

Fig. 1

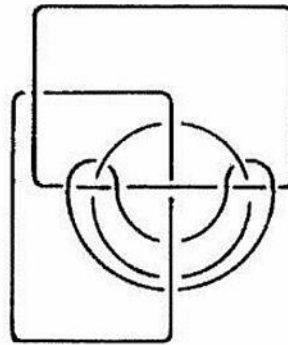


Fig. 2

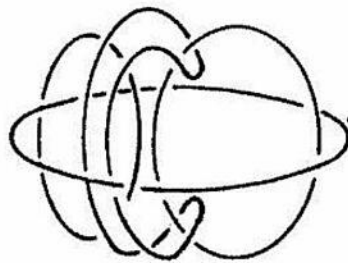


Fig. 3

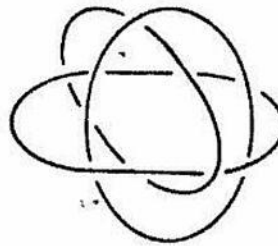


Fig. 4

Seminar of March 11, 1975

... R.S.I, these are just letters, as such supposing an equivalence. What results from my speaking them, making them serve me as initials, speaking them as real, symbolic, and imaginary? This takes on a sense. The question of sense is what I am trying to situate this year. The property of sense is that one names something in it, which gives rise to the dimension of what one calls "things," which only take their seating (*assise*) from the real.

I have been led to the showing (*monstration*) of the knot, although I sought to do a demonstration of analytic discourse. Now Freud's work makes no use at all of the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real. But it implies them, for it revolves around the Name-of-the-Father.

The Names-of -the-Father are that: the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real. These are the first names insofar as they name something. As the Bible indicates *apropos* of this extraordinary thing it calls the Father, the first time of this human imagining (*imagination*) that is God is consecrated to giving a name to what?--to each of the animals.

The Bible did not come from nothing, but from a tradition. A tradition is always stupid (*conne*). This is even why one has devotion--there is no other manner to be reattached to it than devotion. All that one can hope from a tradition is that it be less stupid than another.

How is this judged? There we reenter the more and the less. This is judged by the *plus-de-jouir* as production. The *plus-de-jouir* is all that we can get our teeth into. It is because it is a matter of the *jouir* that one believes in it. The *jouir* is at the horizon of this more and this less. It is an ideal point, which one calls what one can. One says: the phallus.

I have already stressed, in its time, that for the speakingbeing it is the essence of the comic. As soon as one speaks of something that has a relation to the phallus, it is the comic--which has nothing to do with the joke. The phallus is a comic like all comics--sad. Reread *Lysistrata*. You may laugh; you will find it bitter.

It must also be said that the phallus is what gives body to the imaginary. A little film brought me by Mme Aubry as an illustration of what I called then the Mirror Stage struck me a lot.

You know how, on some not very assured foundations, I account for the jubilation connoting this moment for the child. I suppose that this jubilation is due to the prematured body, uncoordinated until then, feeling reassembled, its unity seized by way of the image, its mastery assumed. For animals born ripe, it does not seem--without our being able to confirm it--that this is produced to the same degree. There is not for them this jubilation.

Well, there is a tie between this and a gesture I was able to grasp in this film. The child before the mirror--I don't know if it was a little girl or a little boy; it little matters, the gesture has the same value--the child passed its hand before what was perhaps a phallus or perhaps its absence, and pulled it back sharply from the image.

This ellipsis appeared to me the correlate of the prematuration, and the announcement of what will later be called modesty.

The phallus, thus, is above all the real insofar as one elides it. If you return to what I have cleared the way to this year in trying to make consonate consistency, ex-sistence, and hole with the imaginary, real, and symbolic, I will say that the phallus is not the ex-sistence of the real. There is a real that ex-sists to this phallus, which is called *jouissance*, but rather this is its consistency. It is the concept, if I may say so, of the phallus. With "concept," I echo the word *Begriff*, which doesn't go so badly, since in sum the phallus is what is taken in the hand.

