only end to this, in any masochist novel whatsoever, is the moment which, from outside, may appear to be quite superfluous, an indulgent embellishment, when the masochist subject fashions himself as being the object of a trade or sale enacted between two others, between whom he is passed like a chattel (take notice, not a fetish) and the final term is indicated in his being an item of no value, sold cheaply, something that is not even worth keeping as a slave was kept in antiquity, who was at least constituted and commanded respect by his market value.

All this, these detours, this road paved with the *Flowers of Tarbes* – literary flowers – is intended to spell out clearly for you what I mean when I emphasise the profound disturbance that *jouissance* involves by being defined with respect to the Thing through the dimension of the Other, that dimension of the Other being defined by the introduction of the signifier.

Just three more little steps and I will leave the rest of this discourse to next time. Otherwise the fluey fatigue that hangs over me today will be all too plain for you to see.

Jones is a curious figure in the history of analysis. What he suggests to my mind – I will tell you straight away, continuing today's path of flowers – is the diabolical urge to dissimulate, which must have been Freud's, to have entrusted the task of writing his own biography to this canny Welshman, who was too short-sighted to ever go too far in the task that was entrusted to him.

That is what I meant when I ended the article on symbolism, which I devoted to Jones' work, by comparing the activity of this canny Welshman to that of a chimney sweep (it wasn't just that I wanted to finish with a joke). He really did an excellent job sweeping out all the flues and I deserve credit, in the aforesaid article, for following him through all the twists and turns until I came out with him, black from head to foot, in the living room, as you may remember.³⁷ This earned me the assurance, in a letter from another eminent member of the analytic society – one of those whom I appreciate and like the most, another Welshman – that

³⁷ Lacan, *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.), pp. 585-601.

he understood absolutely nothing of the gain that I apparently believed was to be had from this minutious enterprise.³⁸

The most Jones did in his biography to mark a little distance from its object was to shed a bit of light from outside on points where the Freudian construction is in disagreement, in contradiction with the Darwinian gospel, which is quite simply a grotesque manifestation of partisan superiority on his part.³⁹

Jones, then, in an oeuvre, the path of which fascinates by its very misunderstandings, particularly regarding the phallic phase and by his exceptionally plentiful experience of female homosexuals, encounters the paradox of the castration complex, which is undoubtedly the best of all the things which he championed (and he was right to champion it) in order to articulate his experience, and which he literally never penetrated by even that much [gesture].⁴⁰ The proof of that is his introduction of a term, which is certainly handy, provided you know how to use it, namely that you know how to find in it what you must not do in order to understand castration. The term is “aphanisis” [“disappearance”, Greek].⁴¹ To define the meaning of what I can call, without forcing anything, the Oedipal effect, Jones tells us something which couldn’t make a better fit with our discourse. He finds himself in agreement [partie prenante], whether he wants to be or not, that the Other prohibits the object or prohibits desire, as I articulated last time.

My “or” is, or seems to be, exclusive. But that’s not altogether right: “Either you desire what I desired, I, the dead God, and there is no longer any other proof (but it is sufficient proof) of my existence than this commandment which prohibits for you the object of this desire...”

So he⁴² precisely makes it that the object is constituted in the dimension of what is lost: “Whatever you do, you cannot do anything but find another, never that one.”

This is the most intelligent interpretation that I can give to the step that Jones takes so lightly (and I can assure you, with drums beating), when he marks the entrance of these female homosexuals into the sulphurous domain which will be their habitat henceforth: either object or desire. He makes no bones about it, I assure you.

³⁸ Presumably Donald Winnicott: “I have been working at your paper on the Theory of Symbolism in memory of Ernest Jones, but I have not yet properly assimilated its meaning or assessed its significance” (letter from Winnicott to Lacan in *The Spontaneous Gesture: Selected Letters of D.W. Winnicott*, p. 129). However, Winnicott is not recorded as having been Welsh.

³⁹ As Roussan notes, Lacan is presumably referring to passages where Jones suggests that Freud adhered to a pre-Darwinian Lamarckism (Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 3*, pp. 309-314).

⁴⁰ “geste” (“gesture”) in square brackets in Roussan. Presumably thumb and forefinger of one hand held up with a very small gap between them.

⁴¹ Ernest Jones, “[The Early Development of Female Sexuality](#)”, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 8 (4), 1927.

⁴² Apparently the prohibiting “dead God”.

If I dwell on this, it is in order to give the best interpretation to the choice, “vel... vel...”,⁴³ which is to say that I add to it, I get my interlocutor to speak in the best way possible.

“...Or you renounce desire,”⁴⁴ Jones tells us. When one says it quickly, it may seem to go without saying, particularly since we have already been given repose for the soul (and for the brainbox too) by the translation of castration as *aphanisis*.⁴⁵ But what does it mean to renounce desire? Is it really all that tenable, this *aphanisis* of desire, if we give it this function that it has in Jones, of being a subject of fear. Is it even conceivable in the fact of experience that Freud brings into play as one of the possible outcomes, indeed an exemplary outcome, of the Oedipal conflict⁴⁶ – that of the female homosexual?

Let’s take a closer look. This desire which disappears, which you, the subject, renounce – doesn’t our experience teach us that what this means is that, henceforth, your desire is going to be so well hidden that it may appear for a time to be absent? We could even say, taking a cue from the surface of our cross-cap or mitre, that it is inverted into demand, and we know that this is what the homosexual does: he inverts himself in the cycle of demand.⁴⁷ Demand here, once again, receives its own message in an inverted form. But, at the end of the day, what does this hidden desire mean if it’s not what we encounter in our experience and call “repressed desire”? In any case, there is only one thing that we know very well that we will never find in the subject, and that is fear of repression as such, at the very moment when it operates. If *aphanisis* has something to do with desire, it is arbitrary, given the way that our experience teaches us to see desire conceal itself, it is unthinkable that an analyst should articulate that something could be formed in consciousness which would be the fear of the disappearance of desire. Where desire disappears, namely in repression, the subject is completely included in, and not detached from, this disappearance, and we know that anxiety, if it is produced, is never about the disappearance of desire, but about the object that desire hides, about the truth of desire or, if you like, about what we don’t know about the desire of the Other.

Any questioning by consciousness of desire as capable of fading away [défaillir] can only be complicity. Notice that “consciuis”⁴⁸ means “complicit”, so etymology regains its freshness in experience and that is why I reminded you earlier, in my path paved with flowers, of the relationship between the Sadean ethic and its object. This is what we call ambivalence,

⁴³ “Vel... vel...” in Latin is non-exclusive, i.e., it means “either... or... or both of the two alternatives”

⁴⁴ This seems to continue the direct speech that opened ““Either you desire what I desired...”, four paragraphs earlier.

⁴⁵ Lacan evidently means by the rapprochement of castration and *aphanisis* in Jones’ article (*op. cit.*)

⁴⁶ Typescript 1 has “conflit freudien” (“Freudian conflict”), which must have been a mishearing by the stenographer of “oedipien” or a lapsus by Lacan.

⁴⁷ Roussan reports five alternative versions of Lacan’s words from “and we know...” from the notes of listeners, but keeps to Typescript 1 as his main version. The principal difference in the alternative versions is the use of “homosexuelle” and “elle” (“female homosexual” and “she”). It would indeed be logical for Lacan here to specifically mean the *female* homosexual, since “let’s take a closer look” at the beginning of the passage seems to refer to her, but he may mean both male and female.

⁴⁸ Latin.

ambiguity, reversibility of certain pairs of drives [couples pulsionnels]. But we don't see – just by saying of this equivalent that it turns back on itself, the subject becoming object and the object subject, – we don't grasp the actual mainspring, which always implies this reference to the big Other, where all this acquires its meaning.

So *aphanisis* explained as the source of anxiety in the castration complex is, properly speaking, an exclusion of the problem, because the only question that an analytical theorist needs to pose here – and we understand full well that there really is a question that needs posing, because the castration complex remains a reality that hasn't been completely elucidated to this day – is the question that issues from the happy fact of Freud having bequeathed his discovery to the theorist at a much more advanced stage than the theorist could reach alone: the question of why the instrument of desire, the phallus, assumes this value, which is so decisive.

Why is it the phallus, and not desire, which is implicated in an anxiety – a fear that we have our reasons for talking about in terms of *aphanisis* in order not to forget that every anxiety is an anxiety about nothing, in as much as the subject has to build a rampart [se rembarder]⁴⁹ out of the “nothing, perhaps”, meaning that, for a time, it is the best hypothesis for him: “nothing, perhaps, to fear.”

Why is it that the function of the phallus emerges here, where everything would be so easy to understand without it, but unfortunately in a fashion altogether outside experience? Why this business of the phallus, why does the phallus come along as a yardstick [mesure] just when it is a question of what? Of the void contained at the heart of demand, of what is beyond the pleasure principle, of what makes the eternal repetition of demand, and therefore of that which constitutes the drive. We are brought back once more to this point, which I will not go beyond today, that desire is constructed on the path of a question which threatens it and which belongs to the domain of not-to-be [n'être].

And you will allow me to introduce here with this play on words⁵⁰ a final reflection that was suggested to me recently by the bringing to our attention day after day of how to decently articulate, and not just with a sneer, the eternal principles of the Church or the vacillating detours of various national laws on birth control,⁵¹ namely that the first *raison d'être*, which no legislator until now has highlighted, for the birth of a child, is that it should be desired, and that we who are well acquainted with the role of this fact – whether the child was or was not desired – for the whole subsequent development of the subject, do not seem to have felt the need to point it out, to introduce it, to make it felt in the midst of this drunken discussion which oscillates between the obvious utilitarian necessities of demographic policy and an

⁴⁹ The verb “rembarder” (reflexive “se rembarder”) does not exist in French. Lacan may have combined “rempart” (“rampart”) with “remborder”, which means to fold the edge of a textile back for double thickness.

⁵⁰ The play is presumably between “n'être” (“not to be”) and “naître” (“to be born”), which sound the same.

⁵¹ “birth control” in English.

anxiety-provoking fear (let's not forget) of the abominations that eugenics could eventually bring to us.

A first step, a tiny little step, but an essential step (and if you put it to the test you will see how much it helps to calm the disputes) is to point out the importance of respecting the constitutive relation, effective in any future destiny, that is the essential mystery of the being who is to come into the world – the question of whether he was desired and why he was desired.

Remember, it often happens that the root of the desire for a child is this, which nobody admits to: “Let him be like nobody else, let him be my curse on the world.”

4 April 1962

Those who for various reasons, personal or other, distinguished themselves by their absence from the meeting of the Society that we call “provincial”¹ will have to put up with a little aside; because for the moment, it is to the others that I will address myself, since I have a score to settle with them, a score of an amicable kind. They may perhaps have suspected it, because I said something at that little congress. It was to defend the position they had taken up and I must admit that it masked a certain dissatisfaction that I felt in their regard.

This calls for a little philosophising about the nature of what is called a “congress”. In principle, it is one of those meetings where people speak, but at which everyone knows that whatever he says will have some element of indecency about it, so, naturally, all that gets said there is pompous nothings, everyone usually remaining bolted to the role they have to protect.

This is not altogether what happens at what we more modestly call our *Journées* [Days]. But everyone has been very modest recently. Such gatherings are called “conferences”, “meetings”. But that doesn’t change anything... at bottom they are still congresses.

There is the question of “rapports”.² The term seems to me worth pausing over, because, after all, it is rather droll if you look at it closely: “rapport” to what, about what, “rapport” between what, even, indeed, “rapport” against what, as when we talk about “le petit rapporteur” [tell-tale, snitch]? Is this really what we mean?

We would have to see. In any case, although the word “report” [rapport] is clear when one says, “The report of Mr. So-and-so on the financial situation”, it can’t be said that we are completely at ease giving an analogous meaning to a term like “a report on anxiety”, for example. You must admit that it is rather curious to be giving a report on anxiety, or on poetry for that matter, or on a certain number of things of that sort. I hope that the strangeness of it is apparent to you, and it isn’t just specific to congresses of psychoanalysts, but to a certain number of other congresses – let’s say to congresses of philosophers in general.

The term “report”, I must say, makes one pause. There was a time when I myself didn’t hesitate to describe what I had to say on such matters as a “discourse”: “Discourse on

¹ Lacan is referring to a “Journées provinciales” (“Provincial days”), a regular confab of the Société française de psychanalyse, which had taken place since the last week’s seminar. The *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* (Vol. 60, No. 66 (1962)) reports: “The Spring Journées provinciales of the Société française de psychanalyse were held at La Salpêtrière on 31 March and 1 April 1962 on the general theme: Anxiety. Communications: M. Nicolas-Charles, *Anxiety in the Psychoanalytic Cure*; M. Dongier, *Neurotic Anxiety and Psychotic Anxiety* [https://www.persee.fr/doc/phlou_0035-3841_1962_num_60_66_5158, p. 313, in French].

² I keep the French word here, which means, in English, “report”, but also “relation”, “relationship” and “rapport”. In the following paragraphs I use one translation or another or two together divided by an oblique stroke (“/”) depending which meaning Lacan is using.

psychical causality”,³ for example. That sounds precious [précieux]. I came back to “report”, like everyone else.

All the same, this term and its usage make you pose the question of how to measure the appropriateness of these strange reports/relationships [“rapports”] to their alien objects. It is quite clear that there is a certain proportion between these reports/relationships [“rapports”] and a certain constitutive type of the question to which they relate [à quoi ils se rapportent]: the void at the centre of my torus for example. This is very tangible when we are dealing with anxiety or desire. And this might allow us to believe, to understand, that the best signifying echo that we could have of the term “scientific report/relationship” [“rapport scientifique”] on this occasion, might be with what we also call a “relationship” [rapport] when the issue is the sexual relationship [rapport sexuel]. In both cases, the term is not without relation [pas sans rapport] to the question that is at issue, but only just.⁴

And here we rediscover this dimension of the “not without” [“pas sans”] as foundational of the very point where we are introduced to desire, because access to desire requires that the subject should be not without having it [pas sans l’avoir].⁵

Having what? That’s the whole question. In other words, that access to desire is dependent on the covetousness of the being called the human being curtailing itself at the outset in order to be restored to the dignity of a power, of which we might ask: *whose* power or even the power of what, and, most of all, towards what does this power exert itself?

What it visibly, tangibly exerts itself towards, through all the metamorphoses of human desire, seems to be something that is ever more tangible, more precise, something that is apprehended for us as this central hole, this Thing, around which circuits must keep being made in order for us to be dealing with the desire that we know – human desire, in so far as it is more and more informed [en tant qu’il est de plus en plus informé].

This is what makes it legitimate, up to a certain point, that the reports which were given the other day, the report [rapport] on anxiety in particular, could only accede to the question by being not without relation [pas sans rapport] to the question.

This doesn’t mean all the same that the “without” should, as I might say, get too far ahead of the “not”; in other words, one may believe a little too easily that one can respond to the constitutive void at the centre of a subject by an excessive poverty in the means of

³ This seems to be a slip by Lacan, since he is referring to his text of 1946, included in *Écrits* in 1966, “Propos sur la causalité psychique”, which was not, even in 1946, called “Discours sur...” (“Presentation on Psychological Causality” in Lacan, *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.), pp. 123-158).

⁴ This prefigures Lacan’s aphorism later in his teaching that “there is no sexual relationship” (Lacan, *Seminar 20* (B. Fink, trans.), pp. 57-63).

⁵ See above, p. 183, seminar of 14 March 1962.

approaching it;⁶ and here you will allow me to cite the myth of the foolish virgin⁷ which, in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, corresponds so nicely to that of Penia, of Poverty, in Plato's *Symposium*.⁸ Penia's trick works because she is at the celebration⁹ of Venus, but it's not necessarily so: the improvidence that the foolish virgin symbolises can very well miss getting pregnant.

Now, where is the unforgiveable limit in this matter? Because that, after all, is the issue: the style of what can be communicated in a certain mode of communication that we are trying to define, the mode that compels me to come back to anxiety here, not in order to admonish or lecture those who spoke about it in a way that was somewhat deficient, but to find a limit beyond which one can reproach congresses in general for the results they produce. Where are we to seek this limit, since we are talking about something which allows us, when, for example, we discuss desire, to grasp the void which is involved? Are we going to look for it in this sort of sin in desire against some fire of passion, the passion for truth for example, which is the mode in which we might well upbraid a certain manner, a certain style – the university manner, for example.¹⁰ But that would be altogether too convenient, too easy.

I am certainly not going to parody here the famous roaring and vomiting of the Eternal before lukewarmness,¹¹ since, as we know, a certain kind of heat can lead to sterility just as well. And, in truth, our morality, a morality which holds up very well – Christian morality – says that there is only one sin: the sin against the spirit.¹² Well, we, for our part, will say that there is no sin against desire, no more than there is a fear of *aphanisis*, in the sense that Mr. Jones understands it. We cannot say, in any case, that we can ever reproach ourselves for not desiring well enough. There is only one thing – something we can do nothing about – to be

⁶ Literally “in its approach” (“dans son abord”) where “son” might as well mean “his” (not “its”) if by “sujet” a few words earlier Lacan meant the human subject.

⁷ Matthew 25: 1-13, New Revised Standard Version

⁸ Plato, *The Symposium* (R.G. Bury, trans.), 203b-203c.

⁹ Typescript 1 has “au faite de” (“at the pinnacle of”). Roussan amends this to “au fait de” (“knowledgeable about”), but it seems more likely that Lacan said “au fête de” (at the celebration of”) since, in the *Symposium*, Penia got with child when attending a party of the gods to celebrate the birth of Aphrodite (the Roman Venus, goddess of love) and “faîte” sounds almost indistinguishable from “fête”.

¹⁰ I follow Typescript 1 in this sentence. Roussan (and Staferla), presumably following Typescript 2, with different sentence breaks, has “...are we going to look for it in this sort of sin *against* desire, *in* some fire of passion [my italics]. The passion for truth, for example, which is...” so that “in” and “against” exchange places compared with Typescript 1, implying that the passion for truth would be a sin against desire, perhaps committed by the “university manner”. The Typescript 1 version, by contrast, can be understood to mean that it would be the “sin in desire against some fire of passion” (what Lacan has just said about desire as marked by a certain reticence, reflecting a “central hole”) which is perhaps committed by the university manner. This fits better with the next two sentences, where Lacan takes back the proposal he has made in this sentence, saying that his intention is *not* to condemn “lukewarmness” as such.

¹¹ “I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” (Apocalypse 3: 15-16, New Revised Standard Version).

¹² “Therefore I tell you, people will be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come” (Matthew 12: 31-32, New Revised Standard Version).

feared, namely an obtuseness in recognising the curve proper to the progress of this infinitely flat being¹³ whose necessary propulsion I show you on this closed object which I am here calling the torus, which is really only the most innocent form that the aforesaid curvature can take. Because in some other form, which is no less possible or less commonly met with (it is in the very structure of these forms, to which I introduced you a little the last time), the subject, by displacing himself, finds himself with his left side on the right side, and this without knowing how it could have happened, how it came about.¹⁴

In this respect, none of those who are here listening to me have any privilege, and up to a certain point nor do I. It can happen to me as much as to others. The only difference between them and me up to now, it seems to me, has been the work that I put in – I give it a bit more than they do.

I may say that, in some of the things that were advanced on a subject, which, no doubt, I have not tackled at all, namely anxiety (this isn't what decided me to announce to you that it will be the subject of my seminar next year, if the times we live in allow there to be a seminar next year)¹⁵... I must say that I heard many strange things on this subject of anxiety, some rash things, not all erroneous. They are not things that I would reprove, addressing myself to particular people one by one. Nevertheless, it seemed to me that what came out there as a certain deficiency was that of a centre and it wasn't of a nature to encompass what I call the void of the centre. Some of what I said in my last seminar ought to have put you on your guard as to the most vital points, and that is why it also seems to me legitimate to tackle the question from this angle today, because this follows on directly from my discourse a week ago.

It is not for no reason that I have emphasised and reminded you, in our basic coordinates – the coordinates where our theorems this year on identification need to be inserted, – of the distance that separates the Other from the Thing, and that I have thought it necessary to point out to you in explicit terms [en propres termes] the relationship between anxiety and the desire of the Other.

What was needed was to really start from there, to hold on to this as a sort of firm handle, instead of only circling around it, out of some sort of false modesty [pudeur], because, really, at certain moments, I would say almost all the time and even in the reports that I have spoken of as marked by a certain lack which isn't the right lack, even in these reports, all the same, one could feel a certain something, which was always the convergence, imposing itself with a sort of compass-needle orientation, towards the only term that could give a unity to the sort of oscillatory movement around which the question flickered, namely: the relationship of

¹³ See the seminar of 7 March 1962 (above)

¹⁴ Lacan is alluding to "orientability" of which he says more in a later seminar (below, pp. 298-299, seminar of 16 May 1962).

¹⁵ In the spring of 1962 the Algerian war had come to a bloody end, a huge influx of refugees from Algeria to France was beginning and assassination attempts on President de Gaulle were in the offing.

anxiety to the desire of the Other. It would be false, vain and not without risk if we didn't mark something here in passing that could serve as a seed, that could fish out¹⁶ all the interesting things which, no doubt, were said during the hours of this little meeting where more and more definite things came to be enounced. So that this is not dissipated, so that it can be linked to our work, allow me to try here – writ large [très massivement], as it were, as if in the margin and almost in advance, but also not without a point-to-point relevance to where we had arrived at – to set out a number of primary reference points which you should never be without.¹⁷

If fundamental access to *jouissance*, qua *jouissance* of the Thing, is prohibited, if this is what I was telling you the whole year of the seminar on ethics, if it's in this suspension, in the fact that this *jouissance* is *aufgehoben*, that, properly speaking, we find the supporting plane on which desire will be constituted and sustained (this is really just a very distant approximation of what everyone would say), do you not then see that we can formulate, when we advance toward desire, that the Other, this Other who at the same time poses himself as being and who is not – who is “to be”,¹⁸ – this Other whose support is the pure signifier, the signifier of the law, presents himself here as metaphor of this prohibition. To say that the Other is the law or that he is *jouissance* qua prohibited is the same thing.

So then, an alert to the person (absent today) who made anxiety into the support and the sign and the spasm of the *jouissance* of a self, whom that person identified – as if he wasn't my pupil at all – with this ineffable resource of the drive as if the drive was the heart, the centre of being, where precisely there is nothing. Everything I teach you about the drive is precisely that it is not to be confused with this mythical self, that it has nothing to do with what has been made of it in a Jungian perspective. Certainly, it is unusual to say that anxiety is the *jouissance* of what one might call the deepest resource of one's unconscious. This was what the person's discourse amounted to. It is unusual, but being unusual doesn't make it true. It is an extreme that one can be brought to when one is in a certain error reposing entirely on the elision of the antinomy of this relationship of the Other to the Thing. The Other is to be, so he is not.¹⁹ He has some reality, nevertheless, because otherwise I couldn't even define him as the locus where the signifying chain is deployed, but the only real Other, since there is no Other of the Other, nothing which guarantees the truth of the law, is the one whom one could enjoy without the law. This virtuality defines the Other as locus. In short, he is the Thing elided, reduced to its locus. That is the Other with a big O.

¹⁶ I follow Roussan (and Staferla) who has “en pêcher” (“fish out from it”), while Typescript 1 has “empêcher” (“prevent”), which is almost indistinguishable to the ear. “Prevent” could be correct, but only if the next sentence break (which is in Typescript 1) is disregarded and a degree of loose grammar is allowed, to obtain the meaning: “prevent all the interesting things ... from being dissipated”. Also Lacan uses the expression “en pêcher” in a very similar way in an earlier seminar (p. 19 above, seminar of 22 November 1961).

¹⁷ Instead of the last six words, Roussan, presumably following Typescript 2, has “It is the reference you should never be without” as a phrase at the start of the next sentence. But the Typescript 1 version works well if a nonsense-producing “sans” (“without”) is taken as a mishearing of “dont” (“of which”), which sounds the same except for the first letter (in the translation I leave out “of” for greater fluency).

¹⁸ “qu'à la fois il se pose être et qu'il n'est pas, qu'il est à être”

¹⁹ “l'Autre est à être, il n'est donc pas”.

I will go straight away, very quickly, to what I have to say about anxiety. I said that it goes via the desire of the Other. This is where we have got to with our torus, this is where we have to define it step by step. This is where I will do a first run-though – a bit too quick, but that is never a bad thing, because we can come back to it later.

First approach: when I say that “the desire of man is the desire of the Other”, it, of course, means something, but what is now in question – what it already introduces – is that I am obviously saying something completely different than if I said²⁰ “the desire x of the ego-subject is the relationship to the desire of the Other”, so that a person’s desire would be in a relationship of *Beschränkung*, of limitation, that it would or would not become configured in a simple field of space, vital or otherwise, conceived as homogeneous, that it would be limited by their collisions.

That is a fundamental image of all sorts of thinking, when one is speculating on the effects of a psycho-sociological conjunction. But the relationship of the desire of the subject, the relationship of the subject to the desire of the Other, has nothing to do with anything whatsoever that can be intuitively supported in this register.

A first step would be to advance that if “measure” means a measure of size, there is no common measure between them. By saying that, we do justice to experience. Who has ever found a common measure between his desire and anyone with whom he has had to do as regards desire? Unless you make that the starting point in any “science of experience” – Hegel’s title, the real title of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*²¹ – you can allow yourself anything, including delirious sermonising about the benefits of genitivity. That, and nothing else, is the point of my introduction of the symbol $\sqrt{-1}$. It is designed to suggest to you that $\sqrt{-1}$ multiplied by $\sqrt{-1}$, the product of my desire and the desire of the Other only gives and can only give a lack: -1 , the want of the subject at this precise point. Result: the product of one desire by the other desire can only be this lack, and this is where you must start from, if you want to have something firm to hold onto.

This means that there cannot be any agreement, any contract on the plane of desire, and I will show you what is involved in this identification of the desire of man with the desire of the Other by a manifest game – by making the puppets of the phantasy, which are the support (the only possible support) for what can in the proper sense be a realisation of desire, perform for you. You can already see it indicated in a thousand references – the references to Sade, to take the closest, and the phantasy of “a child is being beaten”,²² to take one of the first angles from which I began to introduce this game, – and what I will show you, once we have got

²⁰ The text in Typescript 1 at this point is as follows: “... something completely different. I say that ‘the desire x...’” This completely changes the meaning of the paragraph and contradicts the whole drift of Lacan’s argument. I follow Roussan in taking out the sentence break and inserting “than if” (“que si”).

²¹ See above, seminar of 14 March 1962, p. 177 and footnote 23.

²² Freud, [Standard Edition 17](#), pp. 176-204 (*A Child is Being Beaten*).

there, is that the realisation of desire, in the very act of its realisation, can only signify being the instrument, serving the desire of the Other who is not the object that you have before you in the act but another who is behind.

It is a matter here of the possible term in the accomplishment of the phantasy. It is only a possible term and before making yourself the instrument of this Other located in a hyper-space,²³ you already have to deal with desires, with real desires. Desire exists, is constituted, roams the world and exercises its ravages before any attempt of your imagination, erotic or other, to accomplish it; and it is even not excluded that you might encounter the desire of the Other as such, of the real Other as I defined it earlier.²⁴

This is the point at which anxiety is born. Anxiety is as easy as pie.²⁵ It's unbelievable that there wasn't a moment when I saw even a hint of this, which sometimes seemed to be, as one says, a game of hunt the thimble – it's so simple. Speakers went looking for anxiety, and more exactly for what is more original than anxiety: pre-anxiety, traumatic anxiety. No one mentioned that anxiety is the sensation of the desire of the Other. But, of course, every time someone advances a new formula, I don't know what happens, the preceding ones find their way to the bottom of your pocket and never come out again.

I apologise, but I need to use an image for this, even if I do it roughly, in order to make you feel what I mean, and then you can try to use it and it will be of use wherever there is anxiety.

So, a little story, which is perhaps not the best one. The truth is that I made it up this morning, thinking that I had to try and make myself understood. I usually make myself understood via a side path [à côté], which is not such a bad thing; it stops you from making a mistake in the right place! This time I am going to try to make myself understood in the right place and stop you getting it wrong.

Imagine me in an enclosed space alone with a praying mantis²⁶ three metres high, which is the proper proportion for me to be the same size as the male, and, what's more, I am dressed in a skin the size of the aforesaid male, which is 1.75 metres high, roughly my own height. I am mirrored, my image decked out like this is mirrored in the compound eye of the aforesaid praying mantis. Is this anxiety? It's something very close to it.

But then, since I tell you that anxiety is the sensation of the desire of the Other, this definition shows itself for what it is, namely purely introductory. Obviously, you need to refer to my structure of the subject, you need to know the whole of the discourse that has gone before in order to understand that, if it's a question of the Other with a big O, I can't just leave it at

²³ Roussan. Typescript 1 has only "located in a space".

²⁴ Above, p. 223, "the only real Other... is the one whom one could enjoy without the law."

²⁵ "bête comme chou" (literally, "stupid as cabbage"). Anxiety is easy, but worth a whole year's Seminar (Lacan, *Seminar 10* (A. Price, trans.)).

²⁶ Lacan means a female praying mantis. The female is nearly twice the size of the male, which it frequently devours after, or even during, mating (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mantis>).

that, with this little image of myself as a male mantis in the compound eye of the Other. We only get the pure apprehension of the desire of the Other as such if I fail to recognise, what? My insignia! Namely that I am decked out in the skin of the male. I don't know what I am as object for the Other. Anxiety, it is said, is an affect without an object, but we have to know where this lack of object is: it's on my side. The affect of anxiety is indeed connoted by the want of an object, but not by a want of reality. If I no longer know myself as eventual object of this desire of the Other, this Other who is in front of me, his figure is entirely mysterious to me, and specifically because this shape that I have in front of me cannot be constituted for me as an object either, but nevertheless inspires sensations of a type which make up the whole substance of what is called anxiety, of this unspeakable oppression, through which we arrive at the very dimension of the locus of the Other as the locus where desire can appear.

That's what anxiety is. It is only by starting from there that you can understand the different approaches the neurotic uses to manage this relationship with the desire of the Other.

Now, at the point we had got to last time, I showed you how, to begin with, this desire is necessarily included in the demand of the Other. And what do you rediscover here as a primary truth if not a commonplace of daily experience? What is anxiety-provoking for just about anyone – not just for small children, but for the small children that we all are – is what can be hidden in any demand that is an x , the impenetrable and anxiety-provoking x *par excellence* of, “What is it that he wants here?”

What the configuration here calls for – you see it clearly – is a middle term between demand and desire. This middle term has a name, it is called “the phallus”. The phallic function has absolutely no other meaning than to be what gives the measure of this field that is to be defined inside demand as the field of desire, and it is true too, if you like, that everything which analytic theory, the Freudian doctrine, tells us in this regard consists precisely in saying that it is through this, at the end of the day, that everything comes right.

I don't know the desire of the Other: anxiety! But I know the instrument: the phallus. And whoever I am, man or woman,²⁷ I am requested to go by way of it [en passer par là] and not make a fuss – what is called in everyday parlance, “stick to dad's principles”. And since, as we all know, dad has no longer had any principles for some time now, this is where all the trouble starts. But things can still work out so long as dad is there, dad as the centre around which is organised the transfer of the unit of exchange, namely $1/\varphi$ ²⁸ – the unit that gets installed and becomes the basis and the principle of every support, every foundation, every articulation of the field of desire.

²⁷ “man or woman” is not in Typescript 1. Roussan inserts it, citing the notes of four listeners.

²⁸ Typescript 1 has “une survie”, which must have been the stenographer's best shot at “un sur phi” (“one over φ ”).

In that case things will be stretched between, on the one hand, at the limit, the μή φῶναι [*me phunai*, Greek],²⁹ “Would that he had never begotten me!”, and, on the other hand, what is called *baraka* in the Semitic tradition (and even, properly speaking, the biblical tradition), which is precisely the contrary – what makes me the living, active prolongation of the law of the father, of the father as the origin of what will be transmitted as desire.

So you will see here that castration anxiety has two meanings and two levels; because if the phallus is this element of mediation, which gives its support to desire, well then, the woman is not the worst off in this business because, after all, for her, it’s quite simple: she doesn’t have it, so she only has to desire it; and, heaven knows, in the most favourable cases she manages that very well.

That, as Freud tells us, is all there is to the dialectic of the castration complex as introducing the Oedipus complex for the woman. Thanks to the structure of human desire, the normal path for her requires fewer detours than for the man. Because, in the man’s case, in order for his phallus to be able to serve as this foundation of the field of desire, will he have to demand it in order to have it? Something like that is the issue in the castration complex: a passage of transition, through this authorisation by the law,³⁰ from that which, in the man, is the natural support for the phallus and that has become semi-alien, vacillating; the process by which this piece, this pound of flesh, will become the pledge, the something through which it will designate itself at the place where it has to manifest itself as desire, inside the circle of demand.³¹

The issue here is the necessary preservation of the field of demand, which, through the law, humanises the mode of the relationship of desire to its object. And, for this reason, the danger for the subject is not – as gets said in all these deviations that we have been making for years, running counter to analysis – of any abandonment on the part of the Other, but of the subject’s abandonment to demand. Because, just by living, he develops the constitution of his relationship to the phallus narrowly in the field of demand, and this demand does not have any end to it, because although, as you know, the phallus has to be demanded in order for the field of desire to be introduced and established, it is not in the power of the Other to make a gift of it on the plane of demand.

When therapy can’t resolve the end of analysis better than it has been doing, when it can’t get out of the circle of demand, it runs into and finishes in this revindicating, insatiable, *unendliche* [interminable] form that Freud in his final article, *Analysis Terminable and*

²⁹ Literally “Not to have been born” (Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, line 1225).

³⁰ The following words, up to “vacillating”, are not in Typescript 1.

³¹ In the earlier English translation (*Seminar IX amended by MCL*) this sentence ends “...he is going to designate himself at the place where he has to manifest himself as desire within the circle of demand.” It is indeed possible that “il” (masculine pronoun, “he” or “it”) refers back to “the man” and not to “this pound of flesh” (i.e., the penis) since both of these are masculine nouns. But the French sentence reads more naturally as I have translated it. Also, Piera Aulagnier cites this exact sentence in her presentation at the seminar of 2 May 1962 (below, p. 259) and her paraphrase clearly assumes this understanding.

Interminable, designates as unresolved castration anxiety in the case of the man and *Penisneid* [penis envy] in the woman.

But a proper positioning, a correct positioning of the function of demand in analytic efficacy and the manner of directing analysis might perhaps allow us to get to the term signalled by Freud as the end point of his own experience, or at least it might if we were not so tardy in this endeavour – as sufficiently marked by the fact that only in the rarest cases do we actually get to that place.

Pray heaven that we get there, even if the place is an impasse! That would at least prove just how far we can go, and the question is to know whether getting there does bring us to an impasse or whether one can go further.

Before leaving you, shall I make a few little points that will give you satisfaction by showing you that we are in the right place, by referring to something in our experience of the neurotic? What, for example, does the hysteric or obsessional neurotic do in the register that we have just been trying to construct? What do they both do in this place of the desire of the Other as such?

Before we fell into their snare by encouraging them to play out the whole game on the plane of demand, imagining that, at the limit, we will manage to define the phallic field as the intersection of two frustrations (which, in fact, isn't an absurd thing to imagine), what do they do spontaneously?

For the hysteric, it is quite simple; and for the obsessional too, but for him it is less obvious. The hysteric doesn't need to have attended our seminar to know that man's desire is the desire of the Other and that, as a consequence, the Other can perfectly well go proxy for her, for the hysteric, in this function of desire. The hysteric lives her relationship to the object by fomenting the desire of the Other, with a big O, for this object. Look at Dora's case. I think that I have already articulated this sufficiently, and in all its aspects, not to need to remind you of it, even here.

I simply appeal to the experience you may have and to the operations of a "subtle schemer" that you see the hysteric weaving throughout her behaviour, when she sustains the love of one or other person in her immediate entourage for somebody else, who is her friend and is the true, ultimate object of her desire; there always being, of course, a profound ambiguity as to whether the situation ought to be understood the other way round. Why? You will be able to see, from other things we will have to say, that this is perfectly calculable, just from the fact of the function of the phallus, which can always pass from one to the other of the hysteric's two partners. That is something we will come back to in detail.

And what does the obsessional really do – I come straight to the point – in his truck with the desire of the Other? He does something craftier, because it's a fact that this field of desire is constituted by the paternal demand, which is what preserves, what defines the field of desire

as such by prohibiting it. “Well then”, the obsessional says, “he can sort it out himself!”³² In obsessional neurosis sustaining desire for the object is made the task of the dead man [le mort]. The subject has the phallus, he may even exhibit it on occasion, but it is the dead man who is asked to make use of it. This is why I pointed out in the case history of the Rat Man how, in the night, after long contemplation of his erection in a mirror, he goes and opens the door to his father’s ghost, to ask him to take note that everything is ready for the supreme narcissistic act that this desire is for the obsessional.³³

With such means being deployed, you shouldn’t be surprised that anxiety only appears from time to time, that it is not there all the time, and also that it is much more and much better avoided by the hysteric than by the obsessional, the complicity of the Other being much greater than that of a dead man, whom it is always difficult to keep present, so to speak. This is why, from time to time, whenever the whole arrangement that allows him to manage the desire of the Other cannot be repeated to satiety, the affect of anxiety re-emerges for the obsessional in a more or less overwhelming fashion.

It is only from here, by going backwards, that you can understand how a phobia is a first step in this endeavour, which is just the neurotic’s way of resolving the problem of the desire of the Other – a first step towards this way of resolving it. As everyone knows, it’s a step that is far from sure of arriving at this relative solution of the anxiety relation. Far from it: the anxiety is only mastered very precariously by the mediation of this object,³⁴ the ambiguity of which between the functions little a and little φ has already been sufficiently underlined for us. The common factor constituted by little φ in every little a of desire is, in a way, extracted and revealed here. It is what I will emphasise next time by starting again from phobia, in order to specify what exactly this function of the phallus is.

So, summing up, what do you have? When all’s said and done, the solution we come to of the problem of the relationship of the subject to desire, at its radical foundation, looks like this: because it’s a question of demand and it’s a question of defining desire, we can say, roughly, “the subject demands the phallus and the phallus desires”. It’s as dumb as that.

At least, that is the radical formula we have to start out from in order to see what it actually is in experience that is modelled and modulated around this relationship of the subject to the phallus, to the extent that, as you see, this relationship is essentially of an identificatory nature, and that if there is something which can provoke this anxiety linked to the fear of a loss, it is the phallus.

Why not desire? There is no fear of *aphanisis*. There is the fear of losing the phallus, because only the phallus can give to desire the field that is specific to it.³⁵

³² “Eh bien, qu’il s’en débrouille donc lui-même”.

³³ Freud, *Standard Edition 10*, pp. 204, 302-303 (*Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*).

³⁴ i.e., the object of a phobia.

³⁵ i.e., the field specific to desire.

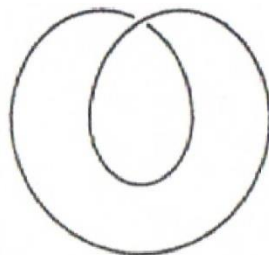
But then, don't let anyone talk to us either about defence against anxiety. One doesn't defend oneself against anxiety, any more than there is a fear of *aphanisis*. Anxiety is at the source of defences, but one doesn't defend oneself against anxiety.

Of course, if I say to you that I am going to devote a whole year to this subject of anxiety, it means I am not claiming to have done the rounds of it today or that we don't have the problem that, if anxiety is always situated at the level defined (almost caricatured) in my little story, it is certainly the case that, when transformed into a sign, it's perhaps not quite the same thing as it was where I tried to pin it down at its essential point. There is also a simulacrum of anxiety. At this level, of course, one may be tempted to minimise its import, because, evidently, if the subject sends himself signs of anxiety, it must be in order to make things nicer [plus gai]. But that is not where we should start from in order to define the function of anxiety.

Finally, then, to say things writ large [des choses massives], as I said I would do today, we should open ourselves to the thought that if Freud told us that anxiety is a signal which goes via the level of the ego [moi], we still need to know who it is a signal for. Not for the ego, because it is at the level of the ego that it is produced.

And I greatly regret too that no one dreamt of making this simple remark at our last meeting.

11 April 1962¹



I had said that I would continue today about the phallus. But I won't talk about the phallus, or I will only talk to you about it in the form of this inverted eight,² which is not all that reassuring.

This isn't a new signifier. You will see that it is the same one that I have been talking about, mainly, since the beginning of this year. The reason why I bring it back as essential is in order get back to [renouveler avec] the topological base that we are dealing with – the point of the introduction this year of the torus.

I am not absolutely sure that what I said about anxiety was very well understood. Someone very nice and who reads – someone from a milieu where people work – remarked to me very opportunely (I use it as an example because it's encouraging) that what I said about anxiety as the desire of the Other matched what can be found in Kierkegaard. This may be the impression from a first reading. It's true that Kierkegaard, talking about anxiety (I remembered the passage that was meant), evokes the young girl who realises for the first time that she is desired.³ But the difference between what Kierkegaard said and what I am saying, to use a Kierkegaardian term, is that I repeat it.

If ever someone pointed out that there is always a reason why one says “I say it and I repeat it”, it was Kierkegaard. If one feels the need to underline that one is repeating something after having said it, that is because it is probably not at all the same thing to repeat it as to say it. It is absolutely certain that if what I said the last time has a meaning it is precisely because the instance cited by Kierkegaard is something quite particular and which obscures – far from clarifying – the true meaning of the formula that anxiety is the desire of the Other with a big O.

¹ Typescript 1 of this seminar is not provided on the École lacanienne website. Clicking on “11 avril 1962” (at <http://ecole-lacanienne.net/en/bibliolacan/seminaires-version-j-l-et-non-j-l/>) opens the seminar of 14 March 1962 (as of 14.11.22). I have used the Roussan and Rue CB versions.

² In this seminar Lacan refers to this surface (a Moebius surface) sometimes as “huit inversé” (“inverted eight”) and sometimes as “huit intérieur” (“interior eight”). They mean the same thing.

³ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread* (W. Lowrie, trans.), p.60. A more recent translation (by A. Hannay) calls Kierkegaard's book *The Concept of Anxiety*.

It might be that the Other is incarnated for the young girl at a certain moment of her existence in some ne'er-do-well. That has nothing to do with the question that I raised the last time and with the introduction of the desire of the Other as such when I say that it is anxiety, or more exactly that anxiety is the sensation of this desire.

So today I am going to come back to the path I am following this year and do so all the more rigorously because I had to make a digression last time. And that is why we are going to do topology and do it more rigorously than ever. We need to do it because you cannot avoid doing it all the time, whether or not you are logicians and whether or not you even know the meaning of the word "topology".

For example, you use the conjunction "or". It's remarkable, but true, that the use of this conjunction in the field of technical logic – the logic of logicians – was not properly articulated, properly specified, properly made plain until recently, much too recently for its effects to have really reached you. And that's why, for example, you only have to read the least analytic text written nowadays to see that the thought trips up when what's at issue is, not just the term "identification", but even the practice of identifying anything whatsoever in the field of our experience.

We need to start out from schemas that haven't been messed about with⁴ in your thought. They haven't been messed about with for two reasons. First, because they have to do with what I will call a certain incapacity that is specific to intuitive thinking or, more simply, to intuition – to the foundations of experience as marked by the organisation of what is called "the visual sense". You can grasp this intuitive incapacity very easily if, after this little talk, you set yourself some simple challenges of representation (I would be so pleased if you did) regarding the things I am going to show you happening on the surface of a torus. You will see how hard it is not to get confused. And yet a torus is quite simple – it's a ring.

You will get confused, and I get confused too. I had to work at it before I could find my bearings a little and grasp what it suggested and what it could be used for in practice.

The other reason is linked to what is called "instruction", because everything is done to encourage this sort of intuitive incapacity, to establish it, to give it an absolute character – all, of course, with the best of intentions. This is what happened, for example, in 1741 when Euler, a very great name in the history of mathematics, introduced his famous circles which, whether you know it or not, did a lot to lead the teaching of classical logic in a certain direction which, far from opening it out, was bound to make the idea that simple schoolboys might have of it appear annoyingly evident.

This happened because Euler had got it into his head, God knows why, to teach a princess – the princess of Anhalt-Dessau. Throughout a whole period of history people were very taken

⁴ "schémas ... inébranlés"

up with princesses; people still are taken up with them, which is unfortunate.⁵ You know that Descartes had one too, the famous Christina.⁶ She was a historical figure of a different stature, and she was the death of him.

This isn't altogether a subjective thing. There's a certain quite particular stink that emanates from everything that surrounds the entity called "princess" or "Prinzessin".⁷ For about three centuries, we have a sphere dominated by letters addressed to princesses, memoirs of princesses, and this sphere occupies a certain place in culture. It's a kind of supplement to the Lady,⁸ whose function – so difficult to understand, so difficult to approach – I tried to explain to you in the sublimating structure of courtly love, though I'm not at all sure that I made you understand its real import.

All I was really able to do was to give you projections of it, like when one tries to depict in another space four-dimensional figures that one can't grasp. I was pleased to learn that something of it has reached ears that are close to me, and that people somewhere else are starting to take an interest in what courtly love might be.⁹ That's a result.

Never mind the princess and whatever problems she may have caused Euler. He wrote 254 letters to her, not just to make her understand Euler circles. They were published in 1775 in London and they constitute a sort of body of the scientific thought of the period. The only part of it that is really still with us is these little circles, these Euler circles. They are circles like any other circles, except for the particular use he made of them. It was to explain the rules of the syllogism and, essentially, exclusion, inclusion and what can be called the intersection of two... of two what? Of two fields. And applicable to what? Well, good heavens, applicable to many things; applicable, for example, to the field where a certain proposition is true, applicable to the field where a certain relation exists, applicable quite simply to the field where an object exists.¹⁰

You can see, if you are familiar with the multiplicity of logics that have been elaborated with immense effort, mostly in propositional (relational) logic and the logic of classes, how usefully the Euler circle has been applied. Of course, I can't even dream of entering into the details that would be required in order to distinguish these different elaborations. All that I want to point out here is that you surely remember encountering, at some moment of your

⁵ A veiled reference to Princess Marie Bonaparte, with whom Lacan had a difficult relationship. See, for example, the letter to his former analyst Rudolph Loewenstein (<http://ecole-lacanienne.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/1926-1981-Pas-tout-Lacan.pdf>), pp. 427-436, in French).

⁶ A queen, in fact: Queen Christina of Sweden.

⁷ "princess" (German).

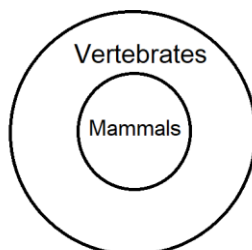
⁸ "dame" in Roussan. Gaogoa has "tare" (defect, flaw). An online search of *Seminar 7* (D. Porter, trans.), where Lacan discusses courtly love, finds no instance of "tare".

⁹ The reference is obscure.

¹⁰ *Letters of Euler on Natural Philosophy Addressed to a German Princess, vol. 1* (Rev. H. Hunter, trans.), letters 101-108, p. 307 *et seq.* <http://www.17centurymaths.com/contents/euler/lettersvol1/letters101to108.pdf>. The circles by means of which Euler explains syllogisms in these letters are at <http://www.17centurymaths.com/contents/euler/lettersvol1/plate3figs.pdf>.

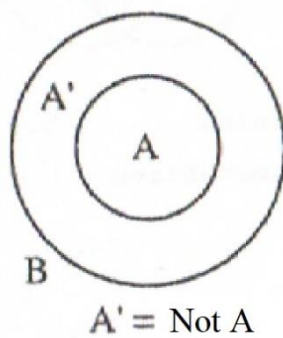
existence, a logical proof that used such a support to deal with some object treated as a logical object, whether it was a proposition, relationship, class or even just an object that exists.

Let's take an example at the level of the logic of classes. Let's represent mammals with respect to the class of vertebrates by a small circle inside a big one.



This speaks for itself [ceci va tout seul] and is particularly simple because the logic of classes is certainly what initially opened the way, in the easiest fashion, to this formal elaboration and because we refer here to something that is already incarnated in a signifying elaboration, namely zoological classification, which really gives the model for it.¹¹ But the universe of discourse, as it is fairly called, is not a zoological universe and the urge to extend the properties of zoological classification to the whole universe of discourse easily falls into various traps, which tend to cause mistakes and set off the alarm bell of an impasse of signification [impasse significative].

One of these inconveniences, for example, is an ill-considered use of negation. This use was only recently revealed as possible, when it was remarked that this exterior Euler circle of inclusion had to play an essential role, namely that it is absolutely not the same thing to speak, for example, of what is “not-man” without any specification as it is to speak of what is “not-man” within the animal world. In other words, in order for negation to have a meaning that is more or less assured – applicable in logic – you have to know the set of things in relation to which something is denied. In other words if A' is not- A , you have to know what it is not- A in, namely in B .



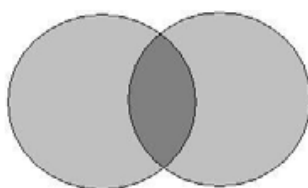
¹¹ It is unclear whether the pronoun “en”, which I translate “for it”, refers back to “the logic of classes”, “formal elaboration” or “signifying elaboration”. The first makes best sense.

You only have to open Aristotle to see how negation drags us into all sorts of difficulties. And yet it is incontestable that nobody waited for these remarks or made the slightest use of this formal support in order to make use of negation, and it would be strange if they had done. The subject, in his discourse, makes frequent use of negation in instances where there isn't the remotest possibility of assurance on this formal basis.

Hence the utility of the remarks I make to you about negation, distinguishing negation at the level of saying [énonciation] or as constitutive of negation at the level of the said [énoncé]. This means that the laws of negation, precisely at the point where they are not assured by this decisive introduction,¹² which dates from the recent distinction between the logic of relations and the logic of classes... that¹³ we have to define the status of negation somewhere quite different from where it has found its seat.¹⁴ This is a reminder, a reminder intended to clarify for you retrospectively the importance of what I have been suggesting to you since the start of my discourse this year about the primordial originality of the function of negation as compared to this distinction.¹⁵

So you see that it wasn't Euler who used these Euler circles for this purpose¹⁶ – it had to wait for the work of Boole and then of De Morgan to be fully articulated. So I don't come back to Euler's circles because he himself made particularly good use of them, but because it was with his material – using these circles – that the later progress was made, and I will straight away give you an example of it. Not the least example, nor the least well known, and one that is particularly striking and that you can immediately feel [immédiat à faire sentir].

The use of these circles, between Euler and De Morgan, enabled a symbolisation, which is both useful and will appear to you as implicitly fundamental, based on a positioning of these circles structured as follows:



We will call this “two circles that cut each other” and they are especially important for their intuitive value, which you will readily admit when I point out to you the two relations that can be articulated by means of these circles and that deserve to be emphasised. The first of

¹² i.e., the discovery, which Lacan described in the last paragraph but one, of an “ill-considered use of negation”.

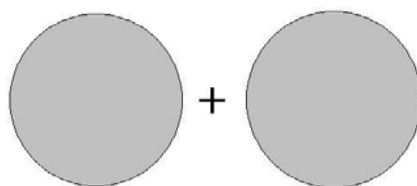
¹³ i.e., “this means that” (Lacan breaks off and repeats the start of the sentence).

¹⁴ The expression is “trouver son assiette”, literally “find its seat” (used of a rider making himself comfortable in the saddle).

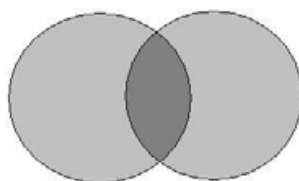
¹⁵ Presumably the distinction between the logic of relations and the logic of classes (not the distinction between the level of saying and the level of the said).

¹⁶ Apparently the purpose of making the distinction between the logic of classes and of relations (the distinction, which, as Lacan just said, brings out that “if A' is not-A, you have to know what it is not-A in, namely in B”).

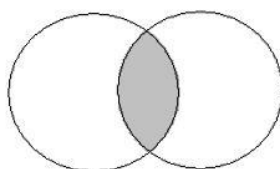
them is union: respecting any of what I enumerated earlier,¹⁷ their union happens when these two fields are what is united. As you can see, the operation called “union”, ordinarily symbolised “ \cup ” (it’s what introduced this symbol) , is something not exactly the same as addition:



The advantage of these circles is to make it tangible; adding two separate circles together¹⁸ is not the same thing as uniting them in this position:¹⁹



There is another relation that is illustrated by these circles that cut each other – that of intersection, symbolised by the sign “ \cap ” . This means something quite different. The field of intersection is included in the field of union.



What is called Boolean algebra shows that, up to a certain point at least, the operation of union is similar enough to addition for it to be symbolised by the addition sign, “+”. It is also shown that intersection is sufficiently structurally similar to multiplication to be symbolised by the multiplication sign, “ \times ”.

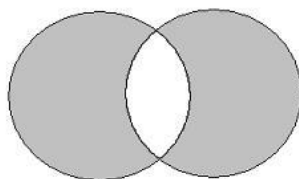
What I am giving you here is an ultra-rapid extract, intended to lead you where I need to lead you, and I certainly apologise to those who know just how complicated these things are for the elisions that all of this involves, because we need to go on. What interests us, regarding the precise point that I have to introduce, is something that hadn’t been properly brought out before De Morgan (one can’t fail to be surprised by such an omission) as one of the functions

¹⁷ See above, p. 233, in the present seminar: “...applicable for example to the field where a certain proposition is true, applicable to the field where a certain relation exists, applicable quite simply to the field where an object exists.”

¹⁸ The last diagram.

¹⁹ The next diagram.

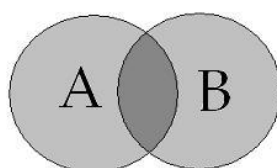
which flow from, which ought to flow from an altogether rigorous usage of logic, namely the field constituted by the extraction of the zone of intersection in the relation between these two circles. Consider the product, when two circles cut each other, at the level of the field thus defined, namely union minus intersection. It is what is called the “symmetric difference”.



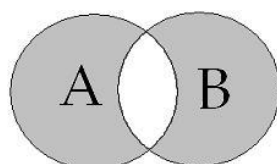
This symmetric difference is what we will focus on. It is of the greatest interest to us – you will see why.

The term “symmetric difference” is an appellation that I would simply ask you to accept in its established usage. This is what it was called. Don’t try giving a grammatically analysable meaning to this so-called symmetry.

The symmetric difference means these fields, in the two Eulerian circles, to the extent that they define as such an exclusive “or”. For two different fields, the symmetric difference marks the field that is constructed if you do not give to “or” the alternative meaning – the meaning that implies the possibility of a local identity between the two terms, the habitual usage of the term “or”, by which the term “or” applies perfectly well to the field of union. If a thing is “A or B”, the field of its extension can be drawn like this,



which is the first form in which these two fields are covered [où ces deux champs sont recouverts]. If, on the contrary, “A or B” is exclusive, we can symbolise it like this, where the field of intersection is excluded:

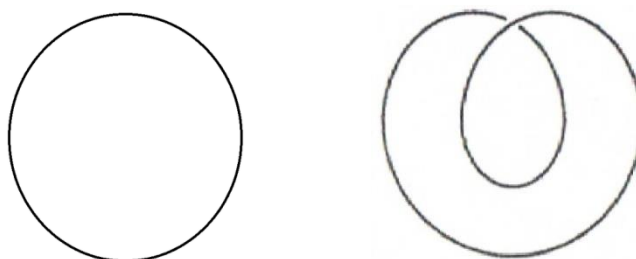


This should make us go back and reflect concerning what is intuitively assumed by the use of a circle as the basis – the support – for something that is formalised in terms of a limit. This assumption can be very sufficiently defined by thinking about a plane surface that we use every day, not a natural plane, but one that can be manufactured and that has entered fully into our universe of tools. I mean a sheet of paper.

