

## **Introduction**

*Preliminary to the Seminar of R.S.I.*

*19 November 1974*

There is no mike. So you're going to have to tell me whether you can hear me.

There you are, there are people, I know because I was told so, who are living the strike like a celebration. I know it, of course, through analysis. One gets to know things by analysis! One gets to know even that there are people twisted enough for that. But anyway, why not? It's subjective, as they say. That means that there are people who can tackle a lot of things from the right angle. Nevertheless, I am not one of them; as analyst, I can only take the strike to be a symptom, in the sense that this year perhaps, I will manage to convince you of it, that the symptom, to refer to one of my three categories, belongs to the Real. The annoying thing – and this is why I have some reservations – is that it is an organised symptom; that is what is bad, at least from the point of view of the analyst.

So then, if all the same I am going to go on strike, it is not because for me it is a celebration, but it happens that this strike comes to me like a ring on my finger; I mean that it happens that today, namely, at the start of this year 74-75, I have not the slightest inclination to do a seminar for you, as is attested by the fact that you have not seen any

notice of it, announcing the title like every other year. I must say that nevertheless your number today does not fail to shake me. You know that every year I question myself about what it could be that motivates this crowd. It is not any more resolved now, it is not any more resolved for me, but all the same I consider it as an appeal, an appeal (10) linked to the fact that what I wrote, did nothing more than write, I mean what is written on the board with little signs, the  $\circ$ , the  $S_1$ , the  $S_2$ , the  $\$$  of the subject, the fact is that the analytic discourse is something that stirs you, I mean which stirs *you*. It is not a *you*, a *stirs you* in the neutral sense. It is true that to have written it, is an attempt, a tentative approximation. One could perhaps do better. I hope that one will do better.

But in short this year, I have to tell you that I have other concerns. That would, I hope, only give me greater merit in your eyes, if I pursue this seminar here. I have other concerns and I question myself as to whether I ought not let them take precedence. I mean that among you – I see numerous faces of them here – there are people who belong to my School. And perhaps after all my lassitude comes from something that is eating me, namely, that this seminar prevents me from paying more attention to this School.

This year to stimulate this School, I took a tack of which some among you have perhaps heard an echo. I am not going to put the concerns that this gives me into the public forum. Not, of course, that this is something private, quite the contrary, since what is at stake is that there is elsewhere, somewhere other than here, something that gives a place to other teachings than mine. It is strange, strange in the properly Freudian sense, *unheimlich*, it is strange that it is by some people who do not find themselves properly speaking yet authorised by analysis, but who are on the path, that there comes this resistance to the reason why I am stimulating them. I am stimulating them in short to make effective, to make effective what? In a testimony that they would contribute about the point where they are at, to make

effective this *passee* which perhaps some of you know is what I am trying to introduce into my School, this *passee* by which in short what is at stake is that each one contributes his stone to the analytic discourse by bearing witness to how one enters into it.

It is strange that among them there are some who are fully formed analysts and who when literally – this is what I did in this place where I wanted certain teachings to take place – when literally I beg their help – this is what I did – refuse it in the most categorical way, and go as far as to answer me with the insult, the insult which can be found in the newspapers for example – these are not things that have an effect on me but which, all the same about this insult, which is already not (11) bad to find in the newspaper, in the newspaper *Le Monde* in particular, as it happens, inflate this insult, and add to it. Yeah.

If I speak this year, I will take things from the angle of the identity of self to self. The question is whether this applies to the analyst. Can the analyst be considered as an element? Does he make, in other words, a *set*? Making a set/doing it together (*faire ensemble*), this is something that I will try to explain to you, is not to form a trade union. They are two different terms. *Faire ensemble* might mean, that means being able to make a series. And what I am questioning myself about is where this series stops? Among other terms, can an analyst, like the example of what I have just alluded to about the insult, behave like an imbecile (*imbécile*)? This is a very important question. How judge what I am describing as imbecility? It surely has a meaning, even in the analytic discourse; elsewhere, of course, in every discourse no one has any doubt, one is an imbecile or not, I am saying with respect to this discourse specifically to the discourse of the master, the discourse of the university, the scientific discourse, there is no doubt about it. How define imbecility in the analytic discourse? Here is a question, a question that I introduced, faith, I would say, from the first year of my seminar in stating that analysis is certainly a remedy against ignorance, that it is without effect against being an asshole (*connerie*).

Hang on, pay attention! I already said that *connerie* is not imbecility. How can you situate imbecility, specify it as being an asshole?

The annoying thing and what is difficult in the question that I evoke, is something is perhaps something that you got wind of from me, I did not heavily insist on it, but all the same it must be said there are subjects for whom analysis, I mean the analytic experience, when they present themselves to it, does not succeed. And I specify that this makes them imbeciles. It must indeed be that there is something flawed at the start. That means perhaps that they would be more useful, I mean useable elsewhere. I mean that for something else they have obvious gifts. This brings us back to the ethics of each discourse and it is not for nothing that I put forward the term ethics of psychoanalysis. Ethics is not the same in it and it is perhaps with those whose ethics would have made them shine elsewhere that analysis does not succeed. Simple hypothesis, but that perhaps – this cannot be without twists and turns – perhaps if I decide, we will put here, finally we will put, it is a manner of speaking, I will put to the test here, (12) starting from the fact that I am indicating that there is no other ethics than to play the game according to the structure of a discourse and that we rediscover there my title of last year; it is the non-dupes, those who do not play the game of a discourse, who find themselves liable to err. It is not inevitably any worse for that. Only it is at their own risk. Those who err, in each discourse, are not inevitably useless in it. Far from it! Only it would be preferable in order to found a new one of these discourses, that people should be a little bit more dupe.

