



### Seminar of April 15, 1975

I imagined this morning on waking two little drawings of nothing at all; you may have seen the trouble I had reproducing them. It is a question (Figures 1 and 2) of two triangles of the most ordinary type, which overlap each other.

Those of Figure 1 are knotted as a chain and, based on this fact, are in every respect comparable with two torii, one of which passes through the hole of the other. Those of Figure 2 are not knotted, and can be pulled free of one another. This is like a torus flattened so as to play --not to be knotted but to play--in the hole of the other.

The case is the same for the two triangles in Figure 3, except that one of them is folded around what is presented as one of the sides of the other. I say *side*, because one imagines that a triangle has three sides, which is no longer the case in this geometry that is not one--topology.

A topology is what permits us to grasp how elements that are not knotted two by two can nonetheless make a knot. We call a Borromean knot that which is constituted in a fashion such that in subtracting, in breaking one of these elements that I have figured--this is only a figure; this is not a consistency--all the others are equally unknotted from each other. This can be done for a number as large as one might enounce (*énoncer*), and you know that there is no limit to this

enunciation. It is in this that it seems to me that the term sexual non-rapport can be supported in a sayable fashion; inasmuch as it is supported essentially by a non-rapport of the couple.

Is it that the knot as chain suffices to represent the rapport of a couple? In a time when most of you were not in my seminar, I illustrated with two torii the tie to be made between demand and desire. With two torii, which is to say, with two orientable cycles.

I drew (Figure 4) a torus that enters into the hole of another. I figured on each something that turns in a round, and I thus showed that what makes an encircling on this one is traced on the other, in a series of coilings around the central hole. What does that mean?--if not that demand and desire are knotted. They are knotted in the measure that a torus represents a cycle, and therefore is orientable.

What makes the difference between the sexes, as you know, is situated at the level of the cell, and especially at the level of the cellular nucleus or in the chromosomes, which, being microscopic, appears to you to insure a definite level of the real. But why the devil want what is microscopic to be more real than what is macroscopic! Something usually differentiates sex. In one case, there is a homozygotism, which is to say, a certain gene that makes a pair with another; and in the other case, there is a heterozygotism. Now, one never knows in advance how this is distributed in each species; I mean, whether it is the male or the female that is homzygote.

It is a matter of giving all of its weight to the proverb of which André Gide makes so much in *Paludes: Numero deux impare gaudit*--which he translates, *The number two rejoices in being odd [impair]*. As I have said for a long time, he is quite right, for nothing would realize the two if there were no odd, the odd inasmuch as it begins at number three--which is not seen immediately, and renders the Borromean knot necessary.

The Borromean knot puts within reach something crucial for our practice: that we have no need for a microscope for there to appear the reason for this first truth, to wit, that love is *hainamoration*<sup>1</sup>, and not *velle bonum aliculi*, as Saint Augustine states (*énonce*).

*Bonum* is well-being, and no doubt, on occasion, love is preoccupies itself a little, the minimum, with the well-being of the other. But it is clear that it only does so up to a certain limit, of which I have not up to this day found anything better than the Borromean knot to represent it. Let it be understood that it is not a matter of a figure, of a representation--it is a matter of the real. This limit is only conceivable in terms of ex-sistence, which, in its vocabulary, means the play permitted by the Borromean knot to one of the cycles, to one of the consistencies.

Starting from this limit, love insists (*s'obstine*)--because there is something of the real in the affair--love insists on something completely the contrary of the well-being of the other. What I have called *hainamoration*, with the vocabulary substantified by the writing with which I support it. The notion of a limit implies an oscillation, a yes or no. Here, it is to wish the good of someone, or to wish strictly the contrary. Which might suggest to you the idea of a sinusoid.

What is it like, this sinusoid? Like this (Figure 5). The limit is the circle. Is this sinusoid coiled? Does it make a knot in being coiled, or not? This is a question posed by the notion of consistency, more nodal, if I can say so, than that of the line, since the knot is subjacent. There is no consistency that is not supported by the knot. It is in this that the knot imposes the idea itself of the real.

The real is characterized by being knotted. Yet this knot has to be made. The notion of the unconscious is supported by this: not only does one find it already made, but one finds oneself made--one is made; one is made by this act x by which the knot is already made.

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<sup>1</sup> A portmanteau of *haine* (hate) and enamoration.