We spend much more time in the company of sheets of paper than of tori. There must be reasons for this, but they are not obvious. Why don't human beings manufacture more tori? That said, for many centuries, what we have nowadays in the form of sheets were scrolls, which must have been more familiar with the notion of volume in periods other than in our own.²⁰ There must be a reason why a plane surface suffices for us and, more exactly, why we find it sufficient for ourselves. As I said just now,²¹ one cannot overstate the importance that should be given to the fact that – say what you will, and contrary to all the efforts of physicists and philosophers to persuade us of the contrary – the field of vision is essentially two-dimensional.

On a sheet of paper, on a practically simple surface, a drawn circle delimits an inside and an outside as clearly as could be. This is the whole secret, the whole mystery, the source of the usage that is made of the circle in the Eulerian illustration of logic.

I ask you this: what happens if Euler, instead of drawing this circle, draws my inverted eight, the one that I mean to talk to you about today?



In appearance it's only a particular case of the circle, with the interior field that it defines and the possibility of having another circle inside. It's just that the inside circle touches the limit constituted by the outside circle, or that is what some people may say at first sight. But it's not quite that, because it's quite clear, the way I draw it, that the line of the outside circle continues in the line of the inside circle and finds itself here.

I will point out the interest and the import of this very simple shape straight away by saying that the remarks I made at a certain point of my seminar, when I introduced the function of the signifier, involved reminding you of the paradox, or the supposed paradox, caused by the classification of sets, which do not include themselves.²²

Let me remind you of the difficulty which they pose: should or shouldn't we include these sets, which do not include themselves, in the set of sets, which do not include themselves?

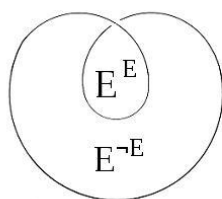
²⁰ Lacan seems to mean "so people must have been more familiar with the notion of volume in periods other than in our own."

²¹ In fact Lacan had not made this point in the present seminar. Perhaps he was thinking of remarks in the seminar of 7 March 1962 (above, p. 162).

²² Above, p. 122 *et seq.*, seminar of 24 January 1962.

You see the difficulty. If the answer is yes, then they are included in this set of sets which do not include themselves. If the answer is no, we are confronted with an analogous impasse.

This is easily resolved on the simple condition that one sees, at the very least, that you can't talk in the same way about sets that include themselves and sets that don't include themselves, and this is the solution that the formalists, the logicians have given. In other words, you exclude them as such from the simple definition of sets, you say, essentially, that sets, which include themselves, cannot be treated as sets. I mean that, far from this interior zone of objects as important in the construction of modern logic as sets... far from an interior zone defined in this image of the inverted eight by the covering, or the redoubling in this covering, of a class, a relation, some proposition or other, by itself, by being raised to a second power... far from this leaving, in a famous case,²³ the proposition, the relation in a general fashion, the category inside itself in a way that would be somehow more weighty and more accentuated, this has the effect of reducing it to homogeneity with what is outside.



E^E : Sets that include themselves

$E^{\neg E}$: Sets that do not include themselves

How is this conceivable? After all, you have to admit that if what is in question is a set, among all the sets, which includes itself, there isn't any reason *a priori* why it shouldn't be a set like the others. For example, you define as a set all works relating to the humanities – to the arts, the sciences, ethnography. You make a list. Works on the question of what one should class as humanities will be part of the same catalogue, which is to say that what I just defined by articulating the title “works about the humanities” is part of what needs cataloguing.

How can we conceive that something which presents itself as redoubling itself in the dignity of a certain category can lead us to an antinomy, to a logical impasse, so that we are forced, on the contrary, to reject it?

This is something, which is not as unimportant as you might think, because the best logicians see it as a quandary, a stumbling block, something that makes the whole formalist edifice quake, and not without reason. It is something that presents a sort of major objection to intuition, an objection that is inscribed, tangible, visible as such in the very form of these two circles that present themselves, in the Eulerian perspective, as included one in the other.

²³ “dans un cas notoire”, i.e., in the case of Russell's paradox.

This is precisely where we will see that the use of intuition in the representation of the torus comes in very handy.

You clearly sense, I expect, that what is involved is a certain relation of the signifier to itself. As I have said, it's when the definition of a set got closer and closer to a purely signifying articulation that it led to this impasse. It's the whole question of the fact, which we need to keep at centre stage, that a signifier cannot signify itself. It's really an extremely dumb and simple thing, this quite essential point that, to the extent that it can serve to signify itself, the signifier has to be posed as different from itself. This is what needs to be symbolised first and foremost because it is also what we will rediscover, up to a certain point of extension that has to be determined, in the whole subjective structure, up to and including desire.

Quite recently one of my obsessionals had been describing all the refinement of the science of his exercises with respect to feminine objects, to whom (as is common among obsessionals) he remains attached by what you could call a "constant infidelity" – impossible to leave any of these objects and extremely difficult to maintain them all together. He added that, quite evidently, if this relationship, this highly complex rapport, which requires such a high degree of what I might call "technical refinement" in order to maintain relationships that must in principle remain external or impermeable to each other, and yet be linked... that if, as he says to me, all this has no other purpose than to leave him intact for a satisfaction, which he himself can't make work in it,²⁴ the satisfaction must be located elsewhere; not just in a future that is always put off, but manifestly in another space, because, at the end of the day, he is incapable of saying what this intactness and its purpose could lead to in terms of satisfaction.

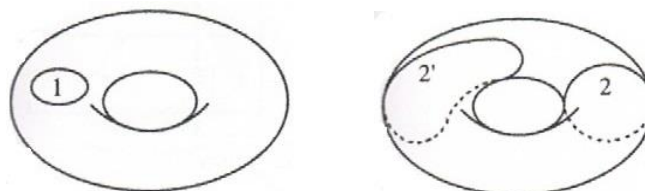
What we have here, tangibly, is something that poses for us the question of the structure of desire in the most everyday manner.

Let's go back to our torus and inscribe our Euler circles on it. This will necessitate a little backtracking, for which I apologise and which isn't a geometrical backtrack (though it may appear so to someone who comes to my seminar today for the first time). Perhaps it will be geometrical right at the end, but very incidentally, and it is really topological.

There is no need for this torus to be a regular torus or a torus on which we could make measurements. It's a surface constituted according to certain fundamental relationships that I will need to remind you of; but, since I don't want to seem to go too far away from the field that interests us, I am going to limit myself to things that I have already made a start on and which are very simple.

²⁴ "dont lui-même ici s'achoppe"

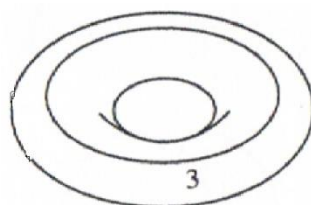
As I already brought to your attention,²⁵ on a surface like this we can describe this type of circle [1], which I connoted to you as being reducible: if we represent it by a little string which passes at its end through a buckle, I can pull on the string and reduce the circle to a point, in other words to zero. I pointed out to you that there are two other kinds of circle or loop, whatever their extension may be, because, for example, this one here [2] could just as well have that shape there [2'].²⁶



Whatever its shape – more or less tight, more or less loose, – what defines such a circle is that it crosses the hole, it passes to the other side of the hole (here it is shown as a dotted line and here as a continuous line).²⁷ That's what it symbolises: this circle is not reducible, which is to say that, if you suppose it to be a string that passes through a little arch that we could use to tighten it, we can't reduce it to something punctiform. Whatever its circumference may be, there will always remain at its centre the circumference of what one could call here the thickness of the torus.

So on the one hand this circle that is irreducible from the point of view that interested us earlier, namely the definition of an interior and an exterior, manifests a special resistance – something that gives it an eminent dignity as compared with the other circles, – but on this other point it will suddenly appear singularly deprived of the properties of the preceding circle. Because, if, for example, you materialise this circle that I am talking about by a cut with a pair of scissors, what do you get? Absolutely not, as in the other case, a little piece which is taken away and then the rest of the torus. The torus remains complete and intact in the form of a pipe or, if you like, of a sleeve.

If, however, you take another type of circle [3], one that I already spoke to you about,²⁸ which doesn't go through the hole, but goes around it,



²⁵ See above, p.163, seminar of 7 March 1962.

²⁶ 2 and 2' in the diagram are both instances of the first of the "two other kinds of circle" (the second kind is yet to come).

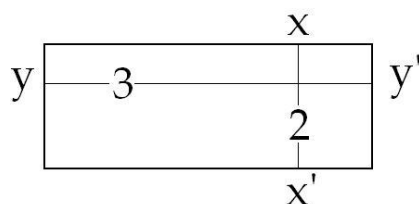
²⁷ In the right-hand diagram above.

²⁸ See above, p.165, seminar of 7 March 1962.

you find that it is in the same situation as the preceding one as regards irreducibility. It is also in the same situation in that it is incapable of defining an inside or an outside, which is to say that, if you follow this circle and you open the torus using a pair of scissors, what will you end up with? Well, the same thing as in the preceding case: you get the form of a torus, and a form with a merely intuitive difference, but that is essentially just the same from the point of view of structure.²⁹ What you have after this operation, like in the first case, is a sleeve; it's just that the sleeve is very short and very wide. You have a belt, if you like, but there's no essential difference between a belt and a sleeve from a topological point of view. You can also call it a band, if you want.

So here we have two kinds of circle, which, from this point of view, are really just one – they don't define an inside and an outside. I would point out to you, incidentally, that if you cut the torus first along one and then along the other circle, you still won't get to what is in question and that you got straight away with the other type of circle, the first that I drew for you [1, above], namely two pieces.

On the contrary, not only does the torus remain whole, but you get the flattening-out from the first time that I talked about it to you³⁰ and that lets you symbolise the torus in a particularly convenient fashion as a rectangle. By pulling a little, you can spread it out like a skin pinned down at the four corners, and then define the correspondence of its edges one to the other and also the correspondence of its vertices (the four vertices unite at a point), so that you can study what happens geometrically on the torus in a way that is much more accessible to your faculties of ordinary intuition.



So one of these types of circle will be represented by a line like this [2, in the last figure] and another type by lines like this [3], representing two opposed points [$x-x'$, $y-y'$], defined in a preliminary fashion as being equivalent on what are called the edges of the spread-out, flattened surface, even though of course it's not a real flattening, which would be impossible as such because we are not dealing with a surface that is metrically (as opposed to topologically) identifiable to a plane surface... I repeat – purely metrically, and not topologically.

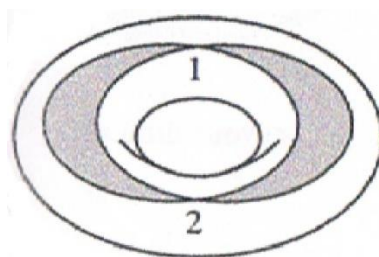
²⁹ i.e., the results of the cuts along circles 2 and 3 are only apparently (not topologically) different.

³⁰ See above, p. 167, seminar of 7 March 1962.

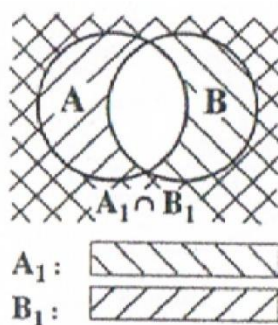
Where does this get us? The fact that two cuts of this kind are possible (with, moreover, the necessity that one or the other cuts across the first)³¹ without fragmenting the surface in any way, leaving it whole, leaving it in one strip [lambeau], as I might say, is enough to define a certain type of surface. Not all surfaces are of this type. In particular, if you make a cut like that on a sphere, you will always have two pieces, whatever the circle may be.

What are we led to by this?

Suppose we make, not a single cut, but two cuts on the surface of the torus.³² What do we see appearing? We see something appear which must astonish us, namely that, if the two circles cut each other, what is called the field of the “symmetric difference” well and truly exists, but can we say that the field of intersection also exists? I think that this figure, as it is constructed, is sufficiently accessible to your intuition for you to clearly understand at once and immediately that there can be no question of its existing.



For the eye, and as I have presented it to you by my way of drawing it, this something which would be the intersection, but isn't, would perhaps be somewhere here [1 in the last figure] (I say “for the eye” because there is certainly no question even for a moment of this intersection existing), in this perfectly continuous field that is in a single block, a single strip with this other field here [2], which could, by analogy, very crudely and for an intuition accustomed to base itself on things that happen only on a plane, correspond to the external field where we could define, with respect to two Euler circles cutting each other, the field of their negation.



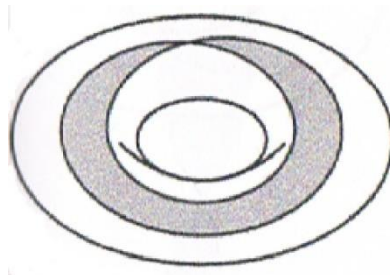
³¹ He seems to mean simply that whichever cut you make first, the second will go across it.

³² It is clear from what follows that he means drawing two circles (making two cuts), which are both of the third type just described (the type shown in the penultimate figure).

I mean that, if we have circle A here and circle B here, then here we have A_1 , the negation of A, and here we have B_1 the negation of B, and there is something to be formulated concerning their intersection in these external fields.

So we see here, illustrated in the simplest fashion by the structure of the torus, that something is possible, which can be articulated as follows: two fields cut each other and are able to define their difference qua symmetric difference, but are nonetheless two fields of which one can say that they cannot be united, nor can they cover each other. In other words they cannot serve a function of “or..., or...”, nor can they serve a function of multiplication.³³

They literally cannot take themselves up again at the second power, they cannot be reflected one by the other and one in the other; they have no intersection, their intersection is exclusion from themselves. The field where we would expect intersection is the field where we leave what concerns them behind, where we are in the non-field. This is all the more interesting because we can substitute for the representation of these two circles our inverted eight of a little while ago. We then have a form which is still more suggestive for us.

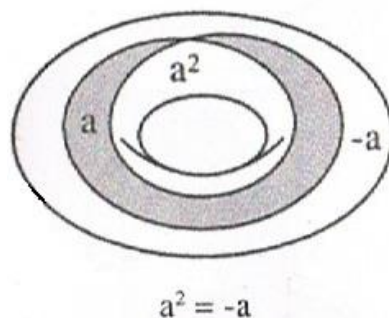


Let's remember what I immediately compared these circles – the circles that make the circuit of the hole in the torus – with. I said to you that it was something related to the metonymical object, to the object of desire as such. What is this inverted eight, this circle which takes itself up inside itself? What is it, if not a circle which, at the limit, redoubles itself and grasps itself again, which enables symbolisation of this limit (because this is about making something intuitively evident and the Euler circles appear particularly appropriate for a certain symbolisation of the limit) as taking itself up again, as identifying itself to itself.

Reduce further and further the distance that separates the first circuit, let's say, from the second, and you have the circle as grasping itself. Are there any objects for us which have this nature of subsisting solely in their grasping of their self-difference? Because it's one thing or the other: either they grasp it or they don't. But there is one thing, at any rate, that is implied and required by everything which happens at this level of grasping; it is that any reflection of this object onto itself is excluded. I mean, suppose that what is in question is

³³ i.e., neither a function of union (“either... or..., or both”, which, as Lacan has said (above, p. 236) is the usual meaning of “either... or...” (“ou-ou”), nor of intersection (he explained that intersection can be connoted by the multiplication sign, “x”; above, p. 235).

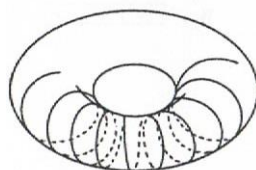
little a – I already said earlier that this is what these circles would be useful to us for, – then (a^2) ,³⁴ the field thus defined, is the same field as what is here, namely not- a or minus a [$(-a)$].



Just suppose that for a moment... I didn't say that it has been proved, I say that today I am giving you a model, an intuitive support for something that is precisely what we need concerning the constitution of desire. Perhaps it will appear more accessible to you, more immediately understandable, if we make it the symbol of the self-difference of desire from itself and the fact that it is precisely by its redoubling onto itself that we see how what it clasps slips away and flees towards what surrounds it.

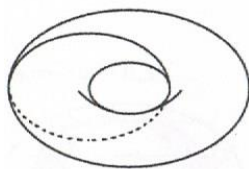
You will say: stop, hold on there, because it's not really desire that I mean to symbolise by the double loop of the inverted eight, but something that applies much better to the conjunction of little a , the object of desire as such, with itself.

For desire to be effectively, intelligently supported in this intuitive reference to the surface of the torus, we, of course, need to bring in the dimension of demand. I told you before that the circles, which go around the thickness of the torus, could serve very intelligibly to represent this dimension of demand. This depends on something partly contingent, linked to a completely exterior, visual apperception that is too marked by ordinary intuition not to be refutable, as you will see. But still, the way you can't help representing the torus to yourselves, namely as something like a ring, you see in the succession of these circles that can, as it were, follow each other in a helix, in a repetition like that of a thread around a reel, how easily demand – in its repetition, its identity and its necessary distinction, its roll-out and its return onto itself – is easily supported by the structure of the torus.

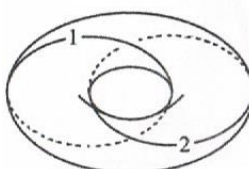


³⁴ Both Rue CB and Roussan have " a^2 ", suggesting that Lacan said " a au carré" (" a squared"), which fits with what he said two paragraphs earlier about the circles that cannot "take themselves up at the second power" and with the idea that intersection is something like multiplication (above, pp. 243, 235).

This isn't what I mean to repeat again today. In any case, just repeating it would be completely inadequate. On the contrary, there is something I want to draw your attention to, namely this privileged circle constituted by the fact that it's not just a circle that makes a circuit of the central hole, but that it also goes through it. In other words, this circle is constituted by a topological property that merges or adds together the loop [boucle] around the thickness of the torus with that of a circuit made around the interior hole.



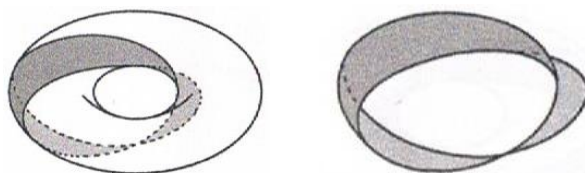
This sort of loop has a very special interest for us because it will enable us to support, to depict as structural the relations between demand and desire. Let's see what happens with these loops. See how one of them can be constituted in such a way that another next to it is completed, comes back on itself, without in any way cutting the first. I have tried to articulate and draw this clearly. You can see how the line of this circle [1 in the figure below] goes round the other side of this object (we suppose it to be a solid mass because that is how you so easily intuit it, though it obviously isn't really) and the other line [2 in the figure below] passes a little further on, and there is no intersection between these two circles.



Here are two demands that imply the central circle and what it symbolises – on this occasion, the object, and how the object is effectively integrated to demand is what our subsequent developments will allow us to articulate, – but that don't involve any cutting, any intersection and even any articulable difference³⁵ between them, even though they have the same object included in their perimeter.

By contrast, there is another type of circuit: one that goes around the other side of the torus, but, instead of joining up with itself at its starting point, it begins another curve here in order to pass through here a second time and come back to its point of departure. I think you grasp what this involves: nothing less than something absolutely equivalent to the famous curve of the inverted eight that I was talking about earlier.

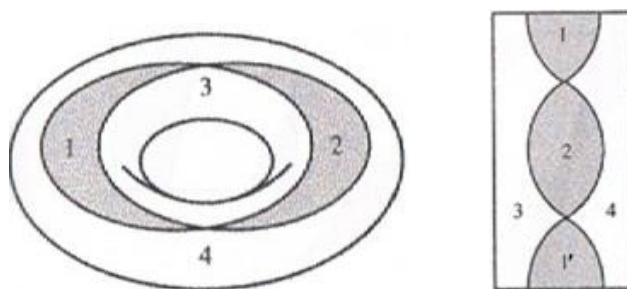
³⁵ He seems to mean symmetric difference, discussed above (p. 236).



Here the two loops represent the reiteration, the reduplication of demand and so involve this field of difference to itself, of self-difference that we emphasised earlier on. So here we find the means of symbolising in a tangible way, at the level of demand itself, a condition by which it suggests the central dimension constituted by the void of desire – in all its ambiguity and in a way that is strictly analogous to the way in which it is suggested in the reduplication mentioned earlier of the object of desire on³⁶ itself.

I offer you all this only by way of exercises that you could do, mental exercises that you need to get familiar with if you want to find in the torus the metaphorical value that I will give to it later on, when I articulate the relationship between desire and demand in each case, whether for the obsessional, the hysteric, the pervert, even the schizophrenic.

For that reason, I am going to use other forms – the form of the torus I mentioned earlier, when it is spread out, made flat – to mark clearly what the different instances that I have evoked up to now correspond to. So I take the first two circles, for example, which were the circles that made the circuit of the central hole and that cut each other to constitute the same figure of symmetric difference as the Euler circles. Here's what that produces on the spread-out torus:



It certainly makes a more satisfying figure than the one you saw earlier,³⁷ because here you can put your finger on the fact that there is no symmetry, let's say, between the four fields, two by two [1/1', 2 and 3, 4 in the figure above], as they are defined by the mutual cutting of the two circles.

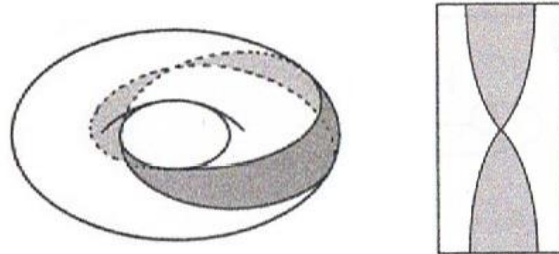
You might have said to yourself earlier on, and it certainly wouldn't have suggested a lack of attention on your part, that by drawing things in this way and giving a privileged value to what I am here calling "symmetric difference", I am doing something quite arbitrary, because

³⁶ Rue CB does not have "on" here.

³⁷ The figure reproduced here as the left-hand figure.

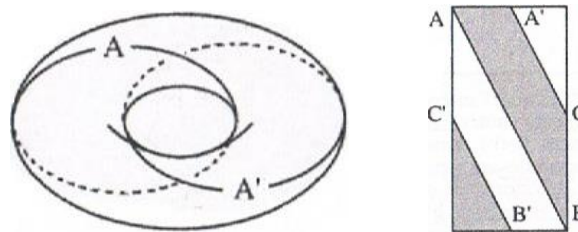
the two other fields [3, 4], which (as I pointed out to you) merge, perhaps occupied a symmetrical place with respect to these two here [1/1', 2]. You see here that this isn't the case – that the fields defined by these two sectors, however you join them up (this can be done), are in no way identifiable to the first field.

The other figure, that of the inverted eight, presents itself like this:



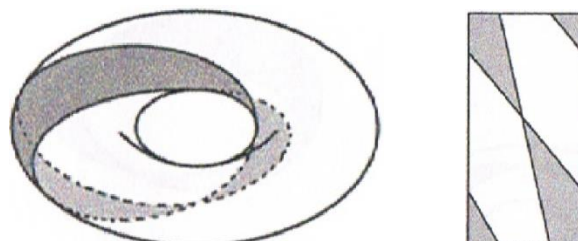
The non-symmetry of the two fields is still more obvious.

The two circles, which I then drew one after the other on the circumference of the torus as defining two circles of demand that don't cut each other, are symbolised here:

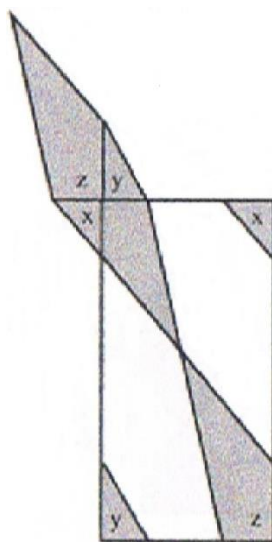


There's one that we can purely identify (I'm talking now about these two circles of demand as I just defined them, in so far as, moreover, they encompass the central hole)... One of them [A in the left-hand figure above] can be very easily defined and situated on the spread-out torus as an oblique line diagonally linking a vertex to the opposite vertex, which is really the same point – the line AB. The second loop I drew earlier [A' in the left-hand figure above] would be symbolised thus: beginning here from any point, we have A and here C – a point C which is the same as this point C' – and finishing here at B'. So A'CC'B'. There is no possibility here of distinguishing the field which is in AA' – it has no privileges with respect to this field here [BB'].

Things are different if we instead symbolise the interior eight, because it presents itself thus:

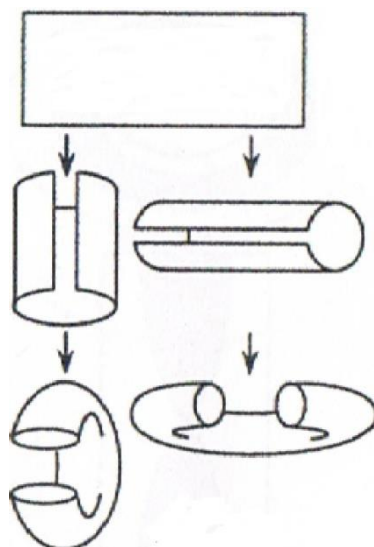


Here is one of these fields, defined by the shaded parts. It is obviously not symmetrical with what remains of the other field, however you try to recompose it. Clearly, you can recompose it so that this element there, call it “x” [in the figure below], comes here, this “y” comes there and this “z” comes here, making the form defined by the self-difference drawn by the interior eight.

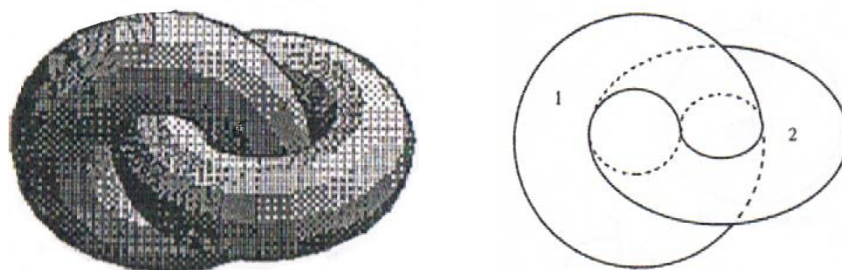


We will see afterwards what use this can be put to, and it may seem a bit fussy or even superfluous when I try to articulate it for you now. Nevertheless, I would like to show you what it's for. As you see, the stress that I put on the definition of these fields is intended to show you how these fields of symmetric difference and what I call “self-difference” are applicable for a certain purpose and how they are sustained as existing in relation to another field that they exclude. In other words, if I go to so much trouble to establish their dissymmetrical function, there is a reason for it. The reason is this: it is very difficult to symbolise in a valid fashion what I would call the dissymmetry of the torus structured purely and simply as a surface. You need to imagine, when you see it spread out in the shape of this rectangle, how I would reconstitute the torus; *primo*, by folding it and making a tube, and, *secundo*, by bringing one end of the tube to the other and making a closed tube.

And the fact is that what I did in one direction, I could have done in the other: since this is about topology and not metrical properties, the question of the greater length of one side with respect to the other is of no significance; it isn't what interests us, because what we are making use of is the reciprocal function of these circles, and they turn out to be capable of having strictly equivalent functions in this reciprocity.

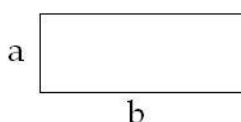


And this possibility is the basis of what I made salient and apparent to you from the outset by using this function of the torus as a tangible image for it, because in certain subjects, certain neurotics for example, we see, in a way, in a tangible fashion, the projection, so to speak, of the circles of desire when they seek, as I might say, to find a way out in the demands required of the Other. And this is what I have symbolised by showing you this:



If you draw a torus [1 in the right-hand figure] you can simply imagine another torus [2 in the right-hand figure] that clasps the first in this way. What you have to see is that each of the circles that go around the hole can, by simple rotation, have their correspondence in circles that go through the hole of the other torus, that a torus in a way is always transformable in all its points into an opposite torus.

What you need to see, therefore, is what gives its originality to one of these circular functions, that of the full circles, for example, compared to what we earlier called the “empty circles. This difference very obviously exists. One could for example symbolise it, formalise it by a little sign on the surface of the torus spread out as a rectangle to indicate the priority in which the folding is to be done. And if we called this side “a” and this side “b”, we could make a note, for example, “a prior to b”, or the converse.



This would be a notation that nobody in topology has ever dreamt of and which would have something completely artificial about it, because it is hard to see why a torus should in any way be an object with a temporal dimension. That has to be acknowledged, and it is very hard to symbolise this some other way, even though one sees clearly that there is something irreducible here and that it is precisely what makes the exemplary virtue of the toric object.

We could try approaching it another way... Clearly, we get to this impasse because we only consider the torus as a surface, taking its co-ordinates solely from its own structure. It is an impasse that has serious consequences for us because, as you see, I want to use these circles to pin down demand in its relations with other circles that have to do with desire. If the first circles are strictly reversible, is this something that we want to have for our model? Certainly not! On the contrary, the essential privilege of the central hole is what concerns us, so the topological status that we are seeking as usable in our model will flee from us and elude us. It is precisely because it flees and eludes us that it will be fruitful for us.

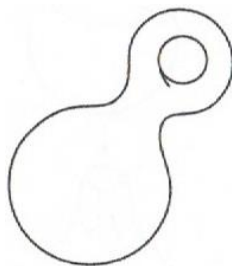
Let's try another method³⁸ to bring out something that mathematicians, topologists, do perfectly well without in their definition of this structure of the torus and the use they make of it in topology. They themselves have highlighted, in the general theory of surfaces, the function of the torus as an irreducible element in any reduction of surfaces to what is called "normal" form.

When I say that it is an irreducible element, I mean that you cannot reduce the torus to something else. You can imagine forms of surfaces as complex as you wish, but you always have to take the function of the torus into account in all planification – in all triangulation, if I can put it like that – in the theory of surfaces.

The torus isn't enough – you need other terms. You need the sphere. You need something that I wasn't even able to allude to today – you need to introduce the possibility of what is called the "cross-cap". And you need the possibility of holes. When you have the sphere, the torus, the cross-cap and the hole, you can represent any of the so-called "compact surfaces", in other words a surface which is decomposable into strips [lambeaux]. There are other surfaces which are not decomposable into strips, but we leave them on one side.

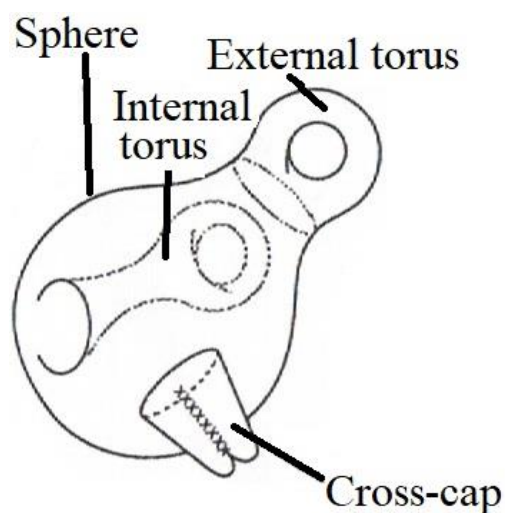
Let's go on to our torus and the possibility of its orientation. Will we be able to give orientation with respect to an ideal sphere to which the torus is attached? We can always bring in such a sphere, because, if you blow hard enough, any torus whatever can be represented as a simple handle on the surface of a sphere, which is just a part of the torus that has been sufficiently inflated.

³⁸ Lacan picks up again from "We could try approaching it another way..." at the start of the previous paragraph.



You see what we are trying to do: will we be able to use the mediation of the sphere to, so to speak, plunge the torus back into this third term that would allow us to introduce the dissymmetry we need between the two types of circles? The dissymmetry is obvious, intuitively evident – irreducible even – and yet it manifests itself as a case of just what we always observe in every mathematical development, namely the need, in order for the development to get started, for something to be forgotten at the outset.

You find it in every kind of formal progress – this something that is forgotten and that literally escapes us, flees away from us in the formalism. Will we be able to grasp it, for example, in the reference of something called a “tube” to the sphere? Look carefully at what happens and what we are told – that every formalisable surface can, by reduction, give us the “normal” form. We are told that this will always come down to a sphere with tori inserted onto it, which we can validly symbolise like this (I spare you the theory):



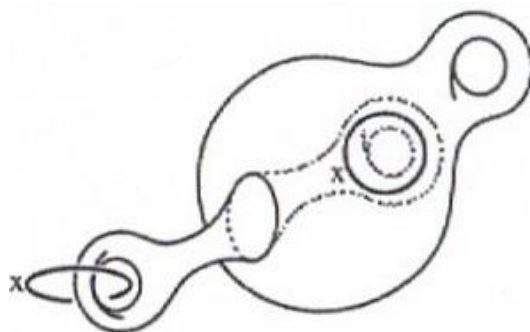
Experience proves that this is strictly true and that we will also have what are called “cross-caps”. I am not going to talk to you about cross-caps today, but I will need to talk about them because they will be of much use to us.

Staying with the torus, you might have the idea that a handle like this, which wouldn't be outside the sphere, but inside it, with a hole for entering it, is something irreducible, not to be eliminated, and that we need to somehow make a distinction between exterior and interior tori. Why does this interest us? It interests us in connection with a mental form, which is necessary for our whole intuition of our object. Because, in the Platonic, Aristotelian,

Eulerian perspective of an *Umwelt* and an *Innenwelt* – of the dominance given from the outset to the division between inside and outside, – will we not place everything that we experience, and specifically in analysis, in the dimension of what I called the other day “the underground”, namely the corridor which goes off down into the depths, in other words – at the maximum, in its most developed form – in accordance with this form?

It is highly exemplary in this connection to make you sense the absolute non-independence of this form. Because, I repeat, once we arrive at reduced forms – forms inscribed, vaguely sketched as drawings on the blackboard in order to give a support to what I am saying – it is absolutely impossible to sustain even for a moment the ultimate originality, as being different, of the interior handle compared to the exterior handle (using the technical terms).

You need only a little imagination in order to see that, if this is something made from rubber, you have only to put your finger in here and hook the central ring of this handle (as it is constituted) from inside in order to extract it to the outside as a form which will be this – none other than a torus, exactly the same, without any kind of tearing, nor even any inversion.



There is no inversion: what was internal, this x ,³⁹ the travel along the inside of the corridor, becomes external because it always was external.

If this surprises you, I can illustrate it again in a simpler fashion, which is exactly the same because there is no difference between this and what I am going to show you now, and which is what I showed you from the first day,⁴⁰ hoping to make you sense what was involved.

Imagine that the torus is captured in the sphere in the middle of its circumference⁴¹ (this is exactly the same thing from a topological point of view).

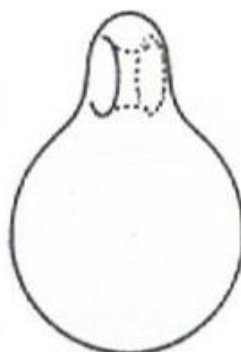
³⁹ Rue CB does not have “this x ”.

⁴⁰ See above, p. 182, seminar of 14 March 1962.

⁴¹ The circumference of the torus.



You then have a little corridor which travels from one hole to another hole. You can see that it isn't difficult, just by hooking the corridor with your finger and making it protrude, to get a figure roughly like this:



something which is a handle, with the two holes communicating through the interior (marked with broken lines).

So we are foiled again: we find it impossible to symbolise by reference to a third dimension, here represented by the sphere, the something which, so to speak, puts the torus in its seat⁴² with respect to its own dissymmetry. We see manifested once again what was introduced by the very simple signifier that I brought you first – that of the interior eight, namely the possibility of an inside field always being homogeneous with the outside field.

This is such an essential category, so essential to mark out, to imprint in your mind, that I thought I had to insist on it in just one of our lessons, at the risk of boring you, even of tiring you. I hope you will see the use of it in what is to come.

⁴² Lacan again uses the word “assiette” (“seat”) meaning a rider’s position in the saddle (see above, p. 234, footnote 14).

2 May 1962¹

It's not necessarily with the idea of going easy on you – on you or anybody – that I thought that today, for this first session after the holidays, when we have two months ahead of us to finish dealing with this difficult topic, I would make this resumption into a sort of staging-post [relais].

To explain myself: I have been wanting for a long time to give the floor, not just to someone among you, but specifically to Madame Aulagnier. I have been thinking about this for a long time – ever since her communication at one of our scientific sessions.² I don't know why some of you, unfortunately not here present, decided, due to a myopia which is characteristic of certain positions that I would call “mandarin-like” [mandarinal] (it's a term that has become popular), that what she said represented some kind of return to the letter of Freud. To my ears it had seemed that Madame Aulagnier was handling the distinction, already long-matured, between demand and desire, and doing so with particular pertinence and acuity.

There's a good chance that one recognises one's own progeny better than others do. What's more, there was someone who agreed with me on this point, namely Madame Aulagnier herself.

I regret therefore that it has taken me so long to give her the chance to speak, due perhaps to a feeling – an excessive feeling – of something always at our heels, urging us forward. So today, for a short time, we are going to make a sort of loop by going via what has responded and borne fruit in the mind of one of you regarding the road that we have travelled together – a long road already since the time I mentioned. The proposal, made to me by Madame Aulagnier a few sessions ago, to make an intervention here comes at an intersection, a crossroads in her mind regarding what I have said recently about anxiety.

The opportunity is as good as any opportunity could be, namely her feeling of having something to communicate to you, something very opportune, about anxiety,³ and this in close relation to what she, like you, has heard in what I am teaching this year about identification. She will offer you something which she has prepared carefully enough to make a full text and which she was good enough to share with me: I looked at it with her yesterday and could only encourage her to present it to you. I am sure that it represents an excellent medium – by which I don't mean an average – for what, I believe, the most sensitive, the best ears among you are able to hear, and for how things can be taken further based on that

¹ Typescript 1 of this seminar is not provided on the École lacanienne website.

² Communication of Piera Aulagnier on anxiety at the Journées Provinciales of the Société française de psychanalyse in March 1962 [Roussan-Staferla note] (see above, start of seminar of 7 March 1962).

³ Roussan cites the notes of several listeners that have “angoisse du psychotique” (“the anxiety of the psychotic”).

hearing. I will tell you, after she has presented the text,⁴ what use I intend to make of the stage that her contribution represents – what use I intend to put it to in what follows.

Piera Aulagnier: Anxiety and Identification⁵

There were a number of interventions during the recent *Journées provinciales* on the question of whether one can define different types of anxiety. It was asked for example whether one ought to give a particular status to psychotic anxiety. I will say right away that I take a rather different view. It seems to me that anxiety, whether it appears in a normal, neurotic or psychotic subject, is a response to a specific and always identical situation of the ego,⁶ and that this is one of its essential characteristics. As regards what could be called the position of the subject in respect of anxiety, in psychosis for example, we have seen that, unless one tries to define the relationship between affect and verbalisation more clearly, one can arrive at a sort of paradox that could be expressed like this: on the one hand, the psychotic is someone particularly subject to anxiety and mirroring of this anxiety in the analyst is one of the major difficulties for the treatment, and, on the other hand, we are told that the psychotic is incapable of recognising his anxiety, that he keeps it at a distance and alienates himself from it.

The position thus stated isn't sustainable unless we try to go a little further. What could it mean, "to recognise anxiety"? Anxiety doesn't wait to be named and has no need to be named in order to submerge the ego, and I don't know what it could mean to say that the subject is anxious without knowing it. We might wonder whether it isn't characteristic of anxiety that it can't be named: the diagnosis, the naming can only come from the Other, the person before whom it is manifested. But the subject is the affect of anxiety, he lives it totally, and it is this impregnation, this capture of his ego, which is dissolved in the anxiety, that prevents mediation by speech [la parole].

At this level we could draw a first parallel between two states which, for all the difference between them, seem to me to represent two extreme positions of the ego that are as much

⁴ Both Rue CB and Roussan have "après qu'elle ait conçu ce texte" (literally "after she has conceived this text"). It is unclear what there is in common between conceiving and presenting a text that makes Lacan choose this verb. He says, after Aulagnier has finished, "I regret only one thing – that it was read" (see below), so here, perhaps, he is expressing a hope that Aulagnier will present her thoughts extempore ("conceiving" them as she speaks), except that he only just said that she has prepared a "full text".

⁵ Aulagnier later published her text with some amendments in the Italian psychiatry journal, *Rivista sperimentale di freniatria e medicina legale delle alienazioni mentali*, vol.89, fasc.1, 13-30, 1965. Lacking access to Typescript 1 of this seminar or to the relevant issue of *Rivista*, I follow Roussan, who records divergences between the *Rivista* text and Typescript 1. Most of the divergences are minor. In order to remain as close as possible to what was said at the seminar, I use Typescript 1 alternatives (as noted by Roussan) unless they are clearly mishearings/typos (in a few places the differences are too great to be mishearings/typos and appear to reflect amendments by Aulagnier of her earlier discourse). I follow the *Rivista* text (as reported by Roussan) in use of "A" or "a" as the first letter of "autre" ("other"), although Aulagnier's choice often seems unmotivated.

⁶ I translate "moi" as "ego" throughout Aulagnier's presentation

opposed as they are complementary. I mean orgasm.⁷ In orgasm there is the same profound incompatibility between the possibility of living it and the possibility of taking sufficient distance to acknowledge and define it in the here and now of the situation that produces it. To say that one is anxious in itself indicates a certain distance from the affective experience; it shows that the ego has already acquired a certain mastery and objectivity vis-à-vis an affect, which from that moment on perhaps no longer deserves the name of anxiety.

I don't need to insist here on the metaphoric, mediating role of speech, or the gap that exists between an affective experience and its translation into words. From the moment when man puts his affects into words, he makes something else of them. Through speech he transforms them into a means of communication, he brings them into the field of relations and of intentionality, he transforms what was lived at the level of the body and which, in the final analysis, remains as such non-verbal, into something that is communicable. We all know that to say one loves someone is only very distantly related to what is felt at the bodily level as a function of that same love. Monsieur Lacan reminds us that to tell someone you desire them is to include them in your fundamental phantasy. It is also undoubtedly to make them into the testimony of the phantasy, the witness of your own signifier. Whatever there is to be said about this, everything points to a gap between affect as interiorised bodily emotion, something with its own deep source in something that cannot, by definition, be expressed in words – I mean phantasy – and speech, which thus appears to us in its whole function as metaphor.

If speech is the indispensable magic key, which grants us access to the world of symbolisation, it seems to me that anxiety occurs precisely at the moment when this key no longer opens any door, when the ego has to confront what is behind or before all symbolisation, when what appears is that which has no name, this mysterious figure, this place from which a desire arises that one can no longer apprehend, where a kind of telescoping between phantasy and reality occurs for the subject. The symbolic vanishes, giving way to phantasy as such. The ego dissolves and this dissolution is what we call anxiety.

The psychotic certainly doesn't have to wait for analysis in order to be acquainted with anxiety. It is also certain that, for every subject, the analytic situation is privileged in this domain. To say that anxiety is very closely related to identification is not to say anything that should surprise us, and if identification always involves something that happens at the level of desire – the desire of the subject in relation to the desire of the Other – it becomes obvious that the major source of anxiety in analysis lies in the essence of the analytic situation: the fact that the Other in analysis is someone whose most fundamental desire is to not desire, someone who, while he thereby permits all possible projections, also unmask their phantasmatic subjectivity, obliging the subject to periodically ask themselves what is the analyst's desire, a desire that is always presumed, but never known, never defined, and

⁷ i.e., orgasm is a second state, taken for purposes of comparison with a first state, which is anxiety.

therefore capable at every moment of becoming the place of the Other from which anxiety can arise for the analysand.

But before attempting to define the parameters of the anxiety-producing situation, parameters which can only be delineated by starting out from problems that concern identification, one might ask an initial question of a more descriptive nature, which is this: what do we mean when we talk about oral anxiety, castration anxiety or anxiety about death?

To attempt to differentiate these different terms at the level of some kind of quantitative ranking is impossible. There is no such thing as an “anxiety meter”. One is not more or less anxious. One either is anxious or one isn’t. The only way of getting an answer at this level is by putting ourselves at the place where we belong – the place of the person who alone can define the subject’s anxiety by setting out from what this anxiety signals to him.⁸

If it is true as Monsieur Lacan points out that it is extremely difficult to speak of anxiety as a signal at the level of the subject, it seems certain to me that its appearance designates, signals the Other as the source, the place from where it arises, and it is perhaps useful to point out in this connection that there is no affect that we are worse at tolerating in others than anxiety and that we are more at risk of responding to in parallel fashion. Sadism or aggressivity [aggressivité] may provoke contrary feelings in a partner, such as masochism or passivity. But anxiety can only provoke either flight or anxiety. There is a reciprocity of response here, which poses a question.

Monsieur Lacan has rebelled against the attempt by various people to look for a “content of anxiety”, and that reminds me of what he said in a completely different context – that in order to pull a rabbit out of a hat one must first put it in. It occurs to me to wonder whether anxiety appears not just when the rabbit emerges, but when it has gone off to chew grass, when the hat is left behind as something reminiscent of a torus, but surrounding a black space from which all nameable content has disappeared and in respect of which the ego no longer has any point of reference, because the first thing to be said about anxiety is that its appearance is the sign of the momentary collapse of any possible identificatory term of reference.

It is only by starting from here, and not from a definition of content, that we can perhaps answer the question I asked earlier about the different denominations that we can give to anxiety, because the specific thing about the subject who is anxious is, as we might say, that he has lost his/her⁹ content. In other words, it seems to me that we can’t speak of anxiety as such; to take an example, I would say that to do so seems to me as mistaken as trying to define an obsessional symptom while remaining at the level of the automatic movement that represents it.

⁸ i.e., to the person who is the analyst.

⁹ The French “son” can mean both.

Anxiety can only teach us something about what it is if we consider it as the consequence, the result of an impasse of the ego, as the sign of an obstacle that has arisen between the two parallel and fundamental lines, whose relationship is the keystone of the entire human structure, namely identification and castration. I will try to sketch the relationship in different subjects between these two structuring pivots in order to attempt a definition of what anxiety is and what it bears witness to in different cases.

In the seminar of April 4th, which I am referring to throughout my presentation, Monsieur Lacan told us¹⁰ that castration could be conceived of as a transitional passage between what there is in the subject that is a natural support for desire and the authorisation by the law, thanks to which it¹¹ will become the pledge by which it will designate itself at the place where it has to manifest itself as desire.

This transitional passage is what must enable attainment of the penis-phallus equivalence. So that which, as “natural support”, was the natural place where desire manifests itself as affect, as bodily feeling [émoi], must become, must yield its place to a signifier, because it is only by starting out from a subject and never from a partial object [objet partiel] – penis or other – that the word “desire” can take on any meaning. As Monsieur Lacan said, the subject demands and the phallus desires – the phallus, but never the penis. The penis is only a tool in the service of the signifier “phallus” and it can be a very unruly tool because, qua phallus, it designates the subject and for this to work the Other must recognise it as such, must choose it, not in its role as this natural support, but in so far as, qua subject, it is the signifier which the Other recognises from his/her¹² own place as a signifier.

What differentiates the masturbatory act from coitus on the plane of *jouissance* – a difference that is evident but difficult to explain physiologically – is that, in coitus, if both partners have been able to assume their castration, then at the moment of orgasm the subject finds again not, as some would have it, a kind of primitive fusion (there is no reason, after all, why the deepest *jouissance* that man can experience should be necessarily linked to such a total regression), but, on the contrary, this privileged moment where for an instant he¹³ attains this identification, ever sought and ever elusive, where he, the subject, is recognised by the other as the object of the other’s deepest desire, but where, at the same moment, thanks to the *jouissance* of the other, the subject recognises himself as the one who constitutes the other as phallic signifier. In this unique moment demand and desire can fleetingly coincide, and this is what gives to the ego the identificatory blossoming [épanouissement], which is the source of *jouissance*.

What has to be remembered is that, although demand and desire coincide in this moment, *jouissance* is nevertheless the bearer of the most profound dissatisfaction, because desire is

¹⁰ Above, p. 226, seminar of 4 April 1962.

¹¹ “it” referring back to “this natural support”.

¹² The French has “sa”, which can mean either.

¹³ “il” (“he”), but presumably “he or she” is meant here and in the rest of the paragraph.

above all desire for continuity and *jouissance*, by definition, is something momentary. So the gap between desire and demand is immediately restored and, with it, the dissatisfaction which also guarantees the perennity of desire.

But if there are simulacra of anxiety, there are even more simulacra of *jouissance*, because in order for this identificatory situation, this source of true *jouissance*, to be possible, both partners must have avoided the major obstacle that threatens them, by which, for one or for both of them, the situation would remain fixated to the partial object of a dual situation where they as subjects have no place. Because what everything linked to castration shows us is that the real issue, far from being a fear that it will be cut off (even if this is how the subject verbalises it), is the fear that it will be left to him and that everything else will be cut off – that the partners is after his penis or the partial object, the support and source of pleasure, and that he as subject will be denied and not accorded recognition [qu'on le méconnaisse]. This is why not only is anxiety intimately related to *jouissance*, but one of the most anxiety provoking situations occurs when the subject and the Other confront each other at the level of *jouissance*.

We are, therefore, going to try and see what the obstacles are that the subject can encounter at this level. They represent nothing other than the sources of all anxiety. For that purpose, we will need to go back to what we call pre-genital object relations, to this most decisive time for the subject's destiny where the mediation between the subject and the other, between demand and desire, took place around this object, whose place and definition remain highly ambiguous, and which is called the "partial object".

You find the same coordinates whether you look at the oral, anal or phallic phase. If I choose the oral phase, it is simply because, for the psychotic we will discuss in a moment, it seems to me to be the fertile moment [moment fécond] of what I have elsewhere called the "opening" of psychosis. How shall we define it?¹⁴ By a demand which, we are told, is from the outset a demand for something else. And by a response which is not only and obviously a response to something else, but is, and this seems to me a very important point, that which constitutes a cry, a call perhaps, as demand and as desire. When the mother responds to the baby's cries she recognises them, constituting them as demand, but, what is of more weight, she interprets them on the plane of desire: the child's desire to have her nearby, to take something from her, to attack her, or whatever else. What is certain is that by her response the Other will give the dimension of desire to the cry of need and this desire, with which the child is invested, is always initially the result of a projective interpretation, a function of the mother's desire alone, of her own phantasy. The subject enters the world of desire via the unconscious of the Other. He will have to constitute his own desire primarily as response, as either acceptance or refusal to take up the place designated for him by the unconscious of the Other.

¹⁴ "it" presumably refers back to "the oral phase" (there is agreement in gender and this understanding fits with what Aulagnier goes on to say).

It seems to me that the first moment of the key mechanism of the oral relation, namely projective identification, comes from the mother. There is a first projection on the plane of desire, which comes from her. The child will have to identify with or fight against and refuse an identification which he may experience as destructuring.¹⁵ And at this first state of human evolution it is also the response that he can make to the subject, which makes possible for him the discovery of what his demand conceals. From this moment *jouissance*, which doesn't wait for the phallic organisation before coming into play, takes on the revelatory dimension that it will always keep, because if frustration signifies to the subject the gap between need and desire, *jouissance* goes in the opposite direction by unmasking for the subject and responding to that which has not been formulated, that which is beyond demand, namely desire.

What do we see in the oral relation? Primarily that demand and response are signified for the two partners around the partial relation, mouth-breast. We can call this level that of the signified. The response provokes an activity of absorption at the level of the oral cavity, which is a source of pleasure; an external object, milk, will become the child's own bodily substance. This is what gives such absorption its meaning and importance.

Starting from this first response, the search for this activity of absorption (source of pleasure) will become the goal of demand. Desire must be sought elsewhere, although it is from this same response, this same experience of the assuaging of need that it will be constituted. If the mouth-breast relation and the activity of absorbing food are the numerator of the equation that represents the oral relation, there is also a denominator, namely that which raises the question of [met en cause] the mother-child relationship, and it is here that desire can be situated. The repetitive scansion of the activity of giving milk represents the fundamental and essential phase of the oral stage (by the investment that it involves on both sides, because of the contact and bodily experiences that it represents for the child, at the level of the body in a broad sense), but we must remember that the truth of the proverb, "How you give is more important than what you give", is nowhere as resounding as it is here. The child will learn the difference between the gift of food and the gift of love thanks to or because of this manner of giving, as a function of what it reveals about the mother's desire.

In parallel with the absorption of food we will see profiled,¹⁶ in the denominator of our equation, the absorption or, better, the introjection of a relational signifier, so that in parallel with the absorption of food there occurs an introjection, a phantasmatic relationship whereby the child and the other are represented by their unconscious desires. And if the numerator deserves a plus sign, the denominator should at the same time be given a minus sign. It is this difference of sign that gives to the breast its place as a signifier, because it is this gap between

¹⁵ "déstructurante" in *Rivista*. Typescript 1 has "déterminante" ("determining"), which may or may not be a mishearing.

¹⁶ "se dessiner" in *Rivista*. Typescript 1 has "se démunir" ("to be deprived"), which makes no sense in the context.

demand and desire, starting from the place which is the source of frustration, that is the genesis, the generator of every signifier.

This equation, which could be reconstituted, *mutatis mutandis*, for the different phases of the evolution of the subject, has four possible sequels: normality, neurosis, perversion and psychosis. I will try to schematise them here (simplifying them, perhaps, to the point of caricature) and to see the relationships that exist in each case between identification and anxiety.

The first of these paths – definitely the most utopian – occurs if we imagine the child finding in the gift of food the gift of love that he desires. The breast and the maternal response can then become symbols of something else. The child enters the symbolic world and can accept the unfolding of the signifying chain. The oral relation as absorption can then be abandoned and the subject evolves in the direction of what can be called a normative solution.

But if, by the function of this little ticket, this uncertain agreement for the future, the child is to accept [assumer] castration, to renounce the pleasure that the breast offers to him, the mother must have accepted her own castration – the third term, the father, has to be present as a reference for the mother from the time of the dual relationship. In this case what she seeks in the child will not be some kind of erotogenic bodily satisfaction, which makes the child into a phallic equivalent, but a relationship in which she as mother is also the wife of the father. The gift of food will then be for her the pure symbol of a gift of love, and because this gift of love will not be the phallic gift which the subject desires, the child will be able to maintain his relationship to demand: he will have to seek the phallus elsewhere; he will enter the castration complex, which alone will allow him to identify himself with something other than a barred subject.

The second sequel occurs if the mother has not properly accepted her own castration, in which case every object that can be a source of pleasure or object of demand for the Other risks becoming for her the phallic equivalent, which she desires. But since the breast has no privileged existence except as a function of the person, to whom it is indispensable, namely the child, we see the emergence of the child-phallus equivalent, which is the origin of most neurotic structures. The evolving subject will then always be faced with the dilemma of whether to be or to have whatever bodily object – breast, faeces, penis, – has become the phallic support. He will either have to identify with the person who has it, but, for want of having gone beyond the stage of the natural support, of having acceded to the symbolic, having it will always signify to him that he has castrated the Other. Or else he will renounce having it and will identify with the phallus as the object of desire of the other, but then he must also renounce being the subject of desire himself.

This identificatory conflict between being the agent of castration or becoming the subject who undergoes it is what defines the continual alternation, the ever-present question at the level of identification, which is referred to in the clinic as a “neurosis”.