There you are. So then since all the same it would be quite useless to tell you that I am suspending myself, that I am questioning myself about what I will do this year, it would be quite vain to do so, but to do it for two hours which is what you were expecting, well then, I am not going to do it. I am going to stop there while asking you simply to trust, in order to know if you are to come back here on the 10<sup>th</sup> December, the second Tuesday, to trust the little notices on which I

will inscribe the title that I will have chosen, if do this seminar this year. It is quite superfluous, and I would even say contra-indicated for you to bombard Gloria with telephone calls. The poor woman can't take any more! It will be one thing or another, either this notice will be put up there, let us say to leave the time to do it and then I must also think things out, the notice will be in the corridor two days before, or else it will not be. If it is not there, well then! You can tell yourselves that I am taking a year's sabbatical. If it is there, I am counting on seeing you as numerous as you are today.

### Seminar 11: Tuesday 13 May 1975

There are no, there are no moods (*états d'âme*). This has to be said, to be demonstrated. And to promote the title under which this saying will be pursued next year, if I survive, I would announce it as: 4, 5, 6.

This year I said R.S.I. Why not 1, 2, 3? – “*Un, deux, trois, nous irons aux bois* (1, 2, 3 we will go to the wood) – you know the rest perhaps? – “*Quatre, cinq, six, cueillir des cerises*, (4, 5, 6 to pick cherries)” – Yes – “*Sept, huit, neuf, dans mon panier neuf*, (7, 8, 9 in my new basket). – Well, I will stop at 4, 5, 6. Why?

Why are R.S.I given as letters? That they are three can be said to be secondary. It is not because they are three that there is one which is the Real. Which, which of these three letters would deserve this title of Real? I say that at the level of logic, what matter! And that meaning yields it to number to the point that it is number that, am I going to say, dominates this meaning? Not at all! Determines it. The number three is to be demonstrated as what it is if it is the Real, namely, the Impossible. It is the most difficult sort of demonstration. What one wants to demonstrate does without saying, it must be impossible, a condition required for the Real. It ek-sists as impossible.

Again it must be demonstrated, not simply shown! Demonstrating refers to the Symbolic. If the Symbolic is thus a step ahead of the

Imaginary, that is not enough, it only gives the tone. And when all is said and done, it is not tone that one must trust but number. This is what I am trying to put to the test. But is a knotted number still a number? Or indeed is it something else?

(166) That is where we have got to. I have kept you throughout this year around a certain number of news flashes. For my part, I am not all that important in it, being determined as subject by the unconscious, or indeed by the practice, a practice that implies the unconscious as presupposed. Does that mean, that like every sub-posed, it is imaginary? It is the very meaning of the word *subject*, sup-posed as imaginary.

What is there in the Symbolic that is not imagined? What I want to tell you is that there is the hole. Someone who saw me preyed on, make no mistake, by this knot, that here [XI-1] I am drawing for you in its simplest form, someone who saw me preyed on by it, in more complicated forms, told me that I was contradicting myself in a way by having put forward at one time, in terms that are not even my own, which are from Picasso as everyone knows, 'I do not seek, I find', someone said to me: 'Well then there, I see you really searching.'

To search (*chercher*), is a term that comes from *circare*, as you can find in any etymological dictionary. I find all the same, because that not in the etymological dictionary, I found the hole, Soury's hole, if I dare to express myself in this way, through which I am reduced to pass. Does it have to do with what people imagine determines it,

namely, the circle? A circle may be a hole, but it is not always so... While I am at it, at this subject, I would say – I recall what can already be found in the last lines of my *Remarks on psychical causality* – an Arabic proverb which states that there are a certain number of things, he also names three of them, on which nothing leaves a trace, the man in the woman, he says first, indeed the step of the gazelle on a rock. I anticipated it, recalling the third term of this ending with a comma, ‘more inaccessible to our eyes, this trace, made for the signs of the (167) moneychanger.’ That is the third term. There is no trace on the coin that has been touched, only wear.

Yes! It is indeed here that there comes to be settled, make no mistake, this knotted thing that is at stake, I find, enough to have to foment the circle which is only the consequence of the hole, I find, enough to be able to move around (*circuler*). I do not know if you have noticed that the police whom Hegel posits very well are at the root of everything political and that there is nothing in politics that is not, when everything has been boiled down, purely and simply police, that policemen have only one word to say: keep moving (*Circulez!*). The gyre that I spoke to you about the last time does not matter to them, whether it is gyring to the right or to the left, they don’t give a damn, make no mistake, what is at stake is to keep moving! That becomes, that only becomes serious if one starts from the hole through which one must pass. What is remarkable in the knot called ‘bo’, I am not saying beautiful (*beau*), in the beau knot, as I will call it on this occasion, is exactly the fact that it forms a knot, while not moving around in a way that uses the hole as such. There is a difference between this knot and that one [XI-2] that the hole uses. This is what makes a chain.