The concept is not without relation with this announcement, this refiguration of an organ that is not yet taken as a consistency, but as an appendix. The ape also masturbates, and this is how he resembles man. In the concept, there is always something of the order of apishness. The only difference between the ape and the man is that the phallus consists no less for him in what he has of the female than in what he has of the male--a phallus worth the same as its absence. Whence the special accent that the speakingbeing puts on the phallus, in the sense that *jouissance* ex-sists to it. This is the accent proper to the real, the real inasmuch as it ex-sists, which is to say the real as real, a real at the power of 2. All that he knows of the two is power, a semblance (*semblant*) whereby he remains the one-alone. This is what one calls being--beginning with $1^2 = 1$.

There must be a tie between that and sense, whereby the 1 is applied so well to the 0. It was Frege who made the discovery, and I have blathered on occasion about the difference between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, where the difference between 0 and 1 is seen, all in suggesting to you that this is not a difference, for there is nothing better than the empty set to suggest the 1.

There it is. How then does the symbolic, ordinarily called the bla-bla, or the word--how does it cause sense?

That is a question I do not ask you without having the answer. Is it in the idea of the unconscious? Is it what I have said since the first Rome discourse? Question mark. No, it is not in the idea of the unconscious; it is in the idea that the unconscious ex-sists, which is to say, it conditions the real, the real of this being I designate the speakingbeing. It names things, as I have just evoked *apropos* of the first flirtation of the Bible with an earthly paradise. It names things for the speakingbeing, a being that, although a species of animal, differs singularly. What does this mean, "animal"? An animal is what reproduces.

Only, how is this animal parasited by the symbolic, the bla-bla? There, it seems to me--it seems to me, but it is not very probable--I am distinguished from people of my species of animal, who since time immemorial, it must be said, know that they speak, but do not explicitly make much of it. And what shows that they do not explicitly make much of it is not that they haven't said it, since everything is said in the bla-bla, but that they dream of not being the only ones (*les seuls*). This has them by the guts. Let us write *laisseuls* to evoke *let them alone*, in this parlance. These days, this is manifested in the frenetic need to discover the language of the dolphins and of the bees. Why not? This has always been a dream. Formerly, this dream had other forms: one dreamed that there was at-least-one God who spoke, and who, above all, did not speak without it having some effects. What you don't hear about is the tangled feet with which the sub-speakers, the angels--the commentators?--approach him.

Finally something more serious comes, a very small advance-- not a progress, to be sure, for there is no reason for us not to continue tangling up our feet. In linguistics we have nonetheless distinguished *naming*,¹ giving a name, consecrating a thing with a speaking name. Naming (*nomination*) is not communication. It is in naming that the *parlotte* is knotted to something of the real.

What is the relation of this *naming*, as the title of a book says, with necessity? Long ago, the person named Plato accounted for having to have the idea, the εἶδος, as a third. The εἶδος is a very good translation for what I call the imaginary, since it means the image. Plato saw very well that without the εἶδος there was no chance that words would stick to a thing. That did not bring him to the point of speaking of the Borromean knot, but only because chance had not furnished him with it. The idea was for him the consistency of the real. Nonetheless, the idea being in his time nothing without something namable, one deduced with university discourse the realism of the name. It must be said, the realism of the name is better than the nominalism of the real--believing that one can use just any name to designate the real. Not that I am marking a preference, I am simply underscoring that nominalism is an enigma paying homage to the effect of the name on the real, to what is added to it when one names it. In the realism of the name, itself founded on the imaginary, a *dire* is missing--one is interdicted from admitting this homage. This is found again in the prestige of the university. But it does not appear to us, us other analysts, to constitute an advantage. We remain in thought.

You will tell me that I run on (*m'en paye*), and even to the point of tiring you. It's that I make an effort to disentangle myself from what is fundamental to thought, what I will call the typical imbecility, typical of thought, of the human humor in regard to the real, which, however, it has to deal with (*traiter*). Whence the urgency that the sense of this word be discernible.