The third sequel is what we encounter in perversion. Perversion has been defined as the negative of neurosis and the structural opposition is found at the level of identification. The pervert is someone who has eliminated¹⁷ the identificatory conflict. On the oral plane, which we have chosen, we could say that in perversion the subject constitutes himself as if the activity of absorption had no other goal than to make him an object that provides phallic *jouissance* for the Other. The pervert neither has nor is the phallus. He is this ambiguous object that serves a desire which is not his. He can only obtain [tirer] his *jouissance* in this strange situation where the only identification that is possible for him isn't with the Other or with the phallus, but with this object, the activity of which procures the *jouissance* of a phallus, whose ownership is unknown to him. One could say that the desire of the pervert is to respond to phallic demand. To take a banal example I would say that the *jouissance* of the sadist depends on there being an Other, for whom pleasure arises from the sadist making himself into a whip.¹⁸

“Phallic demand” is really word play, but I use it to express the fact that the other only exists for the pervert as the almost anonymous support of a phallus, for which the pervert performs his sacrificial rights. The perverse response is always a negation of the other as subject, the perverse identification is always a function of the object, which is the source of *jouissance*, and is for a phallus that is no less phantasmatic than it is powerful.

There is something else that I would like to say about perversion in general. I don't think that it can be defined if we stay on the plane that we could call (in inverted commas) “sexual”, although that is where the classic views on the matter seem to lead us. Perversion is perversion at the level of *jouissance*, regardless of which part of the body is brought into play in order to obtain it (this, I think, is very close to Freud's view). I share Monsieur Lacan's distrust regarding what is called “genitality”, because anatomical analysis is dangerous: the apparently most normal coitus can be as neurotic or as perverse as that which is called a “pre-genital drive”. What marks out normality, neurosis or perversion can only be seen at the level of the relation between the ego [moi] and its identification, which permits or doesn't permit *jouissance*.

If one reserves the diagnosis of perversion to sexual perversion only, not only will this get us nowhere – since a purely symptomatic diagnosis has never meant anything – but we will also have to admit that very few neurotics escape this diagnosis. Nor will you find a solution at the level of a sense of guilt, from which the pervert is supposedly exempt: so far as I know, there isn't a single human being lucky enough not to know what guilt is. The only way to approach perversion is to try and define it at the level where it exists, at the level of relational behaviour.

¹⁷ “éliminé” in Typescript 1. *Rivista* has “détourné” (“diverted”, “warded off”).

¹⁸ “la jouissance du sadique a besoin pour apparaître d'un Autre pour qui, en se faisant fouet, surgisse le plaisir”. The reflexive pronoun “se” (“self”) could refer to “Autre” or to “plaisir”, but the context (the previous sentence and the sentences that follow) suggests that it refers to the “sadique” (“sadist”). Roussan cites the seminar of 7 January 1959, where Lacan makes a similar point (Lacan, *Seminar 6* (B. Fink, trans.) p. 125).

Sadism is not necessarily ignored or kept in check by the obsessional. For him it is the persistence of what one can call an “anal relationship”, a relationship where it is a matter of possessing or being possessed, where the love one feels or of which one is the object can only be signified to the subject in terms of this possession, which can go as far as the destruction of the object. The obsessional, one might say, is someone who punishes well because he loves well, for whom a spank from the father has remained the privileged sign of his love and who is always looking for someone to dish it out to or receive it from.

But when he has given or received it, when he has assured himself that he is loved, he will seek *jouissance* in a different type of relation to the same object. Whether the relation is oral, anal or vaginal, it won't be perverse in my understanding, which seems to me to be the only understanding that avoids pinning the label “perverse” to a large number of neurotics and of our fellow human beings.

Sadism becomes a perversion when the spank is no longer sought or given as a sign of love but when it is assimilated by the subject as the only possibility of procuring *jouissance* for a phallus and when the sight of this *jouissance* becomes the only way for the pervert to reach his own *jouissance*.

Much has been said about aggressivity as a source of exhibitionism. No doubt, the exhibition is an act of aggression against the other, the exhibitionist shows “it” as an act of aggression towards the other, but we must remember that the exhibitionist is convinced that this aggression is source of *jouissance* for the other. When the obsessional has a tendency to exhibition, he is trying to bait the other: he shows what he thinks the other doesn't have and is envious of, he shows what, for him, is bound up with aggressivity. Think of what happens with the Rat Man: the *jouissance* of the dead father is the least of his concerns. Showing to the dead father what he, the Rat Man, thinks that the dead father would like to take away from him (in phantasy) is certainly an act of aggressivity – an act from which the obsessional obtains his *jouissance*.

By contrast, the pervert only ever seeks his own *jouissance* via that of another. This is what perversion is: a zig-zag journey, a detour by which, whatever he does, his ego [moi] is always at the service of an anonymous phallic power. He does not care who his object is: it is enough for him that he¹⁹ should be capable of *jouissance*, that he²⁰ can make him a support of the phallus, before which he identifies himself with the object presumed capable of procuring *jouissance* for this phallus.

This is why, contrary to what one finds in neurosis, perverse identification, like its type of object relation, is something which strikes us by its stability, its unity.

¹⁹ The object.

²⁰ The pervert.

And so we come to the fourth eventuality and the one that is hardest to grasp, namely psychosis. The psychotic is a subject whose demand has never been symbolised by the Other, for whom the real and the symbolic, phantasy and reality, have never been demarcated, for want of acceding to this third dimension – the imaginary, – which alone permits the indispensable differentiation between these two levels.

Even trying to simplify things as much as possible, we have to go right back to the beginning of the subject's history, before the oral relation – as far back as the moment of his conception.

The first amputation undergone by the psychotic happens before his birth: for his mother he is a part of her own metabolism; participation by the father is denied by her, it is unacceptable. From that moment on and throughout the pregnancy he²¹ is the partial object intended to fill the phantasmatic lack at the level of her body. And the role assigned to him from his birth will be that of witness of the negation of her castration. Contrary to what is often said, the child is not the mother's phallus: he is the witness that the breast is the phallus, which is not the same thing. And for the breast to be the phallus, and an all-powerful phallus, the response that it brings must be perfect and total. The demand of the child cannot be recognised as anything that is not demand for food, the dimension of desire at the level of the subject must be denied. What characterises the mother of the psychotic is that she totally prohibits the child from being the subject of any desire.

We can see at once from this how the psychotic's particular relation to speech will develop, how it will be impossible for him, from the outset, to maintain his relation to demand: if he is never responded to except as a mouth to be fed, as a partial object, we can see that, for him, every demand, even at the very moment of its formulation, will carry in it the death of desire. For want of having been symbolised by the Other, he will be led to make symbolic and real coincide in the response. No matter what he demands, he is given food, so food as such becomes for him the key signifier. From that moment, the symbolic will erupt into the real: instead of the gift of food finding its symbolised equivalent in the gift of love, for him every gift of love will only be capable of being signified as oral absorption. To love or be loved by the other will be translated for him into oral terms: to absorb or to be absorbed. For him, there will always be a fundamental contradiction between demand and desire, because either he maintains his demand and his demand destroys him as subject of desire (he must alienate himself as subject in order to make himself a mouth, an object to be fed), or else he will try to constitute himself as subject, as best he can, and then he will be obliged to alienate the part of his own body which is a source of pleasure and the place of a response that is, for him, incompatible with any attempt at autonomy.

The psychotic is always obliged to alienate either his body as support of the ego [moi] or a part of his body as support for the possibility of *jouissance*. I don't use the term

²¹ The future child.

“identification” here, precisely because I don’t think it is applicable in psychosis. In my view, identification implies the possibility of a relation to the object where the desire of the subject and the desire of the other are in a conflictual situation, but where they exist as the two constitutive poles of the relation.

In psychosis the Other and his desire have to be defined at the level of a phantasmatic relation of the subject to his own body. I will not attempt the definition here because it would take us too far away from our theme, which is anxiety. Although you may not realise it, anxiety is what I have been talking about throughout this presentation. As I said at the beginning, it seemed to me that you can’t get to anxiety unless you start out from the parameters of identification.

What have we seen? That any attempt at identification, whether in normal, neurotic or perverse individuals, has to start from what the subject imagines, rightly or wrongly, regarding the desire of the other. As you have seen, whether you take the normal, neurotic or perverse subject, it is always a matter of self-identification as a function of or in opposition to what he thinks is the desire of the other. So long as this desire can be imagined or phantasised, the subject will find there the reference points he needs in order to define himself either as the object of the desire of the other or as an object refusing to be the desire of the other. In both cases he is someone who can define and locate himself.

But when the desire of the Other becomes something mysterious and indefinable, what is revealed to the subject is that it was precisely this desire of the Other which constituted him as subject. What he will find and what will be unmasked at that moment, in the encounter with this emptiness, is his fundamental phantasy. To be the object of the desire of the Other is only bearable in so far as we can name this desire, can shape it in terms of our own desire.

But to become the object of a desire we can no longer name is to become oneself an object without a name, that has lost all possible identity. It is to become an object whose insignia no longer mean anything because they are undecipherable for the other. Anxiety occurs at the exact moment when the ego [moi] is reflected in a mirror that sends back an image, which has no identifiable meaning. When we call it oral, anal or phallic all we are doing is trying to define what the insignia were that the ego put on in order to make itself recognised. The reason why it is only we ourselves (as what appears in the mirror) who can do this is because only we can see of what type the insignia are that we are accused of no longer being able to recognise. If, as I said when I began, anxiety is the affect that most risks provoking a reciprocal response, that is because, from this moment, we become for the other the one whose insignia are equally mysterious, equally inhuman. In anxiety it is not just the ego, which is dissolved – the other, as support for identification, is dissolved too.

In the same vein I would say that *jouissance* and anxiety are the two extreme positions in which the ego can be situated. In the first, the ego and the other exchange for a moment their insignia, they recognise each other as two signifiers, whose shared *jouissance* provides a

momentary identity of desire. In anxiety the ego and the other are dissolved, they are annulled in a situation where desire disappears because it cannot be named.

In conclusion, moving on to psychosis, we see that things are a little different. Certainly, here too anxiety is just the signal of loss for the ego of all possible reference points. But here the source from which the anxiety arises is endogenous: it is the place from which the desire of the subject can appear. For the psychotic, it is his desire that is the privileged source of all anxiety.

The other constitutes us by recognising us as object of desire. The response of the other makes us take cognisance of the gap between demand and desire. And we enter into the world of signifiers through this gap. But the only thing that Other has ever signified to the psychotic is a hole – an emptiness at the very centre of his being. The prohibition that has been imposed on him as to desire means that the response has led him to apprehend, not a gap, but a fundamental antimony between demand and desire. What has emerged from this gap (not a breach, but an abyss) isn't the signifier, but the phantasy – what provokes the telescoping between symbolic and real that we call psychosis.

For the psychotic – if I can put it simply – the other is introjected at the level of his own body, at the level of everything that surrounds this primordial empty space [béance], which is all that designates him as subject. Anxiety, for him, is linked to specific moments where something appears out of this empty space which could be called “desire”, because in order to assume this desire the subject will have to accept being situated in the only place from where he can say “I”: he will have to identify with this empty space, which, because of the prohibition of the other, is the only place where he can be recognised as subject. Every desire sends him back either to a negation of himself or a negation of the other.

But because the other is introjected at the level of his own body and this introjection alone enables him to live (I have said elsewhere that the psychotic can only identify with a unified imaginary body by identifying with the shadow projected before him by a body that is not his own), all negation of the other would for him be the equivalent of a self-mutilation that would only send him back to his own fundamental drama.

In the case of the neurotic, our silence enables us to find the sources that provoke his anxiety. But, with the psychotic, our presence, our speech is what does it. Everything that brings to his attention that we exist as different from him, as autonomous subjects who can therefore recognise him as a subject, can trigger his anxiety. In everything he says he only repeats a monologue that situates us at the level of this introjected Other who constitutes him. But if he starts to talk to us, and because we as object can become the place where he recognises his desire, his anxiety will be triggered, because to desire requires constituting oneself as subject, and the only place where he can do that is the place that sends him back to his abyss. And here too, as you see, we can say that anxiety appears at the moment when desire makes the subject into something which is a lack of being, a lack of naming.

There is a point that I have not dealt with and which I will leave on one side. I regret it, because the point is, for me, fundamental and I would have liked to deal with it. Unfortunately, in order to include it, I would need greater mastery of it. I am referring to the phantasy, which is intimately related to identification and to anxiety, related, indeed, to such an extent that I could have said that anxiety appears at the moment when the real object can no longer be apprehended otherwise than in its phantasmatic meaning, since, from this moment, all possible identification of the ego dissolves and anxiety appears.

But although that is part of the same story, it isn't the same discourse and I will stop here for today. But before concluding my discourse I would like to bring you a very short clinical example regarding the sources of anxiety in the psychotic.

I will not go into detail except to say that the patient is a full-blown schizophrenic [un grand schizophrène], suffering from delusions, and has been hospitalized on several occasions. The first sessions were taken up with an account of his delusion, a fairly classic one, which he calls "the problem of the robot-man". Then in one session the question of communication with others and speech came up, apparently by chance, and he explained that what he cannot bear is "the form of request" ["la forme de la demande"] and that "the handshake is an improvement on civilizations which use verbal salutations, because speech falsifies things, it gets in the way of understanding, speech is like a turning wheel where everyone sees a part of the wheel at different moments, and then, when you try to communicate, it is always false – there is always a slippage."²²

In this same session, talking about women's speech, he suddenly says: "what makes me uneasy is what they say about amputees, that they can feel things in the limb they no longer have." And, just then, this man, whose discourse, even when it is delusional, has a precision and mathematical exactitude, starts to grope for words, gets confused, says he can no longer follow his thoughts and finally comes out with this phrase, which seems to me a powerful expression of what his image of the body is for the psychotic: "a ghost would be a man without limbs and without a body who by his intelligence alone would experience the false sensations of a body that he doesn't have. This makes me very uneasy."

The phrase, "would experience the false sensations of a body that he doesn't have", finds its meaning in the next session when he says that he wants to stop the sessions, that the treatment is unhealthy and dangerous. There is an anxiety felt intensely throughout the session, which he expresses by saying "I realised that you wanted to seduce me and that you could succeed". What he had realised was that his desire could emerge from these "false sensations of a body that he doesn't have", and that he would then have to recognise, to assume this lack which is his body. He would have to look at what is unbearable to a human being²³ unless it has been symbolised – castration, as such.

²² "un décalage" in *Rivista*. Typescript 1 has "un dialogue" ("a dialogue"), which looks wrong in the context.

²³ "l'homme" ("man"). I translate as "human being", since Aulagnier presumably means it to apply to both sexes.

In this same session he himself expressed the source of his anxiety better than I could: “You are afraid to look at yourself in a mirror, because the mirror changes depending on the eyes that look at it, you don’t really know what you will see there. It’s better to buy a gilt mirror...” The impression is that he wants to be sure that the changes are caused by the mirror. As you see, anxiety appears when he fears that I could become an object of desire; because from that moment the arousal of his own desire would imply for him the necessity of taking up what I have called “the fundamental lack, which constitutes him”. From that moment, anxiety appears, because his position as a ghost, a robot, is no longer tenable.²⁴ He risks no longer being able to deny the false sensations of a body that he cannot acknowledge. What provokes his anxiety is the precise moment when, faced with the eruption of his desire, he wonders what image of himself the mirror will reflect back to him, and he knows it may be that of the lack, the void, what has no name, what makes any mutual recognition impossible, and what we, the spectators and involuntary authors of this drama, call anxiety.

Lacan

Before trying to put this discourse in context, I would like some of the people who I noticed with interrogative, expectant expressions at various points of Madame Aulagnier’s discourse to simply state the suggestions, the thoughts produced in them by particular passages in the discourse, as a sign that the discourse was heard. The only thing I regret is that the discourse was read. This will give me a support, so that I can place the accents better in what I have to say about it.

Xavier Audouard

What really struck me associatively is the clinical example that you brought in at the end of your presentation and the patient’s phrase about speech, which he compares to a wheel that different people never see the same part of. That seemed to me (I am not sure why) to illuminate everything you had said and to really open up the themes you had presented.

I think I more or less understood the meaning of the presentation. I don’t have much experience of schizophrenics, but, as regards neurotics and perverts, anxiety as something that can’t be the object of symbolisation because it is precisely the mark that symbolisation hasn’t been able to happen and to be symbolised is about disappearing into a sort of non-symbolisation, where anxiety is on call all the time, is something that is obviously very rich, but perhaps in need of some clarifications on a certain logical plane. How is it that this fundamental experience, which in a way is the negative of speech, gets symbolised, and what happens that makes something emerge from this central hole for us to understand? I mean: where does speaking come from [comment naît la parole]? What is the origin of the signifier in this particular case? How do we get from anxiety as something that cannot be expressed to

²⁴ “soutenable”. *Rivista* has “supportable” (“bearable”).

anxiety that expresses itself? There is perhaps a movement there which is not unrelated to this wheel that turns and which needs to be made a little clearer and more specific.

Antoine Vergotte

I wondered if there aren't two sorts of anxiety. Madame Aulagnier spoke of castration anxiety: the subject is afraid that it will be cut off and that he will be forgotten as a subject. This is the disappearance of the subject as such. But I wonder if there isn't an anxiety where the subject refuses to be a subject; if, for example, in certain phantasies he wants, on the contrary, to hide the hole or the lack. In Madame Aulagnier's clinical example the subject refuses his body because the body reminds him of his desire and his lack. But in the example of castration anxiety you seemed to be saying something different: the subject is afraid that he won't be recognised [qu'on le méconnaisse] as subject. So anxiety has two possible meanings: either he refuses to be subject; or there is the other anxiety – in claustrophobia, for example – where he has the impression of no longer being a subject, where he is shut into a closed world where desire doesn't exist. He can be in a state of anxiety due to his desire and also due to the absence of desire.

Piera Aulagnier

Don't you think that if someone refuses to be a subject it is precisely because he has the impression that he can't be a subject for the Other unless he pays for it by castration? I don't believe that the refusal to be a subject is a refusal to really be a subject.

Lacan

We are right at the heart of the problem. You see immediately where the confusion starts. I thought that the talk was excellent because Madame Aulagnier was able to bring out several dimensions of her experience using some of the notions that we find here, in a way that she couldn't have done otherwise. I am going to take up something that appeared to me remarkable in what she produced. I will say straight away: it seems to me that the discourse only went half-way. It should be quite clear to you that what I am trying to obtain from you through my teaching is a kind of conversion. Heaven knows, that isn't such a unique pretension in history that it ought to be seen as exorbitant. But it is certain that there was a whole part of Madame Aulagnier's discourse where her concern for intelligibility – her own as well as the intelligibility of those whom she is addressing, whom she believes she is addressing – made her go back to formulae that I warn you against, that I draw your attention to and put you on your guard against, and by no means simply because it is a sort of tic or aversion specific to me, but because their coherence with something, which must be radically abandoned, is always visible every time they are used, even when they are used advisedly.

The idea, for example, of an antinomy, of any antinomy whatsoever, between speech and affect, even though it may be empirically verified in experience, is nevertheless not something on which we can articulate a dialectic, assuming that what I am trying to do here

has a value and allows you to develop as far as possible all the consequences of the effect that man is an animal condemned to dwell in language. So we cannot in any way take affect to be anything whatsoever without getting into some sort of primariness [primarité]. No affect of any significance, none of those affects that we have to deal with, from anxiety to anger and all the rest, can even begin to be understood except in a reference where the relationship of x to the signifier is primary.

Before noting the distortions which this led to in Madame Aulagnier's discourse – I mean, with respect to certain advances which would be the next stage, – I want, of course, to mark the positive aspect of what was made possible by the simple usage of terms that she applied with correctness and skill, namely “desire” and “demand”.

It is not enough to have heard about this, which... if you use these terms in a certain fashion, but they are not words so esoteric as to make anyone feel that he doesn't have the right to use them...²⁵ it isn't enough just to use these terms, desire and demand, in order to apply them correctly. Certain people have taken the risk recently and I wouldn't say that the result was in any way either brilliant – which, after all, would be of only secondary importance – or even had the slightest connection with the function that we give to these terms.

This is not the case of Madame Aulagnier who, at certain points, attained a tone that manifested the sort of conquest (albeit only in the form of a question posed) that the handling of these terms allows us. In order to designate the first very impressive opening that she offered us, I would draw your attention to what she said about orgasm or, more exactly, about the *jouissance* of love.²⁶

If I may be permitted to address myself to her as Socrates might address himself to some Diotima,²⁷ I would say to her that she proves here that she knows what she is talking about. That she does so being a woman is something that has traditionally seemed to be self-evident, but I am less sure: women may know the things of love [choses d'amour], but those who are able to talk about them and know what they are saying, are rare. Socrates said that he could assuredly bear witness that he did know those things. Such women are rare, but you should clearly understand what I mean by that: such men are even rarer.

As Madame Aulagnier told us, in connection with the *jouissance* of love, rejecting once and for all the vaunted reference to fusion in a way that should serve as a wake-up call to us, who have given a totally archaic sense to this term “fusion”: you cannot require that arrival at a qualified and unique moment occurs at the end of a process, and at the same time suppose that it occurs by a return to some sort of primitive differentiation.

²⁵ Lacan seems to make two false starts in this sentence.

²⁶ Rue CB punctuates these two sentences in a way that makes no sense. I follow Roussan's punctuation.

²⁷ See: Plato, *Symposium* (R.G. Bury, trans.), 201d-212c .

In short, I will not reread her text because I don't have time, but on the whole I think it would be useful for us to consider this text – to which I am certainly far from giving a mark of 20/20 as a perfect discourse – as defining a level, by which we will be able to situate our progress, to which we will be able to refer as something that has been touched on or, in any case has been perfectly grasped, captured, located and understood by Madame Aulagnier.

Of course, I am not saying that what she gives us here is her last word. I would say more than that: she repeatedly indicates the points where it would seem to her necessary to advance further in order to complete what she is saying and, no doubt, a large part of my satisfaction arises from these points that she indicates. They are, as I might say, the very points that ask to be turned about.

There are two points she called attention to. She said she had a lot of things to say, on the one hand, about the relation of the psychotic to his own body (she gave us some indications) and, on the other hand, about the phantasy, where the obscurity in which she left it would appear to me sufficiently indicative of a shadowiness that is quite general in groups. This is one point.²⁸

The second point that I find very remarkable in what she brought us is what she said about the perverse relationship. That is certainly not to say that I subscribe on all points to what she said on this subject – which was, indeed, incredibly daring, – but to commend her highly for having been able to do it, even if the step she took stands in need of correction.

Without qualifying this step otherwise, I would say that it is the first time, not just in my circle – and I congratulate myself that someone has preceded me in this – that something has emerged, a certain manner, a certain tone in speaking of the perverse relationship that suggests to us the exact idea, which has prevented me from speaking about it up to now, namely that I don't want to have to be the one who says: “everything that has been done before now isn't worth tuppence.”

But Madame Aulagnier, who doesn't have the same reasons for modesty as we do and who, moreover, says it in all innocence, I mean, who has seen perverts and who has interested herself in them in a truly analytic fashion, begins to articulate something which, just by being presented in this general (and, I repeat, incredibly audacious) form – that the pervert is someone who makes himself object for the *jouissance* of a phallus whose ownership he does not suspect, that he is the instrument of the *jouissance* of a god, – entails that some putting in order [quelque appointement], some rectification of the controlling manoeuvre is called for;

²⁸ Lacan's formulation is confusing and neither version (Roussan or Rue CB) gives clarity. He seems to mean that the first of the “two points” he referred to (the point which he has just described) consisted in Aulagnier's having a lot to say (but not saying it) about two things – the psychotic's relation to his body (first thing) and the phantasy (second thing). I have punctuated the preceding sentence differently from either French version in order to bring out this understanding.

in a word, this poses the question of reintegrating what we call the “phallus”, it poses the urgency of defining the phallus.

There can be no doubting it, because this surely tells us that if a diagnosis of perverse structure is to have a meaning for us analysts, we must begin by throwing out of the window everything that has been written, from Krafft-Ebing to Havelock Ellis, and everything that has been written in any supposedly clinical catalogue of the perversions. In short, we have to overcome the sort of distancing called “clinical”, which in reality is only a way of missing what there in this structure that is absolutely radical, absolutely patent to whoever can take the step of conversion, which is what I ask of you and which brings us to a viewpoint, where we can grasp the absolutely universal significance of the perverse structure.

I evoked the gods for a reason. I could just as well have evoked the theme of metamorphoses and the whole mystical attitude – a certain pagan attitude to the world, in which the perverse dimension has what I would call its classic value.

It is the first time that I have heard someone speak in a certain tone, a tone which is really decisive and which opens onto this field where we need the explanation that I am going to give you of what the phallus is.

The third thing is what she told us about her experience of psychotics. I don't need to underline the effect that this can have. Audouard undoubtedly bore witness to it. Here again, what seemed eminent to me is how this opens up the psychotic structure as being something in which we must feel at home.

If we are not capable of grasping that there is a certain degree that isn't archaic (to be situated somewhere around the time of birth), but structural, at the level of which desires are essentially mad... if the subject does not include for us, in its definition, in its primary articulation, the possibility of psychotic structure, then we will never be anything but alienists.

How can one fail to sense vividly (as happens all the time to those who come and listen to what is said here at this seminar), how can one fail to see that everything I have begun to articulate this year about the ψ [psi]-system as having the structure of a surface²⁹ and about the enigma concerning the way in which the subject can gain access to his own body comes down to the point that this doesn't happen by itself – a point that everyone has always been perfectly aware of, because the ever-topical and eternal distinction of the disunity, or unity, of soul and body has always been the aporia, on which every philosophical articulation has foundered?

²⁹ See particularly the start of the seminar of 24 January 1962 (above).

Why shouldn't it be we analysts who manage to find the passage? But this requires a certain discipline. Most of all, it requires knowing how to speak of the subject. What makes it difficult to speak of the subject is the following, which you can never get sufficiently into your heads in the brutal form in which I am going to state it: the subject is nothing other than that (than the consequence of the fact that) there is such a thing as the signifier and the birth of the subject depends on the fact that he can only think of himself as excluded from the signifier which determines him.

This is the value of the little cycle that I introduced to you the last time and that we have not heard the last of, because, in truth, I will need to unfold it for you more than once before you will be able to see clearly where exactly it leads us to.³⁰

If the subject is nothing other than the part excluded from a field entirely defined by the signifier, if it is only by starting from that that everything can be born, we still need to know at what level we are to make this term, "the subject", intervene.

And when Madame Aulagnier speaks, for example, of the choice that exists between being subject or object in connection with desire, in the relationship to desire, then, despite herself, because she is talking to us and to herself and because there is something that has still not been acquired and taken on board, she allows herself to slide to the re-introduction into the subject of the person with all the subsequent dignity that we give to it in our enlightened times: personology, personalism, personality and everything that follows from them... the accepted approach in the midst of which we live, as everyone knows.

Never has there been so much talk about the person. But, after all, our work doesn't have to interest itself much in what is happening in the public arena. We must interest ourselves in the subject from a different angle. And here Madame Aulagnier summoned to her aid the term "parameter of anxiety".

Well, in connection with "person" and "personology", you can look at a sizeable work that kept me busy for several months, consisting of remarks on the discourse of our friend Daniel Lagache.³¹ I would ask you to refer to it in order to see the important place that should by rights have been accorded, in the articulation which she gives us of the function of anxiety and of the sort of making mum [sifflet coupé] that anxiety brings at the level of speech, to the function $i(a)$,³² in other words the specular image, which certainly is by no means absent from her presentation, because she finished by showing us her psychotic in front of his mirror, and the function $i(a)$ is the reason why she quite rightly arranged to meet him there – because he came there of his own accord.

³⁰ Roussan inserts a representation of the interior eight (Moebius band) here, but Lacan could as well mean the whole series of topological consideration that he introduced in the previous seminar (11 April 1962).

³¹ "Remarks on Daniel Lagache's Presentation" (in Lacan, *Écrits*, B.Fink, trans., pp. 543-574)

³² $i(a)$ is discussed in the seminar of 21 March 1962 (above).

To make you smile, let me write in the margin alongside the remarks, which evoked her admiration in what she quoted,³³ these four short verses on the bottom of a plate that I have at home:

Mina's faithful mirror
Shows her features lined.
She says, without a tremor:
"How mirrors have declined!"

This, effectively, is what your psychotic says, showing here the importance of the function, not of the ego-ideal, but of the ideal ego, not only as the place where specifically ego-type [moiques]³⁴ identifications are formed, but also as the place where anxiety is produced, the anxiety which I qualified for you as the sensation of the desire of the Other. The distance between what I had initiated and the already very efficacious level at which the whole of Madame Aulagnier's development was sustained consists precisely in the fact that she brings this sensation of the desire of the Other back to the dialectic of the subject's own desire confronted by the desire of the Other.

But this level of two desires which is already constituted in the subject, a level that is, she says, in some way conflictual, is not in any way adequate for locating the difference, the distinction that exists, for example, between the relations of desire at the level of the four kinds or types which she defined for us using the terms "normal", "perverse", "neurotic" and "psychotic".

Speech [la parole] fails in something in respect of anxiety, namely in the fact, which we cannot fail to recognise as one of the absolutely essential parameters, that it cannot designate who speaks, cannot refer the "I"-shifter of the discourse itself – the "I" which designates itself in the discourse as he who is currently speaking – to this point $i(a)$, and links³⁵ him to this image of mastery that becomes unstable at this moment.³⁶

Madame Aulagnier might have been reminded of this by what I noted in what she took as a point of departure in connection with the seminar of 4th April. Remember the unstable image that I tried to set before you in my obscure confrontation with the praying mantis: if I spoke at first of the image reflected in its eye, it was in order to say that anxiety begins from the moment when this image is missing. No doubt the little a which I am for the phantasy of the other is essential but, where this is lacking,³⁷ what is lacking and what functions is $i(a)$. Madame Aulagnier does not fail to recognise this, because she reinstates it in other passages

³³ The remarks of the schizophrenic patient cited by Aulagnier (pp. 268-269)

³⁴ An adjective from the French pronoun "moi" ("me")

³⁵ "links" is ungrammatical. Lacan's idea seems to be that, when anxiety is not present, speech links the "I"-shifter to $i(a)$, but this mechanism fails when anxiety is present.

³⁶ The moment of anxiety. Lacan takes this up again in the 9 May seminar (below, p. 281).

³⁷ "où il manque ceci", where "ceci" ("this") apparently refers back to "little a ".

of her discourse: it is what she means by “the mediation of the imaginary”, but she does not articulate it sufficiently.

I don't want to go any further because, as you well understand, this amounts to nothing less than resuming the discourse of the seminar. But you should sense the importance of what we are introducing here. It is about that which, in the economy of signifiers, will link the constitution of the subject to the place of his desire. And you also need to glimpse here, to tolerate, to resign yourself to what requires of us something apparently far from your ordinary preoccupations and, indeed, from anything one could decently ask of honourable specialists like yourselves, who don't come here in order to do elementary geometry. Be reassured: it's not geometry, because it's not a matter of measurement. It's something that geometers have not had the slightest idea about before now – the dimensions of space.

I would go so far as to say to you that Monsieur Descartes had no idea whatsoever of the dimensions of space.

From another aspect, “the dimensions of space” is something that has been devalued by a certain number of jests made about the term as having to do with the fourth dimension or the fifth dimension and other things, which have a very precise meaning in mathematics but which always cause laughter when spoken about by incompetent people, so that when one speaks about it one always has the impression of doing what is called “science fiction”, which, when all is said and done, has a rather bad reputation.

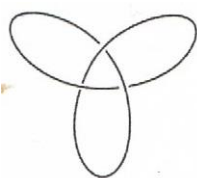
But you will see that we have a few things to say about it,³⁸ nevertheless. I began to articulate it in the sense that, mentally, we only have access to two dimensions.³⁹ For the rest there is only an outline, a beyond. As regards what we have in experience, we can take as a possibly useful research hypothesis that there is nothing firmly established beyond the experience of the surface.

That is already something quite rich and complex and it doesn't mean to say that we can't find in the experience of the surface alone the testimony that it, the surface, is plunged into a space which isn't at all what you, with your visual experience of the specular image, imagine it to be. In a word: take this little object which is nothing but the most elementary knot. Not one that I made from being incapable of bringing the ends of a thread together, but just the most elementary knot, and it suffices to raise a number of questions – questions that I introduce by saying to you that the third dimension is quite insufficient to account for its possibility.⁴⁰

³⁸ About the dimensions of space.

³⁹ See above: p. 162, seminar of 7 March 1962; p. 237, seminar of 11 April 1962.

⁴⁰ In the first part of the sentence Lacan seems to joke that this knot (the trefoil knot) is not his botched attempt to bring the two ends of a thread together to make a circle (the French has “me faire tresser une cordelette qui se fermera sur elle-même”), but it is not immediately clear what he could mean by “the third dimension is quite insufficient to account for its [the knot's] possibility”, since one can easily join the ends of a thread to make the knot in three dimensions (in real space). What he must mean is that it is impossible, in three dimensions, to get



And yet a knot is something that is within everybody's reach. What isn't within everybody's reach is what they do when they tie a knot, but then this has taken on a metaphorical value: the knots of marriage, the knots of love. So why do people talk about knots, sacred or otherwise? These are quite simple, elementary ways of putting the use character [caractère usuel]⁴¹ within your reach, if you are willing to make the effort, and the use character can then serve as a possible support for a conversion which, if it happens, will clearly show, retrospectively [après coup], that these terms must perhaps have something to do with the references of structure that we need in order to distinguish what happens, for example, at the divisions that Madame Aulagnier made, going from the normal to the psychotic. Can we not introduce some very simple distinctions at this point of junction where the image of the knot – the fundamental image, the image that allows mediation between the subject and his desire – is constituted for the subject; distinctions that are perfectly useable in practice and that enable us to represent matters⁴² to ourselves in a way that is simpler and less prone to antinomy, aporia, confusion, labyrinthine complexity, finally, than what we have had at our disposal until now, namely, for example, this summary notion of an inside and an outside, which seems to go without saying on the basis of the specular image, but which is by no means necessarily what is given to us in experience?

from the circle to the trefoil knot *just by manipulating the circle*. Indeed, such manipulation of an “unknot” (mathematical term for a simple loop, a circle) into the most simple knot (the trefoil) requires the fourth dimension, since it cannot be done in three-dimensional space without self-intersection of the thread in question. See, for example <http://www.rdrop.com/~half/Creations/Puzzles/visualizing.4D/index.html> (the section “Unknotting a knot using four dimensions”).

Roussan has a lengthy note in which he suggests that Lacan must, at this point, have drawn something other than or in addition to the trefoil knot (recorded in the notes of listeners and in Rue CB), since Lacan refers back to this same “elementary knot” in the seminar of 16 May 1962 and seems to say there that it is not inscribable on the surface of a torus without its line intersecting itself, but, as Roussan points out, the line of the trefoil knot *is* inscribable on the surface of a torus without intersecting itself (see the diagram on p. 291, footnote 7, below). In fact, I think Lacan meant something different in the 16 May seminar, where the misleading exposition may be due (or at least be compounded) by the lack of any stenograph, and hence of any Typescript 1, for that week's seminar (see below, p. 289, footnote 1).

⁴¹ Presumably the use character of knots.

⁴² I insert “matters”, which is not there in the French, but is strongly implied by the meaning of the sentence (“represent” is a transitive verb, requiring an object).

9 May 1962¹

Last time Madame Aulagnier spoke to us about anxiety. I paid her discourse the homage it deserved as the fruit of very well-oriented work and reflection. At the same time, I remarked the degree to which a certain obstacle, which I located in the context of her communication, remains the same – an obstacle that arises whenever we come to speak about language.

Undoubtedly, the sensitive points, the points in what she told us that are in need of correction, are those where, putting the emphasis on what is unsayable, she made of it the index of a heterogeneity that pertains to what, in her view, is “not able to be said”, whereas what is really at issue in anxiety has to be grasped precisely in its connection with the fact that there is such a thing as “saying” and “ability to be said”.

This is why she cannot give its full value to the formula that the desire of man is the desire of the Other. This isn't by the reference of a renascent third party – the more central subject, the subject identical to itself, Hegelian self-consciousness, – whose task would be to bring about mediation between two desires that it somehow holds before itself: its own desire, as object; and the desire of the Other. And even if this desire of the Other is given primacy, the self-consciousness² would have to situate and define its own desire in a sort of reference, of relationship of dependence or non-dependence on this desire of the Other.

Of course, there is something of this order at a certain level, where we could always remain, but this something is precisely what makes us avoid that which is at the heart of our experience and which needs to be grasped. And that is why I am trying to fashion for you a model of what must be grasped. What must be grasped is that the subject who interests us is desire.

Of course, this only takes on a meaning when we have begun to articulate, to situate at what distance, through what mediation (not that of an intermediary screen, but constitutive and defining) we can situate desire. It's not that demand separates us from desire, as if finding desire was only a matter of setting aside demand. The signifying articulation of demand defines me, it conditions me as desire.

That is the long road that I have already made you travel. If I have made it long, it is because it had to be long, so that the dimension, which this presupposes, could make you, as it were, go through the mental experience of apprehending it. Desire thus borne along, carried forward [porté, reporté] to a distance – articulated as such, not beyond language as if due to an incapacity of language, but structured as desire through this very capacity, – is what we

¹ There is no typescript of this week's seminar available on the site of the École lacanienne de psychanalyse. I have used the Roussan and Rue CB versions.

² The French has “elle” (“it”, feminine pronoun), which may stand for either “primacy” or “self-consciousness” (the most recent feminine nouns in the French text). It makes much more sense to suppose that “elle” stands for self-consciousness and I write “self-consciousness” rather than “it”, which, in English, could be ambiguous.

must get to, so that I can make you conceive and grasp (and in the grasping, the *Begriff*,³ there is something tangible [sensible]) something of a transcendental aesthetic, but not the one we have had up to now, because that transcendental aesthetic is just what the place of desire has eluded till today.

But this is what explains my attempt, which I hope has been successful, to lead you along paths which are also those of the aesthetic, trying to capture something that hasn't been seen in all its relief, in all its fecundity at the level, not so much of spatial as of topological intuitions. Because it must be true that our intuition of space doesn't exhaust everything of a certain order, as can be seen from the fact that those people who are best qualified to occupy themselves with it – mathematicians – attempt by all means to go beyond intuition, and they succeed.

I am leading you along this path with words that are watchwords: what we need to do is to escape from the pre-eminence of the intuition of the sphere, an intuition that commands our logic in a very intimate way, even when we give it no thought.

Because, of course, if there is an aesthetic that deserves to be called transcendental and that interests us, it is because it is what dominates logic. So that if people say to me “Couldn't you tell us how things really are, make us understand what happens in a neurotic and a pervert and what the difference is, without going via your tori and other digressions?” I respond that it is nevertheless indispensable, just as indispensable and for the same reason, as doing logic, because it is the same thing,⁴ because the logic in question is not something empty.

Logicians, like grammarians, have their disagreements and, of course, when we enter their field, we must evoke such disagreements with discretion at the risk of getting lost. But the confidence that you place in me is based on you trusting me to have made the effort not to take the first road that presented itself and to have ruled out a certain number of roads.

It occurs to me, by way of reassuring you, to point out that in logic it isn't a matter of indifference which you put first – the function of the hypothesis, or the function of assertion. Ivan Karamazov is made to say, in a theatre adaptation: “If God doesn't exist, then everything is permitted”. But if you refer to the text you read (and, what's more, if I remember rightly, it's Alyosha who says it):⁵ “Since God doesn't exist, everything is permitted.” So there's the difference between “if” and “since” – between a hypothetical logic and an assertive logic. You say to me: “a logician's distinction, why should it interest us?” It interests us a lot because in the final term, the Kantian term, by presenting things the first way you maintain the existence of God. Clearly, it's not the case that everything is permitted;

³ “Begriff” (“concept”, German) derives from “greifen” (“to grasp, seize”).

⁴ i.e., the tori and digressions are the same thing as logic.

⁵ It is actually Dmitry Karamazov, indicted for patricide, relating to Alyosha (his younger brother) the question which he put to a radical journalist who visited him in prison: ““But what will become of men then?” I asked him, ‘without God and immortal life? All things are lawful then, they can do what they like?’” (Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (C. Garnett, trans.), p. 623.

so, in the hypothetical formula, it is imposed as necessary that God exists. And that's why your daughter is mute⁶ and why, in the teaching articulation of free thought, the existence of God is maintained at the heart of the articulation of all valid thinking as a term without which it wouldn't be possible to advance anything with even the shadow of a certainty. And you know that Descartes' enterprise cannot pass by any other ways (something I thought it necessary to remind you of).

But still, the term "atheistic" isn't necessarily best suited to define our project, which is perhaps about trying to make the fact (which we know by experience) that something is permitted pass by some other way. You say to me, "Something is permitted because something is prohibited", glad as you are to rediscover here the opposition of "A" and "non-A", of white and black.

Yes, but that's not enough, because far from the permitted and the prohibited exhausting the field, what needs to be structured and organised is how it happens that they determine – intimately determine – each other, while at the same time leaving open a field, which not only is not excluded by them but makes them meet, and which, in this movement of torsion, so to speak, gives its shape to what sustains the whole, namely the shape of desire. In a word, desire is instituted in transgression – a fact which everyone feels, sees clearly and has experience of. But this doesn't mean – even cannot mean – that what we have here is only a matter of a frontier, of a line that is drawn, and that it is when the frontier is crossed that desire begins. Of course, this often looks to be the shortest path, but to take it is a counsel of despair. The way through is elsewhere. Which is not to say either that the frontier, that of prohibition, has to descend from heaven and from the existence of the signifier. When I talk to you about the law, I talk about it like Freud – I say that if one day it came into being, it was no doubt necessary that the signifier should immediately attach to it its mark, its stamp, its shape, but nevertheless the knot was tied from something, which is an original desire, so that the law as limit and desire (in its shape)⁷ could be founded together.

This is what we are trying to depict when we enter into details, travel the same road again, but getting closer to a knot that is ever more central and whose umbilical aspect I do not despair of showing to you.

We take the same road again and we don't forget that what is the least definitely situated for us – as to references which would be either legalistic, formalistic, or naturalistic – is the notion of little *a*, to the extent that it doesn't designate the imaginary other. The imaginary other that we identify with in the ego-type [moïque] misrecognition is *i(a)*.

Here also we find this same internal knot, whereby what seems to be quite simple – that the other is given to us in imaginary form – isn't so simple, because this other is what is involved

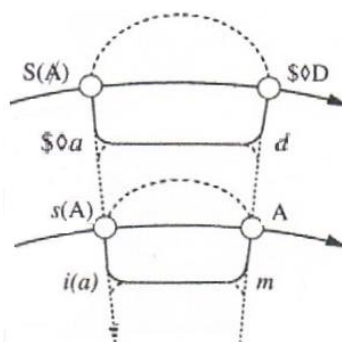
⁶ One of Lacan's favourite catchphrases, from Molière (see above, p. 31, seminar of 29 November 1961), used to mark a preceding proof or assertion as absurd.

⁷ "its" could refer back to the signifier, the knot, the original desire, the law, or desire.

when we speak of the object.⁸ It won't do to say, regarding this object, that it is quite simply the real object, the object of desire as such (original, no doubt). We can't say that about it until we have grasped, understood, apprehended what it means that the subject – constituted as dependence on the signifier, as beyond demand – is desire.

This is the part of the loop that isn't yet secure, and this is where we advance, and we start by recalling the use that we have made up to now of little *a*. Where have we seen it, where are we going to designate it to begin with? In the phantasy, where, evidently, its function has something to do with the imaginary. Let's call it "the imaginary value in the phantasy".

This is quite different from what is simply projectable, in an intuitive fashion, in the function of the decoy [leurre] as given to us in biological experience – the "innate releasing mechanism",⁹ for example. It's a different thing, as you are reminded by the formalisation of the phantasy as constituted by the ensemble "S barred desire of *a*" [$\$ \diamond a$] and by the situation of this formula in the graph, showing homologically that, by its position in the upper storey which makes it homologous with $i(a)$ in the lower storey as the support of the ego [moi] (little *m*), $\$ \diamond a$ is the support of desire.



What does that mean? It means that the phantasy is where the subject grasps himself in what I have told you to be at issue in the second storey of the graph, in a restatement at the level of the Other – in the field of the Other, at this point here¹⁰ of the graph, – of the question "What does it [ça] want?" which, moreover, will take the form "What does he want?" if someone has been able to take the place, projected by the structure, of the locus of the Other, namely the place of he who is master and guarantor of this locus.

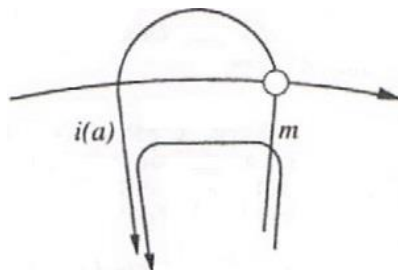
This means that the phantasy has a function in the field and the trajectory of this question homologous to that of $i(a)$, of the ideal ego, the imaginary ego [moi idéal, moi imaginaire] that I rest on [sur lequel je me repose]; that this function has a dimension – no doubt

⁸ Both Rue CB and Roussan give a capital "A" to "Other" in this sentence. But "other" with a small "a" seems more appropriate, since Lacan is referring back to "imaginary other" in the previous sentence, for which both Rue CB and Roussan use a small "a".

⁹ In English in the original. See Konrad Lorenz, *The Foundations of Ethology* (K. Lorenz and R. Kickert, trans.), p.153 *et seq.*

¹⁰ Roussan has in brackets "A" ("the Other").

highlighted on some occasion, and even more than once – which, I must here remind you, anticipates the function of the ideal ego, and this is marked for you in the graph by the fact that it is by a sort of return, which enables a short-circuit with respect to the intentional conduct of the discourse considered as constitutive at this first storey of the subject, that the subject anticipates in imagination [imaginairement] he whom he designates as ego [moi] before (signified and signifier recrossing one another) he has constituted his phrase.



Undoubtedly, it is this ego that the “I” of the discourse supports in its function as shifter.¹¹ The literal “I” in the discourse is, no doubt, nothing other than the subject himself who speaks, but he whom the subject designates here as his ideal support is he whom the subject imagines in advance, in a future perfect, as having spoken: “he will have spoken”. Similarly, there is a “he will have wanted” underlying the phantasy.

I won’t take this opening any further, nor this remark, not this reminder – that I held a dimension of temporality to be implicated at the start of our path in the graph. The graph is intended to show the kind of knot that we are currently seeking at the level of identification. The two curved lines, intersecting themselves in reverse direction, showing that synchronism is not simultaneity, already indicate in the temporal order what we are in the process of trying to knot together in the topological field. In short, what the graph supports is the movement of succession – signifier kinetics.

I recall it to you here to show you the import of the fact that I specifically did not use this temporal dimension – the dimension that contemporary phenomenology makes so much of – in a markedly doctrinal fashion, because, in truth, I believe that there is nothing that lends more to mystification than ill-considered talk about time.

But, having said that, I will put down a marker here by saying that we will have to come back to this in order to make out of it what will be, not a kinetics, but a temporal dynamics. And we won’t be able to do that until we have dealt with our present task, which is the spatialising topological mapping of the function of identification.

That is to say that you would be wrong to stop at anything at all that I have formulated so far (that I thought it necessary to formulate, also in anticipatory fashion) on the subject of anxiety, including the complement that Madame Aulagnier was kind enough to add the other

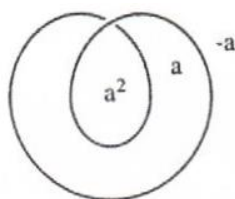
¹¹ See above, p. 274, seminar of 2 May 1962.

day, until we have restored, brought back into the field of this function¹² something I have always pointed out, I might say ever since the article on the mirror stage which distinguished the relation of anxiety from the relation of aggressivity, namely temporal tension.

Let's get back to our phantasy and to little a in order to grasp what is involved in this "imaginification" that is characteristic of its place in the phantasy. It's certain that we cannot isolate it without its correlate $\$$, because the emergence of the function of the object of desire as little a in the phantasy is correlative to the fading, the vanishing of the symbolic, which I articulated last time (responding to Madame Aulagnier, if I remember rightly) as the exclusion that is determined precisely by the dependence of the subject on the use of the signifier.

That is why it's because the signifier has to redouble its effect by striving to designate itself that the subject arises as exclusion from the very field that he determines, thereby being neither the signifier, which is designated, nor the one which designates, with the qualification, however (and this is the essential point), that this only happens in relation, initially, to the play of an object as alternation of a presence and an absence.

To start with, what is the formal meaning of the conjunction of $\$$ and little a ? It's that, in the phantasy, the subject, in his purely formal aspect, radically makes himself $-a$, the absence of a and nothing more, before [devant]¹³ the little a . At the level, if you like, of what I have called "identification with the unary stroke".



Identification is only introduced, only operates, purely and simply, in this product of $-a$ and a , and it's not difficult to see how (not just as a mental game, but because we are brought back to this by something which is, for us, our version of something that is legitimately formulated in this way) the $-a^2 = 1$ that results introduces us to what there is that is flesh [nous introduit à ce qu'il y a de charnel], implied in this mathematical symbol of $\sqrt{-1}$. Of course, we wouldn't dwell on such a game if we weren't brought to it in convergent fashion from more than one angle.

For now, let's take up where we left off in order to try and define what is imposed on us, in the outlining of structure, by the necessity of giving an account of the form to which desire leads us. Let's not forget that unconscious desire, as we have to account for it, is found in the repetition of demand; and, after all, from the origin of what Freud modulates for us, it is what

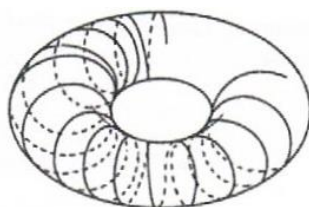
¹² Presumably the function of anxiety.

¹³ In the antiquated sense of "in front of", which, paradoxically in the context of this sentence, implies presence.

motivates it.¹⁴ I see someone saying to me: “Yes, sure, that’s what everyone says!” Except that, for us, desire isn’t to be accounted for merely as a propensity [tendance]; it is something else.

If you understand, if you follow what I mean to signify to you by “desire”, you will know that we don’t content ourselves with an opaque reference to an “automatism of repetition”, because we have perfectly identified this automatism: it is about the quest, at once necessary and doomed to fail, for a unique one time [une fois unique] that is qualified, pinpointed as such by this unary stroke, which cannot repeat itself except by always being another.

And then, in this movement, the dimension appears to us, through which desire is what supports the (no doubt circular) movement of endlessly repeated demand, but of which a certain number of repetitions can be conceived (this is the use of the topology of the torus) as completing something. Somewhere the reel-like movement of the repetition of demand closes its loop [se boucle], albeit virtually, defining another loop which is completed by this very repetition and which depicts [dessine] what? The object of desire.



And we have to formulate it in this way because what we establish as the very basis of our whole apprehension of analytic signification is, essentially, that we talk, no doubt, about an oral and anal object, etc., but this object matters to us, it structures what for us is fundamental in the relationship of the subject to the world because (it’s what we always forget) this object doesn’t remain the object of need. By being caught up in the repetitive movement of demand, in the automatism of repetition, it becomes the object of desire.

This is what I wanted to show you on the day when, for example, I took the breast as signifier of oral demand¹⁵ and showed you that it is precisely because of this that eventually (it was the simplest thing I had in order to make you grasp the point)... precisely at that moment¹⁶ the real breast becomes, not an object of nourishment, but an erotic object, showing us once again that the function of the signifier excludes the signifier being able to signify itself.

It is precisely because the object becomes recognisable as signifier of a latent demand that it takes on the value of a desire which is of another register. Libidinal signification, which analysis opened the way to as marking all human desire, doesn’t mean, can’t mean anything

¹⁴ i.e., (by gender agreement of the French nouns and pronouns) desire is what motivates the repetition of demand.

¹⁵ Perhaps in the seminar of 6 February 1957 (*Seminar 4*, A. Price, trans.).

¹⁶ i.e., when the breast becomes the signifier of oral demand.

but that. But that doesn't mean that it isn't necessary to remind you of it. The factor of this transmutation is what has to be grasped. The factor of this transmutation is the function of the phallus, little φ [phi] and there is no way of defining it¹⁷ otherwise. We are going to try and give its topological support to the function of the phallus. The true shape of the phallus, which is not necessarily that of a prick [queue],¹⁸ although it's a lot like it, is something that I don't despair of drawing for you on the blackboard.¹⁹ If you were able, without succumbing to vertigo, to evenly contemplate the aforesaid prick, you would notice that, with its prepuce, it has a strange construction. This might help you to see that topology isn't the scrap-of-paper thing that you imagine it to be, as you will certainly have occasion to realise.

Having said that, there must be a reason why, down the centuries of the history of art, representations of what I am calling the "prick" have always been so lamentably coarse.

Anyway, let's begin by recalling (because it's better not to go too quickly) that the phallus is never more present – this is where we have to start from – than when it is absent, which already augurs well for presuming that it is the pivot, the turning point of the constitution of every object as object of desire.

It would be tiresome for me to have to recall for you more than an indication of the fact that the phallus is never so much there as when it is absent. To say it all, suffice to evoke the "girl = phallus" equivalence, which the omnipresent silhouette of Lolita can make you sense. I don't really even need Lolita: there are people who know very well how to sense what the appearance of a bud on the little branch of a tree amounts to. It's obviously not the phallus, because, after all, the phallus is the phallus. But it's the presence of the phallus precisely there where it isn't. This goes very far.

Madame Simone de Beauvoir has written a whole book to show us Lolita in Brigitte Bardot.²⁰ But the distance between the blossoming of feminine charm and what is properly speaking the mainspring, the erotic activity of Lolita, seems to me to be huge – it's the easiest thing in the world to distinguish them.

When did we begin to concern ourselves here with the phallus in a fashion which is at least in some measure structuring and fruitful? Obviously, in connection with the problems of feminine sexuality, and, let's remember, the first introduction of the structural difference between demand and desire was in connection with facts discovered in all their original relief by Freud when he tackled this subject, and which are most concisely articulated in this formula: that the normal path, by which the phallus can come to be desired by the woman

¹⁷ "it" most probably refers to "function of the phallus" (by gender agreement).

¹⁸ "Queue" means "tail" but Lacan is clearly using it here in its slang meaning of "prick" (penis).

¹⁹ Lacan means the cross-cap and more particularly the "point-hole" that defines it (see below, seminar of 13 June 1962, pp. 359 *et seq.*).

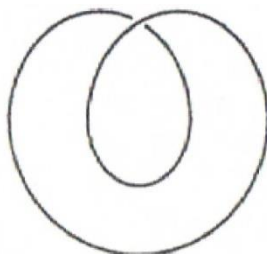
²⁰ Simone de Beauvoir, [*Brigitte Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome*](#)

depends on the fact that the phallus has to be demanded where it isn't – namely in the mother, from the mother, through the mother, for the mother.

The analytic experience emphasises that if it's true that the phallus can be constituted as object of desire, the process has to pass by way of a primitive demand, with everything that such a demand involves that is absolutely phantasmatic, unreal, contrary to nature; a demand that is structured in this way and that continues to bear these marks to such a degree that it appears inexhaustible. And the whole meaning of what Freud said isn't a matter of what is comprehensible to Mr. Jones;²¹ his meaning is that it is because the phallus can remain indefinitely an object that is demanded from a person who cannot give it on this plane, that there arises the whole difficulty of how it can ever attain to what might seem to be natural (if God really had, as the atheist Jones says, made them man and woman, meant for each other like needle and thread), namely that the phallus should at first be an object of desire.

The phallus accedes to the function of object by a way that is difficult, a way that twists the whole relation towards it, even when it seems to be the most natural object.

The topological schema that I am going to form for you is connected with what was first presented to you in the form of the inverted eight.



Its point is to make you aware of the problems of any limitational use of the signifier, in so far as a limited field cannot be identified by it²² with a circle pure and simple. The field marked inside is not as simple as the one here,²³ as the one which marked a certain signifier outside. Because of the fact that the signifier is redoubled, is summoned to signify itself, a field is necessarily produced somewhere, which is a field of exclusion and through which the subject is ejected into the external field.

I anticipate and I propose that the phallus, in its radical function, is the only signifier that can signify itself, but, although it can signify itself, it is unnameable as such. If, in the order of the signifier (since it is a signifier and nothing else), it is that which can be posed without being

²¹ i.e., Ernest Jones

²² i.e., the signifier.

