

Concerning the Lecture of December 17

I speak here of the mental debility of systems of thought that suppose (without saying it, save in the blessed time of the Tao, indeed of ancient Egypt, where this is articulated with all the necessary stupification), that supposes, thus, the metaphor of the sexual rapport, non-ex-sistant in any form, in that of copulation, particularly "grotesque" for the speakingbeing, which is conceived of as representing the rapport that *I say* does not ex-sist humanly.

The clarification (*mise á point*) which results from a certain ventilation of said metaphor, elaborated in the name of philosophy, doesn't go forasmuch very far, no farther than Christianity, fruit of the Triad which in "adoring it" exposes its true nature: God is the not-all that it has the merit of distinguishing, in refusing to confuse him with the stupid idea of the universe. But it is indeed in this way that it permits itself to identify him with what I expose as this to which no ex-sistence is permitted because it is the hole as such--the hole that the Borromean knot permits us to distinguish (to distinguish from ex-sistence as defined by the knot itself; that is, the existence of a consistency submitted to the necessity (=not ceasing to write itself) of not being able to enter the hole without necessarily re-emerging from it, and beginning with the following "time" ("the time" [*la fois*] of which the crossing of its putting flat creates faith [*foi*])).

Whence the correspondence I attempt to begin with of the hole with a real which will find itself conditioned later by ex-sistence. How might I manage with an audience the approach to this truth as maladroit as is revealed to me in the maladress I demonstrate in handling the putting flat of the knot, even more its real, which is to say, its ex-sistence?

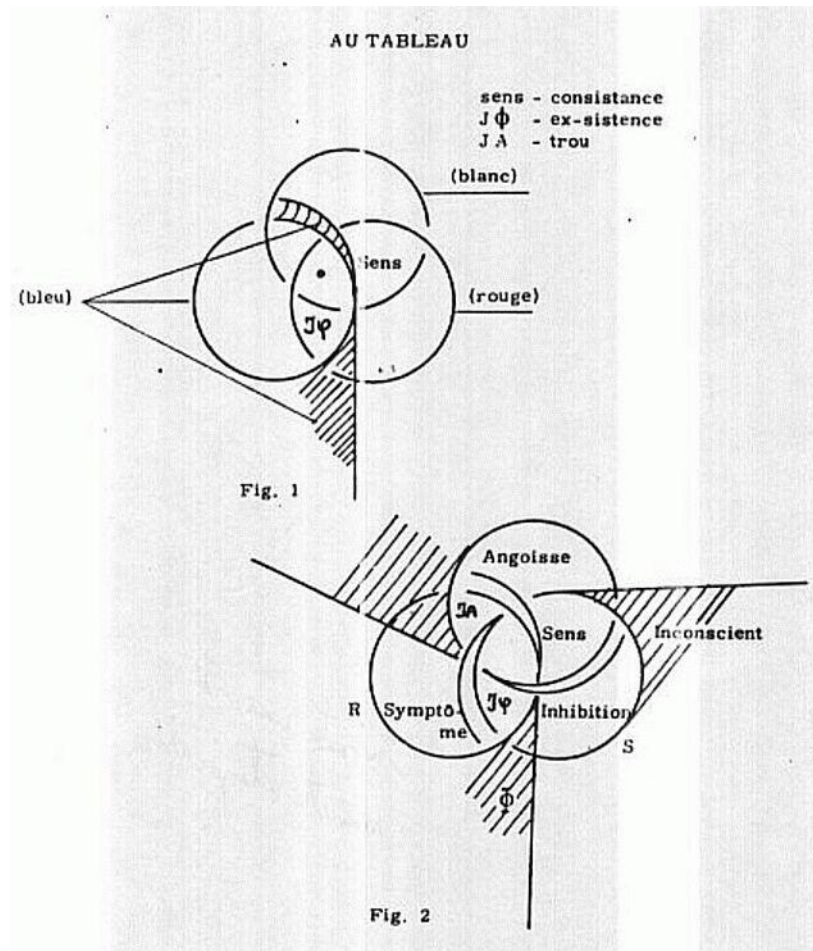
I will therefore leave that there, without correcting it, to show the difficulty of the access to a discourse commanded by a wholly new necessity (cf. above).

