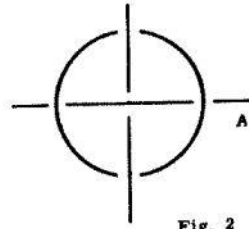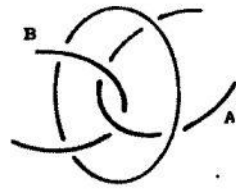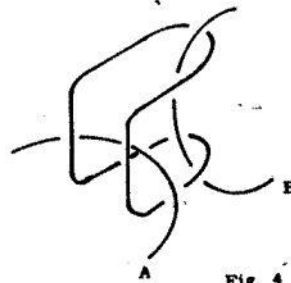Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Seminar of April 8, 1975

Cogitation remains glued into an imaginary rooted in the body, which is the imaginary of the body. Literature bears witness to this, philosophical as well as artistic--which besides are in no way distinguished from one another. To quickly lay down my cards, I am going to speak of the imaginary of the sphere and the cross.

I have wandered into Joyce because someone asked me to speak before a congress. Well, if Joyce is glued into the sphere and the cross, it is not owed only to his having read Saint Thomas because of his education with the Jesuits. You are all as glued as he into the sphere and the cross. Moreover, this makes the plus sign. It may happen that an artist who plaques a bit of plaster on a wall will make something that by chance resembles this (Figure 2). But no one aperceives that this is already the Borromean knot.

When you see this, what do you make of it imaginarily? You make two things that hook together, which bends them in this fashion (Figure 3). By means of which, the round slips over what is knotted in this way. It is not natural--what does that mean, "natural"?--it is not natural to your imagination to do the contrary and distort the round in this way (Figure 4).

The Borromean knot is not necessarily what I have drawn for you a hundred times. This (Figure 5) is a Borromean knot as valuable as the one I usually flatten out.
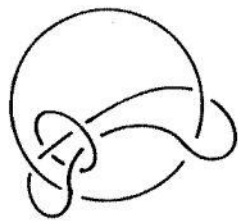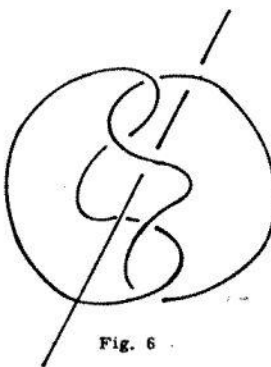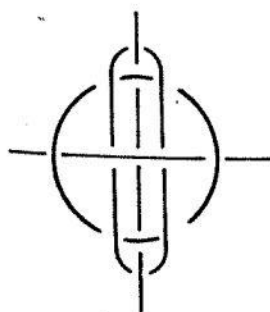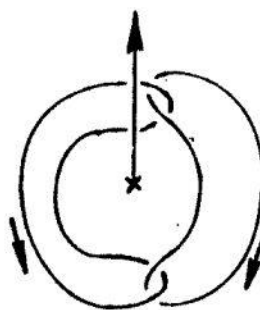
Fig. 5   Fig. 6

Fig. 7   Fig. 8

If I was one day taken hold of by the Borromean knot, it was in relation to this order of event (*événement*), of arrival (*avènement*), which is called analytic discourse, a social tie emerging in our day. This discourse has an historical value, yet to be established. It is true that my voice is weak for sustaining it, but this is perhaps all the better, because if it were stronger, I would perhaps have fewer chances of subsisting. I mean that, based on all of history, it appears to me difficult for the social ties prevailing until now not to silence any voice that sustains another, emerging discourse. This is what one has always seen up to now, and it is not because there is no more inquisition that we should believe that the social ties I have defined--the master discourse, the university discourse, even the hysterico-diabolic discourse--would not stifle what I might have of a voice. This said, me in there, I am a subject, I am taken in this business because I have put myself into ex-sisting as an analyst. This does not at all mean that I believe myself a mission of truth, as have believed some people who have come down on my head. No mission of truth since the truth can only be half-said (*se mi-dire*). So let us rejoice that my voice is low.