There is no other possible definition for my sense of the unconscious. The unconscious is the real. I measure my terms if I say--it is the real inasmuch as it is holed. I advance a little more than I have the right to, since there is no one but I who says it, who still says it. Soon, everyone will repeat it, and by the force of the rain that will fall on it, it will end up making very pretty fossil. In the meanwhile, it's something new. Up to now, there has been no one but I who said there was no sexual rapport, and this made a hole in a point of being, of the speakingbeing. The speaking being is not widespread, but it is like mold: it has a tendency to spread.

Let us then be content to say that the unconscious is the real inasmuch as it is afflicted in the speakingbeing by the only thing that might make a hole, which assures us of the hole: to wit, what I call the symbolic, in incarnating it in the signifier of which, in the final analysis, there is no other definition than the hole. The signifier makes a hole.

It is in this that the knot is not a model. What makes a knot is not imaginary, not a representation. Besides, its characteristic--and it is in this that it escapes the imaginary--is that each time I represent one, I cross it out. Since I don't believe myself less imaginative than anyone else, I think that this shows already to what point the knot repulses us as a model. There is no affinity of the body with the knot, even if the holes in the body play a sacred role for analysts. The knot is not a model; it is a support. It is not reality; it is the real. There is a distinction between the real and reality; the knot demonstrates it. To the extent that, fossilization arriving, you might pass your time making knots between your fingers--it is to be wished, besides; this would suggest to you a little more ingenuity.

In thus folding back the unconscious over the symbolic, which is to say, over what of the signifier makes a hole, I accomplish something that will be judged by its effect, by its fecundity; but this appears to me imposed by our practice itself, which is far from able to content itself with an obscure reference to instinct, as one insists in translating the word *Trieb* in English.

Instinct had its emergence, which of course is immemorial, but how can we know what it might have meant before Fabre? Fabre only supported it with one thing: how the devil can an insect know, have this knowledge that one establishes in the precision of its gestures? How does it know that it must--in some specific point of the body of some other insect, in some jointure, and in weaving beneath what one calls a carapace--and which is nothing but a figurative mythology--how can it attain to such a precise point in the nervous system, and, there, break something which makes it so the other will be ready to be put in conservation? This knowledge of the insect--how does it explain anything to transport it to the human? In the behavior that we see in the human every day, there is manifestly no instinctual knowledge; he sees no farther than the end of his nose.

Certainly, he also, but from another source, finds himself knowing how to make (*savoir faire*) a bunch of devices (*machins*). *Savoir faire* is a manner of speaking--saying that he knows how to make love is probably a great exaggeration. This pushes us to this idea I have endeavored to formulate, that the real is not all. Which implies at the same time that science perhaps only pulls up little bits of this real.

Up to the present, the idea of the universe, it indeed seems, is indispensable to it for what it succeeds in rendering sure. Manifestly, it succeeds in rendering certain things sure when there is number. This is truly the knot in the affair--how is it that language carries a certain number of numbers?--and that one has succeeded in qualifying as real some numbers properly ungraspable, and which are not defined otherwise; to wit, by their not belonging to a series, by their not even being able to, by being fundamentally excluded. Which speaks volumes on the subject of knowing how these numbers--1, 2, 3, 4 --could have even come to mind.

Me, I have taken a certain side, pushed by what? I will not say by my experience, because an experience only means one thing: that one is engaged in it, and I don't see why my engagement would be preferable. If I were the only one, all that I could say would have no scope. Which is why I try to situate psychoanalytic discourse; which is to say that I am not the only one to have this experience. Thanks to the fact that I too am a speakingbeing, I am lead to formulate what might account for it.

There is someone--an asshole (*connard*) of the first water--who said that my theory was dead. It is not yet so dead as all that, but it will end up becoming that way with the encrustation of which I have just spoken. In the meanwhile, this guy--who obviously is not on my side--speaks of psychic reality. Me, I find that the psyche makes for incredible difficulties, that it brings with it a world of suppositions, God in any case. Where would the soul be if there were no God, and if God had not explicitly created us to have one? God is ineliminable from any psychology.

What I myself try to do is to speak of an operative reality. This is a lot shorter, but it imposes itself. The asshole I just mentioned, who says that my theory is dead, who literally does not know what he is talking about, who does nothing but talk, who blablates--in his analyses, however, that operates, I'm sure of it. It operates with a certain limitation, but I am sure that it functions; if it didn't, he wouldn't continue being an analyst. Yes, even the speech of those who believe in psychic reality operates. What I would like to make you grasp, is that for you the structure of the world consists from your talk (*à vous payer de mots*). This is even what in the world is more futile--I mean that it flees--than the real, this real that I try to suggest for you in its proper *dit-mansion* by this *dit* which is mine; to wit, by my *dire*.