It is striking ever since chains have been made that the thing that has not been noted, is that in the 'bo' knot, there is no need to use the hole because it makes a knot without making a chain. How does it make a knot? In such a way that, to redo it in the way the rings do [XI-3] which is exactly the same thing as that [XI-4], despite the appearance

as you see it in this form, this form of pure appearance, it is in the measure that these two rings are not knotted [XI-4] that the third, in this very measure, bends one of the two, that are free among themselves, bends it in such a way that necessarily when it gets to the other end of one of these circles, it will bend the other in its turn, and thus, it will turn around, if this ring, the small one there, we suppose it to be the Symbolic, it will indefinitely make a circuit of the – in inverted commas since it is not a true chain – of the 'false chain' of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. This indeed is what is at stake.

How recognise oneself in this coupled double circle and precisely, by not being knotted? In order for a knot to be Borromean, for a knot to be 'bo', it is not enough that it should be a knot, it is necessary that each of the elements, this term it is necessary and it is sufficient, is not

given its full meaning unless it is referred to the knot; to say it is necessary, is something, but to say it is sufficient implies, which is always forgotten because people do not make the hole (*trou*), the only hole that is worthwhile, the discovery (*trouvaille*)! Because one does not make the hole, one does not see that if the condition is lacking, nothing is going to work out! Which is the opposite of the ‘it is necessary’, the always eluded opposite. I am going to show it to you right away.

You knot two circles [XI-5] you knot them in a way which implies, since here it is not demonstrated but simply shown, you knot them in

(169) such a way that they are not knotted; that they make here something which is just as much the consistency of a circle as an infinite straight line. This is sufficient because it is identifiable to this figure [XI-1], the ‘bo’ knot. This is enough to make a Borromean knot. Nothing is going to be easier for you to imagine than the fact that if you make another one pass here like that, you have a figure which will have the air – how can you not believe it? – of being a

Borromean knot. Nevertheless it is not sufficient to cut this consistency for each of the three elements to be free from the two others. For it to be thus, it would be necessary that things should be differently arranged, which nevertheless indeed seems to be the same thing, namely, [XI-6] that the arrangement in four elements should be in this form, *qua* showable. What demonstrates it? For in this form, it is clear that any one of the elements being broken, the three others are free, which was not the case in the first figure that I gave you.

(170) And first of all what is there in common in the way in which I depicted these four elements for you, what is there in common between the straight line as infinite and the circle. What is in common is that their breaking liberates the other elements of the knot. The breaking of the circle is equivalent to the breaking of the infinite straight line. How? From the point of view of the knot – not in so far as the breaking in its effects on the knot, not in its effects as a remainder on the element. What does there remain of the circle after its breaking? A finite straight line as such, you may as well say ready to be thrown out, a little rag, a piece of cord that is good for nothing. The zero of the cut circle! Allow me to depict this cut up by what separates it, namely, the two, zero over two equals, at the very most, this little one worth nothing at all. The infinite straight line, the big One, once it is sectioned, gives all the same two half-straight-lines that start as they say, from a point, from a zero point, in order to go to infinity. One over two equals two. This in order to make you sense that when I state that there is no sexual relationship, I give to the meaning of the word relationship the idea of proportion. But everyone knows that the *mos geometricum* of Euclid, which sufficed for so long to appear the paragon of logic, is quite insufficient and to get into the figure of the knot. There is a completely different way of supporting the figure of the non-relationship of the sexes, it is to support them by two circles *qua* not knotted. That is what is at stake in what I state about non-relationship, each of these circles which are constituted we do not yet know of what, in the relationship of the sexes, each one in

its way of turning around as sex, is that not so, is not knotted to the other. This is what my non-relationship means.

It is quite striking that language has for a long time anticipated the figure of the knot, about which mathematicians have begun to spar only in our own day, to call a knot what unites the man and a woman, without naturally knowing what is at stake, in speaking metaphorically about the knots that unite them. It is these knots that it would no doubt be worth referring to in showing that they imply as necessary this elementary 3 by which as it happens I support them by this three indications of meaning, of materialised meaning, that are depicted in the nominations of the Symbolic the Imaginary and the Real.

I have just introduced the term nomination. I had to answer for it recently in connection with what was collected in a little work by logicians on the subject of what the logicians have managed to state (171) up to now, concerning what is called the referent. I fell there from the heights of my knot, and this did not facilitate things for me at all because that is the whole question: does nominations stem, as it apparently seems, from the Symbolic? You know, in short, perhaps you remember it! I made for you one day the figure that is required when one wishes to foment a knot of four. The least that can be said is that if we introduce nomination at this level, it is a fourth element. This figure, I made it for you in this way [XI-7]: one must start from the unknotted circles, and I even have no repugnance in evoking the case where I was found lacking with regard to this figure. Here is what is appropriate for a fourth circle to knot the three that first of all were posited as unknotted. This figure, contrary to the one in which one day I was just as entangled as you may be on occasion, for want

of having disciplined yourself to this exercise, one of these circles remained outside the operation.