In philosophy up to the present, there has been the good philosophy, the ordinary one, and then, from time to time, there have been kooks who believe themselves a mission of truth. The lot (*L'ensemble*) are simple buffoonery. But my saying it has no importance--fortunately for me, no one believes me. All told, for the moment, the good one dominates.

I made a little visit over the vacation--a story of giving him a little sign before both of us dissolve--to the person named Heidegger. I like him a lot. There is something in him like a presentiment of *sicanalisse,* as Aragon used to say. But it is only a presentiment, because Freud doesn't interest him at all. However, Freud made something emerge from which I draw the consequences to give weight to its effects--which are not nothing, but this would suppose that the

psychoanalyst existed a little bit more. He has nonetheless begun to ex-sist. How, for this knot I have come to--not, of course, without getting my paws tangled up in it as much as you--how can we make it so it tightens, this knot, to the point where the speakingbeing, as I call it, no longer believes, no longer believes in being, outside of the being of speaking? He believes in being; it would be crude to say that this is exclusively because there is the verb "to be." No, this is why I say "being of speaking." He believes that because he speaks he is healthy. This is an *erre*, and even a *trait unaire*. Thanks to which what I call an oriented nonsense (*déconnage*) has prevailed in what one calls thought, which is said to be human. I am letting myself go; I get the itch (*la mouche me pique*) from time to time. This *erre* merits being pinned to the word *transhumant*[1]-- so-called humanity only owing to a naturality of transit, which postulates transcendence.

My succeeding has no connotation of success in my eyes. I, like Freud, only believe in the failed act, but in the failed act as revealer of the site, of the situation, of the transit in question, with transference as its key. Simply, one must bring this *trans* back to its proper measure. My success, therefore--my succession is what this means--will it remain in this transitory? This is the best thing that can happen, since, in any case, there is no chance that the *humant-trans* will ever approach any of this. Therefore, peregrination without end is worth as much.

Simply, Freud remarked that there is perhaps a *dire* which has value from up to now only being interdicted. This means *said between*, between the lines. He called this the repressed.

I made this discovery of the knot without seeking it, of course. It appears to me a notable discover from recuperating, not the air of Freud, but his *erre,* which ex-sists rigorously, an affair of the knot.

Now let us pass to something we can get our teeth into. That one (Figure 2) is the important one. Why the Devil hasn't anyone drawn on this plus which consists in writing the sign like that, in the right way (Figure 4)?

Young Aragon got heated up in claiming that our time had gone so far as to suppress the crossroads, the *quadrivii*; he was thinking of autoroutes [turnpikes]--it's a funny word, *autoroute*; is this a route in-itself or a route for-itself? There are still a lot of crossroads and street corners, but he took to thinking that there would be no more crossroads, only tunnels. It is curious that he drew no conclusion from this. This is the surrealist mode; it has never led to anything; it has not spacialized the knot in the good way--thanks to which we are still in being, as Heidegger said to me, *in-der-Welt*. The *in-der-Welt-sein*. This is a cosmeticology, cosmetibuttologous (*cosméti-culeuse*) in addition. And thanks to this *Welt*, there is the *Umwelt* and the *Innenwelt*. This should make us suspicious, this repetition of the bubble.

I have learned that in comic strips one speaks in bubbles. I never look at comic strips, and I am ashamed, because this is marvelous. In fact, it was a photo-novel from *Nous Deux*, with words--thoughts, that's when there are bubbles. Well, the question I ask here, in this form of a bubble, is what proves that the real makes a universe? I ask this question starting from Freud, who suggests that this universe has a hole, a hole that there is no means of knowing. Then I follow the trail of the hole, and I encounter the Borromean knot, which comes to me there like a ring to a finger--there we are in the hole again.