There are some very serious people who occupy themselves with the dreams of animals. To be sure, they cannot know if the animal dreams, but they know that it has all the appearances of it. The animal sleeps and stirs. It is thus manifest that something traverses it. One says that it has images, and since no one doubts that ideas are images--*ideas*, this is even what that means; language is always a marvelous witness--one tells oneself that it has ideas. Which does not mean that it names them. But, finally, no one knows if a fly, a rat, dreams. One can imagine it, because one is always a little bit rat on some side; above all, one is failed (*raté*), and the experimenters in question are more so than others; they are ratified, they are the rat-men.

These rat-men of science get excited over the idea that the dream is not there, as Freud says, to protect sleep. The annoying thing is that Freud didn't say that. Freud says that for the speakingbeing--not for the rat; he did not experiment with the rat--the dream protects, not the need, but the *desire* to sleep. This dimension alone adds to the real lantern supposed scientific. One imagines some needs, but Freud, who knows what he says, says that the dream protects something that is called a desire. Now, a desire is not conceivable without my Borromean knot.

I am trying to show you that my *dire* is oriented by the fact that only speech (*parole*) acts. *Im Anfang war die Tat*, which is says is other, and it believes that it is contradictory with *das Wort*. But if there is no *das Wort* before the *die Tat*, there is no *Tat* at all. Analysis seizes on the of course very limited point that speech has a *Wirklichkeit*. It does what it can. It can perhaps not do much, but, finally, this is nonetheless a fact. A fact all the more exemplary for giving us the hope of shedding a little light on what is manifest, that there is no action that does not root itself, I would not even say in speech, but in the *oua-oua* [bow-wow]. *Das Wort* is to say *oua-oua*. Only the unconscious permits us to see how there is a knowledge, not in the real, but supported by the symbolic, conceivable, not *at* the limit but *by* the limit, as being made (*fait*) from a consistency required for the hole, and imposing it based on this fact (*de ce fait*).

The symbolic turns in a circle, but it only consists in the hole that it makes. All that one says of instinct only means this: that one must go to some real, some supposed real, to have a presentiment of the unconscious. In the sense that *body* means *consistency*, the unconscious, in a practice, gives body to instinct. Only the unconscious gives body to instinct.

Why wouldn't all of this be a vain debate between specialists? It is, however, a *dire* that could have some consequences, if analysts said something. But outside of a few scraps, it is a fact that they say nothing. Have you yet seen anything readable come out of *L'Institute psychanalytique de Paris*, for example? You will tell me that there is my school. Precisely, my school, I have had an experience of it in the *Journées*. I was so happy, like a fish in the water; everyone said things that proved they had read me, and I did not return. And they were even, my faith, capable of putting out some pseudopodia that prolonged my teaching--I mean, that drew a certain number of consequences from it. That ex-sisted fairly (*rudement*) well in those *journées* [days].

My discourse is founded on a hole, the only hole that is sure, that constituted by the symbolic. A hole, to the extent that it is consistent, which is to say circled (*cerné*), suffices for knotting a strictly indefinite number of consistencies. And this begins at two--whereby the two is only supported by the fundamental hole of the knot (. . .).

Certainly, the couple is by itself always unknottable, unless it is knotted by the symbolic. In my so-called Rome Discourse, I spoke of full speech, which was not bad, although it was worth what words are worth; to wit, the song of a starling. Full speech supports what makes a knot in the *tu es ma femme* [you are my wife]. Since I was laying into Lagache and Favez-Boutonnier, I did not say right away *Tuer ma femme* [To kill my wife]; that would have had a bad effect. Someone asked me recently in the name of what the acceptance committee proceeded to extend its beneficent hand over a number of people in the school. It is simply that--they will not have a bad effect. They will not have a bad effect right away; they will have it later, when they have gotten on a bit, and won a little authority.

This couple that is unkottable whatever the full speeches that have founded it, analysis demonstrates that it is knotted in spite of everything. Knotted by what? By the hole, by the interdiction of incest. The Jewish religion emphasizes that.

Do you know why they don't get such good press, the Jews? It's because they are not Gentiles. If they were Gentiles, they would not be Jews, and that would settle everything.

There are people who have succeeded in making the interdiction of incest emerge in myths. The Hindus are even the only ones to have said that one must, if one has slept with one's mother, go off--I no longer know whether it is into the Sunrise (*Orient*) or into the Sunset (*Couchant*)--with one's own penis (*queue*) between one's teeth--after having cut it off, of course. But we do not have to consider the fact of the interdiction of incest as historical: it is, of course.

