

Seminar of May 13, 1975

There are no states of the soul. There is a *dire* to demonstrate. And to promote the title under which this *dire* will be pursued next year if I survive, I will announce it: 4, 5, 6.

This year, I have said *RSI*. Why not 1, 2, 3? *we will go to the woods*. You know what follows: 4, 5, 6, *gathering cherries--7, 8, 9, in my new basket*.¹

I will stop at 4, 5, 6. Why? And why are *RSI* given as letters? That they are three can be said secondly. It is only because they are three that there is one that is the real.

Which of the three merits the title of real? At this level of logic, it little matters. The sense cedes to the number, to the point that it is the number that . . . am I going to say dominates this sense? No--determines it. The number three has to be demonstrated as what it is if it is the real, that is, the impossible. What one wants to demonstrate at the point of saying it (*en passe du dire*) must be impossible, a required (*exigible*) condition for the real. It exists as impossible.

Still, it must be demonstrated, and not only shown. Demonstrating is a matter for the symbolic. The symbolic is thus a step ahead of the imaginary. But this does not suffice, because it only sets the tone. One must not trust in the tone, but in the number. And this is what I try to put to the test. But is a number knotted still a number?

That's where we are. I have retained you throughout the year around a certain number of flashes. I am not there for much, being determined as a subject by the unconscious, or else by my practice. This implies the unconscious as supposed--is this to say that, as wholly supposed it is imaginary? This is the sense itself of the word *subject*: supposed as imaginary.

What is there in the symbolic that is not imagined? There is the hole. Someone who saw me in the grip of the knot said to me that I contradicted myself by having at one time appropriated for my purposes a Picassoian formula: "I do not seek, I find." *To seek (Chercher)* is a term that derives from *circare*. I find nonetheless, since I have found the hole (*trouvé le trou*), a mouse hole through which I am reduced to passing. Does it have something to do with what one imagines to determine it, that is, the circle? A circle can be a hole, but it is not always. It is only the consequence of the hole.

While I am there, I will remind you of the Arab proverb which is found already in the last lines of my *Propos sur la causalité psychique*, and which states that there are three things that leave no mark: the man in the woman, the step of the gazelle on the rock, and, *more inaccessible to our eyes made for signs of change*, the mark on the touched coin, the mark that is not there--there is only wear. It is here that is sold cut-rate (*se solder*), it is the case to say, this something knotted in question.

I find enough, enough for having to circulate. Hegel poses quite well that all that is political is rooted in the Police. There is nothing political that is not finally, in the final term of reduction, the police pure and simple. Now, the police have only one thing to say: *Circulez!* [Move on!]. The *gyrie* little matters.

All of this only becomes serious if one begins with the hole, through which it is necessary to pass. What is remarkable about the *bo* knot is that it makes a knot without circling in a

¹ A French nursery rhyme, in which 3 (*trois*) rhymes with *bois* [woods], 6 (*six*) rhymes with *cerises* [cherries], and 9 (*neuf*) rhymes with and is spelled the same as (*neuf*) [new]. In *Lacan Géomètre* (Paris: *Anthropos*, 1998, p. 203), Alain Cochet gives us the complete rhyme as follows:

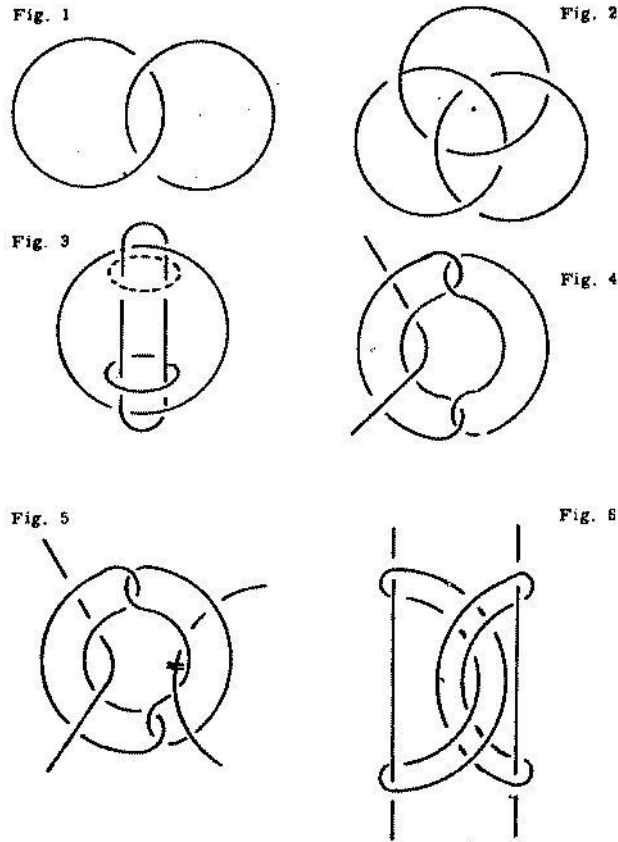
1,2, 3, *nous irons au bois*

4,5,6, *cueiller des cerises*

7,8,9, *dans mon panier neuf*

10,11,12, *elles seront toutes rouges* [they will all be red].

fashion that utilizes the hole as such.



There is a difference between the knot and this (Figure 1), which utilizes the hole. This makes a chain. The knot makes a chain without using the hole (Figure 2).

Despite its appearance, in this form here, a form that is pure appearance, we again find the bo knot (Figure 3). In the measure that these two rounds, the two larger ones, are not knotted, the third, smaller one knots them. It first modifies (*infléchit*) one of them, then, having arrived at the other end, it modifies the other in its turn, and thus turns in a circle. If we suppose it symbolic, let us say that it will indefinitely turn around the false chain of the imaginary and the symbolic, unless this fourth round is interposed. How are we to recognize ourselves in this double circle, and precisely as not being knotted?

For a knot to be Borromean, it does not suffice that it be a knot; each of the knotted elements must be freed by the rupture of one among them.

Let us remark that one does not give to this expression, "it must and it suffices," its full sense, save in referring to the knot. "It suffices" implies--something that one always forgets because one does not make the hole, the only hole worth anything (*le seul trou qui vaille*), the discovery (*la trouvaille*)--that if the condition is lacking, nothing works anymore, which is the inverse of "it must" (*il faut*). This inverse is always eluded; I am going to demonstrate how right away.

You knot two circles in a way that leaves them unknotted (Figure 4). If a consistency passes here, whether of a circle or of an infinite straight line, that suffices to make a Borromean

knot. If you make another pass here (Figure 5), you have a figure that has the air of being a Borromean knot, but which is not, because it does not suffice to cut one of these consistencies for each of the other three to be freed.

For that to happen, things must be disposed otherwise (Figure 6). This has the air of being similar, but here, one whichever of the elements being broken, the others are free.

And, to begin with, what do the straight line as infinite and the circle have in common? It is this: the rupture of the circle is equivalent to the rupture of the infinite straight line in its effects on the knot--it frees the other elements of the knot. But these two ruptures do not have the same effects of remainder on the element.

In fact, what remains of the circle after its rupture? A finite straight line as such, which is as much as to say something to throw out, a scrap, a bit of a cord of nothing at all.

Allow me to figure the circle by this zero, cut by what separates, which is to say the two, that is: $0/2 = 1$, this little 1 of nothing at all. On the other hand, the sectioning of the infinite straight line, with a big 1, gives us two half-lines which begin at a point, and go off to infinity: $1/2 = 2$.

This makes it felt for you how I understand that there is no sexual rapport. I no doubt give to the word *rapport* the sense of *proportion*, but the *mos geometricum* of Euclid, which has appeared for such a long time the paragon of logic, is completely insufficient. Also, in entering into the figure of the knot, there is a wholly other fashion to figure the non-rapport of the sexes--two circles not knotted. Each is in its fashion of turning in a circle as a sex is not knotted to the other. That is what my non-rapport means.

It is striking that language has for a long time anticipated the figure of the knot--with which mathematicians have not begun to busy themselves until our day--by calling what unites the man and the woman a *knot*. These knots imply as necessary the elementary 3 with which I support them: the three indications of sense, of sense materialized, posed in the namings of the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real.

I am introducing the word *naming (nomination)*. I have had to respond with it recently apropos of the theory of reference, as logicians understand it. My knot brought me down to earth.

The whole question is of knowing if naming again arises, as it seems, from the symbolic. The least one can say is that, for my knot, naming is a fourth element. I have already drawn this figure for you (Figure 7). A fourth circle knots the three at first posed as unknotted.