¹ In English in the original.

Up to the present, what I have said about tradition keeps all of its value. It is no more saleable than religion, the *green pastures*.² To go there, right to the end, the true blue (*vrai de vrai*) at-least-one God is He who taught the speakingbeing to give a name to each thing--the name of the name, the name-of-the-Father. The *non-dupe errs* without it, for the *zist* or zest-for-eternity.

To back up a little, this results in the real being what ex-sists to sense, inasmuch as I define it by the effect of *lalangue* on the idea, on the the imaginary supposed by Plato to the speakingbeing animal among others, among the other animals-in-the-flesh (*au corps*)--or the devil in the flesh, if you like. Why not, since we are in mental debility. One mentally debilitated is as good as another, why not Plato? Aristotle (*Aristote*) too, who argues about the idea of the ass (*âne*) to say that the ass is an ass, and that there is no Ass with a capital A; he too assistotles (*anistote*).

The real has to be conceived of as expelled from sense. It is the impossible as such, the aversion to sense. It is also the version of sense in the anti-sense and the antesense, the shock in return of the word, inasmuch as the word is only there for that--which is not for nothing, if it accounts for what it is in question, for the refuse (*immondice*) from which the world (*monde*) is pruned (*s'émonde*) in principle--insofar as there is a world. This does not mean that it gets there. Man is always there. The ex-sistence of filth (*l'immonde*), of what is not the world, is the real plain and simple. It is quite worthwhile to push this as far as the elaboration of the quantor.

Some such x exists; and instead of an (*un*) x, it is better to say *une* x. To what does it exist? That is what one must ask oneself. It ex-sists to the ideic consistency of the body, which body reproduces it. It ex-sists to the symbolic inasmuch as the symbolic turns in a circle around an inviolable hole, without which the three-looped knot would not be Borromean. That is what the Borromean knot means--the hole of the symbolic is inviolable.

Why not then write it like this (Figure 1)? The symbolic is the red circle I put there. It is imposed on the imaginary, which I put there in green, the color of hope. One sees how the real ex-sists there, no more compromising itself by knotting itself with the symbolic in particular than it does with the imaginary. In whatever direction (*sens*) one makes this imaginary and this real turn, they will cross each other without making a chain.

These two consistencies can just as well be straight lines to infinity. But we must stipulate that, however one conceives of this point at infinity dreamed up by Dessargues as specific to the straight line, a straight line that makes one of its ends return to the other, there is no question of its folding back on itself without the line which first passed over the other line passing over it again.

There is no other way to demonstrate that the Name-of-the-Father is nothing other than this knot than to suppose the rounds unknotted.

Let us no longer pass the symbolic in front of the imaginary. How can we knot three independent consistencies? There is a way, which is that one there, which I call the Name-of-the-Father (Figure2)--it is what Freud does. At the same time, I show the radical function of the Name-of-the-Father, which is to give a name to things, with all the consequences that this entails, including a *jouir*, notably. I have already made some traces for you of this four-looped knot, one of which failed. I give you yet another, the same, but in profile (Figure 3).

This story thus leaves us in the three, since the adjunction of the four is superfluous. As one might expect, the distinction in the symbolic of giving-a-name is a part of the symbolic.

² In English.

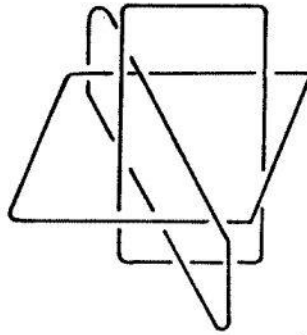


Fig. 5



Fig. 6

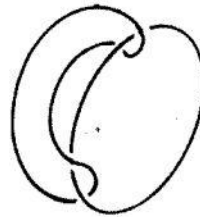


Fig. 7

What you see here (Figure 4) in a particularly clear way, I have repeated because it perhaps does not leap into view there (Figure 5). This is the Borromean knot before its flattening out. The Borromean knot is what, to two circles that circle each other, introduces this third which penetrates the circles in way that the other is, in relation to this third, in the same relation as with the first circle. I now ask the question: is there a discernible order here? Is the Borromean knot a whole (*tout*), a conceivable whole, or else does it imply an order?