For us, the interdiction of incest is not historical, but structural--why? Because there is the symbolic. This interdiction consists in the hole of the symbolic, so that appears, individualized in the knot, something that I do not call the Oedipus complex--it is not as complicated as all that--but the Name-of-the-Father, which means the father as name--which doesn't mean anything at first--and not only the father as name, but the father as naming.

One cannot say that concerning this the Jews are not Gentiles. They have indeed explained what they have called the Father. They cram him (*le foutent*) in a point of the hole that one cannot even imagine--*I am what I am*; that's a hole, no? A hole, if you believe my little schema's, swallows up, and there are moments when it spits out again. Spits out what again? The name, the Father as name.

That brings with it the interdiction of incest, and this is propagated on the side of castration, as indeed the Greek Gentiles have shown us in a certain number of myths. They raised a geneology founded exclusively on the father, Uranus, and so on, and so forth, up to the moment when Zeus, after having made love a lot, disappears into thin air (*s'évanoit devant un souffle*). But there is an additional step to take to understand the tie of castration with the interdiction of incest. The tie is what I call my sexual rapport. The Name-of-the-Father means that there can be, in the Borromean knot, an indefinite number of rounds. The vital point (*point vif*) is that all repose on one, on one inasmuch as it is a hole, which communicates its consistency to all of the others.

The year when I wanted to speak of the Names-of-the-Father, I would have spoken a little more of two or three. What a jumble that would have made for the analysts if they had a whole series of Names-of-the-Father. I am quite content to leave them dry, and to have never again taken up these Names-of-the-Father except in the form of the non-dupes who err. Obviously, they can only err, because the more there are, the more they will be entangled, and I congratulate myself for not having brought forth a single one.

This is why I found myself at the end of these *Journées* having to answer the question of how we know what constitutes a cartel in the School. A cartel, why? I obtained some revealing answers, some pseudopodia, some things that made a very small knot. Why have I posed that a cartel begins with a three, plus one person, which, in principle, makes four; and why have I given as a maximum this five thanks to which that makes six? Is this to say that there is a three that must incarnate the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real? The question could be posed; I could be crazy. But have you never heard identification spoken of? What is it that I wish for? The identification with a group.

It is certain that human beings identify with a group. When they don't, they're screwed, they have to be locked up. But I do not say by this at what point of the group they are to be identified.

The beginning of any social knot is constituted from the sexual non-rapport as a hole, not two, at least three. Even if you are only three, that always makes four. The plus-one is there as this schema shows, giving the example of what a Borromean knot would make if one began with the idea of the cycle as it is made (last seminar, Figure 6) by two knotted rounds. Even if you are only three, that will make four, whence my expression "plus one." And it is in withdrawing one, a real, that the group will be unknotted, which proves that the knot is Borromean, and that it is indeed constituted of three minimal consistencies.

Of three consistencies, one never knows which is real. Which is why they have to be four. The four is what (last seminar, Figure 6), by this double-buckle, supports the symbolic by what it is made for, the Name-of-the-Father. Naming (*nomination*) is the only thing that we can be sure makes a hole. And this is why I give the figure (*chiffre*) four as the minimum for the cartel, not without considering that one can have a little play in what ex-sists . . .

But perhaps we can make clear that, after all, it is not only the symbolic that has the privilege of the Names-of-the-Father. It is not obligatory that naming be conjoined to the hole of the symbolic. I will point this out next year.

To return to Freud, isn't it strange that he only gives (*énonce*) three identifications? In these three, there is already everything we need to read my Borromean knot. With these three, Freud properly designates consistency as such. Certainly, this is not yet the knot, but do not forget that consistency, in the knot, is throughout, that it is the base.

Three that consist without making a knot are the triskele (Figure 6).

The triskele is not a knot. They are only inscribed from consistency. Freud called this *the trait unaire*. He could not better say the components (*composants*) of the knot. And he put it in our heads that there is no love except from what, of the Name-of-the-Father, buckles together the three of the triskele (Figure 7).

Let us note that of this triskele, three rifles that make a stack, the ones supported as a three by the others, the Bretons have made the coat of arms of modern Brittany. This takes us out of the cross; it is already that. While one can say that the cross of Lorraine, if one draws it in the right fashion, also makes a triskele.

It is therefore inasmuch as the triskele ex-sists that there can be identification there. Identification with what? With what is the heart, the center, of the knot, where I have already situated for you the place of the object *a*. This object dominates what Freud makes the third possibility of identification, that of the hysteric, with the desire the Other.