What I must demonstrate, in fact, is that there is no jouissance of the Other, genitive objective, and how to arrive there if I from the outset hit so correctly on the fact that, the sense being attained to, the jouissance consonates there that puts in play the damned phallus (=the ex-sistence itself of the real, that is, taking my register: R at the second power) or, again, what philosophy aims to celebrate.

This is to say that I am still completely bogged down; I speak of the Philo, not of the Phallo. But there is enough time not be hasty, by fault of which we will not just miss what is at issue, but err irremediably, which is to say, "love wisdom," a necessity of Man. To be corrected.

This is why it requires the patience with which I exercise the D.A. (to be read: *discours analytique*). There always remains the recourse to religious humbug (*connerie*), which Freud never lacks: I say this in passing, although politely (we owe him everything).

J.L.



Seminar of December 17, 1974

The Borromean knot is a writing. This writing supports a real.

Can the real then support itself by a writing? But of course, and I will say more--there is no other sensible idea of the real than that given by writing, the stroke of the written (*trait d'écrit*).

I will now introduce what I am going to say to you this morning with some remarks, three in number.

I suppose that you must have asked yourselves the question of whether the knot I proffer to unite RSI is a model, in the sense one understands, for example, of those mathematical models which permit us to extrapolate as to the real.

A model is a writing. Based on this fact alone, it is situated by the imaginary. There is no imaginary without substance. These questions that are formulated, are imagined beginning with this written, are founded on it, are secondarily posed to the real. But this real is nothing but a supposition. This supposition consists precisely in the sense of this word, real.

Well then, I claim that the Borromean knot, as I use it, is an exception--although situated in the imaginary--to this supposition. All that it proposes in fact is that the three that are there function as a pure consistency. It is only by holding to each other that they consist--holding to each other *really*.

Saying this implies a metaphor. Whence the question, what is the err--in the sense in which I understood it last year--the err of the metaphor? Follow me well: if I state--which can only be done through the symbolic, through speech--that the consistency of these three loops is only supported by the real, it is because I make use of the distance (*écart*) in sense permitted between RSI as individualizing these loops, specifying them as such. The distance in sense is there supposed taken at a certain maximum. But what is the maximum allowed for a distance in sense? This is a question I can only pose to a linguist. How would a linguist define the limits of metaphor, which is to say, of the substitution of one signifier for another? What is the maximum distance allowed between the two?

Second remark.

To operate with this knot in a suitable fashion, you must use it stupidly. Be dupes. Do not enter this subject in obsessional doubt. Don't quibble (*chipotez*) too much.

Take Maupertius. He gave at the Berlin Academy, under the title *The Physical Venus*, a report on the point of knowledge arrived at in his époque concerning the reproduction of living bodies. He was pleased--his title indicates it to you well enough--to emphasize only sexed reproduction. Note the date--1756. This shows the time these speaking brutes that are men have put into accounting for the specifics of sexed reproduction.

This *Physical Venus* illustrates for us the cost of playing the non-dupe. Maupertius was in fact wrong not to stick with what his time furnished him as material, which was already a lot. Leeuwenhoek and Swammerdam had already established through the microscope the existence of what one then called "animacules," that is, spermatozoa, and they distinguished them very clearly from eggs. We know that ordinarily there are two different bodies supporting them, and that this defines these bodies as of the opposite sex. Save for some exceptions, of course--look at the snail. But Maupertius, to say it all, was not stupid enough, and as a result he misses the point of discovery constituted by this massive distinction for the real apprehension of the differences between the sexes. If he were more of a dupe, he would have erred less.

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He is a non-dupe--he makes hypotheses.