At first approach, one could say that it implies an order if, for example, one colors each of the circles. Coloring a circle will mean--as someone who sent me a text expressed it very precisely--that it remains identified to itself. If they are colored, there is an order: 1 2 3 is not 1 3 2. The question, however, is to be left in suspense, for the order is perhaps indifferent in regard to all of the effects of the knot, which would indeed make us think that the rounds are not to be identified. It was inasmuch as three rounds make a Borromean knot, none of which makes a chain with another, that they support for us the idea of the symbolic, the imaginary and the real.

What has suggested this to me is a little letter from someone named Michel Thomé, who shows what he calls an error in perspective in figure 6 of chapter 10 of my seminar *Encore*--a figure that I have not drawn here, and which was introduced by him who was good enough to edit me, and whom I did not supervise.

I have stressed that, from one circle to another, the first to be knotted of three, the most simple form of the Borromean knot is, as I am served by the term, the circle tied in two ears

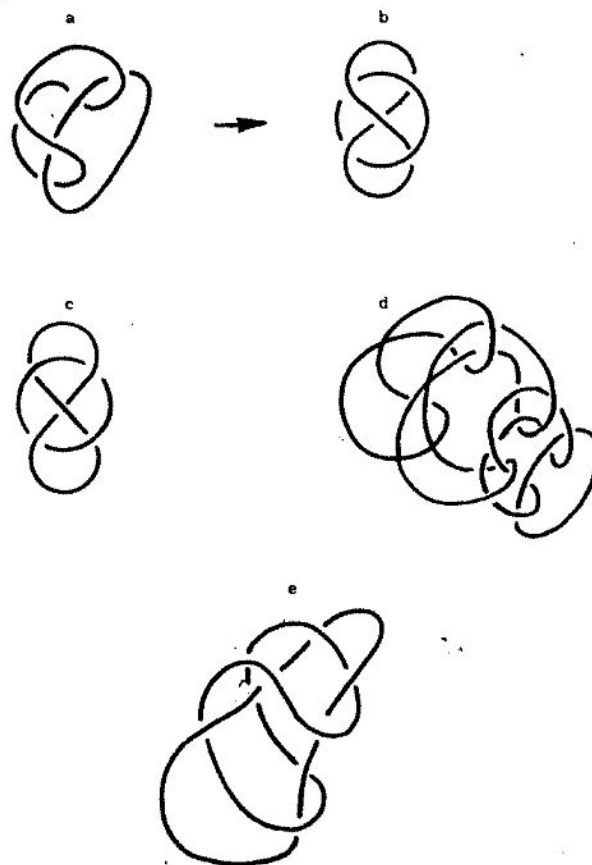
(Figure 6). The error in perspective consisted in not crossing the lobes of the two ears (Figure 7), which resulted in these knots lacing themselves together . . .

But that isn't all. Michel Thomé very well deduced that a Borromean knot of a special type resulted. You see that these two remain knotted if one sections the third. The Borromeanism of this knot is thus only manifested for any number whatsoever of rounds in cutting a single one among them, which we can call the last, by means of which each of the others will be freed from the one following it until it gets to the first, not all at once, it is true, but one after another. On the other hand, if you begin by cutting what I call the first, all of the others to the last will remain knotted. This puts in evidence certain knots that one can call Borromean in one direction (*sens*) but not in the other, which evokes the cycle and orientation.

I do not insist, because it is only those who devote themselves to a study of these knots who can take a true interest in this.