It is in this that however full in its simplicity the Borromean knot of three may be, it is starting from four, and I underline, by being engaged in this four, that one finds a path, a particular path that only goes up to six. In other words, which makes of the coupled circle, taken for each one of the elements qualifiable from the fact that the three is dictated, not from distinction, but quite the contrary from the identity between the three terms of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real to the point that it seems to us to be required to find in each one, this triplicity, this trinity of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. Namely, to recall that the Real holds up in these terms that I already fomented with the name of ek-sistence, of consistency and of hole, to make of ek-sistence written as I write it, namely, what operates up to a certain limit in the knot, this supports the Real. What gives consistency is of the Imaginary order which is supposed by the (172) fact that it is truly tangible for us that if there is something from which the rupture springs, it is indeed consistency, to give it its most restricted meaning. There remains then – but does there remain – for the Symbolic the affectation of the term hole, this in so far as mathematics, the one properly qualified as topology, gives us a figure in the form of the torus of something that can depict the hole. Now topology does nothing of the kind, if only because the torus has two holes, the internal hole with its gyre and the hole that one can call external, thanks to which the torus is demonstrated as participating in the figure of the cylinder which is one of the ways which best materialises for us the figure of the straight line at infinity. Everyone knows the relationship of the straight line at infinity to what I simply call the ring of consistency. Everyone knows this relationship, and not simply for having seen me depict it in the Borromean knot, the one that carries the indication o.k. (*n.bo.*).

Someone named Desargues, the *Arguésien*, as they say, noticed a long time ago that the infinite straight line is in every way homologous to the circle. In this he anticipated Riemann, he anticipated him.

Nevertheless a question remains open to which I already give an answer by the attention that I am bringing to bear on the Borromean knot. Which will not prevent you, at least I hope, from maintaining present to your minds a form of question.

[*At the board*] As you see in this figure on the left [XI-1] of the Borromean knot constituted by the equivalent of this circle in the form of a straight line knotted to a circle, of the couple [XI-4] supposed by what here, to give your mind a support, could be the Symbolic. The two others, without us knowing what straight line should in particular depict the Real, for example this one, or the Imaginary for that one, what is required for that to make a knot? The point at infinity must be such that the two straight lines do not make a chain. Here is the condition that the two straight lines, whatever they may be, from wherever one sees them – I am pointing out to you in passing that this from wherever one sees them supports this reality that I state about the look, this look is only definable from wherever one sees them from – where one sees them from is in truth, if we think of a straight line as going round a point, a unique point at infinity, how not see that the fact that they are not knotted has a meaning. Not alone does it have a meaning that they are not knotted, but that it is by not being knotted that they will effectively be knotted at infinity, a point that to the best of my knowledge Desargues, Desargues whom I used at the time that (173) somewhere other than here, at *Normale Supérieure*, to evoke it by its name, I was giving my seminar on *Las Meninas*, the *Las Meninas* of Velasquez that I took advantage of to pride myself on situating where was this famous look which quite clearly is the subject of the painting. I situated it somewhere, in the same interval – perhaps one day you will see this seminar appearing – in the same interval that I am establishing here on the board, in a different form, namely, in the

one that I define from the fact that the infinite straight lines at their supposed point at infinity, are not knotted in a chain.

Here indeed is where the question begins for us. It does not seem that Desargues ever asked himself about the form in which he supposed these infinite straight lines, in posing the question of whether they knotted or not. It is quite striking that Riemann, for his part, should have settled the question in a way that gives little satisfaction by making of all the points at infinity, whatever straight line they belong to, a single and unique point which is at the principle of Riemann's geometry.

By raising the question of the knot, we are going to see, I am going to depict something for you here [XI-8], ah!, that I hope to get to the end of, in the form of a knot, a true one, which, a curious thing, presents a sort of analogy with this form [XI-3]. If we study this knot as the mathematicians do, what we, all that we can do, is to initiate the notion described as that of the fundamental group, namely, define the structure of this knot by a series of journeys (*trajets*) that will be made from any point whatsoever, this one, for example. We define the knot by something called the fundamental group which involves a number that differs according to the knots, a number of journeys that are necessary to indicate its structure. These journeys, even if they make several buckles in each one, but here I am asking the question, I am putting the hole in quotation marks, in each one of the holes which, apparently, make this knot, will be a certain number of them, and (174) contrary to what you may imagine, this number, in this case, in this case where the flattened-out figure seems to involve four, four distinct fields, that will not make for all that four individualised circles

of the journey, but contrary to what one may imagine, this is not the number which will be characteristic of this fundamental group, it will be the relation between a certain number of journeys.

We are supporting here, in a pure state, the notion of relationship, in so far as, precisely, it brings us back to the knot, to the Borromean knot, since this very relationship makes a knot, except for the fact that the knot lacks numbers. In taking this stage of the Borromean knot, we support by the very number the circles or the journeys that are at stake for any knot whatsoever, even if this knot, the one that I have just drawn, as you see, only has a unique consistency. We take the number as a go-between, as an intermediary, as itself an element to introduce us into the dialectic of the knot. What I will come to this time is the following, it is that namely, nothing is less, as I might say, natural than to think this knot. That there is something of the one, which I put forward at one time to support it by the circle is something to which, precisely, the movement of thought is limited, to make a circle, and that is why there is nothing more natural, make no mistake, than to reproach its circle as vicious. That if, to depict the relationship of the sexes without otherwise specifying any more, I find the figure of two one (*sic*), in the form of two circles, that a third knots precisely by the fact that they are not knotted with one another, for what is at stake is not simply that they are not so, that they are free when this third is broken, it is that this third, as I showed you in the figure [XI-9], this one, what is at stake is that it is because this third explicitly knots them by the fact that they are not knotted and if all I had done was to get this function into your heads, I would consider that today I (175) had not spoken in vain. This is the very thing that is at stake, it is from the fact that they are not knotted that they knot. And the



necessity of a fourth term should come here to dictate its first truths is precisely what I want end on. Namely, that without the fourth, nothing is properly speaking highlighted – I was not able to do it today – highlighted about what the Borromean knot truly is.