In engaging in this four, one finds a particular path (*voie*) that only goes to six. What engages you in this path is what the three imposes, not of a distinction, but, quite to the contrary, of an identity between the three terms symbolic, imaginary, and real. This is true (*Cela va*) to the point that it seems to us necessary (*exigible*) to find again in each this trinity. I have had to foment to account for it the terms ex-sistence, consistency, and hole.

I make of ex-sistence, of what is in play up to a certain limit in the knot, the support of the real. What makes consistency is of the order of the imaginary, since if the rupture involves something, it is indeed consistency, to give it its most reduced sense. There remains then--but does it remain?--for the symbolic the affectation of the term hole.

Topology gives us a figure of it in the form of the torus. But is this figure suitable, since the torus has *two* holes, an internal hole with its *gyrie*, and an external hole, thanks to which the torus is demonstrated to participate in the figure of the cylinder? The cylinder is for us one of the best ways of materializing the straight line to infinity, of which everyone knows its rapport with what I call the round of consistency.

Desargues was aware for a long time that the infinite straight line is in every way homologous to the circle, whereby he anticipated Riemann. Nonetheless, a question remains open, to which I give an answer by the attention I bring to the Borromean knot.

Let us only consider this drawing (Figure 8). Let us say that this circle is the symbolic, and that the two straight lines figure the real and the imaginary. What is needed for it to make a knot? The point at infinity must be such that the two straight lines do not make a chain, whatever they may be and from wherever one might see them (*les voie*).

I remind you in passing that this *from wherever one might see them* supports this reality I enounce of the gaze. The gaze is only definable by a *from wherever one might see them*.

If you think of a straight line as making a round from a unique point at infinity, how can you not see that this has the sense that not only are they are not knotted, but that in not being knotted they are effectively knotted at infinity. Desargues, to my knowledge, neglected this question.

I made use of Desargues at the time when I gave my seminar on *Las Meninas* at the *Normale Supérieure*, focusing on situating this famous gaze that is quite obviously the subject of the painting. I situated it in the same interval that I establish here on the board in another form; that is, what I define by the fact that the infinite straight lines, in their supposed point of infinity, are not knotted in a chain.

The question begins for us there. It does not seem that Desargues ever interrogated himself on the point of knowing if the form in which he supposed these infinite straight lines implied that they were knotted or not. Riemann decided the question in a not very satisfying way by making of all the points at infinity, whatever straight line they belong to, a single and unique point.

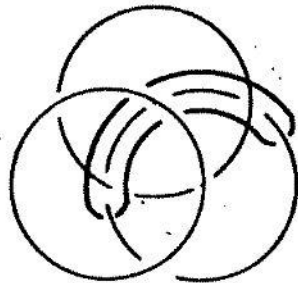


Fig. 7

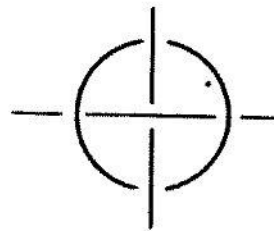


Fig. 8

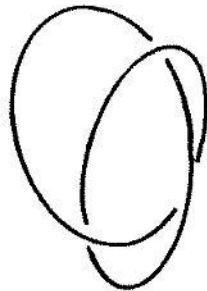


Fig. 9

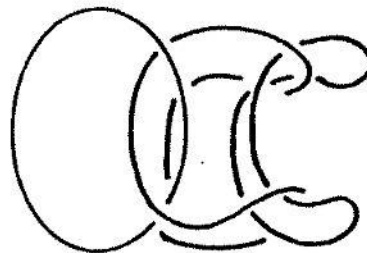


Fig. 10

If we now study this knot (Figure 9)--which, curiously, presents a sort of analogy with this form (Figure 2)--if we study it as do mathematicians, we will define its structure, beginning with the notion of the fundamental group, by a certain number of trajectories that will be made from any point whichever. But contrary to what one might imagine, it is not the number that is characteristic of the fundamental group, it is the relation between a certain number of trajectories.

We support there in its pure state the notion of rapport. And it leads us back to the knot, to the Borromean knot, since this rapport itself makes a knot, except that this knot lacks number.