But I remind you that I had myself drawn a knot whose only interest was in not being able to be produced from this error in perspective given its fecundity by Michel Thomé. It is not strictly producible except by being made explicit, if I may say so, by the confusion of the two loops (Figures 8) that hold to each side, the forms of the ear that I have proposed as the most simple form for engendering the Borromean knot. You see that there could be here (Figure 8, e) an external round, which would hold these two ear loops, and so on. If you reunite these two loops, you obtain the following form, which is a loop altogether distinct from the forms that I will call, on this occasion, Thoméan, to indicate that they are products of an error in perspective.

Fig. 8



I do not insist, and I pursue what there is of the Name-of-the-Father, to lead it back to its prototype. God is the woman rendered all. I have told you she is not-all. But in the case where she would ex-sist from a discourse which would not be of the semblance, we would have the $\exists x.\overline{\Phi x}$, the God of castration. This is a wish, a wish that comes from The Man, a wish that women existed who would command castration. The trouble is that there aren't. That the woman, the all woman, does not exist, does not imply, contrary to Aristotelian logic, that there are some who command castration. *Guard this, which is the most beloved*, as they say in Rabelais. Naturally, this arises from the comic.

Nonetheless, this not-all does not mean that any says the contrary, and that an x of the woman exists that formulates *do not guard it*. It's very little for them, the saying no. They don't say anything, simply. They don't say anything, except as the-all, which I have said was God. The-all, if she existed.

There is none to bear castration for the other, and this is at the point where she would like the phallus for herself, as one says. There is nothing more *phallogocentric*, as someone has written somewhere, than a woman, to the extent that none of them wholly (*toute*) want it, said phallus. They want it each, to the extent that it does not weigh on them too heavily. I have stressed this in the so-called dream of the beautiful butcheress. She indeed wants the smoked salmon, on the condition of not serving it. She only gives it inasmuch as she does not have it. This is even the definition I have given of love. To give what one does not have, this is love, the love of women, inasmuch as, one by one, they exist. They are real, and even terribly so. They are even only that. They only consist inasmuch as the symbolic ex-sists, which is to say the unconscious. This is indeed how they ex-sist as a symptom of which this unconscious provokes the consistency, this, apparently in the field of the real flattened out. This is what has to be called *really*, which means--one has not paid enough attention to this distinction between the adverb and the adjective--in the fashion of the real. But in reality, in the fashion in which is imagined in the real the effect of the symbolic (Figure 9).

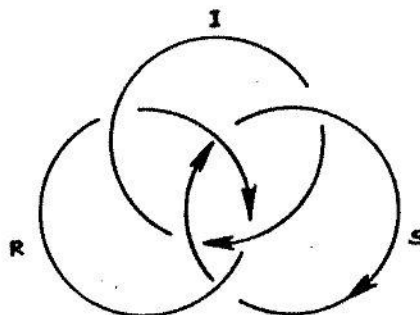


Fig. 9 Centripète.

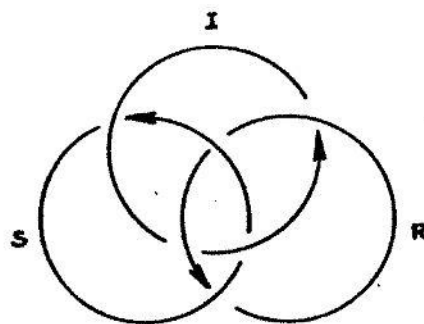


Fig. 10 Centrifuge.

I excuse myself to Pierre Soury, who sent me a very beautiful little schema concerning the Borromean knot of which I will not have time to speak today. These two schemas involve an orientation, a direction--the three essential elements of the Borromean knot are oriented in a centripetal fashion, which he opposes for me with the contrary form, centrifugal (Figure 10). I remark to him in passing that if we do not identify by coloring them which of these three rounds is the symbolic, which the real, and which the imaginary, these knots, far from being nontransformable the one into the other, are the same, seen from another side.