In any chain, to imagine the simplest one for you, in every Borromean chain, there is a one then a two [XI-10] according to the form that I drew for you earlier, you will find here the one and the two, which is the beginning of the chain after which, here, there will be a third circle that act as a buckle. What is implied by the fact that in any chain whatsoever, since it makes a chain, it always makes a chain, we place any one whatsoever of the first two in the third rank? Whatever may be the chain, the operation that is at stake will imply for us limiting the chain 1-2-3-4, [XI-11] will imply that if we wish to put any one whatsoever of these two in the third rank, the one will be then knotted to the two, both by the three and the four. Try it out, for moreover there is nothing like it to try to think out this knot than to manipulate

(176) rings of string. I repeat, although already having no more space on the board, 1-2-3-4, [XI-12] to limit ourselves to that, in any chain whatsoever, from whatever end we take it, will imply that by putting

either the 1, or the 2 in the place described as the third, by making the effort, we will obtain the following. The fact is that by choosing one of the two, since here it is the 2 that we choose, to put the 2 here in the third row, the 3 and the 4 will necessarily knot this 1 to the 2 that is shifted in this way. It is quite clear that the 1 and the 2 are interchangeable, namely, that at the start of a chain, the first and the second are indefinitely interchangeable [XI-13]. It is by placing the one of these two there in the third rank, by striving to aim at placing it in row three that we will see not simply the three involved and passing to the place of the 2, but with the 3, the fourth. And this is why the interest that I have in the knot of four is justified on this occasion and that I will develop it next year.

From then on, since we do not know what to couple nomination with, the nomination which here constitutes the fourth term, are we going to couple it to the Imaginary, namely, that coming from the Symbolic, nomination is there to have a certain effect in the Imaginary? This indeed in effect is what seems to be at stake among logicians when they talk about the referent. The descriptions of Russell, those that question themselves about the author, those that ask why it is legitimate and logically fragile to question the fact of whether or not (177) Walter Scott is the author of *Waverley*, it seems that this reference explicitly concerns what is individualised by the thought-out support of bodies. It is certainly in fact nothing of the kind. The notion of referent aims at the Real. It is as Real, that what the logicians imagine as Real, gives its support to the referent. For this imaginary nomination, the one that is written by this for example, that from the relation between R and S, we have a nomination index  $i$ , and

then the I to stick with the knot of four, as constituting the link between the Real and the Symbolic.

I would propose the following, which is that Imaginary nomination is very precisely what I have supported today by the infinite straight line, and that this straight line, in this circle that we compose of a circle and a straight line, that this straight line is very precisely not what names anything whatsoever of the Imaginary but what, precisely, creates a bar, inhibits the handling of everything that is demonstrative, of everything that, articulated as Symbolic, creates a bar at the level of the Imagination itself and renders what is at stake in the body as regards which everyone knows that what interests the body, at least in the analytic perspective, is the body in so far as it creates an orifice, that that by which it is knotted to some Symbolic or Real that is involved, is precisely from this knot, the highlighting of a circle, of an orifice that the Imaginary is constituted.

(178) This infinite straight line which here completes the false hole [XI-15] that is at stake, since an orifice is not enough to make a hole, each one of them being independent of the other, is very precisely the inhibition that thought has with respect to the knot. We can question in the same way, whether between the Real and the Imaginary, it is the nomination index of the Symbolic, namely, in so far as in the Symbolic there arises something that names, we see that at the beginning of the Bible, except for the fact that what is not noticed is that the creationist idea, the inaugural *Fiat lux*, is not a nomination.

That it is from the Symbolic that the Real arises – that is the idea of creation – has nothing to do with the fact that in a second phase, the same God gives their name to each of the animals that inhabit Paradise.

What nomination is at stake, in what I am calling here to indicate it by a Ns, what nomination is involved, in this, in one of the two of those we are mythically told about? This indeed in effect is a question that is worth dwelling on a little, because this stems from the meaning which, in each case, is a different meaning. The nomination of each one, which moreover is a common name, not a proper name in Russell's sense, what does the nomination of each one of the species represent? Assuredly a narrowly Symbolic nomination, a nomination limited to the Symbolic. Is this sufficient for us to support what happens at a point that is certainly not indifferent in this elementing of four of the knot that is supported by the name of the Father. Is the Father the one who has given their name to things? Or indeed should this Father be questioned *qua* Father, at the level of the Real? In a word is the eternal Father, in whom of course nothing would prevent us from believing if it was even thinkable that he himself believes in himself, while it is quite clearly unthinkable, should we put the term (179) nomination as knotted at the level of this circle by which we support the function of the Real? It is between these three terms, nomination from the Imaginary as inhibition, nomination from the Real as what is found to happen in fact, namely, anxiety, or nomination from the Symbolic, I mean implicated, flower of the Symbolic itself, namely, as it happens in fact in the form of the symptom, it is between these three terms that I will try next year, it is not a reason because I have the answer that I do not leave it to you as a question, that I will question myself next year about what substance should be given to the name of father.