I invite you to repudiate the hypotheses, and, here, to be stupid enough not to ask yourselves questions about the usage of my knot. It will not serve to go farther than there from where it emerges, that is, the analytic experience. It is this experience that it accounts for. There is its worth.

Third remark, also preliminary.

The imaginary founds the consistency of this knot. In regard to this imaginary consistency, jouissance can only ex-sist, that is, parody this; it is that in regard to the real, it is something other than sense that is at issue in jouissance. The signifier, based on this fact, is deprived of sense--it is what remains. And all that remains comes to propose itself as intervening in jouissance.

Must we understand that the *I think* suffices to insure ex-sistence? Certainly not, and Descartes stumbles. But it is no less true, up to a certain point, that ex-sistence is only defined in effacing all sense. Descartes himself also floated between the *ergo sum* and the *existo*--but assuredly the notion of existence was not then assured. I will say that for something to exist, there must be a hole. Is not this hole simulated by the *I think*, since Descartes empties it? It is around a hole that existence suggests itself. Now this hole, we have one at the heart of each of these rounds. Without these holes, it would not even be thinkable for something to be knotted.

But it is not a question here of what Descartes thought. It is a question of what Freud touched. How therefore can we situate with our knot what ex-sists to the real of the hole? I propose symbolizing it by an intermediary field, intermediary insofar as put flat--writing in fact requires (*impose*) as such a putting-flat. This intermediary field is given us by the opening of the round into an infinite straight line, isolated in its consistency.

I must now explain myself concerning the notation where I have indicated that what there is of ex-sistence metaphorizes itself by phallic jouissance. It is to the real as making a hole that jouissance ex-sists, and I situate it therefore by the field produced by the opening of the round connoted R.

Jouissance's ex-sistence to the real is the fact analytic experience has brought us. With Freud there is something like a prostration before this phallic jouissance, of which his experience led him to the discovery of the nodal function, and around which is founded the sort of real with which analysis is concerned. That phallic jouissance is tied to the production of ex-sistence, is what I propose to you this year to put to the test.

Let us remark that this jouissance only situates itself by the wedging that results from the nodality proper to the Borromean knot. There are two other fields that are situated in the same fashion. As a result, this knot, as I have said, is doubled by another triplicity.

To what does ex-sistence ex-sist? Certainly not to what consists. Existence as such is supported by what, in each of these terms, RSI, makes a hole. There is in each something by which it is from the circle, from a fundamental circularity which defines itself, and this is what it is to name. From the time of Freud, what is named is only imaginary. Conformed to this necessity according to which it is to the imaginary that goes the substance, Freud designates by the function of the ego nothing other than what makes a hole in representation. No doubt he does not go as far as to say it, but he represents it, in his fantasmic second topic

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Which holes constitute the real and the symbolic? Something offers itself to us, which seems to go by itself: it is to designate by life the hole of the real. Moreover, this is an inclination that Freud himself did not resist. As for the function of the symbolic, if we interrogate with our knot the structure necessitated by Freud, we find it on the side of death.

In the symbolic, in fact, something is *urverdrängt*, something to which we never give sense, although we are capable of saying that *all men are mortal*. But this statement, because of the *all*, makes no sense. The plague had to be propagated in Thebes for the *all* to cease to be of a pure symbolic, and to become imaginable. Everyone had to feel themselves concerned *in particular* by the threat of the plague. It is revealed at the same time that if Oedipus forced something, it was completely without knowing it. He only killed his father in failing to take the time to *Laiussize*.¹ If he had done so for the time it took, this would have been the time of an analysis, since that was what he was on the road for--he believed, because of a dream, that he was going to kill him who, under the name of Polybus, was well and good his veritable father.

What Freud brings us concerning the Other is this: there is no Other except in saying it, but it is impossible to say completely. There is an *Urverdrängt*, an irreducible unconscious, the saying of which is not only defined as impossible, but introduces as such the category of the impossible.