²³ It is unclear what Lacan pointed at when he said "here". The only diagram at this point, in all versions, is the internal eight ("inverted eight" as he just called it). Perhaps he meant any point in the space around the internal eight.

different to itself, how are we to conceive it intuitively?²⁴ Let's say that it is the only name that abolishes all other nominations, and this is what makes it unsayable. It is not unsayable, because we call it "the phallus", but one cannot at the same time say "the phallus" and continue to name other things.

A final reference point: when we were finding our bearings at the start of one of our scientific *journées* someone²⁵ tried to articulate in a certain fashion the most radical transference function occupied by the analyst as such. The approach that he put forward quite bluntly and that deserves attention – you certainly have the feeling that it is a daring position to take – is that the analyst, in his function, has the place of the phallus. What does that mean? It's that the phallus of the Other is very precisely what incarnates, not he who is desirable, the ἐρώμενος [*eromenos*, Greek] (even though his function is that of the factor through which any object whatsoever can be introduced to the function of object of desire), but the function of the desirer,²⁶ the ἐρῶν [*eron*, Greek].

The analyst is the incarnated "Che vuoi?"²⁷ because he is the presence and support of a desire that is entirely veiled. As I noted just now, one can say that the φ [phi] factor has phallic value which is constitutive of the object of desire itself. It supports and incarnates it.²⁸ But it is a function of subjectivity that is so redoubtable, so problematic, so projected into such radical otherness... This is why last year I led you and brought you back to this crossroads as being the essential mainspring of the whole question of transference: what should this desire of the analyst be?

For the moment, what we need to do is to find a topological model, a model of a transcendental aesthetic which would allow us to account for all these functions of the phallus at once.

Is there something, which resembles that; something which, like that, is what one calls in topology a "closed surface", a notion which takes on its function... to which we have the right to give a homologous value, a value equivalent to the signifying function [fonction de signifiante], because we can define it by the function of the cut?

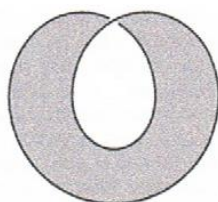
²⁴ Rue CB (also Staferla) punctuates these two sentences differently, with slightly different wording. The difference in meaning is not great. I follow Roussan.

²⁵ Staferla inserts in square brackets "Favez", presumably Georges Favez, who was a member of the Société française de psychanalyse.

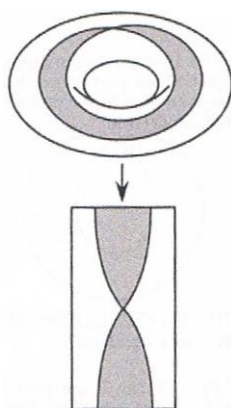
²⁶ The French is "mais celle du désirant" ("but that of the desirer"), where the pronoun "celle" must refer back to "fonction", though the grammar is loose.

²⁷ "What do you want?" (Italian), The words appear occasionally at the top of the graph of desire (e.g., *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.), p. 690). Lacan took the question from the novel by Jacques Cazotte *The Devil in Love*, p.8 (Lacan, *Seminar 4* (A. Price, trans.) p.161).

²⁸ "it" referring back to "phallic value" (by gender agreement).



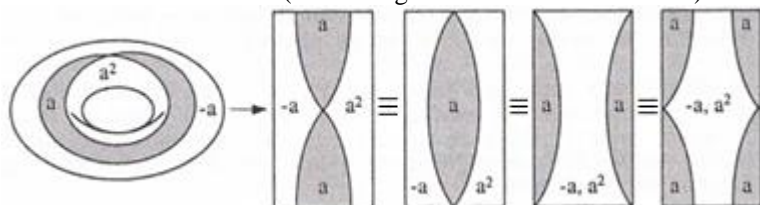
I already referred to it on several occasions. The cut with a pair of scissors on a rubber ball, on an inner tube, so as to inhibit, in many cases, a crowd of problems that arise (due to habits that go back centuries) from becoming immediately evident. I thought I was telling you very simple things about the interior eight on the surface of the torus, and then I unrolled my torus, taking it to be self-evident, thinking that I had explained to you long ago that there was a way of opening the torus with two cuts of the scissors and that when you open the torus crossways you have an open belt; the torus is reduced to this:²⁹



And then you only have to project onto this surface (the rectangle, which we would have done better to call a quadrilateral), to apply on it what we designated before in this form of the inverted eight in order to see what happens and to what something is effectively limited; how something can be chosen, distinguished between a field limited by this cut and, if you like, what is outside – what isn't self-explanatory, isn't immediately evident.

However, this little image that I sketched for you seems to have been problematic for some people at first encounter. So it can't be all that easy. I will have to come back to it next time, and I will also show you something that I have no reason to keep mysterious, because some of you may want to prepare yourselves for it. I say to them that I will talk about another kind of surface, defined as such and purely in terms of surface, whose name I already mentioned

²⁹ See the seminar of 11 April 1962 above (particularly the latter part). How the "open belt" will look depends on where one of the two cuts (that through the thickness of the torus) is made. Roussan shows some alternatives:

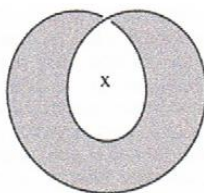


and which will be very useful to us. It is called in English (it has been most written about in English) a “cross-cap”. It has sometimes been translated into French by the term “mitre”, to which it may have a vague resemblance.

This form of topologically defined surface certainly has its own purely speculative and mental attraction, which, I hope will not be lost on you. I will take care to give you figurative representations of it. I have prepared a quantity of them, particularly from angles that aren't, of course, those from which the representations interest mathematicians or under which you will find them represented in works on topology. My figures will preserve all their originality of function, because I don't put them to the same use and I wasn't looking for the same things.

You should understand, however, that what we are trying to fashion in an argued, tangible way is intended to bring with it as support a certain number of reflections and others that are expected to follow – yours in particular. It should also bring with it what I might call a mutative value, which will allow you to think about the logical things that I started out from in a way that is different from how, in your mind, the famous Euler circles keep them moored.

At least in topological form, far from this interior field of the eight being necessarily and forever an excluded field, it's a very tangible and representable fact (one of the most representable and most amusing things about the cross-caps in question) that, far from this field being a field that has to be excluded, it can perfectly well be kept.



That's right, we don't have to worry – there is a quite simple way of imaging how it can be kept. It's not very difficult. All you have to do is take something that has a more or less appropriate shape, a soft circle, and twist and fold it in a certain way to make a little tongue, the bottom of which is in continuity with the rest of the edges.

But you have to remember that this is never anything but an artifice, because this edge is effectively always the same edge. This is indeed the issue. We want to know by a quite different way whether this surface – the surface that makes our case, that aesthetically and intuitively symbolises another possible import of the signifying limit of the marked field – is realisable in a way that is different and somehow immediately obtainable by simple application of the properties of a surface, which you have not been accustomed to before now.

This is what we will see next time.

16 May 1962¹

Let me justify this elucubration of surfaces.² Clearly, what I am telling you about them is the result of reflection, of information that you are at liberty to redo. You haven't, I think, forgotten, although I said it quickly, that the notion of a surface in topology isn't something that you can take as going without saying, as given in intuition. Elementary geometry has already taught us plenty of things, for fifty-five percent of you, the others being afflicted by that bizarre affliction called "mathematical incomprehension". I leave that to the mathematicians, who are often much more psychologists than other people although they only concern themselves with it in part.

The surface isn't something that goes without saying. There would be several ways of trying to approach it: by starting out from what there is in the real that introduces it, from what shows that space isn't this open and contemptible extension which Bergson thought it was (his intuition of duration contains more than one mystery);³ or by trying to introduce it in a more elaborated, more symbolised way.

Let's establish certain terms to begin with, suspending them from their problematic character. It's certain that a first essential thing in the notion of a surface is the notion of a face. When you are dealing with a surface you seem to be dealing with two faces or two sides. This goes without saying if we plunge the surface into space like a sheet of paper. But in order to get the benefit of what the notion of a surface can offer us, we need to know what it renders to us by its dimensions alone. Seeing what it can give us as a surface that divides space by its dimensions alone gives us more than one start-point that will enable us to reconstruct space differently from the intuition that we believe we have of it.

In other words, I propose that we consider it more evident, simpler, more certain ("certain" because linked to action, whereas self-evidence merits suspicion due to the imaginary capture), more structural, therefore, to start from the surface in order to define space, of which I believe we have only a weak grasp, or, rather, let's say in order to define the locus [lieu], instead of starting from the locus (which we don't know) in order to define the surface.

You can refer to what philosophy has said about the locus. The "locus of the Other" already has its place in our seminar. It's not enough, in order to define the face of a surface, to say

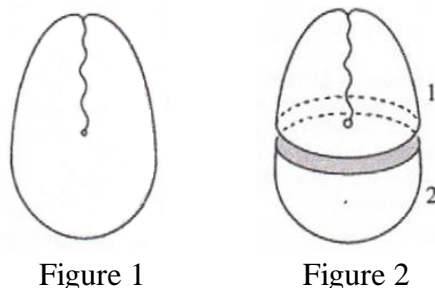
¹ Roussan reports that there is no stenotype of this week's seminar and the Rue CB version is marked "version based on notes". Roussan reproduces the Rue CB version with some additions from the notes of other listeners, but also provides a separate "discursive version" of this day's seminar, drawing particularly on notes by Jean Laplanche and Jean Oury. The differences are not huge (the discursive version takes up seven pages compared with six for the Rue CB version), but sometimes change the meaning significantly. I mainly follow the discursive version and report significant differences in footnotes.

² I follow Rue CB in this sentence. The discursive version has a longer and obscure sentence: "This elucubration isn't reluctance of these surfaces, because I put it under a heading that can justify its necessity". "Réluctance" in French can mean what it does in English as well as the property of a magnetic circuit of opposing the passage of magnetic flux lines (akin to electrical resistance), which is also its less well-known meaning in English.

³ Instead of the phrase in brackets Rue CB has only "it conceals many mysteries".

that it is on one side and on the other, all the more so because that is by no means satisfactory, and these two regions whose infinite extent would divide space give us a Pascalian vertigo.

How are we to define this notion of a face? It is the field on which a line, a path can be extended without having to meet an edge, which can't be applied to the sheet of paper. But there are surfaces without edges: the plane to infinity (first of all), the sphere, the torus and several others, which, as surfaces without an edge, can be reduced practically to a single surface – the cross-cap or mitre, which is pictured here [Figure 1 below]. What you read about under the name of “cross-cap” in learned books is this [part 1 of Figure 2 below], cut so that it can be inserted onto another surface.



These three surfaces – sphere, torus, cross-cap – are elementary closed surfaces, to the composition of which all the other closed surfaces can be reduced.

I will use the name “cross-cap” for this first surface [Figure 1 above]. Its real name is the “projective plane” in Riemann’s theory of surfaces, which takes this plane as its basis. It brings into play dimensions higher than the third dimension. I hate these excursions that bring in dimensions, right up to n dimensions. For us “depth psychologists”⁴ the third dimension is sufficiently problematic, sufficiently lacking in assurance intuitively, to discourage us from using the fourth. But, nevertheless, in this simple figure, the cross-cap, the fourth dimension is already implied necessarily.

It’s really not that complicated. Remember the little knotted thread that I gave you the other day as a token of friendship:⁵ you can give a valid topological theory of that elementary knot by introducing something that already leads us to the fourth dimension. Suppose you were to try and reproduce this knot by following a surface: using the torus, by following the circuits and the detours that you can make on its surface, you could return after several circuits to a line, which links up with itself like the knot above. But you can’t make it⁶ without the line

⁴ “Depth psychologists” in scare quotes only in the discursive version.

⁵ The trefoil knot. See above, seminar of 2 May 1962, pp. 275-76 and footnote 40.

⁶ i.e., “make the knot”. I follow “le faire” in Rue CB. The discursive version has “la fermer” (“close it”, where “it” would refer back to “line” in the previous sentence). This is relevant to the explanation in the next footnote.

crossing itself. There is no means of making this knot on the torus because, on the surface of the torus, you won't be able to mark that the line passes above or below.⁷

However, it is perfectly possible to make the knot on the cross-cap. If this surface implies the presence of the fourth dimension, that is the beginning of a proof that the simplest knot implies the fourth dimension.

I am going to tell you how you can imagine this surface – the cross-cap (that alone won't impose its necessity for us).⁸ It is not unrelated to the torus. It even has the most profound relation to the torus. The simplest way to give you this relation straight away is to remind you how a torus is made, how it is constructed when it is broken down in polyhedric form, namely by bringing it back to its primitive form – its fundamental polygon. Here, this fundamental polygon is a quadrilateral. If you fold this quadrilateral onto itself, *a* joining up with *a'*, you get a tube, a cylinder. Joining the edges of the two circles, at the top and bottom, you get a ring – a torus. If you vectorise these edges by stipulating that only the vectors which go in the same direction can be stuck to one another, so that the beginning of one vector is applied to the point where the other vector ends, then you have all the coordinates for defining the structure of the torus.

⁷ I follow Rue CB and not the discursive version in these last three sentences. Lacan's exposition here is so elliptical as to be incomprehensible. What he means, I think, is:

(1) you can trace the line of a trefoil knot on the torus like this (the line is dotted where it goes "out of sight" round the back of the torus, the diagram is from Roussan);

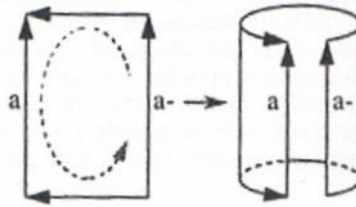


but (2) the trefoil knot, the simplest of all knots, cannot be made in three-dimensional space from a simple circle (an "unknot", see above, seminar of 2 May, p. 276, footnote 40) by pure manipulation, i.e., without the circle self-intersecting, and this is what Lacan means by saying, "but you can't make it [the knot] without the line crossing itself"; so (3) if you stick a ready-made simple circle anywhere on the surface of the torus (as opposed to tracing the line on the torus shown in (1) until its end meets its beginning), you won't be able to make the circle into a trefoil knot by pure manipulation "because, on the surface of the torus, you won't be able to mark that the line passes above or below".

Really (3) adds nothing to (2): the point is just that in the three-dimensional space, in which we are visualising the torus, you cannot get from a circle (a simple loop, an "unknot") to a situation where the line of the circle passes "above or below" itself in a way that makes the trefoil (you cannot do so without self-intersecting the circle).

My reading of these sentences may be wrong. As Roussan points out, listeners record that Lacan drew an interlinking of two threads alongside the drawing of the trefoil. My hypothesis would be that the other drawing was Lacan's attempt to show how the trefoil cannot be made from the circle in 3D space, but that is not obvious from the drawing, which I do not reproduce here.

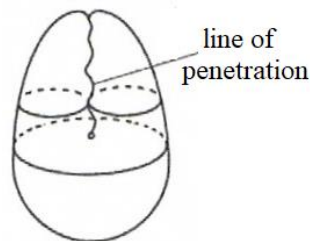
⁸ The phrase in brackets is doubtful. In the French it is: "Ça n'imposera pas sa nécessité, par là-même, pour nous, menée", where the sense of "menée" (literally "led") is unclear. Roussan notes a quite different phrase in the notes of Paul Lemoine, meaning "and I will show its necessity for us".



If you want to make a surface whose fundamental polygon is defined in this way by vectors all going in the same direction on the basic quadrilateral, if you set out from a polygon defined like that, you can think that it has only two edges (or even just one, but we say that there are two) and you get what I am materialising for you as the cross-cap.



When you carry out the junction, the closure of this surface, you necessarily get what I am materialising for you as this surface – the mitre.



I will come back to this in more detail – as to its function of symbolising something – and that will be clearer... it will be much more fit to interest us when we give it a value as support. I present it to you in this rather arid form (the most difficult form) to begin with, to make you swallow the pill straight away

It's already less arid when you take it in cross section. It's not what you think, with this sort of little crocodile's mug or jawbone. This is a line of penetration, thanks to which what is in front... Underneath, there is a hemisphere. Above, the wall at the front on the right passes by penetration to the other side, in the opposite half, and then comes back in front.

Why this shape rather than some other? Up to a certain point the distinction of its fundamental polygon from that of the torus arises as a question posed by the change in the arrows of the torus polygon. On the torus polygon the direction of the vectors starts out divergently from a point and arrives convergently at the opposite point. If we invert (the most imaginable way of doing it in order to symbolise this surface), drawing a polygon whose edges are marked by vectors with the same direction, what sort of surface does that give?

Now we get to the problematic points about these surfaces and also the reason why I have just introduced surfaces without an edge to you: it's to do with the notion of a face. How do

we define the face if there's no edge and if we prohibit ourselves as much as possible from plunging our model too quickly into the third dimension? Where there is no edge we will be sure that there is an interior and an exterior. This is what is suggested by the surface without edges *par excellence*, which is the sphere. I want to get you away from the vague intuition that there is what is inside the sphere and what is outside it.

For the other surfaces without an edge that I enumerated, these notions of interior and exterior don't hold up. Interior and exterior can't suffice for the infinite plane. For the torus, the intuition appears to be applicable enough, because an inner tube has an inside and an outside. Nevertheless, what happens in the field by which this outside space traverses the torus, namely the central hole, is the topological nerve of what makes the torus interesting to us and where the relation of interior and exterior is illustrated by something that can touch us.

To make you understand it I would point out to you – as a margin note, in passing – that, until Freud and the Freudians, traditional anatomy, which, at its origins, necessarily had an element of *Naturwissenschaft* (a bit more with Paracelsus but originally with Aristotle's anatomical-physiology), always counted the sense organs as authentic orifices – as being among the orifices of the body. Analytic theory, as structured by the function of the libido, made a very narrow choice among the orifices and doesn't talk about sensory orifices as orifices, except to refer them back to the signifier of the orifices that had been initially chosen. When one has made a scopophilia out of scopophilia, one says that scopophilic identification is an oral identification, as Fenichel does.⁹

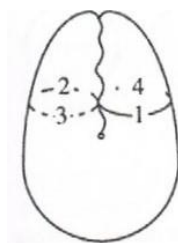
What impresses us about the oral, anal and even genital orifices is that they are not really orifices that lead into the inside of the body: the digestive tract is only a passage, it is open to the outside. The true inside is the mesodermic interior and the orifices that lead into it well and truly exist in the form of the eyes or of the ear, which analytic theory never mentions as such, except on the cover of the review *La Psychanalyse*.¹⁰

This is the real import given to the central hole of the torus: it is not a real interior, but it suggests to us something of the order of a passage from the interior to the exterior.

This gives us the idea, which comes from inspecting the closed surface of the cross-cap. Imagine something infinitely flat which moves about on this surface. It seems to pass from the exterior [1 in the figure below] of the closed surface to the interior [2] and continues further on the interior [3] until it gets to the line of penetration where it re-emerges to the exterior [4] at the back.

⁹ “The Scopophilic Instinct and Identification” in *The Collected Papers of Otto Fenichel*, pp. 373-397.

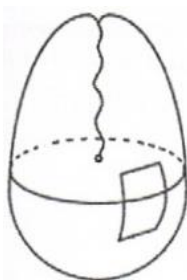
¹⁰ *La Psychanalyse* was the journal of the Société française de psychanalyse (the organisation to which Lacan belonged in the 1950s and early 1960s). The covers of all of its eight issues, published between 1956 and 1964, carry a picture of a human ear floating alone in a landscape (<https://associationpsychanalytiquedefrance.org/publications/les-revues/la-psychanalyse/>).



What's the point of this? It's to show you the difficulty of defining the interior-exterior distinction, even when you are dealing with a closed surface, a surface without an edge.

I don't claim to have resolved anything. I have done no more than open the question, not in order to present you with an amusing paradox, but to remind you that what is important in this figure of the mitre is that you have to regard this line of penetration as null and void. One cannot materialise the mitre on the blackboard without bringing this line of penetration into play, because ordinary spatial intuition requires it to be shown, but we take no account of it in our speculations. You can make this line of penetration slide indefinitely. We can even make the penetrating cut elsewhere and rid it of this pseudo-line of penetration. There is no reflexion of one surface on the other, nothing of the order of a seam, there is no possible passage – nothing that one can isolate in the functioning of this surface. For this reason the interior-exterior problematic isn't about two things, but about a veritable confusion between two parts that are the interior and the exterior, and so on all of the surface.¹¹

There are two orders of consideration of the surface: metrical and topological. All metrical considerations must be set aside. They have no meaning from a topological point of view. In effect, I could give the whole surface from this square.¹²



Topologically the essence, the nature of the structural relationships that constitute the surface is present at each of its points: the inside face is merged with the outside face, because the definition of the surface determines all of its points and properties.

¹¹ Instead of this sentence Rue CB has only "Because of this, the problem of the interior and the exterior arises in all its confusion."

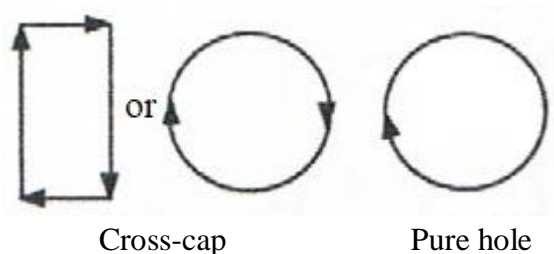
¹² I follow Rue CB in this sentence. The discursive version has instead two sentences: "Indeed, in a metrical consideration I could give the whole surface starting from this little square, whereas that has no meaning from a topological point of view". This seems to have "metrical" and "topological" the wrong way around.

To bring out the interest of this, consider a question that has never yet been posed, concerning the signifier: isn't the locus of a signifier always a surface? The question may sound bizarre. But posing it suggests a dimension. Indeed, at first approach, what is written [le graphique] always requires a surface. It might be objected that a raised stone, a Greek column, is a signifier and that it has volume, but don't be so sure that you can introduce the notion of volume before you have assurance concerning the notion of a surface. Particularly if, in putting things to the test, you realise that the notion of volume cannot be grasped unless you start from that of the envelope. No raised stone has ever interested us except for – I won't say "for its envelope", which would be a sophism, but for what it envelops. Before becoming volumes, architecture arose from the mobilisation, the arrangement of surfaces around a void.

What are raised stones for? For making alignments or tables, for making something which is of use because of the hole around it.

Because that is the remainder we are dealing with. If, in an attempt to catch by the tail the nature of the face, I began from surfaces with an edge in order to point out to you that the criterion was lacking to us in surfaces without edges, if it is possible to show you a fundamental surface without edges, where the definition of the face isn't imposed, because the surface without edges is not suitable for resolving the problem of inside and outside, we still have to take account of the distinction between a surface *without* and a surface *with*, because it has the closest possible relationship with what interests us, namely the hole, which has to be brought into the theory of surfaces positively and as such.¹³

This isn't verbal artifice. In the combinatory theory of general topology, every triangulable surface, i.e., one that is composed of little triangular pieces that you could stick to each another, torus or a cross-cap, can be reduced by means of the fundamental polygon to a composition of the sphere to which are added more or fewer toric elements, cross-cap elements and indispensable pure-hole elements represented by this vector looping back on itself.



¹³ I follow the Rue CB sentence breaks in this paragraph. The discursive version begins the paragraph with one long sentence ending "...was lacking to us in surfaces without edges". I also follow Rue CB's wording, "we still have to take account of the distinction between a surface *without* and a surface *with*", where the discursive version has instead, "we still have to take account of the subtraction of this first kind of surface from the second".

Can't a signifier, in its most radical essence, be envisaged simply as a cut, $>$ $<$, in a surface? These two signs, " $>$ " and " $<$ ", the most elementary signifiers,¹⁴ certainly giving the impression of something that imposes itself only by its structure as a cut inscribed on something where there is always marked, not simply the continuity of a plane¹⁵ on which what follows will be inscribed, but also the vectoral direction where this will always be rediscovered.

Why has the signifier in its bodily, that is to say its vocal incarnation, always presented itself to us as essentially discontinuous? So we had no need of the surface: discontinuity constitutes it,¹⁶ interruption in what is successive is part of its structure.

This temporal dimension of the functioning of the signifying chain, which I initially articulated for you as succession, entails that scansion introduces another element in addition to the division of the modulatory interruption: it introduces haste, which I have inserted as haste in logic. I refer to an old work called "Logical Time".¹⁷

The step that I am trying to get you to take today is a step that we have already begun to take. It is where discontinuity gets linked to what is the essence of the signifier, namely difference.

What I have made pivotal and emphasised again and again in order to bring it to your attention in the function of the signifier is that even by repeating the same, that same, by being repeated, is inscribed as distinct. Where is the interpolation of a difference here? Is it merely in the cut (this is where the introduction of the topological dimension beyond the temporal scansion interests us) or is it in the something else which we will call "the simple possibility of being different", the existence of the differential battery that constitutes the signifier and through which we cannot confuse synchrony with simultaneity at the root of the phenomenon?

Synchrony makes it happen that, reappearing as the same, the signifier reappears as distinct from what it repeats and what can be considered as distinguishable; this is the interpolation of difference, because we cannot pose the identity of "a is a" as fundamental in the signifying function. So is difference in the cut or in the synchronic possibility which constitutes the signifying difference?¹⁸

¹⁴ These four words only in the discursive version.

¹⁵ This word in Rue CB. The discursive version has "surface"

¹⁶ i.e., the signifier (by agreement of gender between pronoun "le" and "le significant"). I follow Rue CB here. The discursive version has a longer phrase: "under all its faces [sous toutes ses faces], discontinuity constitutes it"

¹⁷ Lacan, *Écrits*, B. Fink, Trans., pp. 161-175

¹⁸ Rue CB makes this a statement instead of a question ("So difference is in the cut or in the synchronic possibility which constitutes the signifying difference"), but the context suggests that it should be a question.

In any case, what is repeated as signifier is only different because it can be inscribed. Whatever the answer to that question,¹⁹ it remains the case that the function of the cut is of importance for us primarily in what can be written. And it is here that the notion of the topological surface needs to be introduced in our mental functioning because it is only there that the function of the cut acquires its interest.

The objection that inscription would bring us back to memory is an objection to be refuted. The memory which interests us analysts is to be distinguished from organic memory – a memory which, if I can put it like this, would respond to the same suction of the real by the same manner of defence by the organism against it: the manner which maintains homeostasis, because the organism does not recognise the same which is renewed as different. Organic memory “same-orises” [même-orise].²⁰ Our memory, the one that we deal with, is something else: it intervenes and is supported by inscription as a function of the unary stroke, marking the one unique time [la fois unique].²¹ Between stimulus and response, the inscription, the “printing”²² has to be recalled in terms that aren’t impressionistic but are a matter of print [en termes, non pas impressionistes mais d’impression], of Gutenberg’s printing press.²³

The first draft of the neuro-physiological²⁴ theory, against which we rebel, is always atomistic. This psychophysics always takes the impression in surface schemas as its first foundation. But it isn’t enough to say that this is inadequate unless we can offer something else because, while it is of great interest to see that the first theory that was given of relational life, namely psychological associationism, was inscribed in terms that are eminently interesting to us, which translated (only without knowing it) the very structure of the signifier under the masked forms of the distinct effects of contiguity and continuity, and while it is worth showing (because we can make something of it) that what was recognised and misrecognised [reconnu et méconnu] as the signifying dimension was the effects of the signifier in the structure of the idealist world,²⁵ from which this psycho-physiology²⁶ never detached itself, inversely, what was introduced under the terms of gestaltism and the phenomenology that was substituted for it²⁷ is just as inadequate to account for what happens at the level of vital phenomena, due to a fundamental ignorance that can be seen in the rapidity with which indications [évidences] are taken to be certain, although everything contradicts them. The so-called “good form” of the circumference, which the organism supposedly seeks obstinately to reproduce on every plane – subjective or objective – is contrary to all observation of organic forms. I would say to the gestaltists that a donkey’s ear resembles a cornet, an arum lily, a Moebius surface.

¹⁹ i.e., the question asked two sentence earlier. This phrase is only in the discursive version.

²⁰ Playing on the French words “mémorise” (“memorises”) and “même” (“same”).

²¹ See above, seminar of 10 January 1962.

²² Lacan uses the English word.

²³ Rue CB has a much shorter phrase: “has to be recalled in terms of Gutenberg’s printing press”.

²⁴ Rue CB has “psycho-physical”.

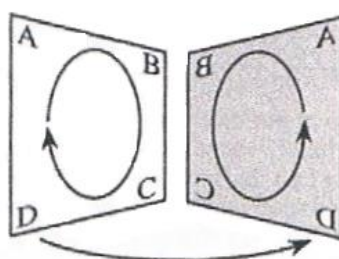
²⁵ Associationism and idealism went hand in hand in the theories of Berkeley, Hume and their followers.

²⁶ Rue CB has “psycho-physics”.

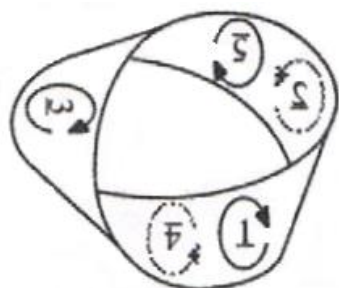
²⁷ “and the phenomenology that was substituted for it” is not in Rue CB.

A Moebius surface is the simplest illustration of the cross-cap. It is made with a strip of paper, the two ends of which one sticks together after having twisted it, so that the infinitely flat being which travels along it can follow it without ever crossing any edge. This shows the ambiguity of the notion of a face. Because it is not enough to say that it is a single-sided surface, with a single face, as certain mathematicians formulate it (a formal definition would be something else) – it remains the case that there is a coalescence, for each point, of two faces, and this is what interests us. For us who do not content ourselves with saying that it is single-sided (on the pretext that the two faces are always present) it remains the case, nevertheless, that we can manifest at every point the scandal for our intuition of this relationship of the two faces.

If, on a plane, we draw a circle that goes round in a clockwise direction, you can see that on the other side, by transparency, the same arrow goes around in the opposite direction.



If the infinitely flat being, the little personage on the Moebius surface, carries with him a circle turning around him in a clockwise direction, it is certain that this circle will always turn in a clockwise direction, so that on the other side from his point of departure what will be inscribed will turn in the direction of the hours²⁸ – the opposite direction to what would happen on a normal strip, on the plane, where the direction on the other face is the contrary. There isn't an inversion.

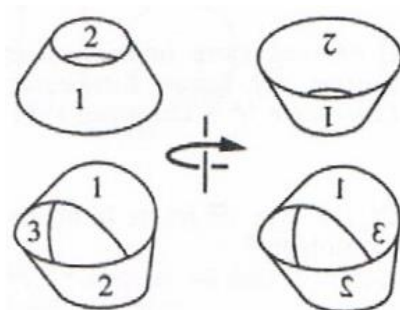


This is why these surfaces are defined as “non-orientable”. And yet nothing could be more damn oriented [plus bougrement orienté].²⁹ Desire isn't articulable, but we can't say, for all

²⁸ i.e., it will still turn clockwise.

²⁹ Rue CB has “And yet it's no less oriented for all that”.

that, that it isn't articulated.³⁰ Because these little ears in the Moebius strip, however non-orientable they may be, are more oriented than a normal strip. Make yourself a conical belt and turn it over: what was open below is now open on top. But turn over the Moebius strip and it will always have the same shape, the same direction.³¹ Even when you turn the object over, this sort of surface will always have the sunken hump on the left, the swollen hump on the right, which isn't the case of a normal band... as different as an ordinary snail from an extraordinary snail.³² So a non-orientable surface is much more oriented than an orientable surface.



There's something that goes even further and that surprises the mathematicians, who smile and send the reader back to experience. If you cut the Moebius strip with scissors at equal distance from the most accessible points – not from the edges, because it only has one edge,³³ – if you cut along the middle of the strip, you make a circle, the cut meets itself, and you produce a cycle,³⁴ a loop, a closed Jordan curve.

Now, this cut not only leaves the surface whole, it also transforms the non-orientable surface into an orientable surface – a strip where, if you colour one of its sides with a paintbrush, a whole side will stay white, contrary to what would have happened on the Moebius surface before it was cut, where everything would have been coloured without the paintbrush changing face. Just by making a cut you have changed the omnipresent structure of all the points of the surface. And if I ask you to tell me the difference between this object and the object before the cut, there's no way of doing it. That introduces what is interesting about the function of the cut.

The quadrilateral polygon is at the origin of [est originaire du] the torus and the cross-cap. I have never given the proper verbalisation of this shape “ \diamond ”, stamp, desire,³⁵ that joins the “ $\$$ ”

³⁰ See above, p. 22, seminar of 22 November 1961.

³¹ Rue CB does not have “the same direction”.

³² Rue CB does not have the words beginning from “which isn't the case...”.

³³ Rue CB has “...at equal distance from the most accessible points of the edges, because it only has one edge”. The discursive version makes better sense in the context.

³⁴ Rue CB has “a circle”.

³⁵ “poinçon, désir”. The words seem to be in apposition, suggesting that the stamp (or mark) “ \diamond ” is to be read as “desire”. See above, p. 280, seminar of 9 May 1962, where Lacan spells out “ $\$ \diamond a$ ” as “S barred desire of a”.

to the “*a*” in “ $\$ \diamond a$ ”. This little quadrilateral should be read: “the subject³⁶ as marked by the signifier is by rights [proprement], in the phantasy, the cut of *a*”.

Next time you will see how this will give us a functioning support to articulate the question: how can what we define and isolate, starting from demand, as projection of the³⁷ field of desire in its ungraspable aspect knot itself, by some torsion, to what, taken from another aspect, is defined as the field of the object *a*? How can desire be equivalent to *a*? This is what I have introduced and which will give you a model that is useful, I mean useful in your practice.

³⁶ The discursive version has “S, the subject...”.

³⁷ The words “projection of the” are only in the discursive version.

23 May 1962

Why is a signifier a grasping of the slightest thing? Can it grasp the slightest thing? That is the question, a question which, it would perhaps not be too much to say, has never yet been posed because of the form that logic has classically taken. Indeed, the principle of predication, which is the universal proposition, implies only one thing: that what one grasps are nullifiable beings, the *dictum de omni et nullo*.¹

For those who are not familiar with these terms and who, consequently, do not understand very well, I recall what I have been explaining to you in recent lessons, namely that if we take the support of the Euler circle (all the more legitimately because it was a question of substituting something different), of any circle that I might call “naïve” – about which the question does not arise of knowing whether it captures [cerne] a piece, a strip, – then it is definitive of the circle, whether or not it detaches a strip of this implied hypothetical surface, that it can be progressively reduced to nothing. The possibility of the universal is nullity.

All teachers, I told you one day² (I chose the example to avoid falling constantly into the same problems) are literate. Well then, if it so happened somewhere that no teacher could be called literate, it wouldn't matter – we would have teachers who are dunces [nuls].³ Notice that this isn't the same as saying that there are no teachers. The proof is that we do sometimes have teachers who are dunces.

When I say “have”, it is to be taken in the strong sense, like when we talk about being and about having. It's not a slippery word that stops you getting hold of the soap. When I say “we have them”, that means that we are used to having them, the same as we have a load of things, like we have the Republic, like a farmer I was talking to recently said, “This year, we've had hail, and then we've had the boy scouts...”. His definition of these meteorologies was hazy, but the word “have” keeps its meaning here.

We also have psychoanalysts, and here things are much more complicated because, with psychoanalysts, we are getting into the order of existential definition. We get there by way of a condition. We say, for example: “There aren't [il n'y a pas]⁴... No one can call himself a psychoanalyst if he hasn't been psychoanalysed”. Now, there is a great danger of thinking that this relationship is homogeneous with what I was talking about just now, so that, using Euler circles, there would be the circle of people who have been psychoanalysed; and because, as everyone knows, all psychoanalysts have to have been psychoanalysed, the circle

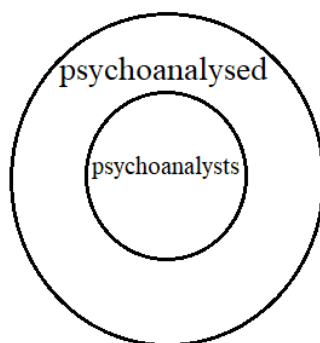
¹ A good discussion of the *dictum de omni et de nullo* can be found at http://www.logicmuseum.com/wiki/Dici_de_omni.

² End of the seminar of 17 January 1962 (above pp. 113-114).

³ “nul” is an adjective meaning “no”, as in “nul homme n'est une île” (“no man is an island”), but colloquially it can also mean “good for nothing”, “useless”, as in “il est nul” (“he's useless”, “he's a mess” or, of a teacher, “he's a dunce”). It can only be used in this latter meaning as a predicative (not an attributive) adjective.

⁴ The French expression uses the verb “have” (“avoir”, third person present tense: “a”), not “be”.

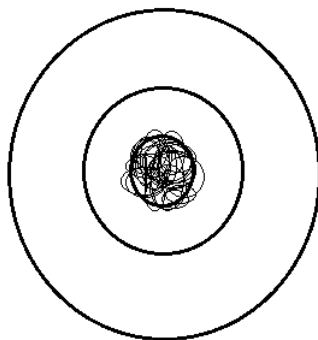
of psychoanalysts could therefore be drawn as included in the circle of people who have been psychoanalysed.



But, our experience with psychoanalysts presenting so many difficulties, you don't need me to tell you that things probably aren't so simple. After all, it's by no means obvious, speaking of teachers, that the very fact of functioning as a teacher can draw into the teacher's breast, like a siphon, something which empties him of all contact with the effects of the letter. But for the psychoanalyst, on the contrary, it is quite obvious that this is just the issue.

It's no good transforming the question into: "What is it to be psychoanalysed?" Because, of course, what one would then be doing (naturally) would only be to deter nobody from prioritising the question of what it is to be psychoanalysed. But as regards the psychoanalyst, it's not this that we need to grasp if we want to grasp the concept of the psychoanalyst. Rather it's to know what it means for a psychoanalyst to be psychoanalysed, qua psychoanalyst, and just not as one of those who have been psychoanalysed.

I don't know whether I am making myself understood, but I am going to bring you back once again to ABC, to what's elementary. Suppose we listen to the oldest example in logic, the first step for pushing Socrates into a hole, namely: "All men are mortal". I don't know if, in all the time we have been deafened with this formula, you have become hardened to it, but for anyone who is a little fresh, the very fact of the promotion of this example at the heart of logic cannot but provoke some unease, a feeling of dishonesty. Because what could be the interest to us of such a formula, if man is what we are trying to grasp? Unless what's at issue (and this is exactly what the concentric circles of the Eulerian inclusion evade) isn't to know that there is a circle of mortals and inside it the circle of man – which has strictly no interest, – but to know what it is for man to be mortal, to catch hold of the whirlwind that is produced somewhere at the centre of the notion of man from the fact of his conjunction with the predicate "mortal", and this is why we bother chasing after something in this case. When we talk about man, it is precisely this whirlwind, this hole that gets made somewhere there in the middle, that we touch upon.



I recently opened an excellent book by an American author, of whose work one can say that it augments the patrimony of thought and of logical elucidation. I am not going to mention his name, because you are going to try and find out who it is.⁵ Why don't I tell you? I had the surprise of finding in the pages, where he works so well, such a lively sense of the actuality of the progress of logic... and my interior eight puts in an appearance.⁶ He doesn't make at all the same use of it as I do, but it occurred to me that some mandarin among my listeners would come and tell me one day that this is where I got it. As regards the originality of Mr. Jakobson's passage, I count the strongest reference. I must say, I began to push metaphor and metonymy in our theory, I think, sometime around the *Rome Discourse*, which has been published, and Jakobson said to me when we were in conversation: "Of course, this business of metaphor and metonymy, we worked it over together, you remember, on 14 July 1950."⁷

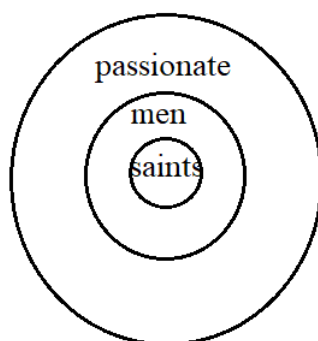
As for the logician in question, he has been dead for a long time, and his little interior eight incontestably precedes its promotion here. But when he enters boldly into his examination of the universal affirmative, he uses an example which has the merit of not turning up everywhere. He says: "All saints are men, all men are passionate, therefore all saints are passionate."⁸ He uses that because you can't but sense, in such an example, that the problem is to know where this predicative passion is, it being the most exterior in this universal syllogism – to know what sort of passion pertains to the heart in order to produce sanctity.

⁵ Charles Sanders Peirce.

⁶ [The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce](#), Volume 4, Book 2, Chapter 6, Section 5 (Tinctured Existential Graphs) (PDF pages 1518-1519).

⁷ The reference (from "As regards the originality...") is unclear. Lacan is perhaps referring to a conversation he had with a listener or listeners before the seminar. The linguist Roman Jakobson was Lacan's friend and an occasional speaker and listener at his seminars. He was a great admirer of Peirce "who in this country has been for me the most powerful source of inspiration" (Roman Jakobson, [Selected Writings II, Word and Language](#), p. v). Places where Jakobson refers to the work of Peirce include his best-known treatment of metaphor and metonymy (as related to aphasia), *Two Aspects of Language*, published in 1956 (*ibid.*, pp. 241-259). The *Rome Discourse*, where, Lacan says, he himself first pushed metaphor and metonymy, was delivered in 1953 (*Écrits*, pp. 197-268). It is mysterious why Lacan thinks that the "mandarins" would take issue with the interior eight and not with his extensive and uncredited use of Peirce's dial to discuss universal and particular propositions (above, seminars of 17 January, 7 and 14 March 1962).

⁸ Peirce, *op. cit.*, Volume 4, Book 2, Chapter 1, Section 2 (Of Euler's Diagrams) [PDF page 1384].



I thought about all that this morning, I mean about saying it to you like that to make you sense what is at issue regarding what I called a certain “whirlwind movement”. What are we trying to grasp in our apparatus that deals with surfaces, surfaces in the sense that we give to them here through a usage which, to reassure my listeners, may perhaps, in view of my excursions, be less than classical, but nevertheless amounts to nothing other than a renewal, a re-interrogation of the Kantian function of the schema?

The radical illogicality, patent to experience, of the concepts of belonging, inclusion, the relationship of extension to intension, to Euler’s circles, this whole direction that logic embarked on over time – isn’t this whole aberration just a reminder of what was forgotten when it began?

What was forgotten when it began is that, whatever one does, the object at issue (even when it is as pure as can be) is, was and will be the object of desire, and that the reason why we try to circumscribe it in order to lay hold of it logically, with language, is because, firstly, we are seeking to grasp it as the object of our desire, and then, having grasped it, to keep it (which means to enclose it), so that this return of inclusion to prominence in logical formalisation has its root in this need to possess, which grounds our relation to the object as object of desire.

Begriff evokes seizure⁹ because it is from trying to seize an object of our desire that we have fashioned the *Begriff*. And, as everyone knows, everything we want to possess that is an object of desire – what we want to possess for desire and not for the satisfaction of a need – runs away and eludes us. It’s what moralistic preaching loves to evoke: “At the end we possess nothing, all this must be left behind,” says the famous cardinal.¹⁰ How sad! “We possess nothing,” says moralistic preaching, “because there is death”. This is another piece of trickery: what is being described to us here, at the level of the fact of real death, isn’t what is in question. That’s why I spent one long year exercising you in this space that my listeners described as “between two deaths”.¹¹ Doing away with real death would do nothing to sort out the problem of the elusive object of desire, because what is at issue there is the other

⁹ “Begriff” (“concept”, German) derives from “greifen” (“to grasp, seize”) (see above, p. 279, seminar of 9 May 1962).

¹⁰ Jacques Bénigne Bossuet. See, for example, *The Sermon on the Mount* (F. Capes, trans.), p.112.

¹¹ Lacan, *Seminar 7* (D. Porter, trans.).

death, due to which, even if we weren't mortal, even if we had the promise of eternal life, the question remains open whether this "eternal life" (life without any promise of an end) isn't to be conceived as a way of dying eternally.

It most certainly is to be conceived like that, because it's our normal condition, and we should take it into account in our logic as analysts because – if psychoanalysis has a meaning and if Freud wasn't mad – it's what is designated by the point called "the death instinct" [l'instinct de mort].

Bichat, who can fairly be called the greatest genius among physiologists who are sensitive to this aspect of the biological approach, said: "Life is the totality of the forces which resist death."¹² If something of our experience can be reflected, can one day take on a stable meaning in this very difficult dimension, it is this precession produced by Freud in the form of the whirlwind of death, to the flanks of which life clings in order to avoid falling into it.

Because all that needs to be added, to make this function quite clear to anyone, is that it is sufficient, in order to avoid confusing the dead with the inanimate, to bend down amid inanimate nature and pick up the trace of what is a dead form – a fossil. That is enough to make you grasp that the presence in nature of what is dead is something other than the inanimate.

Is it so sure that these shells and detritus are a function of life? To say so is to resolve the problem rather too easily when the question is why life contorts itself like that.

As I came back to the question of the signifier, which I have already tackled by way of the trace,¹³ an ironic thought came to me, emerging suddenly from Plato's dialogues, of that slightly risqué imprint that Plato talks about¹⁴ – the marks left in the sand at the stadium by the bare backsides of the beloved, marks that the adoring lovers no doubt hastened towards in adoration and that it was seemly to erase. It occurred to me that they would have done better to leave it be. If the lovers had been less mesmerized by the object of their desire, they could have made good use of the imprint, taking it as a sketch of the curious line that I am going to talk about to you today. Such is the image of the blindness that every desire carries with it from being too keen.

So let's begin again from our line, which we have to take in the form in which it is given to us: closed and capable of reducing to nothing [nullifiable] – the line of the original zero of the effective history of logic. If we learn, by coming back to it now, that "nought" [nul] is the root of "all" [tous], then at least the experience will not have been in vain. We call this line the cut. It's a line (this is our starting point) that we must take, *a priori*, as closed. This is the essence of its signifying nature: nothing will ever be able to prove to us... nothing in

¹² Xavier Bichat, [Physiological Researches upon Life and Death](#) (T. Watkins, trans.) p.1.

¹³ Seminar of 24 January 1962 (above).

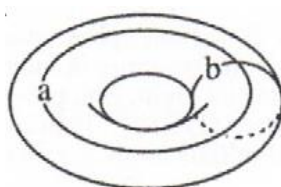
¹⁴ This reference cannot be found in Plato's dialogues. Roussan finds it in Aristophanes, [The Clouds](#), 972

experience can allow us to establish it as being the same line, because it's in the nature of each one of these circuits to establish itself as different.

It's precisely this that allows us to apprehend the real: its return¹⁵ being structurally different – always “another time”, – if there is resemblance between the times, there is a suggestion, a probability that the resemblance comes from the real. There is no other proper way of introducing the function of the similar [semblable]. But what I am giving you here is only an indication that needs to be taken further. It's something that, I believe, I have repeated to you on several occasions. So, having recalled it, if only in order not to have to come back to it again, I refer you to the work of a precocious genius who, like all precocious geniuses, died too soon. Jean Nicod has a passage in his *Geometry in the Sensible World* concerning the axiomatic line (it comes in the middle of the work, and perhaps some of you who are genuinely interested in our progress could take a look at it).¹⁶ It shows how evasion [escamotage] of the function of the signifying circle in this analysis of sensible experience is chimerical and leads the author, despite the incontestable interest of what he puts forward, to the paralogism, which you will not fail to discover there.

We begin by taking this closed line and we remember that the existence of the function of defined topological surfaces has overturned for you the deceptive self-evidence that the interior of the line is something univocal, because if you draw the line on a surface defined in a certain fashion – the torus, for example – it is apparent that, while it keeps its function of a cut, it cannot possibly perform the same function as on the surface that you will allow me without further ado to call “fundamental”, that of the sphere; the function, for example, of defining a strip that can be reduced to nothing.

For those who are here for the first time, this means a closed line drawn here [a, in the figure below], or again this one here [b] – lines that can in no way be reduced to zero, which is to say that that the function of the cut that they introduce in the surface is something that is always problematic.



I think that what is at issue regarding the signifier is this reciprocal link, whereby, as I showed you last time with a Moebius surface (the cute little twisted ear that I have given you in several examples), a median cut in its field transforms it into a different surface which is

¹⁵ Lacan means the return of the circuit.

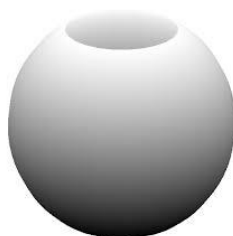
¹⁶ Jean Nicod, “Geometry in the Sensible World” in *Geometry and Induction* (J. Bell, trans.). Lacan may be referring to Part 3, Chapter 1 (p. 77, *et seq.*) of Nicod’s work, where he focuses closely on the concept of the straight line.

no longer a Moebius surface: if it is right that the Moebius surface can be said to have only one face, as to which I have more than one reservation, the surface that results from the cut unambiguously has two faces.

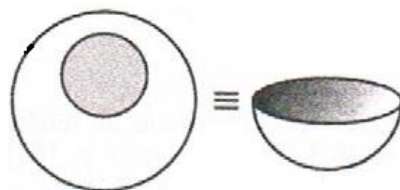
What we need to do, coming from this angle of questioning the effects of desire by way of the signifier, is to see how the field of the cut, the gap of the cut, by organising itself into a surface, causes the emergence of the different forms in which the moments of our experience of desire can be ordered. There is the torus...

When I tell you that it's by starting from the cut that the forms of surface, which are at issue for us in our experience, are organised in their ability to bring into the world the effect of the signifier, I illustrate the point, and not for the first time.

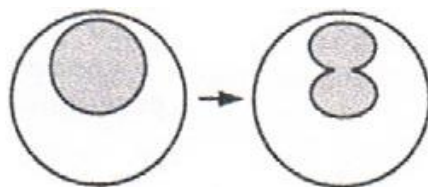
Here is the sphere, here is our central cut, treated in a way which is the inverse of the Euler circle. What interests us isn't the piece which is necessarily detached by the closed line on the sphere, but the cut thus produced and, if you like, the actual hole. It's quite clear that everything we are going to find at the end must already be given, in other words that "a hole" already has all of its meaning, a meaning made particularly obvious by the fact of our having recourse to the sphere. A hole made here makes the inside and the outside communicate with one another.



There is only one problem: it's that, once the hole has been made, there's no longer either an inside or an outside, as is obvious from the fact that it is the easiest thing in the world to turn this sphere with a hole inside-out. It's the universal, primordial, creation – that of the eternal potter. There is nothing easier than to turn a bowl, a skullcap inside-out.

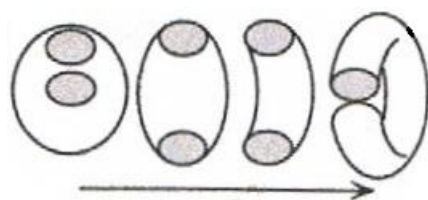


So the hole wouldn't have much meaning for us if there wasn't something else to support this fundamental intuition, something that I think you already know about, namely that a hole, a cut can have avatars, and the first possible avatar is that two points of its edge are drawn together: one of the first possibilities for a hole is that of becoming two holes.

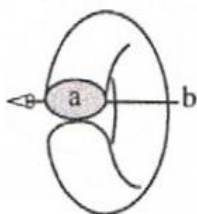


Some people have said to me: “Why don’t you refer your images to embryology?” Believe me, they are never very far away from it. I say that to you now, but it could only ever be an alibi, because for me to refer to embryology here would be to submit to the mysterious power of life, whereby, for some unknown reason, life can only come into the world by way of – through the mediation of – this globule, this sphere which multiplies, is depressed, is invaginated, swallows itself, and then peculiarly (at least up to the level of the Batrachia), by way of the blastopore, namely this something which isn’t a hole in the sphere, but a piece of the sphere that has gone inside the other piece... There are enough doctors here who have done a bit of elementary embryology and can remember this something which begins to divide itself in two to initiate the curious organ that is called the neurenteric canal: something that is completely unjustifiable by any manifest function in the organism, a communication of the inside of the neural tube with the digestive tube that seems to be a baroque peculiarity of development and which is promptly reabsorbed – it doesn’t crop up again in subsequent development. But perhaps these things would take a new turn if they were taken as a metabolism, a metamorphosis guided by elements of structure whose presence and whose homogeneity with the dimension in which we are operating, in the guise of the signifier, are the term of what is a sort of pre-vital isolation of the trace of something, which could perhaps lead us to formalisations that might prove fruitful, even in the organisation of biological experience.

Be that as it may, these two isolated holes on the surface of the sphere, being connected to one another – stretched, lengthened and then joined – give us the torus.



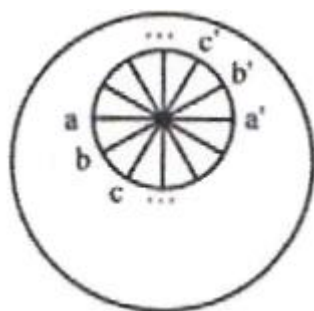
This isn’t anything new. I just wanted to clearly articulate the result for you. The first result is that we have something that supports our intuition of the torus – as a macaroni which joins up with itself, which bites its own tail. This is what is most exemplary in the function of the hole. There’s a hole in the middle of the macaroni and there’s a “current of air” passing through the hoop that it forms. There’s a hole that makes the interior communicate with the interior, and then there’s another, even more formidable, which puts a hole at the heart of the surface – a hole, which at the same time is completely external. We get an image of drilling, because what we are calling a hole is this:



It is this corridor drilled into a thickness [“a” in the figure above], a fundamental image, which has never been sufficiently distinguished as regards the geometry in the sensible world.¹⁷ And then the other hole [“b”], which is the central hole of the surface – the one that I call the “current-of-air” hole.

What I put forward as a way of posing our problems is that, if we define [nous cernons] this irreducible current-of-air hole with a cut, it is there that the objet *a* is positioned, in the effects of the signifying function, which is to say that the object is missed [raté], because there couldn’t in any case be anything there but the outline [contour] of the object, with all the meanings that you can give to the word “outline”.

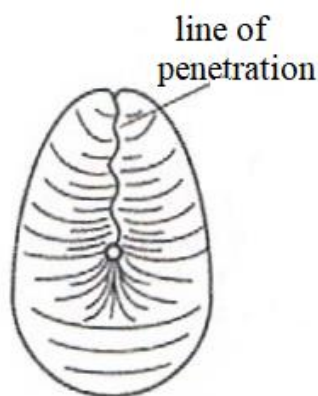
Another possibility presents itself, which brings to life and gives its interest to the structuring and structural comparison of these surfaces, namely that the cut, on a surface, can be articulated differently. We can take the hole on the surface of the sphere and enounce, formulate, suppose that each point be connected to its antipodal point.



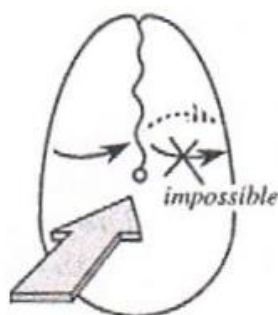
So, without in any way being divided, the gap organises itself into a surface in a way which exhausts it completely without the medium of this intermediate division.¹⁸ I showed you the last time and I will show you again: this gives us the surface called the “mitre” or “cross-cap”, regarding which you must remember that the image of the cross-cap that I gave you last time is really only a distorted image, because the semblance for anyone who reflects on it for the first time – what creates an obstacle – concerns this line of apparent penetration of the surface through itself, which is necessary in order to represent it in our space. I show it here as a wavy line to indicate that it should be considered as vacillating, not as fixed.

¹⁷ The title of Jean Nicod’s book (see above, p. 306).

¹⁸ i.e., without the division of the hole into two holes, which has been discussed in the previous paragraphs.