I should add that, taking things from the other side, the real and the symbolic are inverted, which is not foreseen in his schema. However, this leaves intact the question of whether it is indifferent, in this form, not flattened out, that the order exists or not. I therefore signal to Soury that there is a distinction to be made between the order of the three terms, the orientation given to each, and the equivalence of the knots.

The imbeciles of mad love who had the idea of making up for (*de suppléer*) the unreal woman titled themselves surrealists. They were themselves symptoms, symptoms of the aftermath of the war of '14, to the extent that social symptoms--but it is not said that what is social is not tied to a knot of resemblances. Their idea of making up for the woman who does not exist as *the*, for the woman of whom I have said that she was the type itself of errancy, put them back in the rut of the Name-of-the-Father, of the Father as naming, of which I have said that it was a device (*truc*) emerged from the Bible, but of which I add that it is a way for the man to pull his phallic marker (*épinglé*) from the game.

A God, as tribal as the others but perhaps employed with a greater purity of means, is only the quite useless complement--which is what I express with the conjugation of this four-looped knot--because he is the signifier 1 and without a hole, without a hole of which he would be permitted to be served in the Borromean knot, which has the body of a man--self-sexed, Freud stresses--and gives the man the partner he lacks. He lacks how?--because he is *aphlicted*, to write it like that, aphlicted really with a phallus which bars for him the jouissance of the body of the Other. There would have to be an Other of the Other for the body of the Other not to be some semblance (*semblant*) of his own, for him not to be so different from the animals as to not be able, like all of the sexed animals, to make of the female the God of his life.

The mental of the man--which is to say the imaginary, the aphliction of the phallic real because of which he knows himself born--has only the semblance of power. The real is the blank of sense; in other words, the blank sense by which the body makes a semblance, a semblance on which all discourse is founded, first and foremost the master discourse which makes of the phallus the signifier index 1. Which does not prevent that if in the unconscious there were not a crowd of signifiers to copulate with each other, to be indexed as abounding two by two, there would be no chance that the idea of the subject, of a patheme of the phallus of which the signifier is the One that divides it essentially, would come to light. Thanks to which it aperceives that there is some unconscious knowledge, some unconscious copulation, whence this mad idea--of this knowledge making (*savoir faire*) a semblance in its turn. In relation to what partner?--if not that which is also produced by a blind copulation--it is the case to say.

Only signifiers copulate with each other in the unconscious, but the pathematic subjects that result from this in the form of bodies are lead to do the same--to fuck (*baiser*), as they call it. This is not a bad formula, for something informs them that they can do no better than to suck on the body signified Other, Other only by some writing in the civil registry. To *jouir* from it, it has to be cut in pieces. The Other body lacks no disposition for that, since it is born prematured. And the concept is not lacking--one calls that sado-masochism, I don't know why. It can be no more than dreamed of, from the unconscious naturally, since this is the road which must be said to be heartened by the Royal *dire*. *King*, one more name in the business, which everyone knows always springs to the business of the Name-of-the-Father. But it is a name to lose like the others, to let fall in perpetuity.

The *Noms-du-Pere*, the *ânon*-du-Pere³, what a herd I would have prepared to make reenter their throats their brayings if I had given my seminar; I would have *hunted*--a word coming from *hone*⁴ (*hune*) *woman*--some new stupidity (*ânerie*). This is why the *hanalysts*--on the waiting list, of course--lined up at the doors of *The Interfamilial Analytic Association* and *annafreudhummed*⁵ in the wings the return to the cradle, while patching together tough motions of order against me. I am certainly not insensible to the weariness of ex-sisting (*d'ex-sister-terre-terre*), which one believes one will always attain to finally. But I can only persevere in my *erre*--Laurent, *tighten* (*serrez*) *my herre with my discipline*.

³ An *ânon* is a young donkey.

⁴ By prefixing *une*, *uni*, *analystes*, and *erre* with h's in this passage, Lacan is perhaps trying to evoke *hi-han*, which is what French donkeys say.

⁵ *Annafreudonnaient* in the original: a portmanteau of Anna Freud and *fredonnaient* (hummed).