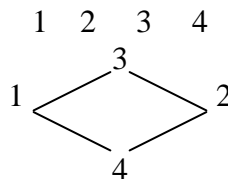
In taking the step (*étape*) of the Borromean knot, we support by the number itself trajectories of which it is a question in no matter what knot; even when the knot (Figure 9) only has one consistency. We take the number as an intermediary, as an element, to introduce us into the dialectic of the knot.

Nothing is less natural than to think this knot.

That there is something of the One, which I advanced in its time in supporting it by the circle, is what the movement of thought limits itself to--it makes a circle. Besides, this is why there is nothing more natural than to reproach its circle as vicious. To figure the rapport of the sexes, I have therefore found the figure of two 1's in the form of two circles knotted by a third because they are not knotted by themselves. It is a matter not only, in the *bo* knot, of the three being freed when the third is broken, but of the third knotting them explicitly because they are not knotted. I would have not made this function pass through your minds if I thought that today I spoke in vain: it is because they are not knotted that they are knotted. I want to conclude with this: without the fourth, nothing is, properly speaking, put in evidence of what is truly the Borromean knot.

In every Borromean chain, there is a 1, then a 2, after which there is a third that makes a buckle (Figure 10).

In any chain whichever--let us limit-ourselves to the chain 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 -- if we put whichever of the first two in the third rung, the 1 will from then on be knotted to the 2 and through the 3 and through the 4.



Try it, for there is nothing better for thinking this knot than manipulating rounds of thread.

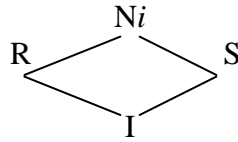
It is clear that the 1 and the 2 are interchangeable; that is, at the beginning of a chain, the first and the second are indefinitely interchangeable. Now, if we place one of these two at the level of the 3, we see not only the 3 involved and passing to the place of the 2, but with the 3, the 4. That is how my interest in the four-looped knot is justified, which I will develop next year.

With what should we couple the naming that here makes the fourth term? Are we going to couple it with the imaginary, inasmuch as, coming from the symbolic, it makes a certain effect in the imaginary?

This is what it would seem to be a question of for the logicians when they speak of the referent. In fact, the Rusellian *description*, which emerges when one is interrogated on the identification of Walter Scott as author of the *Waverly*, concerns, it seems, what is individualized from the support thought of bodies. Now, it is in fact nothing like that.

The notion of reference aims for the real. It as real that what the logicians imagine as real

gives its support to the referent, to the imaginary naming. Between R and S, we have a naming index *i*, and then the I. This is what constitutes the tie between the real and the symbolic.

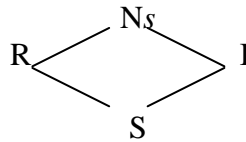


I will propose that this imaginary naming is what I am supporting today with the infinite straight line.

This straight line is not what would name anything whatsoever of the imaginary, but what inhibits the management of anything demonstrative. It is a bar, at the level itself of the imagination, to all that is articulated as symbolic. The body only enters into the analytic perspective inasmuch as it makes an orifice, and it is knotted to some symbolic or real. And it is precisely by a circle, an orifice, that the imaginary is constituted.

The infinite straight line, which here completes the hole in question--a false hole, since an orifice does not suffice to make a hole--is quite precisely the inhibition that thought has in respect to the knot.

From then on, we can interrogate in the same way, what, between the real and the imaginary, naming, index of the symbolic, is.



In the symbolic emerges something that names--one sees this, one believes, at the beginning of the Bible. But one does not notice that the creationist idea of the inaugural *Fiat lux* is not a naming. The emergence of the symbolic from the real--that's what the idea of creation is--has nothing to do with the fact that, in a second time, a name is given to each of the animals who live in Paradise. Of what naming is it a question in what I indicate by Ns?

The naming of each of the species, with a common noun, and not, in Russell's sense, a proper noun--what does it represent? An assuredly symbolic naming, but limited to the symbolic. Does that suffice to support the Name-of-the-Father for us? Is the Father he who has given things their names, or must he be interrogated at the level of the real? Must we not knot the term naming at the level of the circle with which we support the real?

It is between these three namings, the naming of the imaginary as inhibition, the naming of the real as anxiety, the naming of the symbolic, flower of the symbolic even, as symptom--it is between these three terms that I will try next year to interrogate myself concerning what is suitable to give as substance to the Name-of-the-Father.