In other words, we should never take account of whatever walks about here [left-side arrow in the figure below], on one side, on the exterior of the surface, which would be unable pass to the exterior of what is on the other side, because there is no real meeting,¹⁹ but that, on the contrary, could only pass to the other side on the interior, so to the other face, where by “other” I mean other with respect to the observer placed here.²⁰



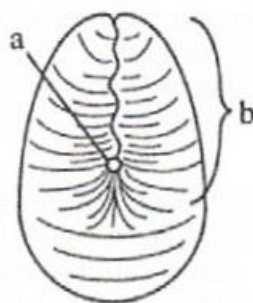
To represent things this way as regards this form of surface reflects a certain incapacity of intuitive forms in three dimensions to support an image that really takes account of the continuity obtained by this new surface called the “cross-cap”. What, in other words, does this surface support? I am advancing initial theses, which will then give meaning to the use that I propose to make of these different forms. So we will call this surface, not “the hole” – because, as you see, there is at least one hole that it spirits away [escamote], that completely disappears in its form, – but “the place of the hole”.

This surface thus structured is particularly well suited to make us see the function of this most ungraspable element, which is called “desire” as such, in other words – lack.

¹⁹ Roussan has “meeting of the faces”.

²⁰ The arrow in the diagram below shows the direction in which the observer “placed here” would be looking at the cross-cap. What Lacan seems to mean in this paragraph is that there is no, so to speak, clever way of thinking about the cross-cap in 3D, whereby whatever “walks about” on the exterior of the left front side (as seen by the putative observer) can’t move across to the exterior of the right front side (marked “impossible” for that reason), but *can* pass to the interior of the “other face” (the interior of the rear face of the right side of the cross-cap, if considered from where the observer is positioned). The diagram presents this “clever” 3D visualisation, which is illusory because the cross-cap simply cannot be represented in 3D.

Despite the appearance that makes all these points – we will call them, if you want, “antipodal”²¹ – into equivalent points, they cannot, nevertheless, function in such antipodal equivalence for this surface which fills the gap unless there are two privileged points.



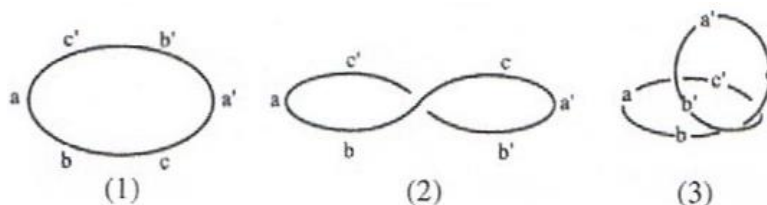
They are represented here by this little ring [“a” in the figure above].²² One of my perspicacious listeners already asked me: “What do you mean to represent by this little ring?” It is certainly by no means something equivalent to the central hole of the torus because, whatever level of this privileged point you place yourself at, everything that gets exchanged between one side and the other of the figure will pass through this false decussation [b], this chiasma or crossing-point which makes the structure.²³

Nevertheless, what is indicated by the form that is thus encircled

²¹ i.e., the points marked *a*, *b*, *c* in the figure on p. 309 above.

²² i.e., both of the privileged points are represented by the ring marked “a”.

²³ The topological point Lacan is making in these two paragraphs becomes clearer in the seminars that follow, up to the end of June (particularly the seminar of 6 June 1962, below, pp. 344-346), but the main idea can be quickly grasped thanks to a diagram, which Roussan provides in a footnote to the above figure (*L'identification*, p. 238) with “antipodean points” (*a*, *a'*, *b*, *b'* etc.) on the edge of a hole in a sphere. Roussan uses the diagram to show how the joining of these antipodean points on the perimeter of the hole might be carried out to produce the cross-cap:

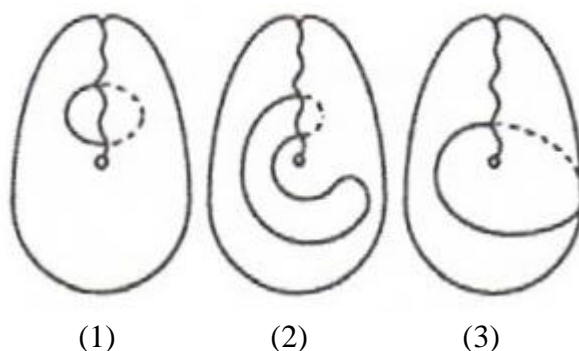


The “two privileged points” are to be thought of as two diametrically opposite (antipodean) points on the edge of the circle, between *c* and *b* and between *c'* and *b'*, respectively, in (1), which are brought together at a crossover in (2) by squeezing them together at the middle of the hole and folding the right-hand part of the hole through 180°. All of the antipodean points on the perimeter can then be laid onto each other, as shown in (3). However, the impression that we have thus made the cross-cap visualisable in 3D is banished when we remember that there is no justification for a 180° twist at the junction of a particular pair of antipodean points: each and every one of the points on the circle goes to meet its antipode head-on (without any twist), and the twist is an unthinkable cumulative effect of all these head-on meetings. This is what Lacan is gesturing at when he says: “whatever level of this privileged point you place yourself at, everything that gets exchanged between one side and the other of the figure will pass through this false decussation, this chiasma or crossing-point [the “line of penetration”] which makes the structure.”



is nothing other than the possibility underneath this point (if it can be put like that) of passing from one exterior surface to the other.

It is also the necessity of indicating that if you take a non-privileged circle on this surface [figure 1 below], a reducible circle, and make it slide, if you extract it from its appearance of semi-occultation, beyond the apparent line here of re-crossing and of penetration, and make it extend and develop like this towards the lower half of the figure [figure 2], and thus isolate itself in an amoeba-like form on the exterior of the figure, the circle will always have to turn around something here, which doesn't allow it to be transformed into what would be its other form – the privileged form of a circle that goes right around the privileged point and that will have to be depicted on the surface in question like this [figure 3].

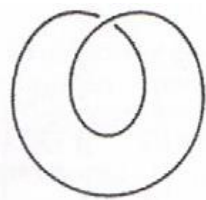


This other form cannot possibly be equivalent to the untransformed circle, because this other form²⁴ goes around the privileged point, the structural point, around which the whole structure of the surface thus defined is supported. This point that is at once double and single, around which the very possibility of the crossed structure [structure entrecroisée] of the cross-cap is supported, symbolises for us what can introduce any object *a* at the place of the hole.

We know the functions and the nature of this privileged point. It is the phallus, because it is through the phallus as operator that an object *a* can be put at the actual place where, in

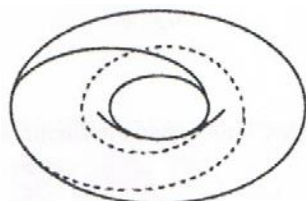
²⁴ I expand the French for the sake of understanding. The French has: “Celle-ci, en effet, d’aucune façon ne saurait lui être équivalente, puisque cette forme...” (“The latter cannot possibly be equivalent to it because this form...”). Gender agreement and context show what refers to what.

another structure,²⁵ we only grasp its outline. This is the exemplary value of the structure of the cross-cap that I am trying to articulate for you: the place of the hole is the point of a special structure that needs to be distinguished from other forms of point. From this one, for example,



defined by the recutting [recouplement] of a cut by itself, the first possible form to be given to my interior eight. We cut something on a sheet of paper, for example, and a point will be defined by the fact that the cut retraverses the place already cut. We know that this is in no way necessary in order for the cut to have a completely definable action on the surface and to introduce to it the change that we need as a support for depicting certain effects of the signifier.

If we take a torus and cut it like this [figure below], we get the form that we have drawn here:²⁶



You can see that, as it goes round the other side of the torus, this cut doesn't ever join up with itself.²⁷ Try it on an old inner tube, you will see what you get: you get a continuous surface, so organised that it turns over twice on itself before joining up with itself. If it only turned over on itself once, it would be a Moebius surface. Because it turns over twice, it's a surface with two faces, which isn't identical to the one I showed you the other day after section of the Moebius surface,²⁸ because that one turns over three times and once differently again.

But what's interesting is to see what exactly this privileged point²⁹ is, which intervenes and specifies the strip of surface where it stays irreducibly, lending to it³⁰ the particular accent

²⁵ Roussan inserts in brackets “[i.e., the torus]”.

²⁶ Lacan's phrasing suggests that he made two drawings here, one of the torus with the line of the cut marked (I reproduce it from Roussan) and another showing the surface produced by the cut (what Lacan describes in the next paragraph). Roussan reports such a second drawing in the notes of one listener, but says that it does not show the produced surface correctly and cites other reasons for thinking that it is not by Lacan.

²⁷ Lacan must mean that it does not ever cross itself.

²⁸ Above, p. 298, seminar of 16 May 1962.

²⁹ Lacan returns to the point (“point-hole” as he will call it in the coming seminars) on the cross-cap.

that allows it at the same time to designate for us the function by which an object, which has always been there, is – even before the reflections, the appearances that we have had from it in the form of images, come into play – the object of desire.

This object is only to be taken in the effects for us of the function of the signifier, and yet we can't fail to rediscover in it its eternal destination. It is the only object that is absolutely autonomous, primordial with respect to the subject, decisive with respect to the subject, to such an extent that my relationship to this object is in a way to be inverted. So that while, in the phantasy, the subject imagines himself – by the effect of what constitutes him as subject, namely the effect of the signifier, through a mirage that parallels the imagination of the mirror stage on all points, although it is of a different order – to be the support of the object which fills the lack, the hole of the Other (this is what the phantasy is), one can say by inversion that the whole cut of the subject, that in the world which constitutes him as separate, as rejected, is imposed on him by a determination which is no longer subjective (going from the subject towards the object), but objective (going from the object towards the subject), is imposed on him by the object *a*, but just to the extent that, at the heart of this object *a* there is this central point – this whirlwind point by which the object emerges from beyond the imaginary, idealist, subject-object knot that has always represented an impasse for thought, – the central point, which, from this beyond, puts the object forward as object of desire.

That is what we will pursue next time.

³⁰ It is unclear whether this refers back to the “point” or the “strip of surface” (“lambeau de surface”).

30 May 1962

The teaching in which I guide you is governed by the paths of our experience. It may appear excessive, annoying even, that these paths cause my teaching to take the form of detours that are, let's say, offbeat and that may, for that reason, appear to be exorbitant. I spare you them as much as I can. I mean to say that I make a reduction of these necessary paths through examples that are tied down, concise, and as close as possible to our experience.

But you shouldn't be surprised that our exposition implicates such domains as (this year, for example) topology, since the paths we have to follow put in question an order as fundamental as the most radical constitution of the subject as such and, for that reason, involve everything that one might call a certain "revision of science".

For example, this radical supposition, which is ours and which places the subject, as to his constitution, in a dependency, a secondary position with respect to the signifier – which makes the subject as such an effect of the signifier, – cannot fail to rebound from our experience, however incarnated it may be, into what are apparently the most abstract domains of thought. And I don't believe that it is an exaggeration to say that what we are elaborating here could interest the mathematician in the highest degree.

For example, it was recently realised, due, I believe, to looking close-up at a theory which, for the mathematician, at one time at least, posed great problems, namely the theory of transfinite numbers, whose impasses certainly antedate by far¹ our highlighting of the function of the unary stroke, that the theory of transfinite numbers is grounded on a return, a grasping of the origin of counting before number, a grasping of that which precedes any counting and which includes and supports it, namely bi-univocal correspondence – stroke for stroke.

Such detours could serve as a way for me to confirm the breadth, the infinite reach [l'infini] and the fecundity of what, for us, is an absolutely necessary construction on the basis of our experience. But I spare you those detours.

If it's true that this is how things are, that analytic experience leads us via what are the incarnated effects of the primacy of the signifier on the subject (of course, these effects have always been there; what's new is our having just become aware of them), then it is inevitable that any attempt to reduce the dimensions of our experience to the pre-constituted viewpoint of what is called "psychological science" (a science which, no one can deny or fail to recognise, has been built on premises that neglect, because they elude, this fundamental articulation that we are accenting this year in an even more explicit, tight, tied-down manner; a science which retains as its hypotheses various points of opacity, eluded points, major

¹ "antécédent grandement" in Typescript 1. Roussan has "s'éclaircit grandement de" ("are greatly illuminated by").

points of unreality) must culminate in formulations that are objectively deceitful (I don't say misleading, I say deceitful, falsified) and must determine something which always manifests itself in the communication of what deserves to be called an incarnate deceit.

I say to you: the signifier determines the subject, because, necessarily, this is what psychoanalytic experience means. But let's follow the consequences of these necessary premises.

The signifier determines the subject. The subject takes on a structure from the signifier – the structure that I have tried to demonstrate to you, to show you, using the support of the graph. This year in connection with identification, which focuses our experience precisely on the structure of the subject, I am trying to make you follow more intimately this link of the signifier with subjective structure.² What I am leading you to in these topological formulae, which, as you have already sensed, are not purely and simply the intuitive reference to which the practice of geometry has accustomed us, is to consider that these surfaces are structures and I have told you that they are all structurally present at every one of their points, provided that we use this word “point” without making the reservation that I am going to talk about today.

What I have brought you to by what I have said before, and what now has to be presented in its unity, is that the signifier is a cut, and that the subject and its structure have to be made to depend on this cut. This is made possible by the fact, which I ask you to accept and to follow me for a while, that the subject has the structure of a surface, topologically defined. What has to be grasped, therefore (and it isn't difficult) is how the cut engenders the surface.

This is what I began to exemplify for you when I launched my Moebius surfaces in your direction, like so many little kites in a game, and showed that if you cut these surfaces in a certain way they become other surfaces, topologically defined and materially graspable as changed, because, by the very fact of this median cut that you make, they are no longer Moebius surfaces, but a band – twisted a little on itself, but well and truly a band, what gets called a “band”, like this belt that I have around my waist.

That should give you the idea of the possibility of the conception of this engenderment, which is, in a way, inverted in comparison with what initially appears evident. You might think that it's the surface that makes the cut possible, but I tell you, from the topological perspective, that we can conceive the cut as engendering the surface. And this is very important because this, perhaps, is where we will finally be able to grasp the entrance point, the point of insertion of the signifier into the real; to see, in human praxis, that it is because the real presents to us what I might call “natural surfaces” that the signifier can enter there.

² In the last two sentences I follow Roussan who cites the authority of three listeners for the reference to the graph (of desire), which is not there in Typescript 1. The meaning of the two versions is otherwise much the same, despite different punctuation.

Of course, one can amuse oneself by bringing about this genesis through what are called “concrete actions”, in order to remind us that man cuts and that (God knows) our experience is certainly one where the importance of this possibility of cutting with a pair of scissors has been brought into prominence. One of the base images of the first analytic metaphors – the two little thumbs which are cut off with a snip of the scissors – ensures that we don’t neglect that which is concrete and practical, namely the fact that man is an animal who extends himself by means of tools, and notably by a pair of scissors.

One might amuse oneself by redoing a natural history: what happens with animals that have a pair of scissors in the natural state?

That is not where I am leading you to, and with good reason. The formula “man cuts” [“l’homme coupe”] leads us rather to its semantic echoes: that he betrays himself [qu’il se coupe], as one says; that he tries to put a stop to it [qu’il essaye d’y couper]. All of this can be gathered around the fundamental formula of castration: “it’ll be snipped!” [on t’la coupe!]

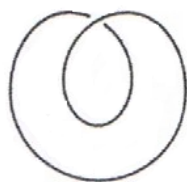
Initially for us, as an effect of the signifier, in the phonematic analysis of language, the cut was this temporal, or, to be more exact, successive line of signifiers, which I have encouraged you to call “the signifying chain” [la chaîne signifiante]. But what if I now ask you to consider the line itself as an original cut?

There were these interruptions, these individualisations, these segments of the line that were called (if you wish, on occasion) phonemes, which were supposed, as separate from the one that precedes and the one that follows, to make an at least punctually interrupted chain. This was the “geometry in the sensible world” regarding which, last time, I encouraged you to read Jean Nicod and his work of that name,³ where you will see in a central chapter the importance of the analysis of the line as defined, I might say, by its intrinsic properties, and you will see how much it would have helped him if he had given radical prominence to the function of the cut in the theoretical elaboration that he is forced to build with the greatest difficulty and with contradictions which are nothing other than the neglect of this radical function.

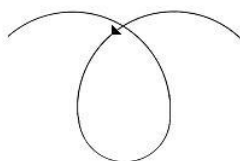
If the line itself is a cut, each one of its elements will then be a section of the cut, and that is what introduces this vital element [élément vif] (if I can call it like that) of the signifier which I have called the “interior eight” [“huit intérieur”],⁴

³ See above, p. 306, seminar of 23 May 1962.

⁴ Typescript 1 has, quite differently: “and this is what introduces this empty element [élément vide] (if I can call it that) of the signifier which I have called the “interior emptiness” [“vide intérieur”]”. The similarity in sound between “vide” and both “vif” and “huit” makes mishearing by the stenographer very possible and I follow the Roussan version, which makes better sense in the context.



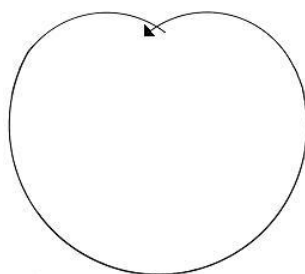
namely the loop [la boucle]. The line cuts itself.



What is the interest of this remark? The cut brought to bear on the real manifests there, in the real, what is its characteristic and function,⁵ and what it⁶ introduces into our dialectic – contrary to the general usage, by which the real is the diverse – is the original function I have always referred to when I say to you that the real is what introduces the same or, more exactly, that the real is what always returns to the same place.

What does that mean, if not that the section of the cut, in other words the signifier, being what we have said it is – always radically different from itself, “ $a \neq a$ ”, a not identical to a, – the only way of making the same appear is on the side of the real. In other words, if I can put it like that, the cut, at the level of a pure subject of the cut, can only know that it has closed, that it goes back through itself, because the real, as distinct from the signifier, is the same. In other words, only the real closes the cut.

A closed curve is the real revealed, but, as you see, the cut has, most radically, to cut itself, unless something already interrupts it. Immediately afterwards, the signifier takes this form,⁷

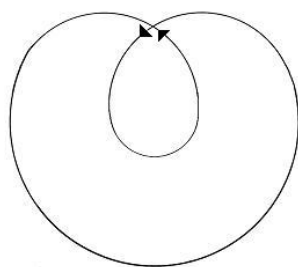


which is the cut properly speaking. The cut is a stroke that cuts itself, and it's only afterwards that it closes,⁸

⁵ i.e., (judging from the drift of this paragraph) what is the characteristic and function *of the real*.

⁶ The real (based on gender agreement of the pronoun).

⁷ I follow Typescript 1. Roussan has “Immediately afterwards the stroke, the signifier, takes this form”. I take the figure from Staferla. Roussan, instead, refers back to the complete interior eight (the last-but-one figure).



on the basis that, cutting itself, it has met the real, which alone permits what comes, respectively, under the first and then the second loop to be connoted as the same.

We find here the knot which gives us a recourse as regards what constituted the uncertainty, the vacillation of the whole identificatory construction (you can see the vacillation very well in Jean Nicod's articulation). That vacillation is as follows: do we have to wait for "the same" in order for the signifier to take shape, as has always been believed without dwelling sufficiently on the fundamental fact that, in order to engender the difference from what the signifier originally signifies, namely the one time, the very time – which, I assure you, cannot be repeated, but which always obliges the subject to rediscover it – that time requires, in order to achieve its signifying form, that the signifier repeat itself at least once, and this repetition is none other than the most radical form of the experience of demand.^{9,10}

What the signifier is, what it is incarnate, is all the times that demand is repeated. And, precisely, if it wasn't the case that demand is repeated in vain, there would be no signifier, because there would be no demand. If you had what demand encloses in its loop, there would be no necessity for demand. There is no necessity for demand if need is satisfied.

A humourist once exclaimed: "Gentlemen, long live Poland, because if there was no Poland there would be no Poles!"¹¹ Demand is the Poland of the signifier, so I would be tempted today to call the signifier a "Polish" signifier, parodying the accident of the theory of abstract spaces by which one of these spaces (there are more and more of them nowadays, and I don't think I need to interest you in them) is called the "Polish space". That will prevent you from calling it the "loop" [lacs], which could be a dangerous encouragement to the use that one of my fervent supporters recently saw fit to make of the term "Lacanism". I hope that this term, obviously tempting after my second death, will at least be spared me while I am alive.

⁸ Roussan has no figure here. I use the figure shown in Staferla.

⁹ Strictly, a question mark is required at the end of this sentence, but the distance from "do we have to..." makes it inappropriate.

¹⁰ Roussan puts two figures opposite this paragraph, citing the notes of Claude Conté. The first (labelled "the real returns") resembles the penultimate, "apple-like" figure in my text, except that the arrow is just short of intersecting its own line. The second (labelled "the sign repeating itself as distinct makes the sameness of the real appear") is the complete interior eight with an arrow just before the point where the line intersects itself a second time.

¹¹ Slightly misquoted from Alfred Jarry, *Ubu Roi* (P. Whittaker, trans.), p.78.

So what my Polish signifier is designed to illustrate is the relationship of the signifier to itself. It is designed to lead us to the relationship of the signifier to the subject, if it's right that the subject can be conceived of as its effect.

I already remarked that, apparently, there is only a signifier if every surface where it is inscribed is supposed to it.¹² This is imaged in a way by the whole of the Beaux Arts system, which illuminates something that introduces you to a questioning of architecture under an aspect that makes apparent why architecture is irreducibly *trompe-l'oeil* – perspective. There was a reason why, in a year whose preoccupations seem to me to have been very distant from aesthetics, I also placed emphasis on anamorphosis;¹³ that is to say (for those who weren't here before) the use of the vanishing point of a surface to make an image appear which is unrecognisable when unfolded,¹⁴ but which gathers itself together and imposes itself from a certain viewpoint. This singular ambiguity regarding that which appears by its nature to be able to attach itself to depths and to volumes,¹⁵ to a certain completeness which, in the event, is always revealed as essentially subject to the interplay of planes and of surfaces, is something as important and interesting as seeing also what is absent from it.¹⁶ Namely all sorts of things that the actual use of extension offers us: knots, for example, that one can easily imagine being implemented in an underground architecture which, perhaps, will come about in the fullness of time.

It is clear though that no architecture has ever dreamt of composing itself around an arrangement of elements, of rooms and communications, even of corridors, as something which would make knots inside itself. But, after all, why not? This is why our remark, that there is no signifier unless a surface is supposed for it,¹⁷ is reversed in our synthesis which seeks its most radical knot in the fact that the cut actually determines, engenders the surface, and gives to it and to its varieties their constitutive reason.

This is how we can grasp and homologise this first relationship of demand to the constitution of the subject, where these repetitions, these returns in the form of the torus (loops that iterate by going around what is represented to us in the imagined space of the torus as its thickness)...

¹² I follow Roussan who has “il n'y a de signifiant, que toute surface où il s'inscrit lui étant supposée”. The text in Typescript 1 is subtly different: “il n'y a que signifiant, toute surface où il s'inscrit lui étant supposée”, which might be translated “there is only signifier, every surface where it is inscribed being supposed to it”. Roussan's version makes more sense in the context of Lacan's argument and matches a repeat of the same formula (differently worded) a few paragraphs further on (see below, footnote 17). The earlier remark Lacan refers to is probably “the structures are all structurally present at every one of their points (above, p. 316).

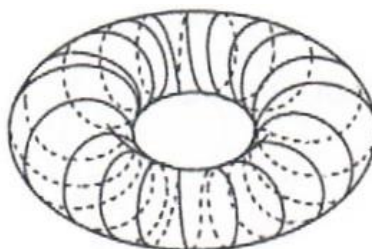
¹³ Lacan, *Seminar 7* (D. Porter, trans.), seminars of 3 February, 10 February 1960.

¹⁴ “déployé”. Lacan's meaning must be that when the image is unfolded directly in front of the viewer the anamorphosis image, which requires a side-angle view, cannot be seen.

¹⁵ i.e., “that which...” = architecture.

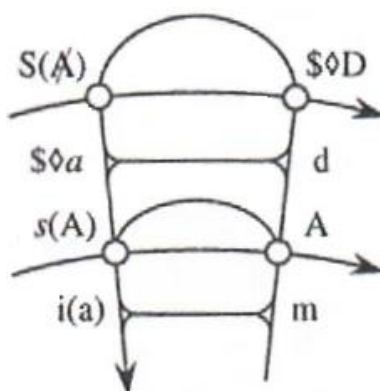
¹⁶ i.e., from architecture.

¹⁷ “qu'il n'y a de signifiant qu'une surface lui étant supposée” (see above, footnote 12).



this return to its origin allows us to structure, to exemplify in major fashion a certain type of relationship of the signifier to the subject, by which we can situate the opposition between the function D of demand and that of a , the object of desire. So we have a , the object of desire, and D , the scansion of demand.

You will have noticed that in my graph there are the following symbols: “ $s(A)$ ”, “ A ”; then on the upper storey “ $S(A)$ ”, “ $\$ \diamond D$ ” [“ $\$ \diamond D$ ” in the figure below]; and on the two intermediate storeys there are “ $i(a)$ ”, “ m ”, and “ $\$ \diamond a$ ” [“ $\$ \diamond a$ ” in the figure below], which is the phantasy, and “ d ”.¹⁸



Nowhere do you see “ D ” connected with a . What does that translate? What does it reflect? What does it support? What it supports, firstly, is that, by contrast, you do see “ $\$ \diamond D$ ”, and you see that these elements of the treasury of the signifier at the saying storey [étage de l’énonciation]¹⁹ are what I teach you to recognise as what is called the *Trieb* – the drive.

This is how I formalise it for you. The first modification of the real into a subject under the effect of demand is the drive. And if, in the drive, there wasn’t already this effect of demand – this effect of the signifier – it²⁰ couldn’t articulate itself in such a manifestly grammatical schema.

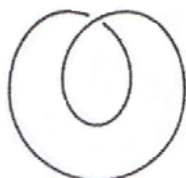
¹⁸ Roussan inserts a sketch of the graph here, which I reproduce. “ A ” is “Autre” (“Other”), “ a ” is “autre” (“other”), “ D ” is “demand”, “ d ” is “desire”, “ m ” is “ego” (“moi”), “ I ” is “image”, “ S ” is “signifier”, “ s ” is “signified”.

¹⁹ The upper storey.

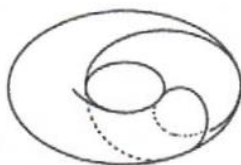
²⁰ The drive.

I allude expressly to what I suppose everyone here is accustomed to from my previous analyses; I refer others to the article *Triebe und Triebchicksale*,²¹ which has been bizarrely translated here as “Avatars des pulsions”,²² no doubt through a sort of confused reference to the effects that the reading of such a text produces on the first obtusion of the psychological reference.

You see the application of the signifier, which today, to amuse ourselves, we are calling the “Polish signifier”,



to the surface of the torus, here:²³



This is the simplest form of what can be produced in an infinitely enriched fashion by a succession of spooled coils – like the coils on a dynamo, – in a repetition that makes the circuit of the central hole. But this circuit is also made in the simplest form, as you see it drawn here. I emphasise – this cut is the simple cut that doesn’t cut itself. To give you an image of this in real space (the one you can visualise): you see it up to here on the surface that is presented to you – the side of the torus facing towards you, – then it disappears on the other side (that’s why I use a dotted line) before coming back on this side [see the last figure].

A cut like that doesn’t capture [ne saisit], if I can say it like that, anything at all. Try it on an inner tube and see what you get: the tube is opened out in a particular way, transformed into a surface twisted twice on itself, but by no means cut in two. It makes graspable, as I might say, in a way that is signifying and pre-conceptual, but by no means without characterising in its way a certain capture, something that is radical in the flight, so to speak, the absence, at the level of demand, of any access of the order of capture in respect of its object. We have

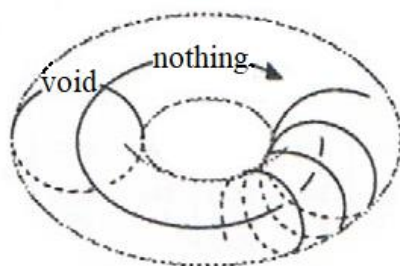
²¹ *Standard Edition 14*, pp. 109-140 (*Instincts and Their Vicissitudes*).

²² “Avatars of the drives” (“here” = in France).

²³ There is disagreement between Roussan and Staferla as to what Lacan drew here. Roussan shows a line that passes twice around the central hole of the torus and once around its thickness, while the line in Staferla passes once around the central hole and twice around the thickness. I follow Staferla because twice around the thickness is what Lacan needs in order to illustrate demand (see the next-but-one paragraph beginning “A cut like that...”) and because it is definitely a line of the second sort that Lacan means below (p. 326) when he refers to “the repeated curve whose function I showed you earlier”.

defined demand by the fact that it repeats itself and that it only repeats itself as a function of the internal void that it circumscribes, this void which sustains and constitutes it, and which does not involve (I point out to you in passing) any play of an ethical or pleasantly pessimistic kind, as if there were something worse, beyond what is ordinary for the subject. It's just a logical necessity, as simple as ABC, so to speak. There's no graspable satisfaction for demand, whether on the side of the subject or of the object. Simply, in order for demand to be demand – for it to be repeated as signifier – it has to be disappointed. If it wasn't, there would be no support for demand.

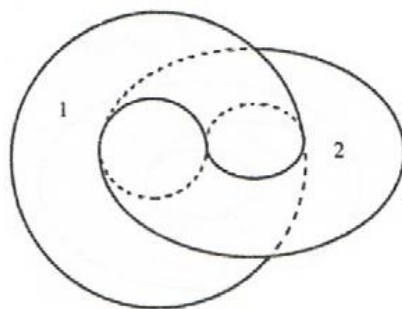
But this void is different from what is in question as regards *a*, the object of desire. The becoming [avènement] constituted by the repetition of demand,²⁴ the metonymic becoming, what slides and is evoked by the very sliding of the repetition of demand, – the object of desire, *a* – can by no means be evoked in the void circumscribed here by the loop of demand. The object *a* is to be situated in this hole – the nothing where the object of desire is called to becoming [est appelé à l'avènement] – that we will call the “fundamental nothing” in order to distinguish it from the void of demand.



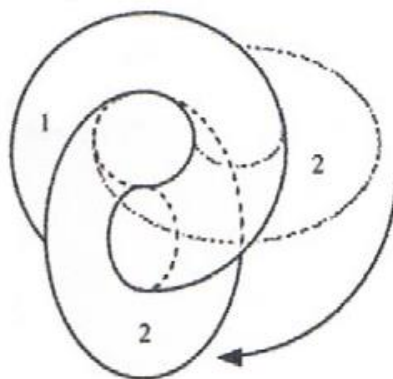
What we need to formalise with the elements that I bring you is what it is that allows us to locate in the phantasy the relationship of the subject as $\$$, the subject informed by demand, to this *a*, when at this level of the signifying structure that I am showing you in the torus, where the cut creates the structure in this form, this relationship is an inverse relationship: the void that sustains demand isn't the nothing of the object that demand circumscribes as object of desire. This is what the reference to the torus is meant to illustrate for you.

If that was all you could get from it, it would be a lot of effort for not much result. But, as you will see, there are a lot of other things to be got from it. Going quickly and, of course, without making you go through the different steps of the topological deduction that show you the internal necessity which determines the construction that I am going to present to you now, I am going to show you that the torus allows something (something you will surely be able to see) that the cross-cap doesn't allow. I think that even those who are the least given to flights of the imagination can see, through these topological windings, what is involved.

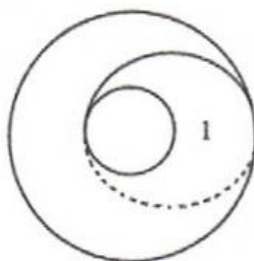
²⁴ Typescript 1 has only “by repetition”.



Metaphorically at least,²⁵ the term “chain”, which implies concatenation has entered into the language sufficiently for us not to have to dwell on it. The torus, by its topological structure, implies what we can call a “complement” – another torus that can concatenate with it. Let’s suppose that they fully conform to what I ask you to conceptualise in the usage of these surfaces, namely that they are not metric, that they are not rigid but made of rubber. If you take one of these coits [anneaux], with which one plays the game of that name, you will be able to see that if you grasp it by its thickness and hold it firmly, and if you make the body of what remains free turn on itself,



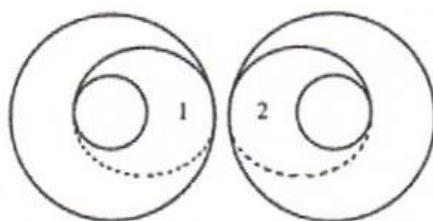
by twisting it onto itself like this, as if you were handling an incurved bracelet, you will make it come back to its first position without the twist being, in a way, inscribed in its substance. It will simply have come back to its primitive point. You can imagine that by twisting one of these tori onto the other in this way, we would get a transfer-imprint [décalque] of anything that was already inscribed on the first (which we will call “1”). Suppose that what was inscribed on the first torus was this curve,



²⁵ Roussan makes these words a part of the previous sentence, qualifying “what is involved”.

which not only goes around the thickness of the torus and not only goes around the space of the hole but goes through it, which is the condition that enables it to go around both – the void and the nothing – at the same time (around both what is here in the thickness of the torus and what is here at the centre of the knot).²⁶

It can be proved (I spare you the proof, which would take a long time and require effort on your part) that what you get on the second torus will be a curve that is superimposable on the first curve, if you superimpose the two tori. What does that mean? First of all that they²⁷ might not be superimposable. Here are two curves:



They appear to be made in the same way, but they are, nevertheless, irreducibly non-superimposable. This implies that the torus, despite its symmetrical appearance, manifests, through the cut, one of those effects of torsion that enable what I will call “radical dissymmetry”, the presence of which in nature, as you know, poses a problem for any formalisation, and due to which snails have, in principle, a direction of their spiral such that those with the opposite direction are an extremely rare exception. A mass of phenomena are of that kind, up to and including chemical phenomena, which express themselves in what are called “polarisation effects”. So there are, structurally, surfaces whose dissymmetry is elective and which imply the importance of the direction of rotation – dextrogyral or levogyral. You will later see the importance of what that signifies.

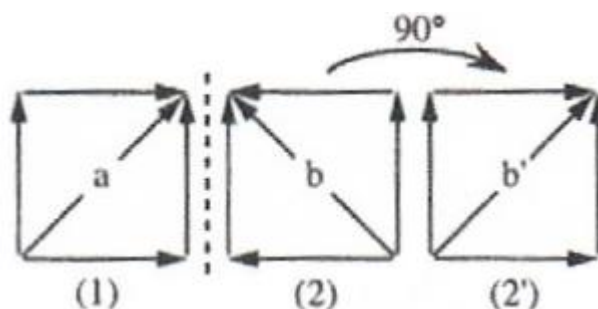
But the thing to note is that the phenomenon, so to speak, of the transposition by transfer-imprint [report par décalque] of what had been produced as combining, encompassing the loop of demand and the loop of the central object, this transposition onto the surface of the other torus, which (as you already sense) will enable us to symbolise the relationship of the subject to the big Other, will give two lines, which are superimposable with respect to the structure of the torus.

I apologise for making you follow a path which may appear arid, but I have to make you feel the steps we are taking in order to show you what we can extract from it.

²⁶ It is unclear why Lacan calls the torus a “knot”, unless he is thinking of the two tori “knotted together”.

²⁷ The curves (by gender agreement in the French).

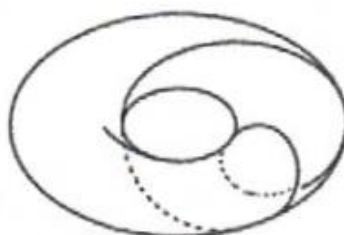
So what is the reason for this?²⁸ It can be very clearly seen at the level of what are called the fundamental polygons. This polygon being described thus [figure 1, below], you suppose its transfer-imprint opposite it, inscribed like this [figure 2]:



The line in question on the polygon is projected here ["a"], as an oblique line, and will be extended, on the other side, on the transfer-imprint, as inversed ["b"].

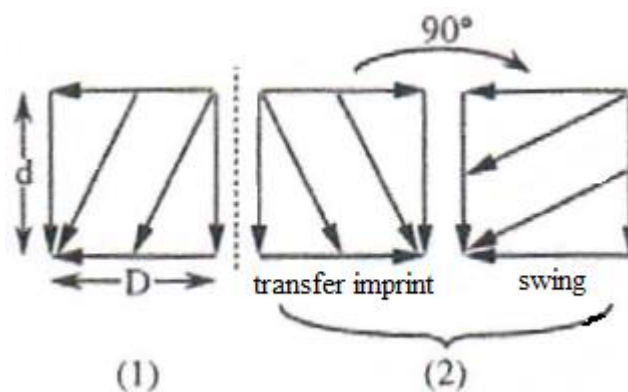
But you should notice that by making this fundamental polygon swing through 90° [above, figure 2 to figure 2'] you will exactly reproduce the figure of the first polygon, including the direction of the arrows, and that the oblique line will be in the same direction, this swing exactly representing the complementary composition of one of the tori with the other.

Now, rather than making this simple line on the torus, make instead the repeated curve whose function I showed you earlier.



Does the same thing happen? I will spare your hesitations. After the transfer and swing, what you will have here [figure 1 below] is symbolised like this [figure 2]:

²⁸ i.e., for the transfer-imprint producing two lines, which are superimposable with respect to the structure of the torus (last-but-one paragraph)



What does that mean? It means, in our signified transposition, in our experience, that the demand of the subject, by repeating itself here two times, inverts its relationships, D and a , demand and object, at the level of the Other. So the demand of the subject corresponds to the object a of the Other, and the object a of the subject becomes the demand of the Other.

This relationship of inversion is essentially the most radical form that we can give to what happens for the neurotic. What the neurotic seeks as object is the demand of the Other; what the neurotic demands, when he demands to grasp a , the ungraspable object of his desire, is a , the object of the Other.

The accent is placed differently in the two aspects of neurosis. For the obsessional, the accent is on the demand of the Other, taken as object of the obsessional's desire. For the hysteric, the accent is on the object of the Other, taken as support for the hysteric's demand. We will have to go into detail about what this implies because what is at stake is nothing less than access to the nature of this a . We will only grasp the nature of a , once we have structurally elucidated, along the same path, the relation of $\$$ to a – the topological support, therefore, that we can give to the phantasy.

To begin to illuminate this path we can say that a , the object of the phantasy, a , the object of desire, has no image and that the impasse of the neurotic's phantasy is that in his quest for a , the object of desire, he encounters (i) of a [$i(a)$] which is the origin of the whole dialectic that I have been introducing you to since the beginning of my teaching, namely that the specular image, the proper understanding of the specular image depends on the fact that the specular image is a mistake (I am astonished that nobody has thought of providing a gloss on the function that I give to it).

It's not just an illusion, a decoy [un leurre] of the captivating *Gestalt*, marked by aggressivity; it is fundamentally a mistake because the subject "me-stakes" himself in it [s'y me-connaiss],²⁹ if you permit the expression, the spelling of which pulls together the origin of the ego [moi] and its fundamental misrecognition [méconnaissance].

²⁹ A punning combination of "méconnaître" ("to misrecognise") and "me connaître" ("to know myself").

The subject mistakenly believes that he has his own image in front of him. If he knew how to see himself, if he knew the simple fact that there are only the most deformed relationships – by no means identifiable – between his right-hand and left-hand sides, he wouldn't dream of identifying himself with the image in the mirror.

When, thanks to the effects of the atomic bomb, we have subjects with a right ear as big as an elephant's, and a donkey's ear in place of the left one, perhaps then the relationship to the specular image will be better authenticated. But, in fact, we have a lot of other more accessible and more interesting conditions within our reach. Think of another animal – a crane, with an eye on each side of its skull. It seems a massive challenge to know how the planes of vision of two eyes arranged in that way can be combined. But there's no reason why this opens up greater difficulties than for us. Simply, for the crane to have view of its images,³⁰ we need to provide it with two mirrors, and it won't be in danger of confusing its left-side and right-side images.

This function of the specular image as having to do with misrecognition of what earlier on I called “the most radical dissymmetry”³¹ is what explains the function of the ego [moi] in the neurotic.

It is not because he has a more or less tangled ego that the neurotic is subjectively in the critical position that he is in. He is in this critical position because of a radical structuring possibility of identifying his demand with the object of the desire of the Other or of identifying his object with the demand of the Other. This possibility is a specific decoying form [forme proprement leurrante] of the effect of the signifier on the subject and there is a way out of it precisely when, in another reference of the cut, the subject as structured by the signifier can become the cut, a , itself (I will show you how the next time).

But this is just what the neurotic's phantasy doesn't have access to because he takes the wrong route in his search for its ways and paths. It's not that the neurotic isn't perfectly capable (like any subject worthy of the name) of distinguishing $i(a)$ from a , since they don't have remotely the same value. But what the neurotic tries to do, and the attempt is not unfounded, is to arrive at a via $i(a)$.

What the neurotic persists in doing and which is very tangible when analysing his phantasy is to get to a by destroying $i(a)$ or by holding it fast. I said first “by destroying it”, because it's the most exemplary approach: it's the phantasy of the obsessional whereby it takes the form of the sadist's phantasy, which it is not.

The sadist's phantasy, supposedly, is the destruction of the Other, as phenomenologist commentators do not fail to insist with all the excessive exaggeration which makes them

³⁰ Presumably self-images.

³¹ Above, p. 325.

forever ridiculous. And because the phenomenologists are not authentic sadists (good for them!) but simply have common-or-garden access to the perspectives of neurosis, they find all the appearances that are necessary to maintain such an explanation. But you only have to look at a sadist or Sadean text for this to be refuted: not only is the object of the sadist's phantasy not destroyed, but it is literally resistant to every ordeal, as I have emphasised for you on many occasions.

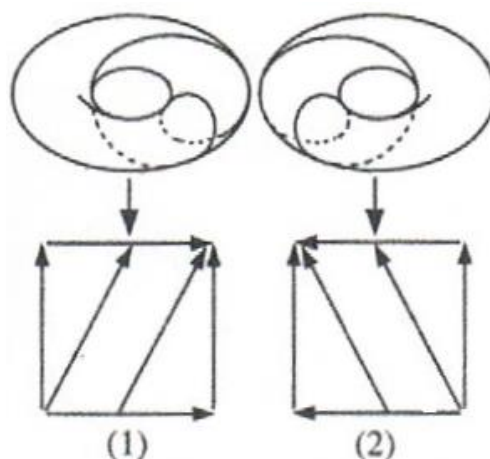
I don't want to get into what is involved in the Sadean phantasy, properly called, again now, though I will probably be able to do it next time. All that I want to bring out now is that what you could call the "impotence of the sadist's phantasy" in the case of the neurotic rests entirely on this: there really is a destructive aim in the phantasy of the obsessional, but the meaning of this destructive aim, as I have just analysed it, isn't the destruction of the other, the object of desire, but the destruction of the image of the other in the sense that I give to it here, namely that, precisely, it's not the image of the other because, as I will show you next time, the other, *a*, the object of desire, has no specular image.

That's a proposition that takes liberties [qui abuse un peu], I agree, but I believe that it's not just demonstrable but essential for understanding what happens in what I would call the aberration of the function of the phantasy, which occurs in the neurotic. The point is that, whether or not he destroys this image, *i(a)*, in a symbolic or in an imaginary fashion, that won't ever make him authenticate the object of his desire by any subjective cut, for the good reason that what he is aiming to either destroy or support, *i(a)*, is irrelevant, because of the fundamental dissymmetry between *i(a)*, the support, and *a* which does not tolerate it.³²

What the neurotic actually arrives at is the destruction of the desire of the Other and that is why he goes irremediably astray in the realisation of his own desire. The explanation is that what makes the neurotic symbolise something, as one might say, when he aims at the specular image in his phantasy, is what I am bringing out for you here: the dissymmetry that appears in the relationship of demand and the object in the subject as compared to demand and the object at the level of the Other.

This dissymmetry only appears once there is demand, properly speaking, namely already two circuits of the signifier, if I can put it like that, and it seems to express a dissymmetry of the same nature as that which is supported by the specular image. The dissymmetries have a nature which, as you see, is well illustrated topologically because the dissymmetry that we would call "specular" would be this [figure 1 below] with this [figure 2 below]:

³² "it" = *i(a)* (by gender agreement)



It is from this confusion by which two different dissymmetries serve for the subject as a support for what is the essential aim of the subject in his being – namely the cut of a , the true object of desire where the subject himself is realised, – it is in this misguided aim, snared [capté] by a structural element that depends on the effect of the signifier itself on the subject, that resides, not only the secret of the effects of neurosis, namely that what is called the narcissistic relationship, the relationship inscribed in the function of the ego [moi], is not the true support of neurosis, but what is important, in order for the subject to make the false analogy³³ (although getting close to and discovering this internal knot is invaluable for finding our bearings in neurotic effects), is that it is also the only reference which allows us to differentiate radically the structure of the neurotic from neighbouring structures, namely from that which is called “perverse” and that which is called “psychotic”.³⁴

³³ i.e. the false analogy between the two dissymmetries

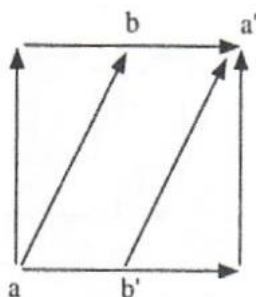
³⁴ The grammar of this long sentence is loose. Having used “not only”, Lacan changes his mind about the grammar and, instead of “but also”, uses “but what is important”.

6 June 1962

Today we are going to continue elaborating the function of what can be called the “signifier of the cut” or the “interior eight” or the “loop” or, again, what I called last time the “Polish signifier”. I would like to be able to give it a less significant name in order to try and get closer to that in it, which is purely signifying.

We advanced into this territory as it presented itself, namely with remarkable ambiguity, since, as pure line, there is nothing to indicate that it cuts itself; as the form, which I used to draw it, reminds you, while also leaving open the possibility of this cutting. In short, this signifier does not prejudge in any way regarding the space where it is situated. Nevertheless, in order to make something of it, we say that what we call the “surface”, in the sense in which we understand it here, is organised around this signifier of the cut.

I reminded you last time – because it wasn’t the first time I showed it to you – how the surface of the torus can be constructed around, and only around, a cut; a cut arranged, manipulated in the quadrilateral fashion, which the formula... expressed¹ by the sequence of an “a” and a “b”, then of an “a’ ” and a “b’ ”, our witnesses, respectively, because they can be referred to, stuck onto the two preceding ones² in an arrangement that we can qualify, in general, by two terms: “oriented”, on the one hand; “crossed” on the other hand.



I showed you what might be called the exemplary relation, at first sight metaphorical (the question precisely being whether this metaphor goes beyond, as one might say, the pure plane of metaphor)... the, as I say, metaphorical relation that it³ can assume of the relation of the subject to the Other if, exploring the structure of the torus, we see that we can make two tori, that are chained to one another, correspond in such a way that,⁴ to a certain privileged circle on one of the two tori, which, for analogous reasons, we made to correspond to the function of demand, namely this kind of circle that turns in the familiar manner of a reel, seeming to us specially apt to symbolise the repetition of demand that entails this sort of necessity of rejoining itself [nécessité de se boucler] (if its self-cutting is excluded) after numerous

¹ i.e., “a cut expressed...” (Lacan scraps the words “which the formula” and restarts the phrase).

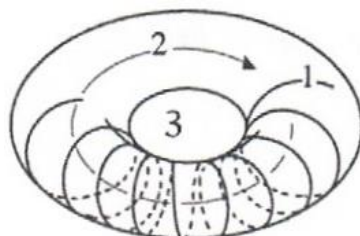
² i.e., “a’ ” and “b’ ” can be stuck onto “a” and “b”.

³ “il” (masculine pronoun) seems to refer to the torus (masculine noun).

⁴ Here begins a parenthesis that is never closed. Lacan resumes what he was saying about the two chained tori a few paragraphs further on (the paragraph beginning “You heard the last time...”).

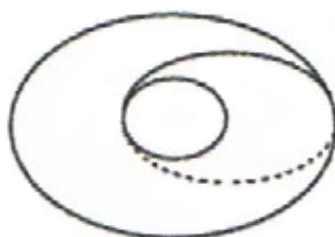
repetitions, multiplied as many times as we can imagine *ad libitum*, and that by rejoining itself [avoir fait le bouclage] it has drawn the circuit, the contour of a void other than the one that it marks, this other void being the one we first distinguished, defining this place of the nothing, the circuit of which, drawn for itself, serves for us to symbolise, in the form of the other circle topologically defined in the structure of the torus, the object of desire.

For those who weren't here (I know that some of you weren't) I illustrate what I have just said by this very simple form,



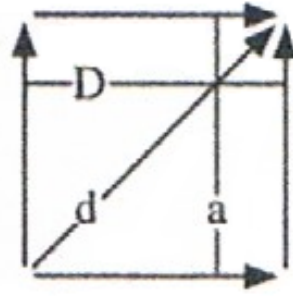
repeating that the looping of the reel of demand [1 in the figure above], which goes around the constitutive void of the torus is found to draw what serves to symbolise the circle of the object of desire, namely all the circles [2] that make the circuit of the central hole [3] of the ring. So there are two sorts of privileged circles on the torus: those which are inscribed around the central hole, and those which go through it.

A circle can bring together both properties and that is precisely what happens with the circle drawn like this:



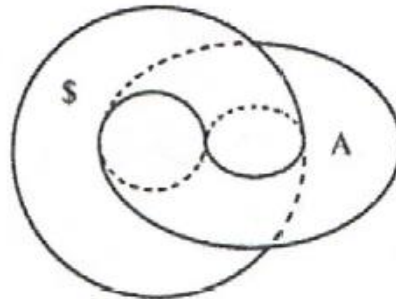
I use dots where it passes on the other side. On the quadrilateral surface of the fundamental polygon, which shows the structure of the torus in a clear and univocal fashion, using the same colours,⁵ I symbolise a circle called “circle of demand” [D in the figure below] from there to there, a circle called “circle a” from there to there, symbolising the object of desire, and this circle here that you can see on the first figure, which here is drawn in yellow, representing the oblique circle, which could just about [de rigueur] serve to symbolise for us desire itself as the cut of the subject [d in the figure].

⁵ I do not use colours in the reproduction of Lacan's figures (the letters are sufficient for identification).

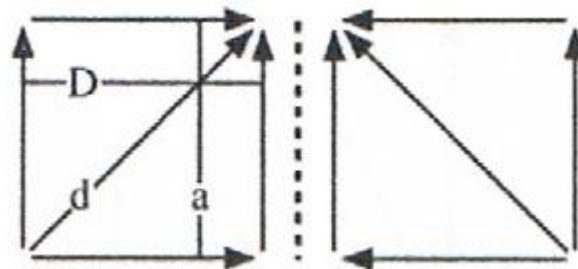


The expressive, symbolic value of the torus in this case is precisely to make us see the difficulty, to the extent that we are dealing with the surface of a torus and no other surface, of ordering this yellow circle of desire here ["d"] with this blue circle here ["a"] of the object of desire. Their relationship is all the more ambiguous because the object here isn't fixed, it's not determined by anything other than the place of a nothing, which, so to speak, prefigures its eventual place, but in no way allows the object to be situated. Such is the exemplary value of the torus.

You heard the last time that this exemplary value is completed by the fact that if we suppose the torus [$\$$ in the figure below] to be chained to, concatenated with another torus which would symbolise the Other [Autre, A in the figure],

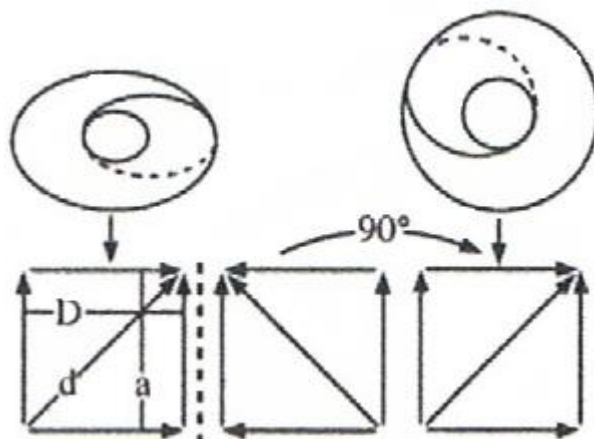


then we cannot fail to see that, by transfer-imprinting [d calquer] the circle of desire projected on the first torus onto the torus that is fitted into it and that symbolises the locus of the Other, we get a circle oriented in the same fashion (as I told you, this can be proved, but to save time I left you to find the proof yourselves).



As you will remember, you have represented, opposite this figure, which (if you don't find the thing too pernicky) I will redo here [left-hand polygon in the figure above], its transfer-

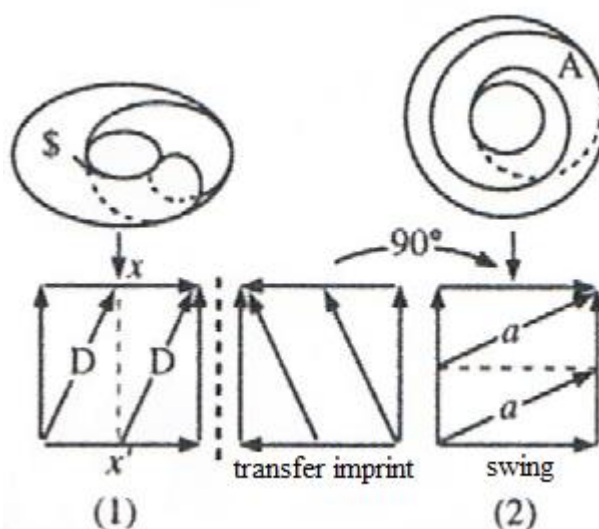
imprint, which is a symmetrical image [right-hand polygon in the figure above]. So we then have an oblique line, oriented from south to north, which we can call inverted – “specular” in the exact meaning of the word. But the 90° swing that corresponds to the interlocking at 90° of the two tori will restore the same obliqueness.



To put it differently, if you take these two tori (these experiments are very easy to do and they have all the value of an experiment) and make this transfer-imprint by rotating one torus inside the other the way I showed you last time... if you take the trace of these two circles, arbitrarily drawn on the one torus and thereby determined on the other torus, you will see, by subsequently comparing them, that they are exactly superimposable on one another on the circle which cuts them. Whereby this image proves apt to represent the formula that the desire of the subject is the desire of the Other.⁶

Nevertheless, as I told you, if instead of supposing this simple circle with the property – the particular topological definition – of both going round and going through the hole, we instead make it go through the hole twice and go round it once, so that it is represented on the fundamental polygon like this [figure 1 below], where these two points, x and x' , are equivalent, then we have something which, on the transfer-imprint, at the level of the Other, is presented by this formula [the polygon labelled “transfer imprint”].

⁶ Typescript 1 has “the desire of the subject is the desire of the object”, which is very implausible.



We can say, if you like, that going round twice, which corresponds to the function of the object and to the transferring twice of demand onto the transfer-imprint on the other torus, according to the equivalence formula that is precious for us in this case, symbolises the fact that in a certain form of subjective structure, the demand of the subject consists in the object of the Other and the object of the subject consists in the demand of the Other. They cross each other [Recoupement]. The superimposition of the two terms⁷ after the swing is then no longer possible. After the 90° swing the cut is this one here,⁸ which can't be superimposed on the preceding form.

What we see here is a correspondence that is already familiar to us, because what we can say about the relationship of the neurotic to the Other, as conditioning his structure down to its final term, is that it is precisely this crossed equivalence of the demand of the subject to the object of the Other and of the object of the subject to the demand of the Other.

One senses here how the realisation of the identity of two desires is in a sort of impasse or at least ambiguity. Obviously this formula is maximally abridged and it supposes a familiarity with these references, which presuppose the whole of our preceding discourse.