**Seminar 1: Tuesday 10 December 1974**

*Voilà.* So then you saw my notice, which is written like that, Rsi. It can be read like that. It can also be read, since it is in capital letters, it can be read R.S.I. Which perhaps suggested to those who are in the know the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary.

I would like this year to talk to you about the Real, and to begin by pointing out to you that these three words, Real, Symbolic and Imaginary have a meaning. They are three different meanings, but you can also note that I said three meanings, like that, because it seems to be self-evident. But if they are different, is that enough for them to make three, if they are as different as I say? Hence the notion of a common measure, which is difficult to grasp, except by defining the unit in it as a function of measure. There are so many, one, two, three. Again it must be, for it to be able to be said that there are so many, again this unit must be grounded on the sign, whether it is a sign or whether it is written equals, or indeed that you make two little strokes to signify equals, the equivalence of these units. But if by chance they were different, as I might say from one another, we would be very embarrassed and, after all, what would bear witness to it, would be the meaning itself of the word other. Again there must be distinguished, in this meaning of other, the other made up of a distinction defined by an external/internal relationship, for example, as Freud did, whether he wants to or not, in his second topography which is supported by a geometry of the sack where you see a thing,

somewhere in the *New introductory lectures*, a thing which is supposed to contain, contain what? It's a funny thing to say, the (14) drives. This is what he calls the Id. Naturally this forces him to add to it a certain number of tools, a sort of lunula which all of a sudden is transformed into a sort of vitellus on which there is supposed to be differentiated an embryo. This is obviously not what he means, but it is regrettable that it suggests it. Such are the disadvantages of imaged illustrations. I am not telling you everything else that he is forced to add, without counting the number of hatchings (*hachures*) that he entitles Superego. This geometry of the sack is indeed this thing that we have to deal with at the level of topology, except for the fact that, as perhaps the idea has come to you, this is drawn on a surface and that we are forced to put the sack onto it. On a surface this gives a ring (*rond*) and, with this ring, there is an inside and an outside.

It is with that that one is led to write inclusion, namely, that something, I for example is included in an E, a set. Inclusion you know perhaps how that is written, like that,  $I \subset E$ , whence people have deduced a little quickly that one could slip from inclusion which is there above to the lesser sign  $I \subseteq E$ , namely, that I is smaller than E, which is a manifest imbecility.

Here then is the first other, the other defined from the outside to the inside. Only there is another Other, the one that I marked with a capital O, which for its part is defined as not having the slightest relationship, however small you may imagine it...when you begin to convey yourself in words, you are immediately caught in a wolf trap. Because this however small you imagine it, brings the Imaginary into play, and when you bring the Imaginary into play, you have every chance of becoming entangled. This is even how people started out for the infinitesimal: people had all sorts of trouble getting out of the Imaginary.

That they should be three, this Real, this Symbolic and this Imaginary, what does that mean? There are two slopes. One slope, a very steep one, leads us to homogenise them; because what relationship have they among themselves? Well then! This is precisely where I want to open up the path for you this year. One could say that the Real is what is strictly unthinkable. That at least would be a start. That would make a hole in the affair and that would allow us to question what is involved in, do not forget, what I started from, namely, from three terms in so far as they convey a meaning. What is this business of meaning, especially if you introduce into it what I am striving to make you sense? The fact is that as regards what is involved in (15) analytic practice, this is where you operate from, but on the other hand, you only work to reduce this meaning; it is in the measure that the unconscious is supported by this something, it must be said, the most difficult thing that I had to introduce, this something defined by me, structured like the Symbolic. It is from the fundamental equivocation of this something that is at stake in the term Symbolic that you always operate - I am talking to those here who are worthy of the name analyst. Equivocation is not meaning. Meaning is that through which there responds something which is different to the Symbolic, and there is no means of supporting this something otherwise than by the Imaginary. But what is the Imaginary? Does it even ek-sist? Since you hint, simply by pronouncing the term Imaginary, that there is something which ensures that the speaking being shows that he is destined for mental defectiveness. And this results from the simple notion of the Imaginary, in so far as the starting point for it is the reference to the body and to the fact that its representation, I mean everything that for it is represented, is only the reflection of its organism. It is the least of the suppositions that the body implies.

Only here there is something that immediately makes us stumble, which is that in this notion of body, there must be immediately implied the following, which is its very definition: it is something

about which one presumes that there are specified functions in the organs, so that an automobile, even a computer according to the latest news, is also a body. It is not self-evident, we should say, that a body is living. So that what best attests to the fact that it is living, is precisely this *mens* in connection with which, more exactly that I introduced along the path, the journeying of mental defectiveness. It is not given to all bodies, in so far as they function, to suggest the dimension of imbecility. This dimension is introduced by this something that the tongue, and not just any one, Latin... – this to put in their place those who impute precisely this imbecility to Latin – is precisely the only one that instead of sticking on the soul an opaque term like *nous*, or another metaphor of something or other, of a knowledge, which we for sure do not know whether it exists, since it is the knowledge supposed by the Real. This knowledge of God, it is certain that it ek-sists. We have given ourselves enough trouble in spelling it out, it ek-sists, but only in the sense that I am writing this term ek-sistence, by (16) writing it differently than is usually done. It *sists* perhaps, but we do not know where. All one can say, is that what consists gives no testimony of it, so then, there is something a little bit striking in seeing that the tongue that is suspected of being the most stupid one is precisely the one that has forged this term *intelligere*, to read between the lines, namely, elsewhere than the way in which the Symbolic is written. It is from this effect of writing of the Symbolic that there stems this meaning-effect, in other words imbecility, to which there bear witness up to today all the systems described as natural. Without language, not the slightest suspicion could come to us of this imbecility, which is also that by which the support which is the body bears witness to us, I remind you that I said it earlier but this did not do anything for you, bears witness to us of being alive. In truth this *mens*, attested to by mental defectiveness, is something from which I do not hope to get out in any way.