Religion is true. It is surely more true than neurosis, in that it denies that God *is* purely and simply what Voltaire believed hard as iron--it says that He ex-sists, that He is the ex-sistence

¹ *Larousse* defines "Laius" as a "long-winded speech" [tr.]

par excellence, which is to say, in sum, that He is repression in person. He is even the person supposed repression. This is why religion is true.

God is nothing other than what makes it so that beginning with language, there cannot be established a rapport between the sexed. Language, where does it come from? Does it only come to stop up the hole constituted by the non-rapport constitutive of the sexual? I have never said that--because the non-rapport is only suspended in language. Language is thus not a simple stopper, it is that in which is inscribed the non-rapport, and this is all that we can say about it. God, himself, is not in language, but he brings with him the set of the effects of language, including psychoanalytic effects, which is not to say little.

To fix things where they merit being fixed, which is to say, in logic, Freud does not believe in God, because he operates in his own line, as is shown by the dust he throws in our eyes to enmose (*emmoïser*)² us. Not only does he perpetuate religion, but he consecrates it as the ideal neurosis, in attaching it to obsessional neurosis, which well merits being called ideal properly speaking. In doing this, he is himself a dupe, in the good fashion, one who does not err. He is not like me, who can only testify that I err. I err in these intervals that I try to situate for you with sense, phallic jouissance, indeed with the third term that I have not clarified, because it is it that gives us the key to the hole, the hole such as I designate it. It is the jouissance that concerns not the Other of the signifier but the Other of the body, the Other of the other sex.

Why did Freud qualify Eros with the One, in daring to refer to that Platonic enormity, the myth of the unified body, of the two-backed body, the body all round?

We embrace another body in vain, which is only the sign of an extreme difficulty (*embarass*). It is a fact of experience, for which Freud, however, did not account--and why?--it happens--Freud catalogues it, as he had to, with regression--that we suck on this body, but what can that really do? Apart from breaking it in pieces, one does not truly see what one can do with another body. I mean a body called human.

This justifies the fact that if we seek what might border this jouissance of the other body inasmuch as it surely makes a hole, what we find is anxiety.

There was a time when I chose this theme of anxiety. I chose it because I knew that this would not last--I had in fact some faithfuls who employed themselves in reviving some motions of order which could in what followed make me declared unfit to transmit analytic theory. It is not at all that this caused me anxiety, nor even difficulty. That can return every day, that causes me neither anxiety nor difficulty. What I taught then concerning *Inhibition*, *Symptom*, and *Anxiety*, shows this: that it is altogether compatible with the fact the unconscious is conditioned by language to situate some affects there. Is it not by language that we are affected in a prevalent fashion?

Inhibition, *Symptom*, *Anxiety*, I have staggered these terms on three planes, demonstrating that they are as heterogeneous to each other as my terms real, symbolic, and imaginary.

What is anxiety? It is what, from the interior of the body, ex-sists when something awakens it, torments it. Look at little Hans. If he rushes (*se rue*) into phobia, it is to give body--I demonstrated it for a whole year--to the difficulty he had with the phallus, with this phallic jouissance that had come to associate itself with his body. He then invents a whole series of equivalents to this phallus, diversely hoofed (*piaffant*). His anxiety is the principle of his phobia

² As Cormac Gallagher tentatively suggests in his translation of an unedited version of this Seminar, in which this word is transcribed as *emmoïser*, this neologism is possibly a play on both Moses (*Moïse*) and *Moi* (Ego) [tr].

--and it is in rendering this anxiety pure that one arrives at making him accommodate himself to this phallus, like all those who find themselves burdened with what I on one occasion qualified as the bandoleer. Man is married to this phallus. He has no other woman than that.

This is what Freud said in every possible way. What else did he say when he stated that the phallic drive is not the genital drive? The genital drive is not natural at all in man. And if he did not have this devil of a symbolic to push him from behind so that at last he ejaculates and that this serves for something, it wouldn't be long until there would be no more of these speakingbeings--of these beings who do not speak simply to be (*à être*), but are speakingbeings, which is truly the height of futility.