The question that then remains open and that we are going to tackle today is of a structure, which allows us to formalise in exemplary fashion – rich in resources, in suggestions – and gives us a support for what our research points towards, namely the function of the phantasy. To this end we can make use of the particular structure called the “cross-cap” or the “projective plane”, regarding which I have already given you enough pointers for you to have

⁷ i.e., desire of the subject and desire of the Other, which were superimposable when there was only a simple circle on the torus.

⁸ Lacan could have pointed here to either of the tori shown in the previous figure, drawing attention to the distinctness of its cut as compared with that on the other torus. Roussan and Staferla insert another figure here, similar to the last, except that the torus marked “A” (“Other”) of the last figure is marked “\$” and is on the left, while that marked “\$” is now “A” and is on the right, with corresponding changes to the polygons.

tried to explore the exemplary properties that it offers, even if it is not yet altogether familiar to you.

I must ask your pardon, therefore, for entering, from this point on, into an explanation which, for a time, will remain very closely bound to this object with its particular topological (not metrical, but topological) geometry, with respect to which I already, in passing, pointed out to you as best I could the idea you should have of it, so that eventually, after taking the trouble to follow me in what I am going to explain to you now, you will be rewarded by what it will offer us by way of a formula concerning the subjective organisation that interests us, exemplifying the authentic structure of desire in what might be called its “central organising function”.

Certainly, it is not without reluctance that I drag you once more into territory that you may find tiring. So I will refer for a moment to two terms which, in my experience, are closely related and which will give me the occasion, firstly (this is the first reference), to announce to you the imminent appearance of a translation made by an eminent person, who today honours us by his presence, namely Monsieur De Waelhens. He has just completed the translation (one cannot but be greatly astonished that it was not done before) of *Being and Time*, or at least he has completed the first part of the published volume, which, as you know, is only the first part of a project whose second part never came to fruition.⁹

There are two sections in this first part and the first section has already been translated by Monsieur De Waelhens, who did me the great honour, the favour, of sending it to me, so that I have been able to acquaint myself with this first part (still only the half), which, I must say, I have done with infinite pleasure, a pleasure that encourages me to permit myself a second pleasure – that of finally, in this place, saying something which has long been my opinion, but which I always refrained from professing in public because, given the reputation of this work (I don’t believe many people here have read it) my words might have sounded like a provocation. It is that there are few texts more clear – of a concrete and direct clarity and simplicity (I don’t know what qualifications I must invent to add an extra dimension to what is obvious) – than the texts of Heidegger. What Monsieur Sartre has done with them does, indeed, make rather difficult reading, but that takes nothing away from the fact that this text by Heidegger – I don’t say all of his texts – carries in itself a superabundance of clarity that makes it genuinely accessible, without any difficulty, to any intelligence that hasn’t been intoxicated by prior philosophical teaching.

I can say this to you now, because you will very soon have the opportunity, thanks to Monsieur De Waelhens’ translation, of seeing how true it is.

⁹ Heidegger completed and published only two sections of the first volume of what he had intended to be a work in two volumes, each consisting of three sections. Lacan here uses the same word (“part”) for the two intended volumes and for their sections. The translation which Lacan refers to is: Martin Heidegger, *L’être et le temps*, translated from the German by Rudolf Boehm and Alphonse de Waelhens. Paris: Gallimard 1964.

The second remark, the truth of which you can confirm at the same time,¹⁰ is this: it has been asserted with injurious intent by a professional sensationalist [baveuse de profession] in certain bizarre brochures that my teaching is neo-Heideggerian.¹¹ The person probably added “neo-” as a precaution, due to ignorance of what either “Heideggerian” or “my teaching” meant, since it shelters her from a certain number of refutations; however, the fact is that this teaching of mine has nothing either “neo-” or “Heideggerian” about it, despite my great esteem for the teaching of Heidegger.

The third remark is linked to a second reference. Something is about to come out, something you can look forward to and which is at least as important – though importance in different domains can’t be measured with a ruler, so let’s say “which is very important too”, – namely the volume (not yet in the bookshops, I have been told) by Claude Lévi-Strauss, called *La pensée sauvage* [*The Savage Mind*].

It has already come out, you tell me? So I hope that you have already begun to enjoy it. I have not got very far with it, due to the exertions that our seminar imposes on me, but I have read the first, excellent pages where Claude Lévi-Strauss enters into the interpretation of what he calls “the savage mind”, by which is to be understood (I think his interview in *Le Figaro* has already made you aware)¹² not “the thinking of savages”, but, so to speak, “thinking in its savage state” [“l’état sauvage de la pensée”], which, we could say, is thinking as it functions, very efficiently, with all the characteristics of thought, without having taken on the form of scientific thought, of modern scientific thought with its statutes. And Claude Lévi-Strauss shows us that it is impossible to make a radical break here, because thinking which has not yet acquired its scientific statutes is already perfectly well-suited for bearing certain scientific effects. Such, at least, is clearly his drift at the start and, singularly, he takes as an example to illustrate what he wants to say about the savage mind something in common (this, surely, is the connection he means to make) with thinking as it bore fruit decisively, let’s say (he underlines this), at a time that we can’t call absolutely ahistorical, since he specifies when it was: thinking as it was in the Neolithic era, he tells us, already offers all the foundations of our “seat” [assiette]¹³ in the world.¹⁴

To illustrate this still functioning within our reach, he lights on something that exemplifies it in a form which is undoubtedly not unique, but is privileged by his demonstration, namely what he calls “bricolage”.¹⁵ This passage has all the brilliance that we know him for – an

¹⁰ i.e., by reading de Waelhens’ translation of *Being and Time*.

¹¹ I was not able to find the reference.

¹² *Le Figaro Littéraire*, 2 June 1962.

¹³ “Assiette” (“seat”) is a horse-riding term meaning the rider’s position in the saddle (see above, p. 234, footnote 14, seminar of 11 April 1962).

¹⁴ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, pp. 13 *et seq.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 16 *et seq.* “Bricolage” is what a “bricoleur” does and the (uncredited) translator of the *The Savage Mind* has the helpful footnote: “‘bricoleur’ has no precise equivalent in English. He is a man who undertakes odd jobs and is a Jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-yourself man” (*The Savage Mind*, p.17).

originality marked by abruptness and novelty, something that sways and overturns the banally accepted perspectives.

But what Lévi-Strauss says seemed particularly suggestive to me, having just re-read Heideggerian themes thanks to Monsieur De Waelhens, because of the example Heidegger uses¹⁶ in his search for, so to speak, the status of knowledge as established in an approach that sets out from an inquiry regarding what he calls “être là”, which is at once the most veiled and the most immediate form of a certain type of entity [étant], namely the manifestation of being [fait d’être] which is peculiar to the human being [être-humain].¹⁷

One cannot fail to be struck, even though the remark would probably rouse the indignation of both authors, by the surprising identity of the ground on which both of them advance. What Heidegger first encounters in his search is a certain relationship of *Dasein* to an entity that is defined as “utensil”, as “tool”, as something that one has present-at-hand (*Vorhanden*, to use his term) as *Zuhandenheit* – as readiness-to-hand.¹⁸ Such is the first form of connection – not to the world but to the entity [étant] – that Heidegger depicts for us. And it is only by starting from there – in, so to speak, the implications, the possibility of such a relationship – that he will, as he says, give its proper status to what will be the first main pivot of his analysis (the function of being in relation to time), namely the *Weltlichkeit* which Monsieur De Waelhens has translated as *mondanéité* [worldhood]¹⁹ and which is the prior constitution of the world, prior to the level of *Dasein* that has not yet detached itself on the inside of the entity [étant], of those sorts of entities that we can consider as purely and simply subsisting through themselves [par eux-mêmes].

The world is something other than the totality, the englobing of all these beings²⁰ which exist, which subsist through themselves, and with which we have to do at the level of this

¹⁶ The French is “because he takes as example...” (“en tant qu’il prend comme exemple...”), but the rest of the sentence then forgets to say what this example is, talking instead about “être-là” (“Dasein”, see next footnote). This change of direction makes the French sentence ungrammatical (my amendment makes it grammatical). The example in question is only specified in the next paragraph (“what Heidegger first encounters in his search”).

¹⁷ “Être là” (literally “being there”) is Heidegger’s “Dasein”, the essence of the human condition as described in *Being and Time*, and “étant” (“entity”) is Heidegger’s “Seiendes”. “Entity”, the translation which I use, is controversial as a rendering of “Seiendes” (the neuter present participle of “Sein” (“to be”)), but was chosen by the English translators of *Being and Time* for reasons which they explain (Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, trans.), p. 22, footnote 1).

¹⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 91-107, particularly p. 98. Macquarrie and Robinson render Heidegger’s “Zeug”, not as “utensil” or “tool”, but as “equipment”.

¹⁹ Both Typescript 1 and Roussan punctuate as follows: “. . . the first main pivot of his analysis: the function of being in relation to time, namely the *Weltlichkeit* which Monsieur De Waelhens has translated as *mondanéité*”. This implies that *Weltlichkeit* = the function of being in relation to time. But Heidegger makes no such equation. It makes more sense and accords with Heidegger’s exposition if Lacan means that Heidegger’s “analysis” (in the whole book) is “the function of being in relation to time” and *Weltlichkeit* is the “first main pivot” of that analysis. I punctuate to bring out this meaning. On *Weltlichkeit* (“worldhood”), see Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 91 *et seq.*

²⁰ “êtres”, which is surprising since one would expect “étants”.

conception of the world that appears to us so immediately natural, and with good reason because it is what we call “nature”.²¹

By his analysis Heidegger preserves the interval that is the anteriority of the constitution of this worldhood as compared to the moment when we can consider it as nature.

This primitive relationship of utensility [ustensilitéé]²² that prefigures the *Umwelt*²³ – that is prior to the environment, which is only constituted secondarily with respect to it – is Heidegger’s move and is precisely the move (I don’t believe I am saying anything here that might be taken as a critique)²⁴ that, certainly, based on everything I know about the thinking and the statements of Claude Lévi-Strauss, might seem to us to be the move most opposed to his, because the status he gives to ethnographic research would seem to be produced in a position of aversion to the metaphysical or even ultra-metaphysical research of Heidegger. However, it is the same move that we find in the first step by which Claude Lévi-Strauss introduces us to the savage mind [la pensée sauvage] by way of *bricolage*, which is just the same analysis, only in different terms – a barely modified illumination (though making a use that is distinct) of the same relationship to utensility as that which both of them consider as prior, as primordial with respect to this sort of structured access that is ours,²⁵ with respect to the field of scientific investigation, which can be distinguished as founded on an articulation of objectness [objectité]²⁶ that would be somehow autonomous, independent of what is properly speaking our existence, and with which²⁷ we retain only this “subject-object” relationship that contains everything we can nowadays articulate as to epistemology.

Well then, let’s say, to pin it down for once, that what makes our enterprise here, based on analytic experience, distinct from both of the investigations whose parallel character I have just shown you, is that we also are looking for this status which is, one might say, anterior to the classical access to the status of the object, concentrated entirely in the opposition between subject and object.

And where do we go looking for it? We look for it in this something which, however evident may be the approach, the attraction towards it in the thought of Heidegger and of Claude

²¹ Heidegger *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94, 100-101. Heidegger’s reservations about the concept of “nature” at this point in *Being and Time* tie with Lacan’s comments about Goethe and *Naturwissenschaft* (below, seminar of 27 June 1962, pp. 331-332).

²² Heidegger’s “Zeughaftigkeit”, which Macquarrie and Robinson render as “equipmentality” (Heidegger, *op.cit.*, p. 97). I use “utensility” because it is closer to Lacan’s French word and is more appropriate for his parallel between Heidegger and Lévi-Strauss.

²³ Heidegger, *op.cit.*, p. 94 *et seq.* Macquarrie and Robinson render Heidegger’s *Umwelt* as “environment”.

²⁴ The parenthesis is placed differently in Roussan compared to Typescript 1. I follow Typescript 1, which makes better sense.

²⁵ i.e. that of the “modern” mind, as against the “savage” mind.

²⁶ The French word is used only by philosophers, particularly Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (H. Barnes, trans.), Part 3, chapter 1, section 4 (“The Look”), p. 253 *et seq.* (search for “object-ness”).

²⁷ “the field of scientific investigation” (deducible by gender agreement).

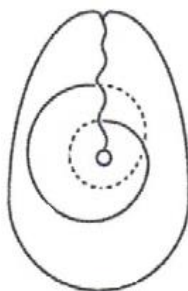
Lévi-Strauss, is well and truly distinct because neither one nor the other of them name this object as the object of desire.

The primordial status of the object for, let us say, in any case, analytic thinking cannot and could not be anything other than the object of desire. All the confusions which have confounded analytic theory until now are the consequences of an attempt – of more than one attempt, of all the possible modes of attempts – to reduce what is imposed on us, namely this search for the status of the object of desire, to already familiar references, the simplest and most common of which is the status of the object of science that a philosophising epistemology organises in the final and radical subject-object opposition in so far as an interpretation more or less influenced by the subtleties of phenomenological research may, at a stretch, speak of it as the object of desire.

This status of the object of desire as such still remains eluded in all the forms of analytic theory that have been articulated up to now; and what we are trying to do here is precisely to give it its proper status. The aim that I am pursuing for you at present lies on this trajectory.

Here are the figures²⁸ where I am going to try today to make you see what interests us in this surface structure, whose privileged properties are apt to retain us as a structuring support for this relationship of the subject to the object of desire, to the extent that it²⁹ is situated as supporting everything that we can articulate regarding the analytical experience, at whatever level; in other words as this structure that we call the fundamental phantasy.

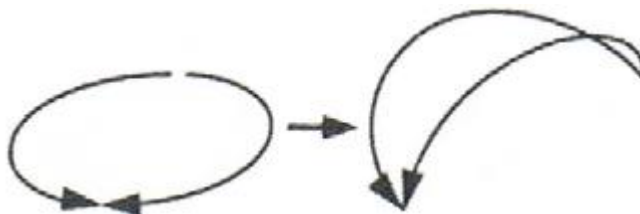
For those who were not at the last seminar, I remind you of this form here, drawn in white: it is what we call the “cross-cap” or, to be more precise (since, as I told you, there is a certain ambiguity about the use of this term “cross-cap”), the “projective plane”.



²⁸ Roussan-Staferla inserts a note, “au tableau” (“on the blackboard”).

²⁹ “it” (“il”) could refer back to the “structuring support”, the “relationship of the subject to the object of desire” or only to the “object of desire”. The second possibility is most likely, since the clause coming up at the end of the sentence equates this same “it” with the fundamental phantasy.

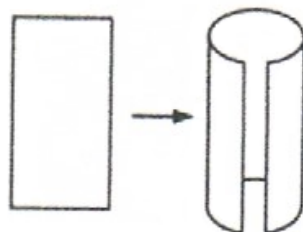
The drawing here in white chalk [the figure above]³⁰ isn't sufficient to represent it to those who haven't yet grasped it, so I am going to try to make you imagine it by describing it to you as if this surface³¹ was constituted here as an inflatable membrane [baudruche]. To be still more clear, I am going to start from the base. Imagine that you have two hoops, like a gin trap. This will serve for us to represent the cut. If we orient the two circles³² of the gin trap in the same direction, that just means that we are going to close them onto one another.



If you have a cut made like that and you stretch a membrane from one to the other, if you blow into it and you close the gin trap, it doesn't take much imagination to see that you will get a sphere. If blowing doesn't do it, you can fill it with water until you have this shape here. You close the two semi-circles of the gin trap, and you have a half-full or a half-empty sphere.



I already explained how, instead of doing that, you can make a torus. This is what a torus is: you put the two corners of a handkerchief together, like this, and the two others like that,³³ and that is enough to make a torus.



³⁰ Roussan writes in a note that Lacan mentions white chalk here because only the outline of the cross-cap was drawn in white, while the interior eight that is inscribed on it (of which Lacan says nothing until later in this seminar, below, p. 346 *et seq.*) was in another colour.

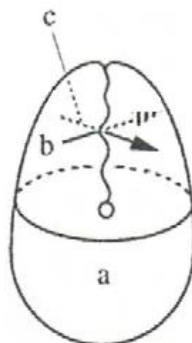
³¹ i.e., the cross-cap

³² Lacan must mean the two hoops, which are, in fact, semi-circles.

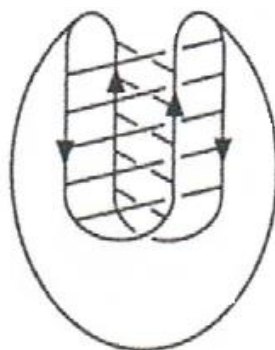
³³ The two top corners and two bottom corners of the rectangular "handkerchief" in the figure below.

There you have the essence of the torus, because here you have the central hole and here you have the circular void around which the circuit of demand turns.³⁴ This is what the fundamental polygon of the torus already illustrated to you. A torus is not at all like a sphere.

Naturally, a cross-cap is not at all like a sphere either. Here you have the cross-cap:



You have to imagine the bottom half of it [“a” in the figure above] being like half of what you just did with the membrane when you filled it with water or with your breath. In the upper part what is anterior here [“b”] will traverse what is continuous – what is posterior here [“c”]. The two faces cross one another, they give the appearance of interpenetrating,



because the conventions concerning surfaces are free, because don’t forget that we are only considering them as surfaces, so we can say that, no doubt, the properties of space, as we imagine it, compel us, in the representation, to represent them as penetrating one another, but all we have to do is to take no account of this line of intersection³⁵ while we are dealing with this surface – to let everything happen as if we treated this line as nothing.

It’s not a ridge, it’s just something we are forced to represent to ourselves because we want here to represent this surface as a line of penetration. But this line, so to say, has no privilege in the constitution of the surface. You may say to me: “What’s the meaning of what you are

³⁴ Presumably Lacan joined up the top and bottom of the “tube” he had made with his handkerchief in order to imitate the torus with its “circular void” (the tube) running around its “central hole”.

³⁵ The wavy line descending from the top of the cross-cap in the penultimate figure.

saying? Does it mean that you go along with Kant's transcendental aesthetic in admitting the fundamental constitution of space in three dimensions, because you tell us that, in order to represent things here, you have to go via something that somehow gets in the way of the representation?"³⁶ Of course, in a certain way, yes. Everyone who talks about the topology of surfaces as such starts out (it's the ABC of the question) from this distinction between what you can call the intrinsic properties of the surface and its extrinsic properties. They tell us that everything they are going to articulate, to determine, concerning the functioning of the surfaces thus defined is to be distinguished from what happens (this is literally how they express it) when you "plunge" the aforesaid surface into space – specifically, in the present case, into three-dimensional space.

This is the fundamental distinction that I have constantly reminded you of, to tell you that we mustn't consider the ring, the torus as a solid and that when I talk about the central void, about the circumference of the ring, and of the hole which is, as we might say, axial to it, these terms are to be taken with the proviso that we aren't going to make them function, because we are interested purely and simply in the surface.

It nevertheless remains true that by plunging this surface into a space (as the topologists say) – a space which we can leave as an x , since we are not obliged to prejudge the number of dimensions which structure it – we can highlight one or other of the intrinsic properties that the surface involves.

And the proof of this is that we have no difficulty representing the torus in the three dimensional space which is intuitively familiar to us, whereas we will have some difficulty with this one³⁷ because we will have to note down all sorts of reservations about what we are to read when we try to represent this surface in this space. And this, precisely, will let us pose the question of the structure of a space as admitting or not admitting our surfaces as constituted by us beforehand.

These reservations made, I would ask you now to advance further and consider what I want to teach you about this surface when I try to highlight certain of its characteristics precisely in the context of its representation in space, without the characteristics being any less intrinsic for that.

Because, while I have already eliminated the value that we can give to this line, the line of penetration, which you see illustrated here in detail (we can represent it like this),

³⁶ This question is presented in Roussan as an intervention by a member of the audience. Typescript 1 has the same text, but makes no reference to an intervention. I suppose that it was Lacan's rhetorical question to himself, since what follows in the rest of this week's seminar seems designed to address the question.

³⁷ The cross-cap.



you can see, just by the way I have drawn it on the blackboard, that there is something which poses a question. Can we eliminate the value of the point here³⁸ just as we can eliminate the value of this line? Is this point also something that only has to do with the necessity of representation in three-dimensional space?

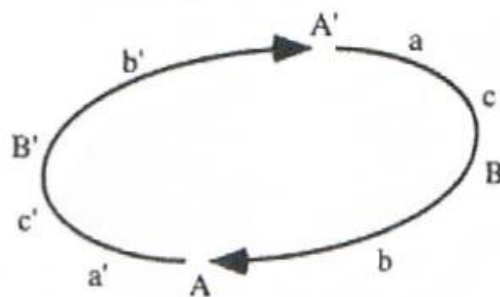
I say to you straight away, to clarify a little in advance what I will argue: the function of this point is not eliminable, at least at a certain level of speculation regarding the surface, a level that isn't defined only by the existence of three-dimensional space.

What does the construction of this surface called the “cross-cap” radically signify, as organised starting from the cut that I represented for you earlier as a gin trap that closes? It can be seen very easily that this gin trap has to be bipartite, when we are dealing with the sphere, because it has to fold back on itself somewhere, its two halves being oriented in the same direction. So the *terminus a quo* will be distinguished from the *terminus ad quem* in as much as they must cover each other along their length.

We can say that here³⁹ we have the manner of mutual functioning of the two halves of the edge that we need to join in order to constitute a projective plane. Here they are oriented in contrary directions, which means that a point located at this place, point “a” for example, will correspond, will be identical, equivalent, to a point located at this place diametrically opposite, in “a’ ”, and that another point “b” located here, for example, will refer to another point “b’ ” located diametrically opposite.

³⁸ Lacan is referring to the point (a small ring, in fact) with which the line of penetration terminates in the figures on pp. 340, 342, above. He already discussed this point/ring in the seminar of 23 May 1962 (above, p. 311).

³⁹ Typescript 1 has in brackets “croquis” (“sketch”), indicating that Lacan now refers to a new figure, which would be that given below. He turns from discussing (in the previous paragraph) an ordinary hole in a sphere, where the hole’s edges are to be thought of as two semi-circles, two “sides” (what he means by “bipartite”) brought together point-to-directly-opposite-point, like the jaws of a gin trap, to discussing the hole as definitive of the projective plane, where each point on one side is brought to meet the point on the other side which corresponds to it at the far end of a diameter across the centre of the hole, in an arrangement that defies three-dimensional representation. In the “directly opposite” (gin-trap) joining we start from the “top” (really any point on the circumference of the circle) and go down both sides of the circle, joining point to “horizontally opposite” point, until we get to the “bottom” (a point diametrically opposite the “top”), whereby the two “halves” of the circumference are “oriented” (Lacan’s topological term) in the same downwards direction. By contrast, in “diametrically opposite” joining we go top-down on one side and bottom-up on the other, so that the two “halves” are “oriented” in contrary directions.



What are we to make of this? Isn't it that, given this antipodal relationship of the points on this circuit oriented in a continuous fashion, always in the same direction,⁴⁰ no point will be privileged, and that, however difficult we find it to grasp intuitively what is involved, we simply have to think of this circular antipodal relationship as a sort of radiating crisscross [entrecroisement rayonné], so to speak, concentrating the exchange of one point to the opposite point of the single edge of this hole, and concentrating it around a vast central crisscross, which eludes our thought and of which we are therefore unable to give any satisfactory representation.

But what justifies this way of representing things is that we mustn't forget that we are not dealing with metric figures. It isn't the distance from "a" to "A" and from "a" " to "A" " that regulates the point-by-point correspondence, which allows us to construct the surface by organising the cut in this way, but solely the relative position of the points. Put differently: in a set of three points located on the half (permit the use of the term "half" that I make on this occasion and which is already represented by the analogical reference that I made of the two halves of the edge), it's because, on this edge, on this line as on every line, a point can be defined as being between two others that a point "c", for example, will find its correspondent in the point "c' " on the other side.

But, if we don't have a point of origin, an ἀρχήν [archen] -point,⁴¹ "Τὴν ἀρχὴν ὅτι καὶ λαλῶ ὑμῖν" [ten archen ho ti kai lalo humin, Greek] as we find in the Gospel and which has caused such difficulties of translation that a thinker from Franche-Comté⁴² could say to me: "That's just like you! The one passage in the Gospel that nobody can agree on is the one you took as an epigraph for a section of your Rome report"⁴³... If, as I say, we don't have somewhere ἀρχήν, the beginning, these starting points, then it's impossible to define a point as being

⁴⁰ "in the same direction" because Lacan is no longer thinking of the circumference as having two sides/halves, but as a continuous track.

⁴¹ "ἀρχήν" is the accusative (direct object) case of "ἀρχή" ("origin", "beginning", Greek).

⁴² The quote is from the original Greek of the New Testament (John 8: 25). In the *New Revised Standard Version* the Jews ask Jesus "Who are you?" and he replies (translation of Lacan's quote from the Greek): "Why do I speak to you at all?" But, for example, in the *English Standard Version*, the English translation is: "What have I been saying to you from the beginning?". Staferla suggests that the thinker from Franche-Comté may have been Raymond Ruyer.

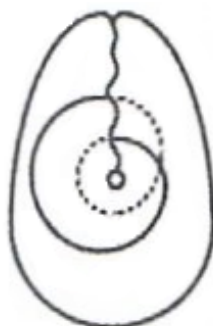
⁴³ Lacan, *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.), p. 220

between two others, because “c” and “c’ “ are also between the two others, “a” and “B” unless there’s an “A A’ ”⁴⁴ to locate in a univocal fashion what is happening in each segment.

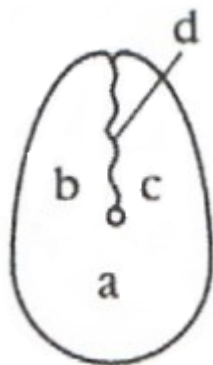
So it’s for reasons other than the possibility of representing them in space that we have to define a point of origin for this crisscross exchange which constitutes the surface of the projective plane, between an edge that we have to divide in two even though it always turns in the same direction.

You may find this extremely tiresome, but you will see that it assumes ever greater interest. I’ll tell you straight away what I mean. I mean that the ἀρχή-point, the origin, has an altogether privileged structure, that it – its presence – is what gives the interior loop of our Polish signifier, the interior loop, in other words, of our interior eight, a status which is absolutely specific to it. So as not to keep you in suspense: I apply this signifier, called “as an interior eight” [dit “en huit intérieur”], on the surface of the cross-cap.

We will see later what that means. You can see, though, that applying it in this way means that the line traced by our interior eight goes twice around this privileged point.

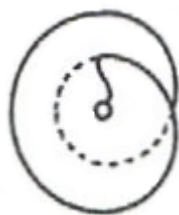


Make an effort of imagination. I can do something to illustrate it for you. Look what you get: you have here, if you like, the bulge of the lower half [“a” in the figure below], here the bulge of the left pincer of the lobster’s leg [“b”], here the bulge of the right pincer [“c”]. Here it goes inside the other one, to the other side [“d”].



⁴⁴ The two letters stand for a single point on the surface.

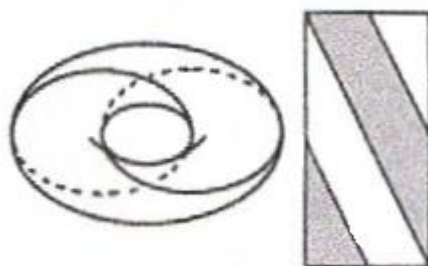
What does that mean? It means that you get a plane, which rolls up on itself,



then traverses itself, so you have an effect something like two shutters or flapping wings superimposed that are isolated from the lower bulge by the cut, and at the upper level these two wings cross one another. It's not too inconceivable. If you had interested yourselves in it for as long as I have, you wouldn't find it so surprising because, really, the privilege of this double cut is very interesting.

It's very interesting because, as regards the torus, I already showed you that if you make a cut, the torus is transformed into a band; if you make a second cut, which crosses the first, it doesn't fragment the torus, but allows you to spread it out like a nice square.⁴⁵

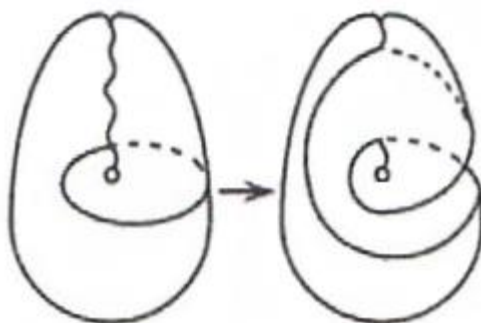
If you make two cuts on a torus, which do not cross each other (try to imagine it), you necessarily separate it into two pieces.⁴⁶



Here, on the cross-cap, with a cut that is a simple cut like one that can be drawn so, you open up the surface.

⁴⁵ Lacan must mean a circular cut along the surface of the torus around the central hole, turning the torus into a band, and then a cut from one side to the other of the band that makes it into a rectangle ("a nice square" if the torus was suitably proportioned), or the same two operations in reverse order.

⁴⁶ The light and dark segments in the rectangle are the two pieces into which the torus is divided by such non-intersecting cuts.



Amuse yourselves by making a drawing of it. Seeing what happens will be a very good intellectual exercise. You open the surface up, you don't cut it in two, you don't make it into two pieces. But if you make any other cut, whether or not it intersects itself, you divide the surface.

What's paradoxical and interesting is that it's still only a single cut, but that just by making it go twice around the privileged point, you divide the surface.⁴⁷ It's not the same at all on a torus. On a torus, you can go around the central hole as often as you like, but you will only ever obtain a lengthening of the band – you will never divide it.

So you see that we touch here on something interesting about the function of this surface. And there is something else no less interesting, namely that you cannot repeat the effect of this double circuit by going round one more time: if you make a triple circuit, you will draw something on the surface which will repeat itself indefinitely like the loops you make on the torus in the spooling operation I spoke about at the start,⁴⁸ except that here the line will never connect up with itself, it will never bite its own tail.



The privileged value of this double circuit is adequately secured by these two properties.

Let's now consider the surface that is isolated by this double circuit on the projective plane. I'm going to point out to you certain properties that it has. First of all, it's what we can call a "left-handed" surface, like a left-handed body, like anything at all that we can define like that

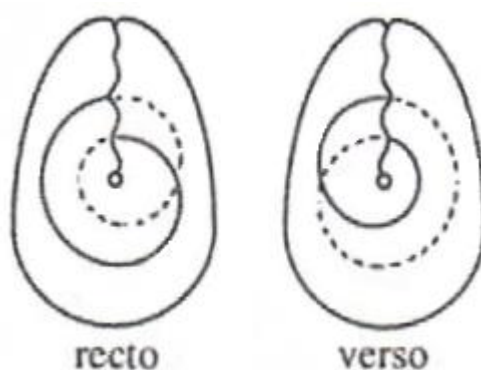
⁴⁷ The result of the cut that goes twice around the privileged point is well shown in a short youtube video by Adrián Landa, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCeQsEEvInE>

⁴⁸ Above, p. 322, seminar of 30 May 1962.

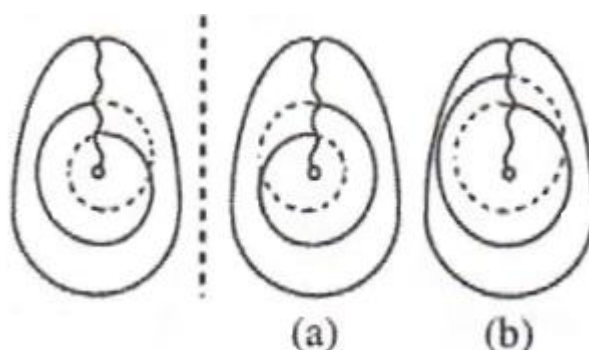
in space. We'll call it that to be quick, between ourselves, so to speak, because I'm going to remind you what it means.

I don't use the term "left-handed" as opposed to "right-handed". I use it to define what you must be familiar with, that if you want to define the spiral of a snail's shell, which, as you know is privileged as dextral or sinistral – whichever of the two (it depends how you define the one or the other) – you will find this spiral to be the same whether you look at it on the side where it has its tip or you turn it upside-down and look at the side where it makes a hollow.

In other words, if you turn the cross-cap over to look at it from the other side, if here we define the rotation from left to right starting from the central point, you will see that it always turns in the same direction from the other side.



This is the property of all bodies that are dissymmetric. So there is a dissymmetry that is fundamental to the form of this surface. The proof is that underneath⁴⁹ you have something that is the image in the mirror of this surface thus defined on our double loop.⁵⁰ Here it is [(a) in the figure below].



We should expect that, as with any dissymmetrical body, its image in the mirror will not be superimposable on it, just as our own image in the mirror cannot be superimposed on our

⁴⁹ Roussan has "on the blackboard" in brackets

⁵⁰ Roussan has "something that is the image in the mirror of our double loop thus defined on this surface."

own support (we are not symmetrical, despite what we think). If we have a beauty spot on the right cheek, it will be on the left cheek of the image in the mirror.

Nevertheless, the property of this surface is such that, as you see, all you have to do is to raise this loop here a little,⁵¹ which is legitimate, and make it go above the other one, since the two planes do not really traverse one another, and you get an image [(b) in the figure above] that is absolutely identical to and therefore superimposable on the first one – the one we started from. You see what happens: lift this very gently, bit by bit, up to here, and see what happens – the occultation of this little dotted part here is identical to what there is in the original image.⁵²

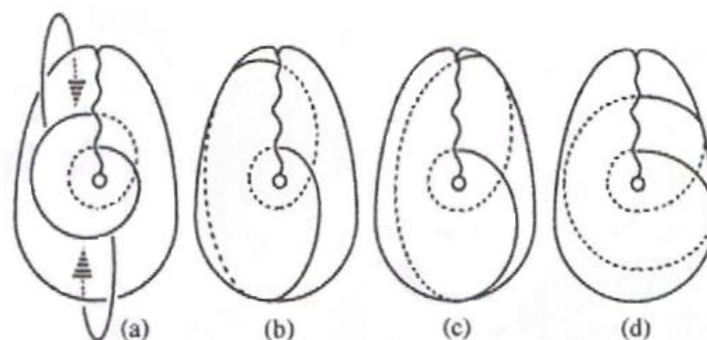
This serves to illustrate the property which, I told you, was that of *a qua* object of desire, of being the something which is at once orientable, and undoubtedly very oriented, but which isn't, if I can put it like this, specularisable. At this radical level that constitutes the subject in his dependence with respect to the object of desire, the function $i(a)$, the specular function, loses its hold, so to speak. And what commands all this? Precisely this point as belonging to this surface.

To clarify at once what I mean, I will say that by articulating the function of this point we will be able to find all sorts of felicitous formulas that let us conceive of the function of the phallus at the centre of the constitution of the object of desire. This is why it's worthwhile continuing to interest ourselves in the structure of this point. I must pause for a minute to show you the real function of this point as being the key to the structure, to the surface thus defined, sliced by our cut in the projective plane, and that will surely require a little more patience on your part.

What is the function of this point? Where we have got to now, we can see that the point is in one of the two parts into which the double cut divides the projective plane. It belongs to the part, which gets detached, not the part which remains. Since you were capable earlier of conceiving how this figure [(a), above] can pass to this one [(b), above] by a simple, legitimate displacement of the level of the cut (I assume you were capable, since there was no murmur of protest), you will, I think, also be capable of making the mental effort required to see what happens if, on the one hand, we make this cut go beyond the horizon of the lower cul-de-sac of the surface by making it pass over to the other side, as indicated by my yellow arrow, and if we also make the upper part of the loop go over the horizon of the top of the cross-cap. This leads us without difficulty to the following figure [(b) in the figure below]. The passage to the last figure [(d) in the figure below] is a bit more difficult to conceive of, not, as you see, for the lower loop, but for the upper loop, because you may perhaps be hesitant to say what happens at the moment of going beyond what is presented here as the extremity of the line of penetration.

⁵¹ The inner loop in (a) in the figure above.

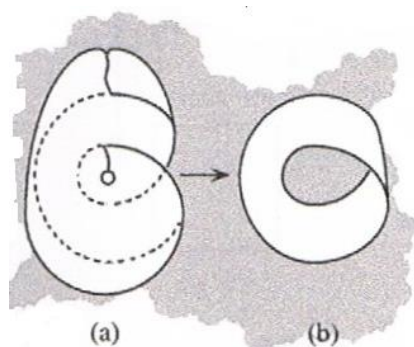
⁵² i.e., in the original cut on the cross cap, of which (a) is the mirror image.



If you reflect a little, you will see that if the cut crosses this line of penetration on the other side, it will evidently present itself like that [(c) in the figure above], which is to say that, because it's on the other side, it will be dotted on this side and it will be unbroken⁵³ because, according to our convention, what is dotted is seen by transparency.

So nothing in the structure of the surface allows us to distinguish the value of this cut [(a)] from that which we arrive at here [(d)]. To the eye, they both seem to enter on the same side of the line of penetration.⁵⁴

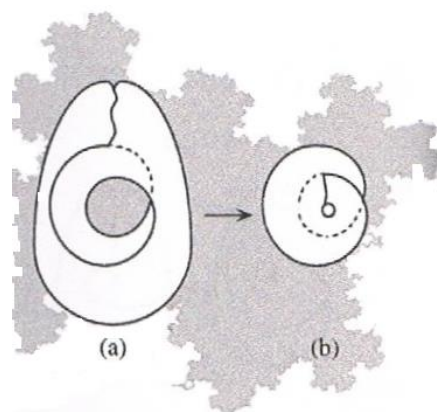
Is it simple for the eye? It isn't. Because this difference that there is, for the cut, between entering from two different sides or from the same side, ought to be marked in the result, on the figure. And this is quite tangible. If you think about what has been cut out on this surface [(d), above], you will easily recognise it. Firstly, it's the same thing as our signifier. And, what's more, you can see from the way it cuts a surface... it cuts a surface (you can see just by looking at the figure) that is a band, and a band that has only one edge. I already showed you what it is: it's a Moebius surface [(b) in the figure below]:



⁵³ Perhaps meaning that it will be unbroken when it come back to "this side" (by crossing the line of penetration).

⁵⁴ I follow Roussan in assuming that Lacan is here referring to figures (a) and (d). But the meaning is unclear, since, while in (d) both loops of the line are on the same side when they approach and "disappear through" the line of penetration, that is not the case in (a).

Now, the properties of a Moebius surface are completely different from those of this little rotating surface [(b) in the figure below] whose properties I showed you earlier by turning it round, mirroring and transforming it, and finally telling you that it is what interests us.



This little conjuring trick obviously has a reason, which is not hard to find. Its interest is simply to show you that this cut always divides the surface into two parts, one of which preserves the point in question inside it [(a) in the penultimate figure, (b) in the last figure], while the other part [(b) in the penultimate figure, (a) in the last figure] no longer has the point. This other part, which is just as present there [(a) in the figure above, p. 351, with drawings (a)-(d)] as in the final figure [(d) in the figure above, p. 351], is a Moebius surface.

The double cut always divides the surface called the “cross-cap” in two: into, on one hand, this something which interests us and which I am going to use as a support to explain the relationship of $\$$ with a in the phantasy; and, on the other hand, a Moebius surface.

What is the first thing that I got you to realise when I handed out five or six little Moebius surfaces for you to look at? It was that the Moebius surface, in the sense in which I meant it earlier, is irreducibly left-handed.⁵⁵ Whatever modification you make to it, you can never superimpose its image in the mirror onto it.

Here, then, we have the function of this cut and what gives it its exemplary value. This cut divides a certain surface in a privileged fashion, a surface whose nature and function are completely enigmatic to us, because we can scarcely situate it in space. On the one hand, the cut causes privileged functions to appear that I earlier called “specularisable”, namely involving irreducibility to the specular image,⁵⁶ and, on the other hand, it produces a surface that, while presenting all the privileges of a surface which is oriented, is not specularised.⁵⁷ Because you can’t say of this surface, as you can of a Moebius surface, that an infinitely flat

⁵⁵ Presumably Lacan means that the Moebius surface is irreducibly left-handed in the sense in which he meant “left-handed” when he talked about it earlier in the present seminar (above, pp. 348-349).

⁵⁶ The property of the Moebius surface, (b) in the penultimate figure.

⁵⁷ (b) in the last figure.

being who moved along it would suddenly find itself on the other side: each face of this surface is well and truly separated from the other.

This property, certainly, is something that leaves an unsolved enigma; because it's not so simple, and it's all the less simple because, obviously, the total surface can only be reconstituted, and immediately reconstituted, from this surface.⁵⁸

So the most fundamental properties of the surface must be preserved somewhere in this surface, despite its more rational appearance compared with the other surface.

Clearly, these fundamental properties are preserved at the level of the point. The passage that makes it always possible, in the total figure, for an infinitely flat traveller to find himself by an excessively short path at a point, which is its own reverse side, is no longer available at the level of the central surface that has been fragmented, divided by the signifier of the double loop. And this is precisely because something of that⁵⁹ is preserved at the level of the point. Except that, for this point to function as this point, it has the privilege of being, precisely, impassable [infranchissable] without making the whole structure of the surface vanish.

I haven't had time yet to fully develop what I just said about this point. If you reflect, you will be able to work out the development yourselves before the next time.

It's late and I must leave you. I apologise for the aridity of what I produced for you today, which was due to its complexity, even though the complexity is extraordinarily punctiform (the word is carefully chosen). This is where I will start from next time.

Coming back to what I said at the start⁶⁰ – because I have only been able to get this far in my exposition, we will keep next Wednesday's seminar (tell people who have been notified of the next one), so that we avoid leaving too much space, too much of an interval between the two seminars, because that space could be harmful for what comes next in the exposition.

⁵⁸ (b) in the last figure

⁵⁹ i.e., something of the property whereby “an infinitely flat traveller” can find himself at a place on the surface, which is its own reverse side.

⁶⁰ This sentence is present in all French versions, but there is no mention at the start of the French text of this seminar (in any version) of the organisational matters that Lacan refers to.

13 June 1962¹

Here are three figures:²

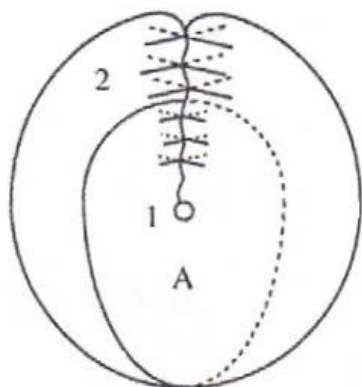


Figure 1

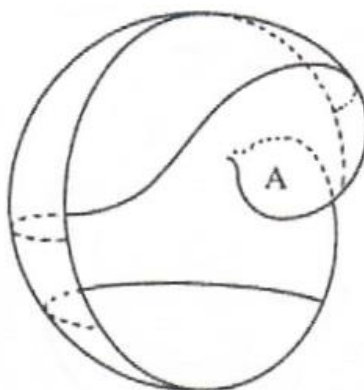


Figure 2

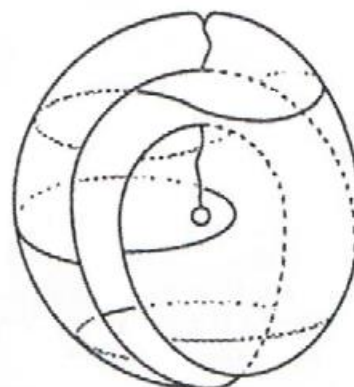


Figure 3

Figure 1 corresponds to the simple cut: the projective plane can't tolerate more than one cut without being divided, and this cut doesn't divide it but opens it up. This opening-up is interesting to show in this form, because it allows you to visualise, to materialise the function of the point. Figure 2 will help you to understand the other.³ It's a matter of understanding what happens when the cut shown here has opened up the surface.

Of course, this is a description of the surface linked to what are called its extrinsic relations – the surface as it is when we try to insert it into three-dimensional space. But, as I said to you, this distinction between the intrinsic properties of the surface and its extrinsic properties isn't as radical as sometime gets suggested, out of a concern for formalism, because certain intrinsic properties of the surface appear with all their consequences precisely in connection with its being “plunged into space”, as it is called. I simply mention the problem to you.

Hence what⁴ I am going to tell you about the projective plane, the privileged place occupied there by the point (what we will call “the point”), which is figured here [“1” in Fig. 1] in the cross-cap – the terminal point of the line of pseudo-penetration of the surface on itself. You

¹ More work is needed to clarify what exactly Lacan means in some of the explanations he gives in this week's seminar using the figures. Roussan has extensive notes on the topology of this seminar in an appendix to his version (Roussan, *L'identification*, pp. 312-315). I cannot fully understand the explanations that Roussan gives.

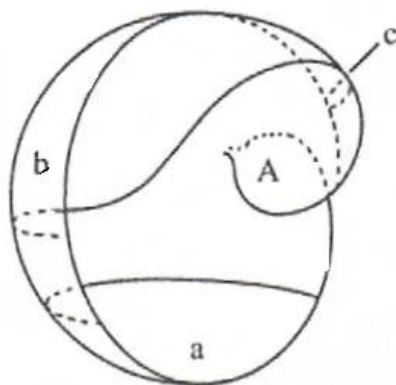
² Roussan writes in a note that he reserves numbering (“Figure 1”, etc.) for reproductions of figures drawn by Lacan (presumably on the blackboard and presumably taken by Roussan from the notes of listeners, since Typescript 1 is text only). I follow this convention and do not number the other figures, which are presumably Roussan's own, intended to aid understanding (although some of these extra figures are Lacan's with various additional annotation). Throughout the present seminar, wherever Lacan clearly referred to a figure by its number, all that is found in Typescript 1 is “fig.” followed by a space. It seems that whoever typed up the stenograph thought it best to leave out the numbers due to the text-only nature of Typescript 1.

³ Lacan means that it will help to understand Figure 1.

⁴ I follow Typescript 1, which has “D'où ce que...” (“Hence what...”), which make the sentence more grammatical than Roussan's same-sounding “Tout ce que...” (“Everything that...”).

see the function of this point in this open form [Fig. 2] of the same object that is described in Figure 1.

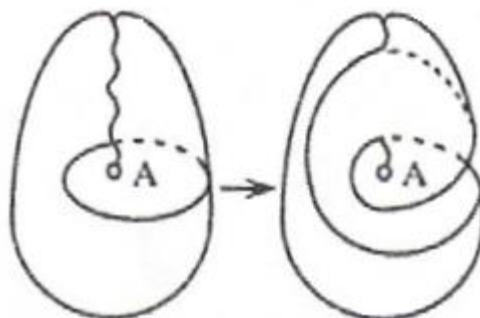
If you open it along the cut, what you see appearing is a floor at the bottom – that of the half-sphere [“a” in the figure below]. Above, there is the plane of this front wall [“b”] that continues as the rear wall [“c”] after penetrating the plane that is, so to speak, symmetrical to it in the composition of this object.



Why do you see it made bare like this right up to the top? Because, once the cut has been made, since these two planes which traverse one another like this [cross-hatch lines in Fig. 1 above], at the level of the line of penetration, don't really traverse one another (it's not a real penetration, but a penetration required by the projection in space of the surface we are dealing with), we are free, once a cut has dissolved the continuity of the surface, to lift one of these planes across the other, since it's not just unimportant to know at what level they traverse one another (what points correspond in the traversing), but, on the contrary, we have to deliberately not take account of this coincidence of the levels of the points in so far as the penetration may render them superimposable at certain moments in the reasoning. We need to emphasise that, on the contrary, they are not superimposable.

The front plane of Figure 1, which passes on the other side, has come down towards the point that we henceforth just call “the point”, while above we see a line that goes to the top of the object and passes behind on the other side.

When we make a crossing [traversée] on this figure, we get something that presents itself as a hollow that is open towards the front:



The dotted line will pass behind the ear-like shape and find an exit on the other side, which is the cut between this edge here and that which, on the other side, is symmetrical to this basket-like shape, but behind. You have to think that there is an exit behind.

Here is Figure 3, which is an intermediate figure:

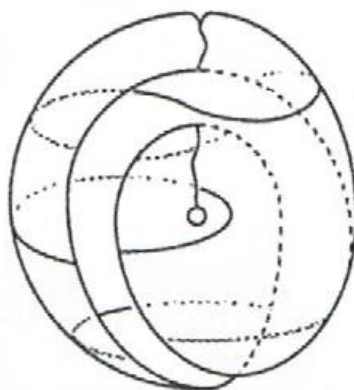
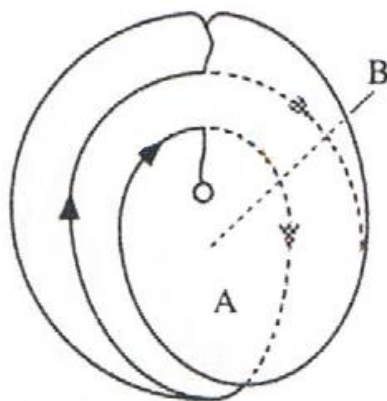


Figure 3

Here you also see the cross-over in the upper part of the front plane, which becomes posterior and then comes back. And, as I already pointed out, you can lift that up [relever cela] indefinitely.

This is what has happened at the furthest level. This edge here is the same thing as is described in Figure 1. This part that I distinguish in Figure 1 we are going to call "A" [marked on Fig. 1 above]. It is what is maintained at this place in Figure 2. This edge is continuous with that which folds backwards behind the sort of oblique surface that emerges once you have begun to let it all go [une fois que vous avez commencé à lâcher le tout], so that if you glued them back together it would join up as in Figure 3. This's why I drew it in blue on my drawing [the line with arrows in the figure below, which is a schematic version of Fig. 3]. In short, the blue is everything that perpetuates the cut itself.



So what do we get? You have a hollow, a pocket where you could put something. If you put your hand in, it goes behind this ear which is in continuity with the surface from the front. What you encounter behind is a surface that corresponds to the bottom of the basket, but separated from what remains on the right, namely this surface which comes forward here, and which folds back in Figure 2. Following a path like that you have an unbroken arrow, then a dotted one because it passes behind the ear which corresponds to “A” [in the figures above and below].

It comes out here because it’s the part of the cut that is behind. It’s the part that I can designate by “B” [in the figures above]. The ear that is drawn here by the limits of this dotted line in Figure 2 could be on the other side. This possibility of two ears is what you find when you have made the double cut and you isolate something in the cross-cap which is produced here. What you see in this isolated central piece of Figure 4 is really a plane such that you erase the rest of the object, so that you no longer have to put in dotted lines here, or even a crossing. All that’s left is the central piece.

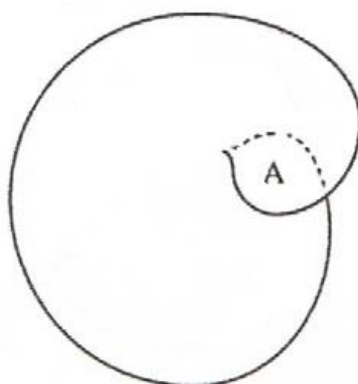


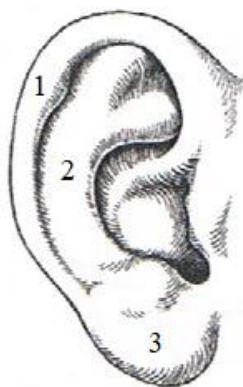
Figure 4

What do you have then? It’s easy to imagine. You have a sort of plane, which, by going askew [en gauchissant] eventually cuts itself on a line that then passes behind. So here too you have two ears: a lamella in front and a lamella behind. And the plane traverses itself according to a line that is strictly limited by a point. This point could be placed at the

extremity of the posterior ear. That would be a way for the plane to cut itself, which would be just as interesting in certain respects because it's what I have done in Figure 5, so that I can show you a bit later how to think of the structure of this point.

(I know personally that you are worried about the function of this point because you have asked me in private why I and other authors always represent it in this form, with a sort of little hole at the centre. Certainly, this little hole is cause for reflection and it is exactly what we are going to insist on, because it gives the quite special structure of this point, which is not a point like others. This is what I am going to need to explain now).

Its slightly oblique, distorted shape⁵ is amusing, because there is a striking analogy between the form of this sliced projective plane and the helix [1 in the figure below], antihelix [2] and even the lobe [3].⁶



Its form, which fundamentally tends towards the form of the Moebius strip, can be found in a much more simplified version in what I previously called the “arum” or, again, the “donkey’s ear”.⁷ That is just to bring your attention to the obvious fact that nature seems in a certain way drawn by these structures, and notably in particularly significant organs, namely those orifices of the body which are, in a way, left to one side, distinct from the analytic dialectic. The sort of resemblance shown by these orifices of the body might be linked to a certain affinity, an attachment of this point to *Naturwissenschaft*. Certainly the point⁸ should indeed adjoin and find its reflection there, if it really has some value.

⁵ Lacan means the shape presented in the last figure (with two “lamellae”), the previous paragraph being a parenthesis.

⁶ Lacan means the elements of the outer ear. I use the picture that Roussan inserts here, adding “3” for the lobe (French “lobule”) since I follow the punctuation in Typescript 1. By punctuating differently, Roussan has “...there is a striking analogy between the helix, antihelix. And even the lobe of the form of this sliced projective plane: if we consider that this form, which fundamentally tends towards the form of the Moebius strip...” Roussan is closer than my version to the wording in Typescript 1, but further from its punctuation and at the cost of a clear meaning.

⁷ Seminar of 16 May 1962 (above).

⁸ The point discussed in the previous paragraph.

The striking analogy between several of these drawings that I have presented and the figures that you find on every page of books on embryology also merits attention. When you consider what happens almost immediately after the stage of the germinative plaque in snakes' or fishes' eggs (what is closest to the development of the human embryo in an examination that hasn't yet been fully completed at the present stage of science), you find something striking, which is the appearance at a certain moment on this germinative plaque of what is called the "primitive line", which also terminates at a point – Hensen's node – that is highly significant and truly problematic as regards its formation, because it is linked by a sort of correlation to the formation of the neural tube, which, in a way, it comes to meet by a process of refolding of the ectoderm. This, as you know, is something that suggests the formation of a torus, since at a certain stage this neural tube remains open at both sides like a trumpet.

By contrast, the formation of the notochordal canal,⁹ which occurs at the level of Hensen's node, with a manner of propagating itself laterally, suggests a cross-over process, the morphological aspect of which cannot fail to recall the structure of the projective plane, particularly when one notes that the process which occurs at this point called "Hensen's node" is in a way a regressive process. As development advances, this function of the primitive line is completed in a posterior withdrawal of Hensen's node that produces the opening towards the front, towards the endoblast, of this canal, which, in the sauropsidians, presents itself as homologous to (without being altogether identifiable with) the neuro-enteric canal found in the Batrachia, namely what puts the terminal part of the digestive tube and the terminal part of the neural tube into communication.

In short, this point is highly significant because it joins the cloacal orifice (of such importance in analytic theory) to something in front of the lowest part of the caudal formation, which is what specifies the vertebrate and pre-vertebrate more markedly than any other characteristic, namely the existence of the cord,¹⁰ which has this primitive line and Hensen's node as its point of departure.

There is certainly a whole series of directions for research here, which, I believe, are worthy of attention. If I haven't insisted on it at all, that's because it is certainly not what I want to pursue. I mention it in passing both to awaken a little more interest on your part in these structures, which are so captivating in themselves, and also to authenticate the remark made to me that embryology would have its word to say here, at least by way of illustration.

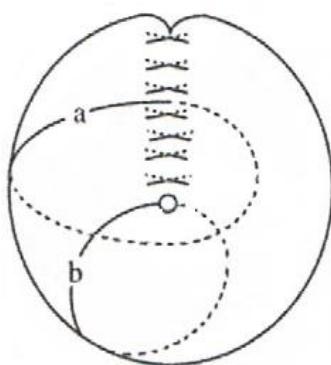
That leaves us free to go further, without more ado, regarding the function of this point. A tightly knit discussion of these topological constructions on a formalistic level could be endless and would perhaps weary you. You know the function in the cross-cap of the line I

⁹ The words "of the notochordal canal" ("du canal chordal") are not present in Typescript 1.