Only, when one follows the trail of things one grasps that there is not just one trick for making a circle. There is not only one hole. If you take two of these circles, if you knot both in the right way and if you add this infinite straight line, it makes a knot as valuable as the one I

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[1] In both French and English, *transhumant* is an adjective referring to the migration of livestock.

usually draw (Figure 6). Rather than make the infinite straight line, it is a lot more convenient to close this consistency, and we then return to the familiar knot.

The interest in representing it in this way (Figure 6) is to show how the knot can be, if I may say so, doubly Borromean, which is to say that we pass to the four-looped Bo-Bo knot.

Here I give you (Figure 7) a new illustration of the four-looped knot. But the question that this raises is the following--what is the order of equivalence of the infinite straight line and the circle?

There was a man of genius called Desargues to whom it came to mind that any infinite straight line closed itself at a point at infinity.   How could this idea have come to him? It is an absolutely sublime idea, around which I constructed my commentary on *Las Meninas*, of which it was said, if you believe the pen-pushers (*gratte-papiers*), that it was completely incomprehensible. What is the equivalence of the straight line to the circle? It is obviously because they make a knot. This is a consequence of the Borromean knot; it is a recourse to efficiency, to effectiveness, to the *Wirklichkeit.* But if we find them equivalent in the efficiency of the knot, what is their difference?

As you see, I painfully approach the "*thinking the Borromean knot* will give you pain." Because it is not easy to imagine, which gives a proper measure of what all thinking is. Even Descartes never made anything of his *Regula decima*, and this is a sign.

Between the circle and the straight line, there is a play, which leads to their equivalence. But how can we formulate in what their difference of ex-sistence consists? The straight line ex-sists, goes off in the *erre* until it encounters simple consistency, while the circle is centered on the hole.

No one knows what it is, this hole. That, when it comes to the corporal, the accent is put by all analytic thought on the hole, plugs it up rather. This is not clear. That it be from the orifice that is suspended all that there is of the pre-oedipal, as one says; that it be there that is oriented the perversity which is integrally that of our conduct, is indeed strange. This does not clarify for us the nature of the hole.

There is another thing that could come to mind and which is completely unrepresentable --it is what one calls by a name that only flickers forth because of language: death. This doesn't plug it up any less, because one doesn't know what death is.

However, there is an approach that envisages space otherwise; it is topology. One cannot say that it leads us to very easy notions. One sees well there the weight of the inertia of the imaginary. Why is geometry found so at ease in what it combines? Is this because of the adherence to the imaginary or is it because of a sort of injection of a symbolic? A question that merits being posed to a mathematician. Whichever the case, with the topological notions of neighborhoods and of points of accumulation, the accent is put on discontinuity, while, manifestly, the natural slope of the imagination is continuity. The difficulty of the introduction of the mental to topology indeed gives us the idea that there is something to learn here concerning our repressed.

The effective difficulty of cogitating on the Borromean knot, the facility, on the other hand, of doing so on the sphere and the cross, makes of this knot something like an example of a missed *mathesis* (*mathesis manquée*), missed by a hair, inexplicably, never familiar in any case. Why not see in the aversion that this manifests the trace of the first repression itself? And why not follow this path, like a dog that scents a trail?--although it is not scent that characterizes us. Besides, how are we to account for the effect of scent on the dog? Scent imitates an effect of perception, which in this case would be the supplement to the lack that we must indeed admit if

we open our eyes to the ex-sistence of the *Urverdrängt*, the repression that analysis affirms not only as first, but as irreducible. This is what would be involved in following the trail, and this is what I do for you in the measure of my means.

Naturally, I take care to tell you that I am not getting all worked up, that I do not believe that I have found the last word. Thinking that one has found the last word, would that be paranoia? No, paranoia is not that; it is being glued into the imaginary. A voice that sonorizes the gaze is what is prevalent there; it is an affair of the congealing of desire. But finally, all the same, this would be paranoia.

It remains that this could be a vein to follow. Freud told us not to worry. There is no reason to have so much fear if this leads us somewhere. It is clear that this has only lead to the truth, which indeed shows the measure of the truth itself; to wit, what the paranoia of President Shreber demonstrates, that there is no sexual rapport with God. That is the truth. And it is indeed what puts in question the existence of God.