I do not see why what I am contributing to you would be less defective than the rest. This might indeed be the meaning of this



banana skin that was slipped under my foot, by catching me like that on the telephone, to give a lecture in Nice. You'll never guess, they slipped this title under my foot, the Lacanian phenomenon! Ah yes! What I am in the process of telling you, is that precisely I do not expect it to be a phenomenon, namely, that what I am saying is any less stupid than all the rest. The only thing that makes me persevere, and you know that I do not persevere without looking twice at it, I told you the last time why I was hesitating to set about it again this year, it is because I believe that there is something I have grasped (*sais*), I cannot even say with my hands, with my feet, it is the coming into play of this trace that is outlined, which quite obviously is not easily tolerated, especially by analysts, by the analytic experience. So that if there is a phenomenon, it can only be the *Lacanalyste* phenomenon or indeed *lac-à-pas-d'analyste* [*être dans le lac*: to be in the soup?].

There is something which happened nevertheless, I am sharing it with you like that, because I am letting myself be drawn along; naturally, I could not explain anything about all of that to them, because for them, I was a phenomenon. What the organisers wanted in fact was to collect a mob. There is always a mob to look at a phenomenon. So, I was not going to tell them, listen I am not a phenomenon! That would (17) have been a *Verneinung*. Anyway, I let myself go for a good hour and a quarter. I cannot say that I am at all satisfied with what I told them, because what can you say in an hour and a quarter! For my part I imagine that with you of course I have a number of hours, since it is a little bit more than three, it is limitless. I am quite wrong, because in reality, there are no more than 50, including all that I will have between now and the end of the year. But that helps me to take to the road.

In short, at the end of an hour and a quarter of chat, I asked them questions, I mean, I asked them to ask me some. It was a demand. Well then! You can believe me if you wish, contrary to you, they asked me them for three quarters of an hour! And I will say more,

these questions were striking in that they were relevant questions, relevant of course like that, in a second zone. In short it was the testimony of the fact that in a certain context, the one in which I do not insist, questions could come to me, and questions that were not stupid, questions that in any case required me to respond. So that I found myself confronted with the situation, without having had to reject the Lacanian phenomenon, of having demonstrated it. That naturally, it was not even sure that they noticed themselves, that that was the Lacanian phenomenon. Namely, that I was an effect for an audience, which had only heard like that, on the rebound, from very far, what I may articulate in this place here, where I give my teaching, my teaching to open up for the analyst the very discourse that supports him. If indeed it is from a discourse, and always from a discourse, that this Thing that we are trying to manipulate in analysis suffers, from a discourse.

I am saying then that this is the phenomenon. It is, in short, part of the wave (*vague*), if you will allow me to employ a term that might have tempted me to write the letters in a different order. Instead of R.S.I., R.I.S., that would have given a laugh, this famous *ris de l'eau*, on which precisely, somewhere in my *Ecrits*, I equivocate. I was looking for the page earlier, there was someone here, a pal of the first order, who had the *Ecrits*; I found it, it is on page 166, that I play on the *ris d'eau (rideau)*, indeed implicating there 'my dear friend Leiris dominating' something or other.

I must obviously cheer myself up by telling myself that this (18) phenomenon is not unique, it is only particular. I mean that it is distinguished from the universal. The annoying thing is that it is up to now unique at the level of the analyst. It is nevertheless indispensable that the analyst should be at least two, the analyst to produce effects, and the analyst who theorises these effects. That was why it was precious for me that I was accompanied by a person, who perhaps, I did not ask him, at this precise level of the phenomenon, of the

phenomenon described as Lacanian, was able to notice precisely there, at the level of what I had to say, about what I have just now stated, namely, that on that occasion I simply demonstrated this phenomenon by the fact that from that, from this mob, I received questions and that alone is where the phenomenon lies. If this person, and I have no doubt about it, is an analyst, she was able to notice that I had in the little I said - which was, I am repeating to you, execrable - demonstrated this phenomenon.

That closes the brackets. I would like now to come back to what I have to advance in today, namely, that I only found, in a word, a single way of giving these three terms, Real, Symbolic, Imaginary their common measure by knotting the, with this bo-bo...bo-bo...Borromean knot. In other words, that you must pay attention to what I drew there on the board, and you have been able to see, not without difficulty, because I made a mistake in the colour on several occasions. Because it is indeed here that we will find the whole time the question, what distinguishes the way in which each one consists, of those things which at one time, I designated as rings of string, what distinguishes each one from the others? Absolutely nothing but the meaning. And that is why we have the hope, a hope, good God, on which you can thoroughly depend, because hope, in short for me is only in this affair. And if I did not have the answer, as you know, I would not ask the question.