¹⁰ Roussan follows the spellings of "chordal", "caudal" and "cord" in Rue CB, where the terminology in this passage has been substantially revised compared with Typescript 1 (perhaps by Lacan himself, who was a qualified medical doctor).

draw here as a sort of crossing-over of fibres,¹¹ and what I want to draw your attention to is that the point which terminates it is, of course, a mathematical point, an abstract point. So we can't give it any dimension.

Nevertheless, we can only think of it as a cut, to which we must give paradoxical properties because, on the one hand, we can only conceive of it as punctiform and, on the other hand, it is irreducible. In other words, to be able to conceive of the surface at all we cannot consider it¹² as filled [comblée]. It is a "point-hole", so to speak. What is more, if we consider it as a point-hole, which is to say as made by the joining [accolement] of two edges, it would be, in a way, indivisible [insécable] in the direction that traverses it and you could illustrate it by this type of single cut ["a", in the figure below] that you can make in the cross-cap.

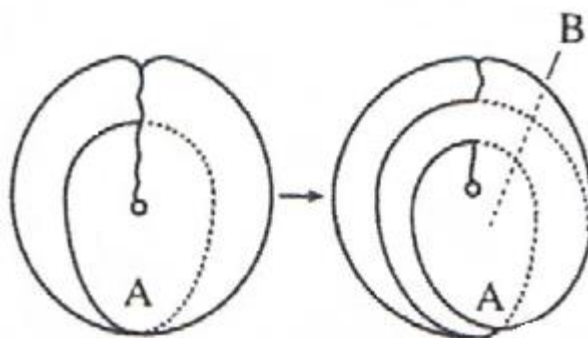


Such cuts are usually made in technical books that deal with this in order to explain the functioning of the surface. If there is a cut ["b", in the figure] that passes through this point, how should we conceive it? Is it, in a way, homologous and uniquely homologous to what happens when you make one of these lines pass higher, traversing the structural line of false penetration, so that, as it were, if something exists that we can call a point-hole, the cut, even when it comes so close as to be merged with this point, makes a circuit around this hole?

This really is what we have to conceive of, because when we draw such a cut this is what we get: take, if you like, Figure 1, transform it into Figure 3 and consider what's at issue between the two ears that remain there at the level of A and of B, which would be behind.

¹¹ Lacan seems to mean the line of penetration on the 3D representation of the cross-cap.

¹² "la" (feminine pronoun), could refer back to the cut or to the surface. In fact, the thought that Lacan is elaborating here makes them equivalent; equivalent also to the point that he discusses (as is clear in the next sentence).



It's something which can move apart indefinitely, to the point where the whole set-up takes on the aspect in Figure 5:

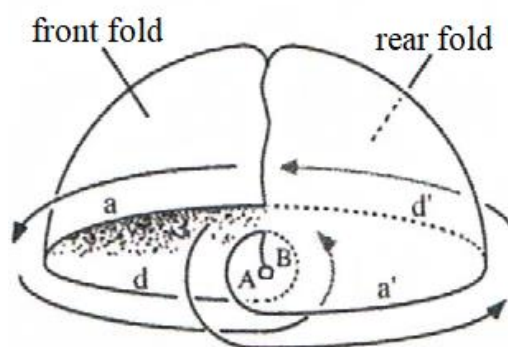


Figure 5

These two parts in the Figure represent the front and rear folds that I drew in Figure 4. This surface which I drew in Figure 4 also appears here at the centre in Figure 5. It is there behind.

Still, at this point something has to be maintained which is, in a way, the origin [amorce] of the mental fabrication of the surface, specifically with respect to this cut around which the surface is really constructed. Because this surface, which you want to show, is to be conceived as a certain way of organising a hole. This hole, whose edges are here [Fig. 5], is the origin and the point that you have to start from¹³ so that the edge-to-edge joins that are drawn here can be made in a way that effectively constructs the surface in question, namely so that this edge here (after, of course, all the modifications that are necessary for its descent through the other surface), and this edge here join up with the edge¹⁴ that we have brought into this part of Figure 5: “a” with “a’ ”. The other edge, on the contrary, has to join up with this edge here, following the general direction of the green arrow: “d” with “d’ ”.

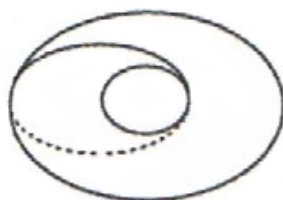
This join-up is only conceivable if you set out from a beginning [une amorce] of something that presents itself as the covering [le recouvrement] (as punctiform as you like) of this

¹³ I follow Roussan here. Typescript 1 begins the new sentence in a different place and has slightly different wording, as follows: “...is to be conceived as a certain way of organising a hole, this hole, whose edges are here. The origin is the point that you have to start from...”

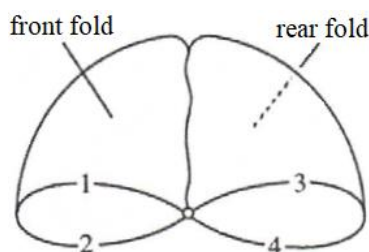
¹⁴ Lacan seems to mention three edges where he only needs two (“a” and “a’”).

surface by itself at a point – something which is at a small point here where it¹⁵ is split and where it overlaps itself [où elle vient se recouvrir elle-même]. The process of construction operates around that.

If you don't have that, if you consider that the cut "b" which you make here [in the third-last figure above, with cuts labelled "a" and "b"] traverses the point-hole, not by going around it like the other single-circuit cuts, but, on the contrary, by cutting it in the same way as we can consider that a cut in a torus is produced like this,



what happens to the figure then? It takes on another and quite different aspect. Here's what it becomes:



It becomes purely and simply the most simplified form of the retraction frontwards and backwards of the surface in Figure 5. So, whereas in Figure 5 you saw an edge-to-edge crossing-over according to four segments (segment "a" coming onto segment "a'"), here you would have the segment marked "1" in relation to another marked "3" in relation to the continuity of the cut drawn like that, then segment 2 with segment 4.

Here, in the final figure, you have only two segments:

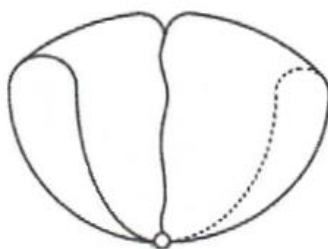


Figure 6

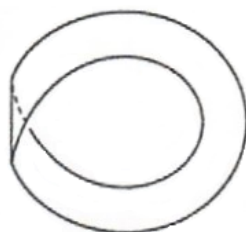
¹⁵ The surface (by gender agreement).

You have to conceive of them as sticking to each other by a complete inversion of one with respect to the other. It's very hard to visualise, but the fact that what is in one direction on one side has to join onto what is in the opposite direction on the other side shows us the pure structure (even though it isn't visualisable) of the Moebius band. The difference between what is produced when you make this simple cut on the projective plane and the projective plane itself is that you lose one of the elements of its structure. You make it into a pure and simple Moebius band, except that you don't see appearing anywhere what is essential in the structure of the Moebius band: an edge.

But this edge is absolutely essential to the Moebius band.

In the theory of surfaces (I can't go into it in a way that's entirely satisfying), in order to determine properties such as type, number of connections, characteristic – everything that makes topology interesting – you have to take into account that the Moebius band has an edge and has only one edge, that it is constructed on a hole (when I say that surfaces are organisations of the hole, it's not from love of paradox).

So here, if we are dealing with a Moebius band, the hole must still be there, even if there's no way of representing it anywhere. You will have to put a hole there in order for it to be a Moebius band. However small it may be, however punctiform, it will perform, topologically, exactly the same functions as the complete edge in this something that you draw when you draw a Moebius band, namely something more or less like this:



As I have said, a Moebius band is as simple as that. A Moebius band has only one edge. If you follow its edge you have gone right around everything on the band that is an edge, and really it's just a hole, a thing that can appear as purely circular.

Emphasising the two sides, inverting them by sticking one to the other, it would still be necessary, in order for it to be a Moebius band, that we retain the existence (as reduced as can possibly be) of a hole.

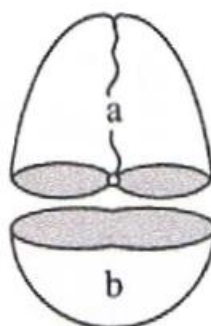
This shows us the irreducible character of the function of this point. And if we try to articulate it, to show its function, we are led (when we designate it as the origin-point of the organisation of the surface on the projective plane) to find properties in it that aren't completely those of the edge on the Moebius surface, but which, nevertheless, are something that is so much a hole that if you try to suppress it by this operation of section, by the cut

passing through this point, what you nevertheless make appear in the most incontestable fashion is a hole.

What more does that mean?

In order for this surface to function with its complete properties, and particularly that of being single-sided like the Moebius band, so that an infinitely flat subject that walked on it, starting from some exterior point of its surface, can return by an extremely short path, and without having to pass across any edge, to the other side of the surface from which he began, there has to be somewhere, in the construction of the apparatus that we are calling the projective plane, the kind of bottom (however reduced you may suppose it to be) that is represented here – the bottom of the apparatus, the part that isn't structured by cross-over. There has to be a bit of it left over – however small – without which the surface becomes something else and, in particular, no longer presents this property of functioning as single-sided.

Here's another way of highlighting the function of this point: the cross-cap cannot be drawn purely and simply as something that would be divided in two by a line where the two surfaces would cross each other ["a", in the figure below]. There has to be something left here ["b"], which, beyond the point, surrounds the point. Something like a circumference, however reduced – a surface that allows communication between the two upper lobes, so to speak, of the surface structured in this way.



This is what shows us the paradoxical and organising function of the point. But what this allows us to articulate now is that this point is made by the coming together of two edges of a cut, a cut which cannot possibly be crossed again, which cannot be divided, a cut which you see here as I have imaged it for you, as deduced from the structure of the surface, and which is such that one can say that if we were to arbitrarily define something as inside and as outside by, for example, putting in blue on the drawing what is inside and in red what is outside, then one of the edges of this point would present itself to the other edge like this,¹⁶

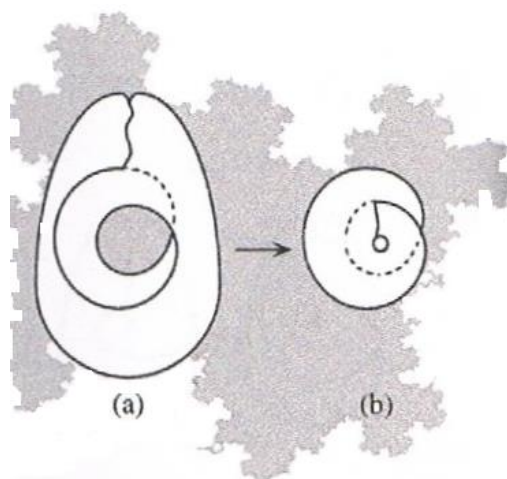
¹⁶ I follow Roussan's alternative way of showing this (not by use of colour)



because it¹⁷ is made from a cut (as minimal as you can imagine) of the surface that comes to superimpose itself on the other. In this privileged cut what will be confronted without joining will be an outside and an inside, an inside and an outside.

Such are the properties that I present to you in a form that seems to me to be not just sufficient, but necessary so that I can go on to image the function that I intend to give to it for our purposes, although it could be expressed in more scientific, formal and dialectical way.

As I have pointed out to you, the double cut is the first form of cut that introduces, in the surface defined as the cross-cap of the projective plane, the first cut, the minimal cut that achieves the division of that surface. I explained to you last time what this division produces and what its significance is. I showed it to you in these very precise figures, all of which, I hope, you noted down, and which were meant to prove to you that what this division does is to divide the surface into, firstly, a Moebius surface, i.e., a one-sided surface like this [(a) in the figure below].



This surface¹⁸ preserves in itself, you could say, only a part of the properties of the surface called the cross-cap. It preserves the particularly interesting and expressive part, consisting in the single-sided property and in the property, which I highlighted for you when I circulated those little Moebius ribbons that I had made, namely that what you have is a left-handed

¹⁷ i.e., the point

¹⁸ The Moebius surface.

surface – that it is, as we will say in our language, “specularisable”, that its image in the mirror cannot be superimposed on it, that it is structured by a fundamental dissymmetry.

And this is the whole interest of the structure that I am showing you, because, by contrast,¹⁹ the central part (what we will call the “central piece”) [(b) in the figure above] which is isolated by the double cut, while it manifestly carries with it the true structure of the whole apparatus called the “cross-cap” (you only have to look at it to see it, you only have to imagine that the edges join up here in some way at the points of correspondence, which they present visually, for the general form of this projective plane or cross-cap to be at once reconstituted), but²⁰ what appears with this cut is a surface that has this aspect that you can, I think, now consider as something that you are sufficiently familiar with to be able to project it in space – this surface that traverses itself according to a certain line which stops at a point.

It’s this line, and particularly this point, that give a privileged significance, from a schematic point of view, to the double-circuit form of this cut, because the former²¹ is what we are going to rely on in order to give a schematic representation of the relation “ $\$$ cut of a ”, which we aren’t able to grasp at the level of the structure of the torus, namely something that allows us to schematically articulate the structure of desire; the structure of desire, which we have already inscribed formally in this something, of which we say that it allows us to conceive the structure of the phantasy: $\$ \diamond a$.

We won’t exhaust the subject today, but we will try to introduce for you today that this figure, in its schematic function, is exemplary for enabling us to find the relation of “ $\$$ cut of a ”, the formalisation of the phantasy, in its relation with something that is inscribed in what is left over of the surface called the “projective plane” or “cross-cap” when the central piece is, so to speak, excised from it.

What we have is a specularisable, fundamentally dissymmetric structure, which will allow us to localise the field of this dissymmetry of the subject in relation to the Other, especially concerning the essential role played there by the specular image.

Here’s what’s at issue: the true imaginary function²² (one might call it that) as it intervenes at the level of desire is a privileged relation to a , object of desire, a term of the phantasy. I say “term”,²³ because there are two of them, $\$$ and a , linked by the function of the cut. The function of the object of the phantasy, in so far as it is a term of the function of desire, is hidden. What is most efficient, most efficacious in the relation to the object, as we understand it in the vocabulary currently accepted in psychoanalysis, is marked by a maximal veiling.

¹⁹ Lacan means that he is now going to describe the other thing that the double cut divides the cross-cap into (the first thing was a Moebius surface).

²⁰ Introducing an antithesis to the previous clause that began “while”.

²¹ “celle-là”, almost certainly referring back to “this line”.

²² “La vraie fonction imaginaire”, where “vraie” (“true”) might also be translated “real” or “actual”.

²³ Presumably Lacan means “I say ‘a term’ because..”, emphasising “a”.

One could say that the libidinal structure, as marked by the narcissistic function, is what covers and masks for us the relation to the object. The narcissistic – secondary narcissistic – relation, the relation to the image of the body as such²⁴ takes on all its weight because it is linked by something structural to this relation to the object, which²⁵ is that of the fundamental phantasy. But this “something structural”, as I call it, is a relation of complementarity: it is because the relation of the subject marked by the unary stroke finds a certain support – a support which is decoying [de leurre], mistaken – in the image of the body as constitutive of specular identification that it²⁶ has its indirect relation to what is hidden behind it, namely the relation to the object, the relation to the fundamental phantasy.

So there are two imaginaries, the true and the false, and the false is only sustained in the sort of subsistence to which are attached all the mirages of “making a me-stake” [tous les mirages de “me-connaître”]. I already introduced this play on words of “being mistaken”-“being mistaken” [“méconnaissance”-“meconnaissance”]:²⁷ the subject mistakes himself²⁸ in the mirror relation. This mirror relation, in order to be properly understood, has to be situated on the base of this relation to the Other, which is the foundation of the subject, because our subject is the subject of discourse, the subject of language.

It is by locating the nature of “\$ cut of *a*” in relation to the fundamental deficiency of the Other as locus of speech [parole], to the only definitive response at the level of saying [énonciation] – the signifier of *A*,²⁹ the universal witness as lacking [en tant qu’il fait défaut] and, at a given moment, as only having the function of a false witness [faux témoin]... it is by situating the function of *a* at this point of failure, by showing the support that the subject finds in this *a* (the *a* that we target in analysis as an object having nothing in common with the object of classical idealism and nothing in common with the object of the Hegelian subject)... it is by accurately articulating this *a* at the point of lack of the Other, which is also the point where the subject receives from this Other, as the locus of speech, his chief mark, that of the unary stroke – that which distinguishes our subject from the knowing transparency of classical thought as a subject entirely attached to the signifier in so far as this signifier³⁰ is the tipping point [point tournant] of his ejection, the ejection of the subject, from the whole signifying realisation ... it is by showing, based on the formula “\$ \diamond *a*”, as structure of the

²⁴ “as such” (“comme telle”) referring back to either “the relation” or “the image” (by gender agreement).

²⁵ Referring back to “relation” (by gender agreement).

²⁶ “elle”, referring back to “the relation of the subject marked by the unary stroke” (also “its” and “it” that come a few words further on).

²⁷ See above, p. 327, seminar of 30 May 1962. The translation does not quite work, because “méconnaître” really means “to misrecognise”, although “mistake” and “misrecognise” can be synonyms (as in “The man who mistook his wife for a hat”).

²⁸ “se méconnaît” (see last note).

²⁹ I follow Roussan by using here the symbol of the “Autre barré” (the “barred Other”). Typescript 1 has “le significant de *a*”, Rue CB has “le significant de 1” (the sound of “un”, the French for “one”, is not very unlike the French name of the letter “a”). “*A*” fits the context best (“*A*” occurs at the “saying” level, the upper level, in the graph of desire, and refers to the inadmissibility of the big Other as “universal witness”), but it is strange that the stenographer failed to hear “barré” if Lacan said it.

³⁰ Probably meaning the unary stroke.

phantasy, the relation between this object and the lack of the Other, that we see how, in a moment, everything in the signifying function recedes, is erased, in face of the rise, the eruption of this object.

This is what we can advance towards, even though it is the zone of our experience which is most veiled, most difficult to articulate. We can do so because we have a handle on it [nous en avons le contrôle] via the paths, which are those of our experience, paths that we follow all the time, which are those of the neurotic and that give us a structure which it certainly isn't a matter of pinning in that way onto scapegoats.

At this level the neurotic like the pervert, like the psychotic himself, are only aspects of the normal structure. People often say to me after these talks: when you talk about the neurotic and his object which is the demand of the Other (except when his demand is the object of the Other), why don't you talk to us about normal desire?

But I do talk about it all the time. The neurotic is the normal in so far as, for him, the Other with a big O is all-important. The pervert is the normal in so far as what's all-important for him is the phallus – the big Φ that we are going to identify with this point that gives all its consistency to the central piece of the projective plane. For the psychotic his own body, which has to be distinguished in its place in this structuring of desire, is all-important.

These are just aspects where something is manifested of this element of paradox which I'm going to try and articulate for you at the level of desire. I gave you a foretaste of it last time by showing you what there is that's distinct in the function³¹ as it emerges from the phantasy, which is to say from something that the subject foments, tries to produce at the blind place, the masked place, of which this central piece gives the schema.

I already indicated to you *à propos* of the neurotic, and specifically of the obsessional, how it can be that the search for the object is the true intent, in the obsessional phantasy, of the constantly renewed and constantly unsuccessful attempt to destroy the specular image, which the obsessional takes aim at because he perceives it as an obstacle to the realisation of his fundamental phantasy.

I showed you that this clarifies very well what happens at the level, not of the sadist's phantasy, but of the Sadean phantasy, which I spelt out for you and with you in the seminar on ethics, namely the realisation of an inner experience that cannot be entirely reduced to the contingencies of the knowable framework of an effort of thought concerning the relationship of the subject to nature, but where Sade tries to define the essence of human desire in an offense to nature.³²

³¹ It makes sense to suppose that "function" here means the "function of desire", a term that Lacan used a few paragraphs earlier (above, p. 366, the paragraph beginning "Here's what's at issue").

³² Seminar of 4 May 1960 (*Seminar 7*, D. Porter, Trans., pp. 210-211). See also the discussion of Sade in the seminar of 28 March 1962 (above).

I can use that to introduce the dialectic I want to deal with today.

If we can still retain the notion of knowledge [connaissance] anywhere, it is undoubtedly somewhere outside the human field. There's no obstacle to us – us positivists, Marxists, or whatever – thinking that nature knows herself [se connaît].³³ She definitely has her preferences. She doesn't take just any material. And that has left the field open to us recently to find piles of other materials, strange ones, that she had bizarrely left to one side! We see no obstacle to nature knowing herself, whatever way she does it.

It is quite certain that the whole development of science, in all its branches, goes on in a way that renders the notion of knowledge [connaissance] ever clearer. Connaturality with whatever recourse [moyen] may exist in the natural field is what is most foreign and ever more foreign to the development of science. Isn't this what gives special relevance to our investigation of the structure of desire, based on how our experience makes it tangible to us every day? The kernel of unconscious desire and what one might call its relation of magnetisation is absolutely central to all the paradoxes of human misrecognition [méconnaissance]. Isn't its³⁴ foundation that human desire is a fundamentally acosmic function?

That is why, when I try to develop these plastic images for you, you might think that I am updating ancient imaginary techniques, such as I have taught you to read in the form of the sphere in Plato. You might say that to yourselves.

This little double point,³⁵ this sigillum [poinçon] shows us that what we have here is the field of the veritable mainspring of the relation between the possible³⁶ and the real.

The charm, the seduction – so long pursued – of classical logic, the true point of interest of formal logic (Aristotle's logic) is that which it both supposes and excludes and which is its true pivot-point, namely the point of the impossible as being that of desire. I will come back to this.

So you could say that everything I am explaining to you here now is the continuation of the preceding discourse. It's (allow me the term) "Theo-things" [trucs à Théo], because, when all's said and done, it's as well to give a name to this God, regarding whom we tickle ourselves a little too romantically when we claim to have pulled a fine stunt by saying that God is dead.

³³ I translate "connaître" and "connaissance" as "know" and "knowledge" in this and the next paragraph, but it is important to be aware of the limited meaning of "connaissance" compared with English "knowledge" (see above, seminar of 13 December 1961, p. 61, footnote 21).

³⁴ It is unclear whether "its" refers to "the kernel" or to "human misrecognition".

³⁵ Roussan adds "ce point de garantie" ("this point of guarantee").

³⁶ A page is missing in Typescript 1, from here to "...the whole story in Freud about the father".

There are gods and gods. I already told you that some gods are perfectly real. We would be mistaken if we failed to recognise their reality. To be clear about terms, why not have called the god at issue (the problem we can't dodge, because it's a problem that is our business, a problem on which we have to take a position) by his true name of "the Supreme Being",³⁷ echoing Beckett who called him "Godot".

Incidentally, if I remember right, this was the surname of Robespierre's good friend: I believe she was called Catherine Théot.

It is certainly the case that a whole part of the analytic elucidation – the whole story in Freud about the father – is our essential contribution to the function of Theo in a certain field, namely the field that finds its limits on the edge of the double cut, the cut which determines the structuring features, the fundamental kernel of the phantasy in both theory and practice.

If something can be articulated that puts the domains of Theo in the scales... domains that prove to be not so totally reduced, nor so reducible, because we deal with them just as much, except that, for some time recently, we have been losing what I might call their soul, their juice and their essence: we don't really know anymore what to say about them; this father seems to be absorbed in an ever-receding mist, and that leaves the import of our practice singularly in suspense... but³⁸ if there really is some historical correlate there, it's by no means superfluous that we should evoke it when we try to define what we deal with in our domain.

I believe it is high time to do so. It's high time because, already, a certain sector is separating itself out, in a thousand concrete, articulated, clinical and practical forms, in the evolution of our practice, a sector which is distinct from the relation to the Other, big O, as fundamental, as structuring³⁹ the whole experience whose foundations we have found in the unconscious. But its⁴⁰ other pole has all the value that I earlier called "complementary": that without which we wander, we come back, as by a retreat, an abdication, to this something that was the ethic of the theological era, of which I have made you feel the origins, certainly retaining all their worth and value, in this original freshness that the dialogues of Plato have preserved for them.

What do we see after Plato, if not the promotion of something that gets perpetuated nowadays in the dry-as-dust form of the distinction (its occurrence under the pen of an analyst is nothing less than scandalous) between ego-subject and ego-object [du moi-sujet et du moi-objet]?

³⁷ The deist cult of the Supreme Being was instigated by Robespierre in 1794, partially retracting the antireligious stance of leaders of the French Revolution at the start of the 1790s.

³⁸ Lacan picks up from the phrase that began the paragraph.

³⁹ "...as fundamental, as structuring..." refer back to "the relation to the Other" (by gender agreement).

⁴⁰ It is ambiguous in the French what "its" refers back to in the previous sentence, but most probably to "practice".

Tell me of the rider and the horse,⁴¹ of the dialogue between the soul and desire; but it's just this soul and this desire – this referral of desire to the soul, precisely when desire alone was in question – that is the issue. In short, it's everything that I showed you last year in the *Symposium*.⁴² It's a matter of seeing this more essential clarity that we are able to offer, namely that desire is not on one side.

If desire appears to be this unmanageable something that Plato describes in such a poignant, moving way and that the higher soul is destined to dominate, to hold captive, it is because there is a relationship, to be sure, but the relationship is internal, and to divide it is precisely to let oneself be fooled by a decoy, a decoy that has to do with the fact that this image of the soul, which is nothing other than the central image of secondary narcissism as I just defined it for you and to which I will return, functions only as a path of access (a decoying path, but one that is oriented) to desire.

Plato was certainly not unaware of this, and what makes his enterprise all the more strangely perverse is that he masks it from us. For I will speak to you of the phallus in its double function that allows us to see it as the common point of eversion, of “evergence” (I construct the word as the reverse of “convergence”). I think I can articulate for you, on the one hand, its function at the level of the $\$$ of the phantasy and at the level of a , which it authenticates for desire, and starting from today I will indicate to you the kinship of the paradox with this same image that the schema of Figure 4⁴³ offers you, because here it is nothing other than this point which guarantees to the surface cut in this way its character as a single-sided surface, but guarantees this character to it entirely – truly making $\$$ into the cut of a .

But let's not go too quickly. Assuredly, a is the cut of S .⁴⁴ The sort of reality that we are driving at in this objectality or this objectness,⁴⁵ which we are alone in being able to define, really is for us what unifies the subject.

And what did we see in the dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades?⁴⁶ What are we to make of the comparison between this man, elevated to the pinnacle of a passionate homage, and a box?⁴⁷ This wondrous box: it has always existed wherever man has known how to make for himself objects, figures⁴⁸ of what for him is the central object, that of the

⁴¹ “Thus in its relation to the id it [the ego] is like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse” (Freud, [Standard Edition 19](#), p. 25 (*The Ego and the Id*)).

⁴² Roussan notes that one listener records “Transference” (the title of the previous year's Seminar) at this point instead of “the Symposium”. Typescript 1 has a gap.

⁴³ As discussed above (p. 354, footnote 2), Typescript 1 has only “fig.” followed a space. I follow Roussan's “Figure 4”, but it is unclear how that figure (above p. 357) fits with what Lacan is saying here.

⁴⁴ “ S ” standing for the undivided subject.

⁴⁵ Typescript 1 has “objectité”, which I follow (see above, p. 339, footnote 26, seminar of 6 June 1962). Roussan has “objectivité”.

⁴⁶ *Seminar 8* (B Fink, trans.), seminars of 1 and 8 February 1961.

⁴⁷ Plato, [The Symposium](#) (R.G. Bury, trans.), 215b.

⁴⁸ There is a page missing in Typescript 1, from here to the sentence ending “...something that we will be able to bring out more precisely.”

fundamental phantasy. And what does it contain, as Alcibiades says to Socrates? The ἀγάλμα [*agalma*, “ornament”, “statue of a god”, Greek].⁴⁹

We begin to glimpse what this *agalma* is: something that must have more than a little to do with the central point that gives its accent, its dignity to the object *a*. But, in fact, things need to be inverted at the level of the object. The phallus being so paradoxically constituted that care must be taken to distinguish between its enveloping function and its enveloped function, I believe that it is rather at the heart of the *agalma* that Alcibiades seeks what he appeals to, at this moment when the *Symposium* ends, in this something that only we are able to read (even though it is obvious), because what is it that he seeks, that he prostrates himself before, to which he makes this impudent appeal?

It is to Socrates as desiring, whose avowal he wants. At the heart of the *agalma*, what he seeks in the object manifests itself as being the pure ἐρῶν [*eron*, “lover”, “desirer”, Greek] because what he wants isn’t to tell us that Socrates is lovable, it’s to tell us that what he has desired most in the world is to see Socrates desiring.

This most radical subjective implication at the heart of the object itself of desire (where I think you can find your bearings a little, simply because you can put it in the old drawer of the desire of man and the desire of the Other) is something that we will be able to bring out more precisely. We see that what organises it is the punctiform, central function of the phallus. And here we have our old sorcerer, rotting or not, but certainly a sorcerer⁵⁰ – he who knows something about desire, who gives our Alcibiades the brush off by telling him what? To work on his soul, his ego [moi], to become what he isn’t: a neurotic for the centuries to come, a child of Theo.

But why? What is this rebuff that Socrates makes to a being as admirable as Alcibiades? It’s that, quite manifestly (as I think I have shown you),⁵¹ he is the *agalma* – Alcibiades is, purely and manifestly, the phallus. Only nobody can know whose phallus he is. To be the phallus like that [à cet état là], you have to be made of certain stuff (he certainly had plenty of it), and, on that score,⁵² without any doubt, the charms of Socrates have no hold on Alcibiades. It passes down the centuries of ethical theology that followed towards this enigmatic and closed form, but a form which the *Symposium* nevertheless indicates for us at its starting point with all the necessary complements, namely that what Alcibiades actually does, when he manifests his call for the desirer⁵³ at the heart of the privileged object, is to appear in a position of

⁴⁹ Lacan discusses the meaning of “*agalma*” at length in *Seminar 8* (B Fink, trans.), seminar of 1 February 1961.

⁵⁰ Apollinaire, *The Rotting Sorcerer* (see above, seminar of 29 November 1961 and supplement to that seminar)

⁵¹ Lacan says that Alcibiades is Socrates’ “daemon”, which he equates with the *agalma* (*Seminar 8* (B Fink, trans.), p. 162, seminar of 8 February 1961).

⁵² These three words are not in Typescript 1. Roussan includes them, citing the notes of one listener.

⁵³ “appel du désirant” could also mean “desirer’s call”, but “call for the desirer” makes more sense if Lacan is referring to Alcibiades account of his attempt to arouse Socrates’ desire and his veiled attempt to arouse desire in Agathon (Plato, *op.cit.*, 215a-222b).

frantic seduction towards the one, whom I called the “fundamental idiot” [le con fundamental],⁵⁴ whom, with supreme irony, Plato connoted by the proper noun meaning “the good”: Agathon.⁵⁵

The supreme good has no other name in his dialectic.

Doesn't this show well enough that there is nothing new in our research? It goes back to the point of departure, in order, this time, to understand what has happened since.

⁵⁴ Lacan, *Seminar 8* (B. Fink, trans.), p. 397, seminar of 28 June 1961.

⁵⁵ Agathon, a character in the *Symposium* and ἀγαθός (*agathos*, “good”, Greek).

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We are approaching the end of the year. Certainly, my discourse on identification hasn't been able to exhaust its field. But that doesn't leave me feeling that I have let you down. Someone worried when we began, and not without reason, that I had chosen a theme which, as they thought, seemed to permit, to be the tool (even for us) of "everything is in everything". I have tried, on the contrary, to show you the structural rigour that there is in it.

I have done so by starting from the second type of identification distinguished by Freud¹ and I believe, without false modesty, that I have rendered it unthinkable for you in the future otherwise than via the mode of functioning of the unary stroke. The field I have been in since I introduced the signifier of the interior eight is that of the third type of identification – the identification by which the subject is constituted as desire and in which we are prevented by all our previous discourse from overlooking that the field of desire is only conceivable for man if we start out from the function of the big Other. The desire of man is situated in the locus of the Other and is constituted there precisely as this original type of identification that Freud teaches us to separate out empirically (which is not to say that his thinking on this point is empirical) in the form that is given in our clinical experience, most especially in connection with the very manifest form of the constitution of desire which is that of the hysteric.

Simply to say "there is the ideal identification, and then there is the identification of desire to desire"² can certainly suffice for a first clearing of the ground, it's plain to see; but Freud's text doesn't leave things there. It doesn't leave things there because, in the major works of his third topography,³ he shows us the relation of the object, which here can only be the object of desire, to the constitution of the ideal itself.⁴

He shows it on the plane of collective identification,⁵ of what is, in short, a sort of point of concurrence of experience, through which what I might call the "unariness" of the stroke (of my unary stroke, I mean) is reflected in the unicity of the model taken as that which functions in the constitution of this order of collective reality that is, one might say, the crowd with a head – the leader.

This problem, local though it be, is surely what offered Freud the best basis, at the point where he was elaborating these things at the level of the third topography, for grasping something that brought together the three forms of identification; not in a structural way, but somehow linked to a sort of concrete point of concurrence.

¹ Freud, *Standard Edition 18*, pp. 106-107 (*Group Psychology*). See above, p. 23, footnote 38, seminar of 22 November 1961.

² Presumably referring to Freud's second and third forms of identification, respectively, *ibid.*, pp. 106-108.

³ Roussan flags this term, since Freud is generally taken to have developed only two topographies.

⁴ "itself" referring to "the ideal" and not to "the constitution" (by gender agreement).

⁵ See, in particular, Freud, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-116 (the chapter of *Group Psychology* that culminates with a diagram showing this "relation of the object ... to the constitution of the ideal").

Because the first form, the one which will remain at the edge, at the end of what we have developed this year, the one which comes first in order, and also the most mysterious, even though seemingly the first to be brought to the light of the analytic dialectic, namely the identification with the father,⁶ is there in this model of identification with the leader of the crowd; it is implicated there in a certain way without at all being implicated, included in its total dimension, in its entire dimension.

The identification with the father raises the question of something to do with the tradition of a properly historical adventure (to the point that we can probably identify it with history itself); it opens up a field, which we have not even dreamt of bringing into our purview this year, or else we would indeed have to be completely absorbed in it.

To have started out by taking as our object the first form of identification would have been to engage our whole discourse on identification in the problems of *Totem and Taboo*, the work [oeuvre] that one can indeed say to be the driving force [animatrice] for Freud, to be, to have been for him *die Sache selbst* (the thing itself), and of which one can also say that it will remain that in the Hegelian sense. Because for Hegel *die Sache selbst*, the work, is, in short, everything that justifies, everything that entitles the subject – whatever he may have been, experienced, suffered⁷ or whatever – to subsist: only this essential exteriorisation, and the path of a work that it traces. This is what we behold and it is what the work wishes solely to remain: the phenomenon of consciousness in movement. And, from that angle, we really can say that we are right to (or, rather, we would be wrong not to) identify the legacy of Freud, if it had to be limited to his work,⁸ with *Totem and Taboo*.

Through the discourse on identification that I have pursued this year, through what it has constituted as an operational apparatus [appareil opératoire], you cannot fail, I think, to be ready to start putting it to use. Until you have tried it out, you can't⁹ appreciate its decisive importance for everything that calls at the present time for an urgent formulation – phantasy, first and foremost.

I have been at pains to emphasise that it is there¹⁰ that we have the essential preliminary stage, an absolute requirement of didactic antecedence, for a proper articulation of the failing, the shortcoming, the loss that we are at when it comes to referring in the least bit adequately to what is at issue concerning the paternal function.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.

⁷ Typescript 1 and Roussan have “qui ne fut, qui ne vécut, qui ne souffrit” (verbs in the past indicative) which gives no clear sense to the sentence. Insertion of a pronoun (“il”) and change of the verbs to past subjunctive would give “qu’il ne fût, qu’il ne vécût, qu’il ne souffrît”, which is almost indistinguishable in sound and gives a clear sense. I suppose that this is what Lacan said and translate accordingly.

⁸ i.e., his writings.

⁹ Roussan reports that some listeners’ notes miss out the negation to make “Already before you have tried them out you can appreciate...”.

¹⁰ It is unclear whether Lacan means identification or phantasy.

I allude specifically to something that we could qualify as the soul of the year 1962, during which there appeared two books by Claude Lévi-Strauss: *Totemism* and *The Savage Mind*. I don't think that any analyst has acquainted himself with them – of the analysts who follow the teaching offered here – without feeling encouraged and reassured and without finding in them the complement¹¹ (because, certainly, he can expand at leisure into fields, which I can only bring in here by allusion) in order to show you the radical character of the signifying constitution in everything that belongs, let us say, to culture, although, of course (as he emphasises), this doesn't mark off a domain with an absolute frontier.

But at the same time, within his highly pertinent exhaustions of the classificatory mode, of which one might say that the savage mind is less the instrument than, in a way, the effect, the function of the totem appears entirely reduced to these signifying oppositions. And it is clear that this cannot be resolved in any but an impenetrable way unless we analysts are capable of introducing here something which is at the same level as this discourse, namely (like this discourse) a logic.

This year I have given you the tool of this logic of desire, this logic of the object, by describing the apparatus by means of which we can grasp something that, being valid, must always have been the true driving force [animation] of logic – I mean when, in the history of its progress,¹² it made itself felt as something which opened the way to thought. Nevertheless, this secret mainspring was able to remain masked, even when logic concerned and implied¹³ the movement of this world – the world of thought, which is far from being nothing – in a certain direction, a direction that, for being centrifugal, was not any the less determined by something related to a certain type of object, which is the one that we are interested in at present.

What I defined the last time as the point, the point Φ , in a certain new way of delimiting the circle of connotation of the object, is what brings us to the threshold, before I leave you this year, of having to pose the function of this point Φ (an ambiguous point, as I told you) not just in the mediation but in the constitution of the barred subject and of little *a* in the phantasy, whereby each is inherent to the other, not just as front goes with back [non seulement comme l'envers vaudrait l'endroit], but as a front that would be the same thing as the back; its function in recognising, starting from desire, what the object of human desire is, and in recognising the reason why, in desire, the subject is nothing other than the cut of this object... and to understand how individual history (the discoursing subject, in which the individual is only included) is oriented, polarised by this secret point – secret and, perhaps, ultimately, never accessible, if we are to concur with Freud (at least for a time) regarding the

¹¹ Presumably the complement of “the teaching offered here”.

¹² i.e., the progress of logic.

¹³ Roussan writes these verbs, which are in the past indicative tense in Typescript 1, in the past subjunctive (the sound is the same), thereby suggesting a meaning to this phrase, which is otherwise hard to interpret. Also, if Lacan was indeed using the rare past subjunctive tense here, that is additional support for my reading of a difficult sentence above (p. 376, footnote 7).

irreducibility of an *Urverdrängung* [that entails the existence of this navel of desire in the dream which he speaks of in the *Traumdeutung*.¹⁴

This is the function that we cannot omit in any appreciation of the terms into which we decompose the faces¹⁵ of this nuclear phenomenon.

Don't rush, therefore to rejoin clinical experience,¹⁶ which always leads us back too easily to the well-worn paths of veiled truths that we feel comfortable with, namely: what is the object of desire for the neurotic, or again for the pervert, or indeed for the psychotic? But this is wrong. It's not about sampling, varying the suits – all that will ever do is make us lose the interesting cards. “Become what you are,” the formula of the classical tradition tells us, and it's possible, it's a pious wish, but what is guaranteed is that you become what you misrecognise [*méconnait*]. The way in which the subject misrecognises the terms, the elements and the functions between which the destiny of desire is played out, precisely because one of its terms somewhere appears to him in unveiled form, is the way in which each of those, whom we have called neurotic, perverse and psychotic, is normal.

The psychotic is normal in his psychosis and nowhere else,¹⁷ because the psychotic has to do in desire with the body. The pervert is normal in his perversion because he has to do, in his variety, with the phallus, and the neurotic because he has to do with the Other, the big Other as such. Therein they are normal, because these are the three normal terms of the constitution of desire.

These three terms are certainly always present. But what's at issue for the moment isn't their being in any one of these subjects, but here in the theory. That's why I can't advance in a straight line. I have to take stock over again with you at each step, not so much to make sure that you understand me...

“Do you care much whether you are understood?” I am asked from time to time. Such are the pleasantries that I hear in my analyses.

Of course I do!

¹⁴ “There is at least one spot in every dream at which it is unplumbable - a navel, as it were, that is its point of contact with the unknown” (Freud, *Standard Edition 4*, p. 111 (*The Interpretation of Dreams*)).

¹⁵ Typescript 1 has “phases”.

¹⁶ In both Typescript 1 and Roussan the sentence begins, “That is why, before rejoining clinical experience...”, but Lacan changes tack in mid-sentence, listing the “veiled truths” (expressed as questions) instead of saying what has to be done before rejoining clinical experience. I recast the opening phrase to make the sentence grammatical.

¹⁷ “et pas ailleurs” in Roussan. Typescript 1 has “et par ailleurs” (almost indistinguishable in sound), which would mean “and elsewhere”.

But what makes the difficulty is that it's a necessity of our discourse here to make you see that you are included [compris]¹⁸ in this discourse. That's where it can start to be misleading [trompeur], because you are included in it in any case and error can arise solely from the way in which you conceive that you are included in it.

I was struck yesterday morning when I read (before the electricity strike started) the work of one of my students on phantasy.¹⁹ Not bad, by gosh. It doesn't go so far as to apply the tools that I have talked about, but just the collation of passages in Freud where he speaks about phantasy in an absolutely inspired fashion leaves you asking yourself where the first formulation (in the absence of everything that these openings can be said to have conditioned since) can have found this pertinence, whereby it remains now marked by the same stamp [poinçon] that I am trying to distinguish in things. Always the emphasis is on the drive which makes itself felt from within the body, on schemas structured entirely from topological prevalences, on the question of how to define what functions by arriving from outside and by arriving from inside.

What incredible vocation in the forging of platitudes can have been required in what one might call the mentality of the analytic community to believe that this is a reference to what is called "the realm of biology" ["l'instance biologique"]!

Not that I mean to say that a body, a living body, isn't a biological reality (I'm not playing games), but to make it function in the Freudian topology as topology and to see there some sort of biologism, which would be radical, inaugural and co-extensive with the function of the drive – that is the enormity, the gaping hole of what is called "getting it wrong" ["un contresens"], as is absolutely manifest from the facts, namely that, as I don't need to point out, until we hear differently (until the revision that we await from biology), the paths of analysis haven't produced so much as the trace of a biological or even physiological, or even an aesthesiological discovery ("aesthesiological" means a discovery relating to the senses, some possible new discovery about how we sense things). We can define clearly what has been got wrong: the relationship of the drive to the body is everywhere marked in Freud topologically. This idea of a direction doesn't have the same reference value as²⁰ a discovery in biological research.

It is certainly true, as you know, that "What is a body?" wasn't even an idea framed in the consensus of the philosophising world at the time when Freud drew the outline of his first topography. The whole notion of *Dasein* came later and is constructed to give us, let's say, the primitive idea one could have of what a body is as a "there", constitutive of certain dimensions of presence.

¹⁸ "Comprendre", "compris" ("to understand", "understood") can also mean "to include", "included". See also Lacan's discussion of the set of all sets that do not include themselves (seminar of 24 January 1962, above).

¹⁹ Serge Leclaire, "Les éléments en jeu dans une psychanalyse", in *Les Cahiers pour l'analyse*, No. 5, Paris, Seuil, Nov-Dec. 1966. Leclaire's paper (in the original French) and a synopsis in English can be accessed at <http://cahiers.kingston.ac.uk/vol05/>.

²⁰ Roussan makes sense of this sentence by assuming "que" ("as") instead of "de" ("of") in Typescript 1.

(I'm not going to redo Heidegger for you. The reason I talk to you about him is that you will soon have the text which I told you was easy²¹ – you will be able to take him at his word. At any rate, the facility with which we read him now proves that what he has launched into the flow of things is well and truly in circulation.)

These dimensions of presence, however you call them – *Mitsein*, being there, and whatever else, *In-der-Welt-sein*, all these worldhoods,²² so different and so distinct... because it's precisely a matter of distinguishing them from space, *latum*, *longum* and *profundum*, which (there is no difficulty in showing us)²³ is only abstraction, and because, what's more, this is put forward as such in Descartes, whom I placed at the beginning of our exposé this year: the abstraction of the object as subsisting, as already ordered in a world, which isn't simply a world of coherence, of consistency, but a world from which the object of desire as such has been surgically removed [énucléé].

Yes, in Heidegger all of this makes admirable irruptions into our mental world. Let me say that there are people who shouldn't be satisfied with it in any degree – psychoanalysts and me. Heidegger told me himself: the undoubtedly suggestive reference to what I will call (don't think that I am trying to demean what is at issue) an "artisanal praxis", the foundation of the object-utensil, as assuredly discovering in the highest degree these first dimensions of presence, so subtly detected, that are proximity and distancing, as constituting the first lineaments of this world, owes a lot to the fact that his father was a cooper.

Certainly, all this reveals to us something with which presence is eminently concerned, and we could sign up to it much more passionately by posing the question of what it is that every tool has in common – the primitive ladle, the first means of drawing out, of extracting something from the flow of things... what does it have to do with the tool of the signifier?

But for us, when all's said and done, isn't everything decentred²⁴ from the outset, if there's a meaning to what Freud says, namely that at the heart of the constitution of every object there is the libido? If this has a sense, it means that the libido isn't just the surplus of our presence as praxis in the world, which is the age-old thematic that Heidegger re-introduces. Because if *Sorge* is care, occupation – if it is what characterises the presence of man in the world – this²⁵ means that when care relaxes a little, people start to fuck. And that, as you know, is, for

²¹ Martin Heidegger, *L'être et le temps*, translated from the German by Rudolf Boehm and Alphonse de Waelhens. Paris: Gallimard 1964 (see above, seminar of 6 June 1962).

²² See above, p. 339, seminar of 6 June 1962.

²³ Lacan means that Heidegger has no difficulty showing this to us (Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, trans.), pp. 122-134). Heidegger's discussion includes (*ibid.*, p.129) comments on Descartes' example of melted wax that Lacan discussed in the seminar of 17 January 1962 (above, p. 98).

²⁴ Typescript 1 has "centré" ("centred").

²⁵ "this" probably referring back to the idea of libido as surplus.

example, the teaching of someone whom I honestly select here without any scruple and in a polemical spirit, because he is a friend: Mr. Alexander.²⁶

Mr. Alexander has a very honourable place in the (slightly cacophonous) chorus that might be called “the theoretical discussion” in the American psychoanalytic society and he has every right to it, because it would clearly be out of order, in a society as large and officially constituted as the American Association, to reject what really coincides very well with the ideals and the practices of a particular “cultural space”, as it is called.

But it’s clear that even to outline a theory of libidinal functioning as constituted by the surplus part of a certain energy (however we categorise it, as survival energy or something else) is to absolutely deny the whole value (not just the noetic value), the whole *raison d’être* of our function as therapists, as we define its terms and goals.

Of course, on the whole, in practice, we get by very well, we carry out our daily task of getting people back to their daily tasks, but it’s certain that even when we describe this result as a therapeutic success, we at least know that it’s either one thing or the other: either we have done it outside any genuinely analytic path, and in that case what wasn’t working properly at the heart of the matter (what it’s really about) still isn’t working properly; or, if we have succeeded, it’s precisely to the extent (this is the ABC of what we have been taught) that we didn’t in any way try to do a fix [régler l’affaire], but set our sights on something else, on what wasn’t working properly, on what had to do with the central, libidinal knot.

This is why any results that can be sanctioned in the direction of adaptation, any therapeutic success in bringing people back to the wholesomeness of their *Sorge*, of their little daily tasks, is always for us (and, at bottom, we know it, and that is why we have no reason to boast about it) a second-best, an alibi, a misuse of funds, so to speak.

I apologise for this little detour to banalities, but there are banalities that are worth calling to mind, especially since, called to mind in a certain fashion, the banalities may sometimes appear anything but banal.

And what is much more serious is that we debar ourselves from doing better, even though we know full well that this action of ours, of which we can occasionally boast that it has been successful, is carried out via paths, which do not concern the result. By following these paths, we bring about some fine touches [retouches] in a supplementary place, a place which these paths have nothing to do with except by resonance. That is the most one can say.

When do we manage to put a subject back into his desire? It’s a question that I pose to those here who have some experience as analysts, obviously not to others. Is it conceivable that the

²⁶ Franz Alexander, “Three Fundamental Dynamic Principles of the Mental Apparatus and of the Behavior of Living Organisms” and “Unexplored Areas in Psychoanalytic Theory and Treatment—Part 1” in [The Scope of Psychoanalysis. Selected Papers of Franz Alexander 1921-1961](#), pp. 165-169 and pp. 183-201.

result of an analysis should be to make a subject enter into desire, as one talks of entering into a trance, rut or religion?

That's why I allow myself to pose the question at a local point (the only point, when all's said and done, that is really decisive, because we're not apostles): I ask whether the question doesn't deserve to be maintained when it concerns analysts.²⁷ Because the problem posed for others is: what is the desire of the analyst in order for him to be able to subsist, to persist in this paradoxical position?

Because, obviously, it's not at all my intention, by what I'm saying, to express a wish that the effect of analysis should be the effect obtained since time immemorial by mystical sects, and I am not particularly asking you to take an interest in their renowned means of operation (often, no doubt, deceptive, and dubious in any case most of the time), unless it is nevertheless to situate them as occupying the overall position of bringing the subject to a field which is nothing else than the field of his desire.

In a word, spending last weekend in a series of rebounds, trying to see the meaning of some words from the Muslim mystical technique, I opened some things that I, like everybody else, tried out at one time. Who hasn't delved into those indigestible and stultifying books of Hinduism, of the philosophy of some asceticism or other, which are served up to us in dry-as-dust terminology and usually without understanding; I would say, the more stupid the transcriber the better the understanding, which is why English works are the best. Don't on any account read works in German: they are so intelligent that it immediately turns into Schopenhauer.

And then there's René Guénon, who I mention because he's a curious geometrical place. I see from your smiles how many of you have sinned! I swear to you there was a time, at the beginning of this century to which I belong (I don't know if it still goes on, but I see that the name is not unknown, so it must do) when the entire French diplomatic corps found in René Guénon (that idiot) its master thinker. You see where that got us!

You won't find anything worth reading, whichever of his books you open, because what he says the whole time is that he would do better to shut up. This must have an imperishable charm, because the result is that it helped all sorts of people who probably didn't have much to do (as Briand said, "You know that we have no foreign policy, because a diplomat has to exist in an atmosphere that is rather hard to breathe")²⁸ to stay inside their little shell.

In short, the point of all this isn't to guide you towards Hinduism. But although I can't say I have reread Hindu texts (because I never read them and, as I say, the experience, when you

²⁷ Lacan apparently means when the analysand aspires to become an analyst (in a "training analysis"). Roussan cites listeners' notes, according to which Lacan said "didactiques" ("trainings") and not "analystes" ("analysts").

²⁸ Aristide Briand was an early 20th century French politician. I have not found the quote.

make the attempt, is always very disappointing), I did look again at their retranscription and comparison with much more accessible things from the Muslim mystical technique by someone marvellously intelligent, although presenting all the appearances of madness (I say the appearances): Monsieur Louis Massignon. Elucidating the terms of that technique and the penultimate threshold that has to be crossed on the way to the sought-after liberation, Massignon refers to the buddhi, used in the Hindu asceticism, and gives to the buddhi its function as object, because that is what “buddhi” means, although it hasn’t been stated anywhere else except in this text of Massignon, where he finds its equivalence to the “manzur” of Shiite mysticism.²⁹ The function of the object is the indispensable turning point of this process of concentration, in an account in metaphorical terms of the subjective realisation which is in question and which, really, is just the access to the field of desire that we can simply call “the desirer” [“le désirer”].³⁰

And what is he, this desirer? Certainly, those who haven’t travelled this road don’t have the slightest idea, hence the annoyance of all the officiants of the well-established domain, which last time I called that of Theo. Naturally, in all religions, mystical asceticism is hedged around by suspicion, exclusion and the smell of sulphur.

In any case, the relationship articulated at this stage, at the stage that we can describe as the completion of the involution, of the assumption of the subject into an object (chosen by mystical techniques in a very arbitrary order, it can be a woman or it can be the cork in a carafe), seemed to me to coincide perfectly with the formula “\$ ◇ a” which I formulate for you as a given, as the most simple formalisation that we can attain while staying in touch with the different forms of clinical work. Because we have to presume as to the structure of this central point such as we are able to construct it (“construct” being Freud’s term)³¹ and such as we must necessarily construct it in order to take account of the ambiguities of its effects.

The work I alluded to earlier,³² which I read yesterday morning, deals again (it takes time to digest things) with a theme that I talked about a long time ago, namely the structure of the Wolf Man, specifically in the light of the structure of the phantasy. This work circumscribes what’s at issue very well. It doesn’t represent much of an advance compared with the first formulations that I made, before I brought you the more recent tools, but it shows me the point you are at in following me, so that I can demonstrate that point as a place to be gone beyond. Let’s go back to this work, then, just in order to highlight it (I don’t mean to offer a

²⁹ Roussan, in a note, takes “manzur” to be the name of a Sufi teacher, Mansour Hallaj, about whom Massignon wrote a scholarly work. But Lacan is in fact referring to a different work by Massignon, and “manzur” is an Arabic term meaning “the object of which one becomes conscious” (Louis Massignon, *Essay on the Origin of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism* (B. Clark, trans.), pp. 62-65).

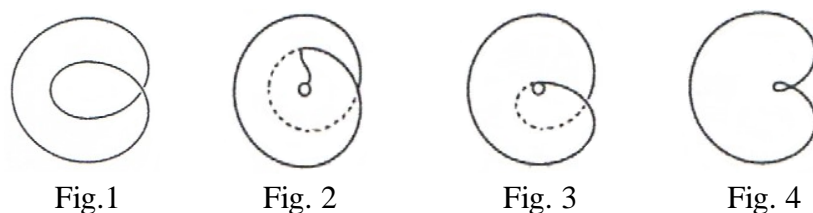
³⁰ This paragraph (from “Elucidating...”) is very muddled in the French. The versions mainly concur, so the fault must have been Lacan’s formulation.

³¹ Probably referring to Freud’s paper, *Constructions in Analysis* (Freud, *Standard Edition 23*, pp. 256-269).

³² Serge Leclaire, “Les éléments en jeu dans une psychanalyse” (see above, p. 378 and footnote 19).

critique). There are a lot more works that need doing and it's important that you should be familiar with this one and know it – that it should be broadcast. I think that that is desirable.

The logical definition of the object (I will allow myself on this occasion to call it “Lacanian”; that's not the same as talking about “Lacanism”, which is execrable), the object of desire, its logical function (designated by the novelty of the little circle [Fig. 1 below] by which I teach you to circumscribe [cerner] it³³ when I tell you that it is essentially constituted by the presence of this point, which is there, either in its central field [Fig. 2 below], or at the limit of this field [Fig. 3 below], or even here [Fig. 4 below] (because these three cases are the same), as the final reduction of the field)³⁴... the logical function³⁵ of the object doesn't depend on either its extension or its intension,³⁶ because its extension, if one can designate something by the term, comes down to the structuring function of the point. The more, so to speak, “punctiform” this field is, the more effects it has and these effects are, so to speak, effects of inversion.