We are there in a failing of creation. To say it, is to take confidence in something that probably dupes us. Only, not being a dupe is nothing other than to find oneself in the mess (*essuyer les plâtres*) of the non-dupe, which I have called the *erre*. But this *erre* is our only chance of truly fixing the knot in its ex-sistence, since it is only ex-sistence as a knot. It is what only ex-sists in being knotted in a way that it can only be tightened, even in the tangle.

Saying that *there is no sexual rapport* departs from the idea of a φυσις, which would make of sex a principle of harmony. *Rapport* even to this day means proportion. The idea that one can reproduce it with words, that words are destined to make sense, that being being results in non-being not being--there are still people for whom this makes sense. The Parmenidian sense at the origin has become empty chatter, and it has come to no one's mind that it is the sign itself that is wind: *flatus vocis.* I do not at all say that these people are wrong. On the contrary, they are precious to me because they prove that sense goes as far into the equivoke as one might desire. They prove that beginning with sense *se jouit*, I *s'ouit*[2] myself, *s'oui-jouisse* . . .

Naturally, there are better--although the best, as says popular wisdom, is the enemy of the good; likewise, the *plus-de-jouir* proceeds from *père-version*, from the *a-pèritive* of the *jouir.* On can do nothing there; the speakingbeing only aspires to the good, where it always buries itself in the worse. That does not change the fact that the speakingbeing cannot refuse it. Not even me. I am a grain, like you all, ground into this salad.

The annoying thing is that everyone knows that analysis has some good effects--which only last for a time. This does not change the fact that this is a respite, and that it is better--it is the case to say--than doing nothing. It is a little aggravating (*embêtant*), an *aggravating* against which one could try to swim despite the current.

If there is this current, it is because, despite everything, nature has proven the existence of God. Everyone believes it. I defy any among you to say that I can't prove that he believes in the existence of God. This is even the scandal, which psychoanalysis alone stresses, because currently there nothing but it that proves it--I mean the scandal, not God. Formally, this is only due to the Jewish tradition of Freud, which is a literal tradition, which ties it to science, and at the same time to the real. It is the cap that it is a matter of doubling. God is *père-verse*. This is a fact rendered patent by the Jew himself. But to rise up again on this current, one will end well--I can't say that I hope it--by inventing something less stereotyped than perversion. This is even the only reason that I am interested in psychoanalysis, why I try to galvanize it. I am not stupid (*bête*) enough to have the least hope in a result that nothing announces, and which is no doubt

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[2] A pormanteau of *ouïr* (to hear) *suis* (I am).

taken by the wrong end--thanks to the cock and bull story of Sodom and Gomorra.   There are even days when it comes to me that Christian charity would be on the path of a perversion that would clarify the non-rapport a little. You see where I am going. This is not, however, in my inclination.
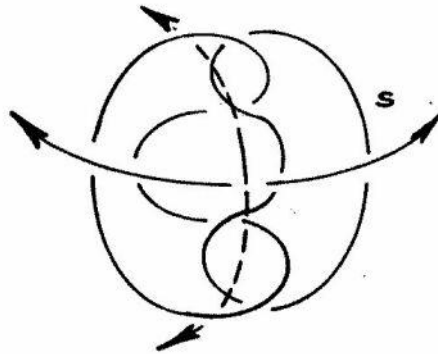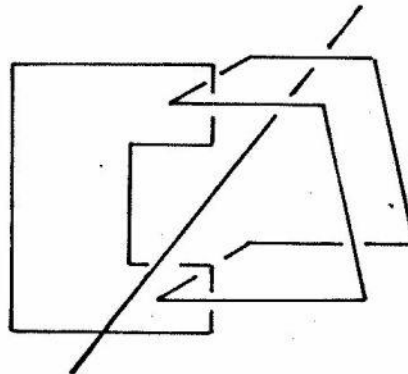