In the light of this principle there is no problem about what Freud gave us as the reproduction of the Wolf Man's phantasy. You know this tree, this big tree, and the wolves, which absolutely aren't wolves, perched on the tree, and there are five of them, although somewhere else there are said to be seven.³⁷ If we needed an exemplary image of what little *a* is at the limit of the field [Fig. 2 above], when its phallic radicality is manifested by a sort of singularity as accessible at the only place where it can appear to us, namely when it approaches or when it can approach the external field [Fig. 3 above], the field of what can be reflected, the field of that in which a symmetry can allow the specular error – we have it here. Because it's clear that it certainly isn't the specular image of the Wolf Man that is there before him, but that, nevertheless (and it's something we have emphasised for long enough for it not to be a novelty), for the author of the work I mentioned,³⁸ it is the very image of the moment that the subject experiences as the primal scene.

I mean that it is the very structure of the subject faced by this scene. I mean that, faced by this scene, the subject makes himself into a gazing wolf and makes himself into five gazing wolves. What opens up to him suddenly on that Christmas night is the return of what he essentially is in the fundamental phantasy.

³³ Lacan presumably means the object.

³⁴ The four figures seems to be Lacan's. They are drawn at the start of the seminar in the notes by Paul Lemoine.

³⁵ Picks up (by repeating) from “logical function” earlier in the sentence.

³⁶ See above, seminar of 17 January 1962, p. 112 and footnote 58.

³⁷ Freud, *Standard Edition 17*, p. 37, footnote 2 (*From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*).

³⁸ Serge Leclaire, “Les éléments en jeu dans une psychanalyse”.

No doubt the actual scene is veiled (we will come back to this veil shortly). All that emerges of what he sees is this V of the open legs of his mother, flapping like a butterfly's wings, or the Roman V of the time on the clock – five o'clock on the hot summer afternoon when the encounter appears to have taken place.³⁹ But what's important is that what he sees in his phantasy is the barred "S" itself as the cut of little *a*: the little *as* are the wolves.

I bring this up today because the object of desire is illustrated here in a way that gives me immediate access to specific elements of structure. I could set them out for you more didactically, but I don't have the time, so I skirt around a difficult and abstract discourse that I despair of being able to deliver in its final details in the limitations we have, and I take this path instead.

This non-specular object which is the object of desire, this object which can be located in this frontier zone as a function of images of the subject in, let's say (for the sake of brevity and at the risk of confusion), the mirror constituted by the big Other or, let's say, in the space developed by the big Other because we have to take this mirror away unless we make it into what is called (no doubt for a reason) a "witch's" mirror, by which I mean those mirrors with a certain concavity containing a number of other concentric mirrors, in which you see your own image reflected as many times as there are smaller mirrors in the big one.

That is what indeed happens. You have present in the phantasy that which is perhaps only definable, only accessible via our experience or perhaps (I don't know and I am not much concerned) via the experiences that I alluded to earlier, and which is of the nature of the object of desire. And this is interesting because it's a logical reference: the object that is connoted, distinguished by the Euler circles is the object of the function that is called "the class". I will show you its intimate, structural relationship with the function of privation – the first of the three terms that I have articulated as privation, frustration and castration.

But what completely veils the true function of privation... although one can approach it and it's where I started from to give you the schema of universal and particular propositions – you remember, – when I told you that "Every teacher is literate" doesn't mean that there is any teacher.⁴⁰ The thing is still truthful [véridique] for all that. The mainspring of privation – privation of the unary stroke⁴¹ as constitutive of the function of the class – is sufficiently indicated there. But such is the function of dialectical reason (with all due respect to

³⁹ Freud, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

⁴⁰ Roussan follows Typescript 1, which has "...doesn't mean that there is only one teacher". I follow the version in the notes of another listener, reported by Roussan, which chimes with what Lacan said in the seminar of 17 January 1962 (above, pp. 112-114).

⁴¹ Typescript 1 has "privation très unaire" (literally "very unary privation"), which is clearly wrong and which could easily be a mishearing of "privation du trait unaire" if Lacan swallowed the "du" ("of the"). This is Roussan's preferred version, which I follow. Roussan also reports another listener's version, "...privation: trait unaire comme constituant la fonction de la classe", which is at odds with Lacan's argument in the latter part of the 17 January seminar and seems to confirm the hypothesis of a swallowed "du".

Monsieur Lévi-Strauss who believes that it is only a particular case of analytical reason)⁴² – it precisely doesn't enable grasping of its "savage" stages unless you start from its elaborated stages.

That isn't to say that the logic of classes is the savage state of the logic of the object of desire. If people were able to establish a logic of classes (I'll ask you to devote our next meeting to this object), it's because there was access, which they denied themselves [qu'on se refusait], to a logic of the object of desire. Put differently: the fecundity of the privative theme is to be understood in the light of castration.

Everything leads me to think, at the point I am at in the illumination of our path, that what I wanted to indicate to you today is only this function, which I situated for you long ago and showed how it is exemplary of the most decisive, the most cruel incidences of the signifier in human life, when I told you that jealousy, sexual jealousy requires that the subject knows how to count. The lionesses in the little pride of lions in some zoo or other⁴³ that I described to you were manifestly not jealous of one another, because they didn't know how to count. Here we put our finger on something: the object as constituted at the level of desire, namely the object as a function of castration and not of privation, is quite probably the only object that can really be numerical.

I am not sure whether that suffices for us to affirm that it is countable, but when I say that it is numerical I mean that it carries number with it as a quality. There are five wolves in the drawing and seven in the text. We can't say which is right, but it doesn't matter – there certainly aren't twelve of them.

What gives me the right to venture such indications? I am hedging my bets, as with a risky interpretation: I await the response. I mean that by indicating this correlation to you, I am inviting you to notice everything that could validate or invalidate it, and that you might otherwise let pass, in what is presented, in what is proposed to you. You can take my word for it that I have developed the status of this relationship of the category of the object (the object of desire,) with numeration a little bit further. But I am hedging my bets in the sense that I can give myself time and just say that we will come back to this later, without it being any less legitimate for me to indicate a reference point that may clarify certain facts for you if you make use of it.

At any rate, what we see at this level under Freud's pen is an image: the libido of the subject, he tells us, emerged from the experience "fragmented" [éclatée].⁴⁴ My dear friend Leclair doesn't read German; he didn't put the German term in brackets and I didn't have time to go

⁴² Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, pp. 245 et seq.

⁴³ Lacan, *Seminar 4* (A. Price, trans.), seminar of 20 March 1957.

⁴⁴ "eine Aufsplitterung der Libido" (Freud, *Gesammelte Werke 12*, p. 71). The *Standard Edition* translates: "his sexual life was positively splintered up by it" (by the primal scene) (*Standard Edition 17*, pp. 43-44).

and check it. It's the same thing as the term "splitting",⁴⁵ "split" ["refendu"]. The object manifested here in the phantasy carries the mark of what we have called on many occasions "the splits of the subject" [les refentes du sujet]. What we find here is undoubtedly the very topological space⁴⁶ that defines the object of desire, and this inherent number is probably only the mark of the inaugural temporality which constitutes this field.

The double loop is characterised by a repetition that one might call radical. It has the fact of doing the circuit twice in its structure and the knot thus constituted in this doing the circuit twice is at the same time this element of the temporal,⁴⁷ because, really, the question remains open of how the developed time that is a part of the current usage of our discourse is inserted there.⁴⁸ But it is also the essential term, by which the logic constituted here is differentiated in an absolutely authentic fashion from formal logic as it had subsisted with its prestige intact up until Kant.

And this is the problem: where did formal logic get its prestige, given its apparently quite dead character for us? The prestige of this logic consisted entirely in what we ourselves have reduced it to, namely the use of letters. The little a's and the little b's of subject and predicate and of their reciprocal inclusion: that's what it's all about. It never did anybody any good, it never brought about the slightest progress in thought, but it kept its fascination down the centuries as one of the rare examples that were given us of the power of thought.⁴⁹

Why?

It is no use for anything, but it could be of use for something. All that's needed (it's what we do) is to bring out its constitutive misrecognition: "a = a" is there the principle of identity. This is its principle. But we won't say A, the signifier, except to say that it's not the same big A.⁵⁰ The signifier, by its essence, is different from itself, which is to say that nothing of the subject can be identified with it without excluding itself from it.

It's a very simple, almost obvious truth, which suffices in itself to open up the logical possibility of the constitution of the object at the place of this splitting,⁵¹ at the very place of this difference of the signifier from itself in its subjective effect.

⁴⁵ Lacan uses the English word.

⁴⁶ Roussan has "dans l'espace même, topologique", but "dans" ("in") seems to confuse the sense and is not in Typescript 1, so I leave it out.

⁴⁷ Typescript 1 and Roussan have "du temporal, de temporel" which is hard to interpret and harder to render in English. French "temporel" = English "temporal", but French "temporal" means the offices of the liturgical year. Perhaps Lacan intended the first meaning but stumbled over the word.

⁴⁸ I follow Typescript 1 in the second half of this sentence. Roussan's version is almost the same, but ungrammatical.

⁴⁹ "de la puissance de la pensée" in Roussan. Typescript 1 has "d'impuissance de la pensée" ("of powerlessness of thought"), which is less plausible because of meaning in the context and because one would expect use of the definite article ("de l'impuissance...").

⁵⁰ Lacan shifts polemically in this sentence from "a" as a letter used to stand for some value (an "argument") in formal logic to "A" as "Autre", the big Other.

⁵¹ "splitting" in English in the original.

How this object which is constitutive for the human world... Because what you need to be shown is that, far from having the slightest aversion towards the evident psychological fact that the human being tends to take his desires for realities, we have to follow him on this score. Because he is right: it's only in the channel furrowed by his desire that he can constitute any reality whatsoever, whether or not it comes under the yoke⁵² of logic.

I will pick up from there next time.

⁵² "sous le youg" in Typescript 1. Roussan has "dans le champ" ("in the field"). Mishearing by the stenographer seems unlikely, unless he/she was mesmerised by Lacan's ploughing analogy earlier in the sentence.

27 June 1962

What I need to do today, in the context of the theoretical teaching that we have succeeded in covering together this year, is to choose my axis, as I might say, and I will put the accent on the formula that supports the third type of identification,¹ which I wrote for you a long time ago (since the time of the graph) in the form of “S” barred, that you now know to read as “cut of a ” [$\$ \diamond a$].²

The accent won't be on³ what is implicit and nodal there, namely the φ , the point thanks to which the eversion from one into the other can happen, thanks to which the two terms present themselves as identical, like back and front (but not just any back and front, or I wouldn't have needed to show you what it⁴ is when it represents the double cut on the particular surface whose topology I tried to show you in the cross-cap). The point marked here:



is the point φ thanks to which the circle depicted by this cut can serve for us as the mental schema of an original identification.

I believe I have sufficiently indicated the structural function of this point in my last discourses. To a certain degree, it can harbour for you an excess of satisfying properties: here is the phallus with the magical function that our discourse has long implied for it. Making it our landing point would be a bit too easy.

That's why today I want to put the accent on this point, which is to say on a , little a , as at the same time⁵ being that which lets us conceive of the function of the object in analytic theory, namely this object which, in the psychical dynamic, is what structures for us the whole progressive-regressive process, what we have to do with in the relations of the subject to his psychical reality, but which is also our object, the object of analytic science.

¹ Freud, *Standard Edition 18*, p. 107 (*Group Psychology*).

² It is unclear exactly what Lacan said here. Typescript 1 has "...that you now know to read as 'cut of big A' ". Rue CB has "...that you now know to read as 'cut of big S $\diamond a$ '". Roussan has "...that you now know to read as 'cut of little a '". I prefer the last version, which is what one would expect in view of what follows.

³ Lacan says only "Non pas sur..." ("Not on..."), which I expand for clarity.

⁴ Presumably referring back to "the point".

⁵ "at the same time" is oddly placed in Lacan's sentence. He seems to mean that the point is little a at the same time as it is φ .

And what I want to foreground, in what I am going to say to you about it today, is that if we want to qualify it in a genuinely logical (I stress, logicising) perspective, the best we can say about it is that it is the object of castration. I mean (I specify) as against the other functions of the object that have been defined before now. Because if one can say that the object in the world, in so far as it can be discerned there, is the object of a privation, one can also say that the object is the object of frustration. And I am going to try to show you just how the object that is our object is different from them.

Clearly, if this object is an object of logic, it can't have been completely absent, undiscoverable in all the attempts that have been made hitherto to articulate as such what is called logic.

Logic hasn't always existed in the same form – the form which served us perfectly well, which met our needs up until Kant, who still went along with it. This formal logic, born one day under the pen of Aristotle, exercised this captivation, this fascination until, in the last century, people started looking into how formal logic could be revised in detail. They noticed for example that many things regarding quantification were missing from it.

It's certainly not what was added to formal logic that is interesting, but rather what had kept us attentive to it. And a lot of the things that people felt needed to be added to it lead in a singularly sterile direction. Really, what is interesting for us about logic concerns the reflection that analysis imposes on us regarding the powers of Aristotelian logic that retained their force for such a long time.

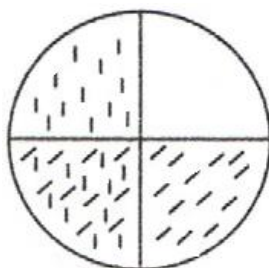
The outlook of anyone who strips formal Aristotelian logic of all its so fascinating details must (I repeat) abstract from what it has brought that is decisive – a cut in the mental world – in order to be able even to understand truly what preceded it; the possibility, for example, of the whole Platonic dialectic, which is always read as if formal logic was already in place, which completely falsifies our reading of it. But we won't go into that.

What defines the Aristotelian object, as it must be called, is precisely the ability to have properties which belong specifically to it [qui lui apartiennent en propre]: attributes. And these are what define classes. But this is a construction that it⁶ owes solely to a confusion of what I will call (for want of anything better) the categories of being and of having. This would merit long developments and I must have recourse, in order to get you to make this step, to an example that will serve me as a support.

I already showed you this decisive function of the attribute in the dial: it's the introduction of the unary stroke (distinct from the phasic part), where it will be said, for example, that every stroke is vertical, which doesn't in itself imply the existence of any stroke: there may be

⁶ i.e., the Aristotelian object.

vertical strokes, but there may not be any.⁷ To say that every stroke is vertical must be the original structure, the function of universality, of universalisation proper to a logic founded on the trait⁸ of privation.



Πᾶς [*Pas*, Greek] is “all”. It evokes some echo of the god Pan, but that is one of the mental coalescences that I ask you to try and expunge. The name of the god Pan has absolutely nothing to do with the all [le tout], and the panic effects that, of an evening, the god makes his amusement among the simple souls of the countryside have nothing to do with any effusion, mystical or other. When old authors described delirium tremens [raptus alcoolique] as “panophobic” it was well named in the sense that something Πανικός [*Panikos*, “relating to the god Pan”, Greek] is stalking the person, troubling him, so that he jumps out the window. But there’s nothing more to be read into it. It’s an error of excessively Hellenist minds to add this extra touch, as one of my former teachers (much as I loved him) used to do: he would make the correction, “You ought to say ‘raptus pantophobic’ ”.⁹ Absolutely not.

Pas is indeed “all” and what it is related to, if anything, is πάσασθαι [*pasasthai*, Greek], which is possession. I will perhaps be reproved if I link this *pas* to the *pos* of *possidere* and *possum* [“to possess” and “I can”, Latin] but I don’t hesitate to do so.

The establishment of a new classificatory logic of the sources of the Aristotelian object revolves around the possession or non-possession of the unary stroke [trait unaire] – of the characteristic trait [trait caractéristique]. I use the term “classificatory” intentionally, because thanks to Claude Lévi-Strauss you now have the corpus, the dogmatic articulation of the classificatory function in what he himself calls (I leave to him the responsibility for what is

⁷ I follow Typescript 1 to the letter in this sentence except for putting brackets around “distinct from the phasic part”. Roussan has quite different wording from the colon onwards, as follows: “it’s the introduction of the unary stroke that distinguishes the phasic part, where it will be said, for example, that every stroke is vertical, which doesn’t in itself imply the existence of any stroke, from the lexical part where there may be vertical strokes, but there may not be any.” Roussan remarks (correctly, based on this wording) that Lacan has “phasic” and “lexical” the wrong way around, judged by his own definitions earlier in the year (above, seminar of 17 January 1962, p.110 and footnote 53). But in the Typescript 1 wording (with my brackets) Lacan is here talking about lexis and not phasis, and so is not guilty of a mistake.

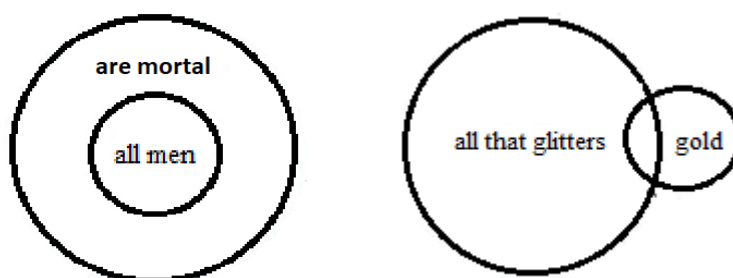
⁸ The French word “trait”, which Lacan uses here, is the same word that I generally translate as “stroke”. Lacan is again taking advantage of the fact that one and the same French word can mean “stroke”, “line” or can mean “trait”, “attribute”.

⁹ Greek “Pas” becomes “panto-” with various endings in some oblique cases, and this form is used in various French (and English) words, such as “pantomime” (“mimicking everything”).

humorous in the term) “the savage state”,¹⁰ which is much closer to Platonic than to Aristotelian dialectic: the progressive division of the world into a series of moieties, couples of antipodal terms that he circumscribes in types, the essence of which, as you will see if you read *The Savage Mind*, is that what isn’t hedgehog is whatever you want [ce que vous voudrez] – shrew or marmot, something else. What characterises the structure of the Aristotelian object, is that what isn’t hedgehog is non-hedgehog. That’s why I say that it’s the logic of the object of privation.

This can take us much further, even as far as the type of elusion, by which the problem (always acute in this logic) is posed of the function of the excluded middle, which, as you know, entails problems right to the heart of the most elaborated logic – of mathematical logic.

But we are dealing with a beginning, with a kernel that is more simple, which, as I said, I want to picture for you by an example. I won’t go too far afield to find it. I will take a proverb which presents a peculiarity in French that’s not immediately apparent, at least for French speakers. The proverb is: “All that glitters is not gold” [“Tout ce qui brille n’est pas or”].¹¹ If you want to render it in colloquial German, for instance, it’s no use being literal: “Alles was glänzt ist kein Gold”. That would not be a good translation. I see Mademoiselle Uberfreit¹² nodding approval at what I say: she agrees with me. “Nicht alles was glänzt ist Gold”. This may, apparently, give greater satisfaction as to the meaning; putting the accent on the *alles*, thanks to an anticipation of the *nicht* which is not at all usual, which forces the spirit of the language and which, if you reflect on it, misses the sense, because this is not the distinction that is at issue. I might use the Euler circles, the ones that we used the other day regarding the relation of the subject to some particular case: “all men are mortal”.¹³



Is the meaning simply that? Can we express it here by putting a part of what glitters in the circle of gold, while the other part isn’t in the circle? Is that the meaning? Don’t think that I’m the first logician to have paused at this structure. It’s a fact that more than one author who has occupied himself with negation has paused at this problem, not so much from the

¹⁰ The first English translation of Lévi-Strauss’ book has “mind in its untamed state” (Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, p. 219).

¹¹ The proverb is formulated identically in English and French.

¹² This is not a recognisable German surname, but is reproduced in all versions.

¹³ In Typescript 1. Roussan has “menteurs” (“liars”) instead of “mortels”, but universal mortality was discussed more recently (above, pp. 302, 304-305, seminar of 23 May 1962).

point of view of formal logic, which, as you see, scarcely pauses at it except to misrecognise it, but from the point of view of grammatical form, insisting that the all be arranged in such a way that what is put in question is precisely the “goldness” – the gold quality of what glitters. So the authenticity of gold goes in the direction of a radical putting in question.¹⁴

Gold here is symbolic of what causes glittering and, if I can say so in order to make myself understood – what gives the object the fascinating colour of desire. What’s important in a formula like this, if you will allow me the expression (forgive the play on words) is the *point d’or-age* [golden point/point of the storm]¹⁵ around which the question turns of what causes glittering and, in a word, the question of what there is in this glittering that is true. And from there, of course, no gold will be veritable enough to guarantee this point around which the function of desire subsists.

Such is the radical characteristic of this sort of object, which I call little *a*: it is the object put in question, because we can say that it is what interests us analysts, in the same way as one talks about what interests someone who lends their ear to a teaching.

There’s a reason for the nostalgic twist I saw on the lips of certain people, which meant to say: “Why doesn’t he tell the truth about the true?” (that’s how someone put it in so many words).¹⁶ It’s quite an honour to pay to a discourse which takes place every week in this daft position of me here behind a table in front of you, articulating the kind of explanation which, as a rule, is freely permitted to always avoid such a question.

If it wasn’t precisely the analytic object that is at issue,¹⁷ namely the object of desire, no one would have dreamt of raising such a question, except perhaps someone from the backwoods who might imagine that when one goes to university it is in order to know “the truth about truth”.

But that’s what is at issue in analysis. One might say that it’s what we feel awkward about when we make its mirage glitter (often in spite of ourselves) in the minds of those to whom we address ourselves. We are flummoxed by it like the fish by the proverbial apple. And yet it¹⁸ really is what is there, it’s what have to do with and, as that which is at the heart of the structure, it’s what castration bears on. It’s precisely because there is a subjective structure which revolves around a type of cut, which I represented to you like this, [the figure below] that there is, at the heart of phantasmatic identification, this object that organises, that induces

¹⁴ In Typescript 1. Roussan has a quite different, expanded version of this last sentence, according to which the French proverb “goes in the direction of denying to it [what glitters] the authenticity of gold, goes therefore in the direction of a radical putting in question”.

¹⁵ “Or” = “gold”, “orage” = “storm”. See above, pp. 302-303, seminar of 23 May 1962 (“this whirlwind”).

¹⁶ See above, p. 7, seminar of 15 November 1961.

¹⁷ I follow Typescript 1. Roussan has “S’il ne s’agissait que de l’objet analytique” (“If it was only the analytic object that is at issue”), which seems wrong in the context.

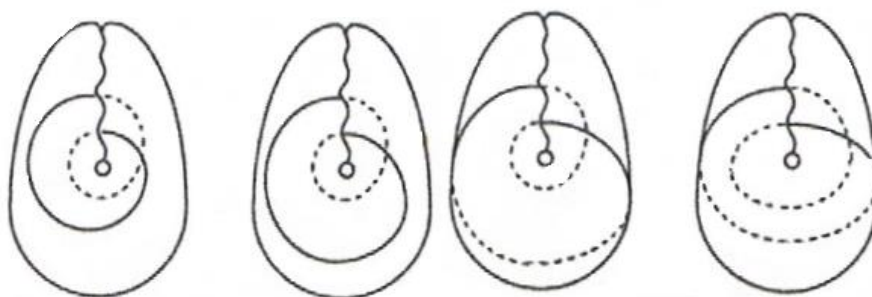
¹⁸ “elle” (feminine pronoun), so Lacan must mean the truth (“la vérité”) about truth. The other instances of “it” in this sentence are also “elle” in the French

(and it couldn't be otherwise) the whole world of anxiety, with which we have to deal, and that is the object defined as object of castration.



Let me remind you of the surface from which we borrowed this part that I described for you the last time as “surgically removed” [énucléée] and that gives the very image of the circle in terms of which this object can be defined. I want to give you an image of the specific property of this double-circuit circle.

Gradually expand the two lobes of this cut so that they both pass, so to speak, behind the anterior surface.

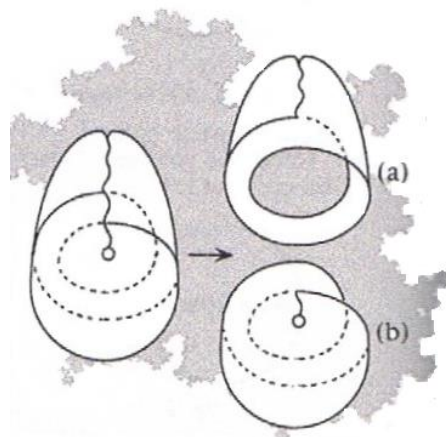


There's nothing new about this. It's the way I showed you before of displacing this cut:¹⁹ just by displacing it you easily make apparent that the complementary part of the surface, with respect to what is isolated around what we can call the two central leaves or the two petals, making them join up (the inaugural metaphor of the cover of Claude Lévi-Strauss' book, with this very image), what is left over [“a” in the figure below]²⁰ is clearly a Moebius surface:²¹

¹⁹ Above, pp. 350-351, seminar of 6 June 1962.

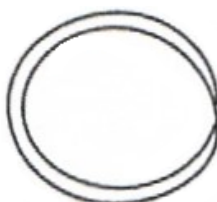
²⁰ i.e., the complementary part of the surface .

²¹ Roussan renders the last part of this sentence differently, as follows “... with respect to what is isolated around what we can call the two central leaves (or the two petals, making a link with the inaugural metaphor of the cover of Claude Lévi-Strauss' book), with this very image, what is left over is clearly a Moebius surface.” “La pensée sauvage” (“the savage mind”) also means “the wild pansy” (there are two French words spelt “pensée”; one of them means “thought”/“mind” and the other means “pansy”) and the front cover of the first edition of Lévi-Strauss' book has a picture of the flowers and leaves of a wild pansy. This pun may be what Lacan is referring to as a “metaphor”.

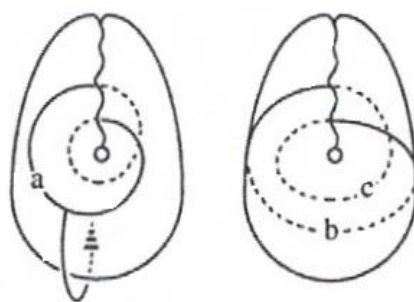


It's the same figure that you see here. What is between the two edges, displaced in this way, of the two loops of the cut, when these two edges move together, is a Moebius surface.

But what I want to show you here is that, for this double cut to meet itself, to close on itself, as seems to be implied by the structure as such, you have to expand the inside loop of the interior eight little by little.



And what you hope for is that its superimposition [recouvrement] on itself will suffice for it to “go back to normal”, where you know what's what – what's outside and what's inside. It's what this state of the figure shows you, because you see clearly how it needs to be seen: this lobe [“a” in the figure below] has extended onto the other side, it has made inroads on the other face [“b”]; it visibly shows us that the outside loop will, on this surface, rejoin the inside loop [“c”] provided that that it passes by the outside. So the surface called the “projective plane” is complete, closed, achieved.



The object defined as our object, the object that forms the world of desire, only rejoins its inwardness [son intimité] by a centrifugal path.

What does that mean? What do we find there? Let me go back a few steps. The function of this object is linked to the relation by which the subject is constituted in his relationship to²² the locus of the Other, big O [au lieu de l'Autre, grand Autre], which is the locus where the reality of the signifier is ordered. It's at the point where all meaning-power [signifiante] fails, is abolished, at the nodal point called "the desire of the Other", at the point called "phallic" because it signifies the abolition as such of all meaning-power, that the object little *a*, the object of castration, finds its place [vient prendre sa place].

So there is a relationship to the signifier, and I must remind you here again of the definition I began from this year concerning the signifier: the signifier is not the sign, and the ambiguity of the Aristotelian attribute is precisely that it wants to naturalise the signifier, to make it into the natural sign: "every three-coloured cat is female". The signifier, as I told you, contrary to the sign, which represents something for someone, represents the subject for another signifier.

And there is no better example of this than the seal. What is a seal? On the following day after I gave you this formula it so happened that a friend of mine who is an antique dealer put into my hands a little Egyptian seal, which (unusually, though not rarely) was in the shape of the sole of a shoe with the toes and the bones of the foot drawn on top. The seal, as you will have understood (I found it in texts) is indeed that: it is, so to speak, a trace. Nature abounds in them, but it can only become a signifier if you go around this trace with a pair of scissors and cut it out. If you then extract the trace, it can become a seal. The example shows clearly, I think, how a seal represents the subject, the sender, but not necessarily for the addressee: a letter can always remain sealed, but the seal is there for the letter; it is a signifier.

And the object little *a*, the object of castration, participates in the nature, thus exemplified, of this signifier: it's an object structured like that. What you will see is that, after everything the centuries have been able to dream up about the function of cognition [connaissance],²³ this is all we have left in our hand.

In nature, there is "some thing" [il y a "de la chose"],²⁴ if I can put it like that, which presents itself with an edge. Everything we can conquer there that simulates cognition [connaissance] is never anything more than detaching this edge, not in order to use it, but to forget it in order to see the rest which, curiously enough, is completely transformed by this extraction; exactly what the cross-cap pictures for you, because, remember, what is the cross-cap? As I told you, it's a sphere. That's a necessity – we can't do without the bottom of this sphere. It's a sphere with a hole, which you organise in a certain way, and you can imagine how by pulling on one

²² I follow Roussan. Typescript 1 has "...where the subject constitutes for himself his relationship to the locus of the Other..."

²³ To translate the French word as "knowledge" would be misleading (see above, seminar of 13 December 1961, p. 61, footnote 21).

²⁴ "Some thing" (not "something"), as one might say "some sugar".

of its edges you make appear, more or less by holding onto it,²⁵ this something which will block the hole provided that each of its points is joined to the opposite point, which, naturally, creates considerable intuitive difficulties which even obliged us to carry out the whole construction that I set out for you in the form of the cross-cap imaged in space.

So what of it? What is important here? It's that, by this operation that occurs at the level of the hole, the rest of the sphere is transformed into a Moebius surface. By the surgical removal [énucléation] of the object of castration the entire world is ordered in a certain fashion, which gives us, so to speak, the illusion of being a world.

And I will even say that, in a certain way, in order to make an intermediary between the Aristotelian object, where this reality is, as it were, masked, and our object that I am trying to highlight for you here, I will introduce in the middle the object, which, at one and the same time, inspires in us the greatest distrust, due to the inherited prejudices of our epistemological education, but which is easily fallen prey to and is our great temptation, so that we analysts perhaps wouldn't even have realised just how much we still believe in it if we didn't have Jung's example to exorcise it. The object I mean is that of *Naturwissenschaft*, it's Goethe's object – the object which ceaselessly reads in nature, like in an open book, all the figures of an intention that would have to be called quasi-divine, if the term “God” hadn't been so well preserved from another angle [d'un autre côté].

What are we to make of the, let's say, demonic (rather than divine) intuition that led Goethe to read in a skull found on the Lido the completely imaginary form of Werther²⁶ or forge the theory of colours, in short, made him leave for us the traces of an activity, of which the least one can say is that it is cosmogenic, engendering age-old illusions of the micro-macrocosmic analogy and yet, nevertheless, captivating in a spirit so close to us?

To what does Goethe's personal drama owe the exceptional fascination that it exercises upon us if not to the way in which the drama of desire shows though as central for him. You know that one of the survivors of the first generation of analysts, Theodor Reik, wrote an article “*Warum Goethe liess Friederike?*”²⁷ The specificity and the fascinating character of Goethe's personality is that we read there in all its presence the identification of the object of desire as what must be renounced in order for the world to be vouchsafed to us as world.

²⁵ “en le retenant” (Roussan). Typescript 1 has “en le retournant” (“turning it upside down”), which may be correct if Lacan is referring to what he discussed in earlier seminars: the bringing together of two diametrically opposite points on the hole's perimeter and twisting half of the perimeter through 180° where the points meet (seminar of 23 May, p. 311 and footnote 23; seminar of 6 June 1962, pp. 344-346).

²⁶ Lacan seems to recall a short text where Goethe mentions how he became convinced that the mammalian skull is derived from vertebrae, based on the appearance of a sheep's skull that he found in a Jewish cemetery in Venice (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “Significant Help Given by an Ingenious Turn of Phrase” in *Goethe: Scientific Studies* (D. Miller, trans.), pp. 40-41). The reference to Werther (of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*) seems muddled.

²⁷ Lacan's misremembering of: Theodor Reik, *Warum verliess Goethe Friederike?* The essay was published in English in 1949 as “Goethe's Romance with Friederike” in Theodor Reik, *Fragment of a Great Confession - A Psychoanalytic Autobiography*.

I reviewed the structure of this case²⁸ very adequately in “The Neurotic’s Individual Myth”²⁹ by showing its analogy with that developed by Freud in the story of the *Rat Man*. Or rather, my work was published somewhere without my consent, because I hadn’t revised or corrected the text, so that it’s almost unreadable; but it can be found, and you can make out the gist [les grandes lignes].

What I have tried to illustrate for you at the culmination of my discourse this year is this complementary relationship of a , the object of a constitutive castration where our object as such is situated, with this remainder where we can read everything, and particularly our figure $i(a)$.³⁰

In the specular illusion – the fundamental misrecognition that we always have to do with – the barred subject³¹ takes the function of specular image in the form of little i of little a [$i(a)$], even though it³² has, so to speak, nothing of the like to do with it.³³ It³⁴ couldn’t possibly read its image there for the good reason that if the barred subject is something, it’s not the complement of little i factor [facteur] of little a ;³⁵ it could be its cause,³⁶ and I use the term “cause” intentionally, because, ever since the categories of logic went a bit wobbly, the cause (good or bad) hasn’t had a good press and people have preferred to stop talking about it.

And, indeed, we are just about the only ones who can find our way about with this function, whose ancient shadow can’t be approached (after all the mental progress that has been made) without seeing it as, in a way, identical with everything that is manifested as effects, but when they are still veiled. And there is certainly nothing satisfying in that, unless perhaps it isn’t precisely by being at the place of something – by cutting out all of the effects – that the cause sustains its drama.

In any case, if there’s a cause that merits us espousing it, or at least giving it our attention, it’s not a cause that’s always lost in advance. So we can say that if there’s something that we must emphasise and not evade, it’s that the function of the partial object cannot in any way be reduced for us, if what we call “the partial object” is that which designates the point of repression of the fact of its loss.

²⁸ i.e., Goethe’s case.

²⁹ Lacan, *The Neurotic’s Individual Myth* (M. Evans, trans.), in *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* (48) [<https://www.douban.com/group/topic/23706556/>] (accessed November 2022)]. The translation is of a French original edited by Jacques-Alain Miller.

³⁰ This paragraph is very garbled in Typescript 1 (the typist inserts a question mark in brackets to signal his/her confusion). I follow Roussan.

³¹ Roussan cites the authority of four listeners for “S barré”. Typescript 1 has “est-ce que le grand A ...”, which is unlikely in the context and could be based on a mishearing.

³² “it” referring back to “the barred subject” (by gender agreement).

³³ “it” referring back to “specular image” (by gender agreement).

³⁴ “It” referring back to “the barred subject” (by gender agreement).

³⁵ The phrase (“little i factor of little a ”) is a putting into words of what Lacan usually writes $i(a)$. The French word “facteur” means “factor” as understood in arithmetic, but can also mean “maker” or “manager”.

³⁶ i.e., The barred subject could be the cause of $i(a)$.

And that's where the illusion of the cosmicity of the world takes root. The acosmic point of desire as designated by the object of castration is what we must retain as the pivot point, the centre of every elaboration of what we have accumulated³⁷ as facts concerning the constitution of the world as objectal.

But how can we fail to give to this object – this object that we see emerge at the point of failure of the Other, at the point of loss of the signifier (because this loss is the loss of this object itself, of the never-rediscovered member of the dismembered Horus)³⁸ – what I will call, so to speak, parodically, its “reflexible property”,³⁹ because it starts from it:⁴⁰ it is because the subject is initially and solely, essentially the cut of this object that something can be born which is this interval between skin and flesh [entre cuir et chair],⁴¹ between *Wahrnehmung* and *Bewusstsein*, (perception and consciousness), which is *Selbstbewusstsein* [self-consciousness].

Its place⁴² in an ontology founded on our experience deserves mention here. You will see that, at this point, it rejoins a formula commented on at length by Heidegger in its pre-Socratic origin.⁴³ The relationship of this object to the image of the world that it orders⁴⁴ constitutes what Plato called, strictly speaking [à proprement parler], “the dyad”,⁴⁵ provided we take note that in this dyad the subject *S* barred and the little *a* are on the same side.

Τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι [*to gar auto noein estin te kai einai*, “for thinking and being are the same”, Greek].⁴⁶ This formula, which was long used to unsustainably confuse being and cognition [connaissance], means exactly that.

In relation to the correlate of little *a*⁴⁷ – to what remains when the constitutive objet of the phantasy has separated itself, – being and thinking are on the same side, namely on the side

³⁷ Typescript 1 has “ce que nous avons à accumuler” (instead of “...avons accumulé”), which would mean “what we have to accumulate”.

³⁸ Roussan puts in brackets “Osiris”, correcting a mistake by Lacan: in Plutarch’s account of the Egyptian myth, the penis is the only part of the dismembered body of Osiris (the father of Horus) that is never recovered (Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 18).

³⁹ “réflexible” in Typescript 1. Roussan has “réflexive”. The words and the difference between their meanings are identical in French and English.

⁴⁰ The reflexible quality starts from the object (by gender agreements).

⁴¹ On “between skin and flesh” see above, seminar of 10 January 1961, page 91, footnote 30.

⁴² The place of *Selbstbewusstsein* (by gender agreement).

⁴³ See the next paragraph

⁴⁴ “qu’il ordonne” in Roussan, which makes much better sense in the context than “qui l’ordonne” (“that orders it”) in Typescript 1. The two are indistinguishable to the ear.

⁴⁵ One of Plato’s two “unwritten doctrines” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato%27s_unwritten_doctrines]

⁴⁶ The saying, discussed by Heidegger, is from the pre-Socratic philosopher, Parmenides. See: Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking* (D. Krell, F. Capuzzi Trans.), pp. 79 *et seq.*

⁴⁷ “Par rapport au corrélat de petit *a*” in Roussan. Typescript 1 has “Par rapport au corrélatif petit *a*” (“In relation to the correlative little *a*”). But if *a* itself is the correlate, then, going on in the sentence, *a* would be “what remains when the constitutive objet of the phantasy has separated itself”, whereas Lacan’s idea seems to be that *a* precisely *is* the constitutive objet of the phantasy. Perhaps Lacan said “au corrélatif du petit *a*” (“to the correlative of little *a*”) and the stenographer failed to hear “du”.

of little *a*. Little *a* is being as what is essentially missing from the text of the world, and that's why everything that's called "the return of the repressed" slips through around little *a*. It's where the true truth which interests us and which is always the object of desire (what any humanity and humanism are designed to make us miss) oozes through and betrays itself.

We know from our experience that there's nothing that has any weight truly in the world except what alludes to this object, of which the Other (big O) takes the place in order to give it a meaning. Every metaphor, including that of the symptom, tries to bring out this object in its signification, but all the pullulation of meanings that it⁴⁸ can engender will never staunch what is at issue in this hole of a central loss.

This is what regulates the relations of the subject to the Other, big O, regulates them secretly but in a way that is certainly no less efficacious than the relation of little *a* to the imaginary reflection which covers and surmounts it. In other words, what we first encounter, when we travel the only road that is open to us in order to rediscover the incidence of this little *a*, is the mark of the occultation of the Other under the same desire.

This is indeed the way: *a* can be approached by way of what the Other, with a big O, desires in the deficient [défaillant] subject, in the phantasy, the barred subject. This is why I have taught you that the fear of desire is experienced as equivalent to anxiety, that anxiety is the fear of what the Other in himself desires of the subject, this "in himself" being founded precisely on the ignorance of what is desired at the level of the Other. The little *a* comes to light on the side of the Other, not so much as lack, but rather as yet-to-be [comme à être].

This is why we get to the point here of posing the question of its relationship to the Thing – not *Sache*, but what I described to you as *das Ding*.⁴⁹ You know that all I did in leading you to this limit was to indicate that here the perspective is inverted – it's *i(a)* that envelops access to the object of castration.⁵⁰ It's the image itself that gets in the way in the mirror, or rather – as happens in dark mirrors – something can appear beyond the image that the clear mirror gives (you should always bear this obscurity in mind when ancient authors refer to the mirror).

What I previously described as the barrier of beauty⁵¹ attaches to the image in the clear mirror. The revelation of little *a* beyond this image, even in the most horrible form, will always keep its reflection.

I would like at this point to share with you the pleasure I had in coming across these thoughts in the writings of someone whom I consider, quite simply, to be the minstrel of our literature

⁴⁸ "it" referring back to "metaphor" (by gender agreement).

⁴⁹ Lacan, *Seminar 7* (D. Porter, trans.), seminars of 9, 16, 23 December 1959, 13 January 1960.

⁵⁰ There is a tangle in Typescript 1 at this point, which seems due to mishearing "accès" ("access") as "c'est" ("it is"). I follow Roussan.

⁵¹ Lacan, *Seminar 7* (D. Porter, trans.), seminar of 4 May 1960. See also above, p.1, seminar of 15 November 1961.

and who has incontestably gone further than anyone, present or past, along the path of realisation of the phantasy. I refer to Maurice Blanchot, whose *Death Sentence*⁵² was for me a sure confirmation of what I said the whole year in the ethics seminar about the second death. I hadn't read the second version of his first work, *Thomas the Obscure*, before now.⁵³ I think that, after what I am going to read from it, none of you will hesitate to try the experience of such a slim volume.

We find there something that incarnates the image of this object *a*, regarding which I have used the term "horror" (it's the term Freud uses, discussing the Rat Man).⁵⁴ The rat is the theme here too. Georges Bataille has written a long essay, *A Story of Rats*,⁵⁵ about the well-known central phantasy of Marcel Proust, which also concerned a rat. But I probably don't need to tell you that when Apollo riddles the Greek army with the arrows of the plague, it's because, as Monsieur Grégoire has realised, if, as I taught you a long time ago, Asklepius is a mole (not so long ago I discovered the plan of a molehill in a tholos, yet another tholos, that I visited recently), then Apollo is a rat.⁵⁶

Anyway, I am anticipating, or rather I am giving away *Thomas the Obscure* (there's a reason why it's called that):

Those who came in thought he was pretending to read, seeing that the book was always open to the same page. He was reading. He was reading with unsurpassable meticulousness and attention. In relation to every symbol, he was in the position of the praying mantis about to be devoured by the female. They looked at each other. The words, coming forth from the book which was taking on the power of life and death, exercised a gentle and peaceful attraction over the glance which played over them. Each of them, like a half-closed eye, admitted the excessively keen glance which in other circumstances it would not have tolerated. And so Thomas slipped toward these corridors, approaching them defenselessly until the moment he was perceived by the very quick of the word. Even this was not fearful, but rather an almost pleasant moment he would have wished to prolong. The reader contemplated this little spark of life joyfully, not doubting that he had awakened it. It was with pleasure that he saw himself in this eye looking at him. The pleasure in fact became very great. It became so great, so pitiless that he bore it with a sort of terror, and in the intolerable moment

⁵² Maurice Blanchot, *Death Sentence* (L. Davis, trans.).

⁵³ Maurice Blanchot, *Thomas the Obscure* (R. Lambertson, trans.).

⁵⁴ Freud, *Standard Edition 10*, pp. 166-167 (*Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*).

⁵⁵ Georges Bataille, *The Impossible* (R. Hurley, trans.).

⁵⁶ Henri Grégoire, *Asklépios, Apollon Smintheus et Rudra* (Belgian Royal Academy, Class of Letters 2, Series 45, 1949). Asklepius, Greek god of healing, has been associated with "skalops" ("mole" in Greek), and the god Apollo who smote the Greek army with plague in Homer's *Iliad*, was given the epithet "Smintheus", associated with "sminthos" ("mouse", in Greek). I have not found why Lacan says "as I taught you a long time ago".

when he had stood forward without receiving from his interlocutor any sign of complicity, he perceived all the strangeness there was in being observed by a word as if by a living being, and not simply by one word, but by all the words that were in that word, by all those that went with it and in turn contained other words, like a procession of angels opening out into the infinite to the very eye of the absolute.

I pass over these boundary-crossings, which go via:

...while, perched upon his shoulders, the word He and the word I were beginning their carnage...

until you get to the confrontation, which is what made me want to read you the whole passage:

His hands sought to touch an impalpable and unreal body. It was such a painful effort that this thing which was moving away from him and trying to draw him along as it went seemed the same to him as that which was approaching unspeakably. He fell to the ground. He felt he was covered with impurities. Each part of his body endured an agony. His head was forced to touch the evil, his lungs to breathe it in. There he was on the floor, writhing, reentering himself and then leaving again. He crawled sluggishly, hardly different from the serpent he would have wished to become in order to believe in the venom he felt in his mouth. [...] It was in this state that he felt himself bitten or struck, he could not tell which, by what seemed to him to be a word, but resembled rather a giant rat, an all-powerful beast with piercing eyes and pure teeth. Seeing it a few inches from his face, he could not escape the desire to devour it, to bring it into the deepest possible intimacy with himself. He threw himself on it and digging his fingernails into its entrails, sought to make it his own. The end of the night came. The light which shone through the shutters went out. But the struggle with the horrible beast, which had ultimately shown itself possessed of incomparable dignity and splendor, continued for an immeasurable time. This struggle was terrible for the being lying on the ground grinding his teeth, twisting his face, tearing out his eyes to force the beast inside; he would have seemed a madman, had he resembled a man at all. It was almost beautiful for this dark angel covered with red hair, whose eyes sparkled. One moment, the one thought he had triumphed and, with uncontainable nausea, saw the word "innocence", which soiled him, slipping down inside him. The next moment, the other was devouring him in turn, dragging him out of the hole he had come from, then tossing him back, a hard, emptied body. Each time, Thomas was thrust back into the depths of his being by the very words which had haunted him and which he was pursuing as his nightmare and the explanation of his nightmare. He found that he was ever

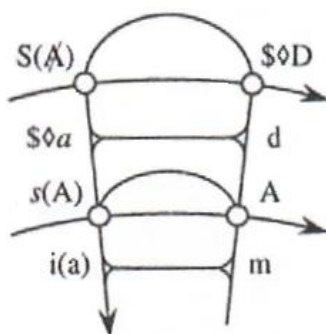
more empty, ever heavier; he no longer moved without infinite fatigue. His body, after so many struggles, became entirely opaque, and to those who looked at it, it gave the peaceful impression of sleep, though it had not ceased to be awake.⁵⁷

You can read the rest yourselves. And the path that Maurice Blanchot uncovers for us doesn't stop there. I have taken the trouble to bring this passage to your attention because, taking my leave of you this year, I want to say that I'm often conscious that all I do here is allow you to advance with me to the point at which, around us, many of the best people are already arriving.

Others have noted the parallelism between various researches that are being carried on at present and those that we are developing together. I could easily remind you how the works of Pierre Klossowski and his own reflections on works converge with the path of research into the phantasy as we have pursued it this year.⁵⁸

Little *i* of little *a* and little *a*, their difference, their complementarity and the mask that one constitutes for the other – that is the point I will have led you to this year. So little *i* of little *a*, its image, is not its image. The image doesn't represent the object of castration, it's not by any means the representative of the drive on which⁵⁹ repression specifically bears,⁶⁰ and for a double reason: firstly, this image isn't a *Vorstellung*, because it is itself an object, a real image (you can refer to what I wrote about this in my *Remarks on Daniel Lagache's Presentation*),⁶¹ an object that's not the same as little *a* and that isn't its representative either.

Let's not forget, where is desire ["d" in the figure below] located in the graph?



⁵⁷ Maurice Blanchot, *Thomas the Obscure* (R. Lambertson, trans.), pp. 25-29

[<https://archive.org/details/thomasobscure00blan>].

⁵⁸ Roussan cites the following works by Klossowski: *Sade my Neighbor* (A. Lingis, trans.), *Diana at Her Bath* (S. Sartarelli, trans.) and *Such a Deathly Desire* (S. Ford, trans.).

⁵⁹ "which" referring to "representative".

⁶⁰ Freud's *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, the "psychical (ideational) representative" of the drive (Freud, *Standard Edition 14*, pp. 148, 177 (*Repression, The Unconscious*)).

⁶¹ Lacan, *Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.), pp. 543-574 (see particularly the figure on p. 570, where *i(a)* is the real image of the vase)

It aims at the phantasy, barred S cut of little a [$\$ \diamond a$ in the figure above], analogously to how little m , the ego [moi], refers to the specular image. What does that mean, if not that there is some relation between the phantasy and the desirer himself? But can we make this desirer into the agent of desire, pure and simple? Let's not forget that, at the second stage of the graph, little d (desire) is a "who" that responds to a question – the d doesn't aim at a "who", but at a "Che vuoi?" ["What do you want?", Italian].⁶²

The desirer is the response to the question "Che vuoi?", the response that doesn't designate the "who" of "who wants?", but the response of the object. What I want in the phantasy determines the object from which the desirer that it contains must declare himself as desirer.

Look for him always, this desirer, at the core of any object of desire, and don't let the necrophiliac perversion be an objection, because it is precisely the example which proves that, on the near side [en-deçà] of the second death,⁶³ physical death still leaves something to desire and that the body can be seen there as entirely taken up in the function of the signifier, separated⁶⁴ from itself and witness to what the necrophiliac embraces: an ungraspable truth.

Regarding this relationship of the object to the signifier, before I leave you, let's come back to the point that these reflections are based on, namely to what Freud himself emphasised about the identification of desire (in the case of the hysteric, in brackets) with the desire of the Other. The hysteric shows us well what the distance is from this object to the signifier, this distance which I defined by the deficiency [carence] of the signifier, but implying her relation to the signifier.⁶⁵ This is what the hysteric identifies with when, Freud tells us, what she orients herself by and what sets her on her hunt is the desire of the Other. And it's that on which affects, he tells us – emotions considered here under his pen as mixed up in the signifier and taken up as such...⁶⁶ It's in this regard that he tells us that all the validated emotions – the conventional forms of emotion, so to speak – are nothing other than ontogenic

⁶² In one version of the graph, instead of the whole upper storey, two lines emerge upwards from "A", pass either side of "d" (desire) and then loop down to " $\$ \diamond (a)$ " where they terminate. One of the lines, which goes higher than the other, is marked "Che vuoi?" (*Écrits* (B. Fink, trans.), p. 690). See above, p.286, footnote 27, seminar of 9 May 1962.

⁶³ A concept that Lacan takes from Sade and applies to Antigone, the heroine of Sophocles's play (*Seminar 7* (D. Porter, trans.), seminar of 4 May 1960 and subsequent seminars in May-June 1960).

⁶⁴ "separated" referring back to "the body".

⁶⁵ Grammatically this could as well mean "its [the object's] relation to the signifier".

⁶⁶ In Typescript 1 this sentence begins "Et c'est sur quoi les affecte, nous dit-il, les émotions...", which is ungrammatical (plural subject, singular verb), but, correcting third-person singular "affecte" to plural "affectent" (they sound exactly the same), it would mean "And it's on which emotions affect them, he tells us...". It is obscure, though, what "them" could refer back to. Roussan has, very differently, "Et c'est sûr: quoi les affecte? nous dit-il" which would mean "And it's certain: what affects them (he tells us)?" As well as unclear meaning, this shares with Typescript 1 the problem of what "them" could refer back to. Roussan must be assuming it is the hysteric, suddenly treated by Lacan as plural.

I prefer Staferla, which has "Et c'est sur quoi les affects, nous dit-il...", taking "affects" to be a noun, not a verb, and assuming a false start by Lacan, so that the sentence peters out after "...and taken up as such".

inscriptions of what he compares to, what he reveals as expressly equivalent to hysterical attacks, which brings us back to the relation to the signifier.⁶⁷

The emotions are in a way the left-overs of behaviour, the discarded pieces taken up as signifier. And what is most tangible, everything that we can see of it, is to be found in ancient forms of combat. Those who have seen the film *Rashomon*⁶⁸ will remember the strange interludes which suddenly suspend the combatants, who each separately make three little circuits around themselves and offer a paradoxical reverence to some unknown point in space. This is a part of the combat, like in a mating parade. Freud teaches us to recognise this type of interruptive paradox of incomprehensible scissions.

If the hysteric manifests emotion it is precisely when she is on the track of desire, and it has this decidedly mimicked, untimely character, which gets misunderstood and gives an impression of falsity. What does this mean, if not that the hysteric certainly can't do anything other than to seek the desire of the Other where it is, where it leaves its trace in the Other – in utopia, or indeed in atopia, distress, even fiction; in short, that, as one might expect, it's by way of manifestation that all the symptomatic aspects are shown. And if these symptoms find this pre-travelled path, it is in connection with the relationship, designated by Freud, to the desire of the Other.

There was something else I wanted to point out to you, concerning frustration. Certainly, what I brought you this year concerning the relationship to the body (merely outlined in the way I tried to show you in a mathematical body the beginning of all sorts of paradoxes concerning the idea that we can frame to ourselves of the body) has applications that are undoubtedly well designed to profoundly modify the idea we might have of frustration as a deficiency [carence] of gratification concerning a supposed primitive totality that tends to be seen as designated in the mother-child relationship.

It's strange that, analytic thinking has never encountered on this path the membrane in which the child is born⁶⁹ (except, as always, in corners of Freud's observations, where we find the word *Schleier* [veil] in the Wolf Man case history) and which crops up in analytical literature without it ever having occurred to anyone that this was the beginning of a very fruitful path: tell-tale signs [stigmates].

⁶⁷ This sentence goes to show that "affects" in the previous sentence is a noun, because the Freud passage, which Lacan must be thinking of, is: "In my opinion the other affects [as well as anxiety] are also reproductions of very early, perhaps even pre-individual, experiences of vital importance; and I should be inclined to regard them as universal, typical and innate hysterical attacks, as compared to the recently and individually acquired attacks which occur in hysterical neuroses and whose origin and significance as mnemonic symbols have been revealed by analysis." (Freud, *Standard Edition 20*, p. 133 (*Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*))

⁶⁸ *Rashomon*, a film by the Japanese director, Akira Kurosawa

⁶⁹ In fact the newborn usually sheds the amniotic sack before emerging from the mother's body.

If there is something that can be conceived of as implying the totality of some kind of primary narcissism (saying this I can only regret that the person who asked me the question isn't here), it's surely not so much the reference of the subject to the body of the mother-host, but to these lost envelopes where the continuity between inside and outside, to which my model of this year introduced you and to which we will return, can be read so well.

I want simply to indicate to you, because we will come across it again, that if there is something where the relationship to the body, to incorporation, to *Einverleibung* has to be emphasised, it is to be looked for on the side of the father, who has been left entirely out of account in this regard.

I left him out of account because I would need to introduce you (when would I have the time?) to a whole tradition, that can be called mystical and that, assuredly, by its presence in the Semitic tradition, dominates the whole of Freud's personal adventure.

But don't you find it striking that what the child demands of the mother is the one thing that she doesn't have, namely the phallus? The whole dialectic of recent years, up to and including the Kleinian dialectic (which comes the closest) remains falsified because the accent is not placed on this essential divergence.

What's more, it can't be corrected and it's impossible to understand anything about what constitutes the impasse of the analytic relationship, particularly in the transmission of analytic truth as in a didactic analysis, the point being that it is impossible to bring in the relation to the father: you are not the father of your analysand. And I have said enough and done enough to ensure that no one, at least no one anywhere close to me, would any longer dare to risk advancing that you can be the analysand's mother.

But that is the issue. The function of analysis, as inserted where Freud left it to us with its sequels yet to be decided, its weave [trame] wide open, is situated where the pen fell from his hand in the article on the splitting of the ego, at the ambiguous point, to which he is brought by the following: the object of castration is a term so ambiguous that precisely when the subject has set about repressing it, he establishes it more firmly than ever in an Other.

Until we recognise that this object of castration is the very object by which we locate ourselves in the field of science (I mean that it is the object of our science, as number or quantity may be the object of mathematics), the dialectic of analysis, and not only its dialectic but its practice, its contribution even, and even the structure of its community, will remain in suspense.

Next year I will give you a treatment of anxiety, strictly pursuing the point where I have left you today.