Fig. 9

Fig. 10

But, finally, one must not carry on (*charrier*), nor charity-on (*chariter*). There is no chance that one might have the key to the road accident (*accident de parcours)* that made it so that sex has ended up becoming a malady for the speakingbeing, and the worst malady, that by which it reproduces. It is obvious that biology has an advantage in forcing itself to become, with a little different accent, viology, the logy of violence; in forcing itself to the side of mold, with which said speakingbeing has many analogies. One never knows. A good encounter. One François Jacob is enough of a Jew to have permitted rectifying the non-rapport, which, in the current state of knowledge, can only mean replacing the fundamental disproportion of said rapport by another formula, by something that can only be conceived of as a detour devoted to an *erre*, but to an *erre* limited by a knot.

I think you have seen the papers distributed by Michel Thomé and Pierre Soury, which demonstrate that there is only one oriented Borromean knot. I would like to underline the remark I have made today; the fact that there is a means of making a cycle with two circles has some consequences concerning this proposition. I agree that there is an oriented knot when there are three rounds of thread, but not when there are more. Nonetheless, if you transform one of these circles into an infinite straight line, there is no longer only one oriented knot, but two. For the infinite line is not orientable. Beginning with what could one orient it? It is only orientable

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beginning with any chosen point on it, from which the orientations diverge. But if they diverge, that does not give it one orientation.

To hold ourselves to a simple formulation, let us remark that in the double circle (Figure 8), there is an orientation, which we will designate with the word *gyrie*. Not that we could say that this is a dextro- or levogyrie Everyone knows--it's why we couldn't send as a message to someone from another planet the distinction between right and left. It has to be admitted that it is impossible, like the quadrature of the circle. But we could with words distinguish the gyres as being two for the inhabitants of another planet. It would suffice that they have the notion of a horizon, which would also give them that of the plane.

If we flatten out these two circles by themselves, having supposed the notion of a horizon (Figure 9), we can distinguish the two circles from our Figure 8, the direction their respective gyres (. . .). Thus we have here (Figure 8) two orientations, this one dextrogyre and this one levogyre. But we are incapable of saying which is dextro, which levo. We are incapable of transmitting it in a message. And no manipulation of the three-looped knot gives without ambiguity the definition of levo and dextro. On the other hand, the existence as such of two gyres is quite manifest. For there to be two gyries, two oriented Borromean knots, it therefore suffices that we make one of the three rounds into an infinite straight line, inasmuch as the infinite straight line is defined as non-orientable.

If the rounds are all oriented, either as centrifugal, going toward the exterior, marked *e*, or centripetal, toward the interior, marked *i*, we have the following possibilities, extracted quite correctly by Soury and Thomé: 3e/3i/1i, 2e/1e, 2i. Which only makes one oriented knot.

But with a line without an orientation, marked *o*, we have 1o, 1i, 1e. And this order is differentiated from another: 1o, 1e, 1i.

From the diverse flattenings out of Soury and Thomé it results that the knot remains the same--if I may say so--from all the points of view of the flattening out. But it suffices to take one from elsewhere, from the non-point-of-view, to demonstrate that there are two oriented Borromean knots.

Lets us sum up. If the three rounds are oriented, the knot isn't, since orientation implies that there are two orientations. But to the extent that one of these rounds is specified, two distinct orientations appear.

Specifying a round can be simply to color it, to signify that it remains identical to itself, and that it is therefore non-orientable. Coloring a round is thus equivalent to transforming it into a straight line. Which shows you in passing that coloring a round and orienting it can make two.

No doubt it will come to the minds of Thomé and Soury that the flattening out introduces a suspicious element here. Nonetheless, I indicate to them that the same articulations concerning orientation are relevant (*valent*) if we draw the two circles in the following fashion (Figure 10), which makes no reference to the exteriority of one of these curves in relation to the curve of the other. There is neither an external nor an internal; however, there is thus already a means to demonstrate that there are two oriented three-looped Borromean knots.