We have the hope, I am leaving you the hope in the short term, there is none other, that we will take this year a step together, a step which only consists in the fact that, if we have won something somewhere, it is inevitably, it is surely, at the expense of something else. That in other terms, if analytic discourse functions, it is sure that we lose something in it elsewhere. Moreover, what could we well lose, if truly what I have just said, namely, that all the systems of nature that have emerged up to now are marked by mental deficiency, why should we hold on to them so much! There remain to us all the same these

(19) pivotal systems whose manipulation may allow us, I mean us analysts, to account for our own operation.

I would like to keep you for an instant on the Borromean knot. The Borromean knot consists strictly in the fact that 3 is the minimum for it. If you make a chain, with what this word has for you, in terms of ordinary meaning...If you unknot two rings of a chain, the others will remain knotted (I-1).

The definition of the Borromean knot starts from 3. Namely, that if [I-2] you break one of the rings of the 3, all 3 are freed, namely, the two other rings are freed.

The remarkable thing in this, which is a matter of consistency, is that starting from there you can put an indefinite number of rings. It will always be true that if you break one of these rings, all the others, however numerous they are, will be freed. I already, I think, sufficiently made you sense, at a time that has already gone, that to take the example of a ring thus fabricated [I-3], it is quite conceivable that another comes to pass into the buckle which consists, which is realised by the bending of this little circle, and that you grasp, in short, immediately, that simply here by breaking the circle which, here, (20) prevents the third from being liberated, the bent buckle is going to slip from this, and that, in putting an indefinite number of these

bent circles, you will see through what really tangible, immediately imaginable mechanism, all the rings are freed, whatever may be their number.

This property is all by itself what homogenises everything in terms of number starting from 3; which means that, in the sequence of numbers, of whole numbers, 1 and 2 are detached; something begins at 3, which includes all the numbers, however far they are denumerated, and it is indeed on this that I intended to put the emphasis, in my seminar, particularly last year. That is not all. There is much more than a single way of Borromeanising a certain number of consistent toruses, there is much more than a single way. I already indicated it at the appropriate time, there are very probably a quantity that there is no reason not to qualify as infinite, infinite in the sense of numerable, because you have only to suppose for an instant the following way of making a buckle [I-4] for you to perceive that you can multiply it indefinitely. Have you got that? Namely, to make of

(21) these buckles, as many turns as you wish to knot the two toruses together. There is no plausible limit to this arrangement, and consequently, already simply in this dimension, there is a way of tying together, one to the other, as many ways as it is possible to dream of on this occasion. You can even find others, it will be no less true that the Borromean knot whatever it may be has as a lower limit the number 3, that Borromean knot will always bear the mark of three,

and that under that heading, you have right away to ask yourself the question of the register to which the Borromean knot belongs? Is it to the Symbolic, to the Imaginary or to the Real?

From today I am putting forward what subsequently I will allow myself to demonstrate, I am putting forward that the Borromean knot, in so far as it is supported by the number three, belongs to the register of the Imaginary. It is in so far as the Imaginary is rooted in the three dimensions of space. I am putting forward something which is nowhere going to be conjugated with a transcendental aesthetic. It is on the contrary because the Borromean knot belongs to the Imaginary, namely, supports the triad of the Imaginary, of the Symbolic and of the Real, it is in so far as this triad exists, from the fact that there is joined to it the addition of the Imaginary, that space *qua* sensible finds itself reduced to this minimum of three dimensions, in other words from its attachment to the Symbolic and to the Real.

Other dimensions are imaginable, and they have been imagined. It is by sticking to the Symbolic and to the Real that the Imaginary is reduced what is not a maximum imposed by the sack of the body, but on the contrary, is defined by a minimum, the one which ensures there is only a Borromean knot from the fact that there are at least three of them.

I am going here, before leaving you, to give you a little indication, some points, some punctuations of what we are going to have to demonstrate this year. If here [I-2] I depicted the Real with a blue ring, the Symbolic with a white ring, and with a red ring the one that is found to be supported by the three, to be depicted here, dominating them, I would like to point out to you that it is in no way implied in the notion of the knot as such, of the Borromean knot, whether we are dealing with rings of string or with toruses, that it is just as conceivable that, in conformity with the intuition of Desargues in ordinary geometry, these rings open up, or, to say it simply, become

(22) cords supposed, why not, nothing prevents us from positing it as a postulate, to join up at infinity.

There is nevertheless a means of defining what is called a point, namely, this something strange that Euclidean geometry does not define, and of which it nevertheless makes use as a support because on occasion, it punctuates the individual there. Namely, that the point, in Euclidean geometry, has no dimension at all, that it has zero dimensions, contrary to the line, to the surface, indeed to volume which respectively have one, two, three of them. Is there not, in the definition that Euclidean geometry gives of the point – as the intersection of two straight lines – something, I will allow myself to say, something that falls short? Namely, what would prevent two straight lines from sliding onto one another?

The only thing that would allow a point to be defined as such is presented like this [I-5], three straight lines which are not here simple lines, marks of a saw, shadows, but effectively three consistent straight lines which, at the central point here, produce what constitutes the essence of the Borromean knot, namely, which determine a point as such, something for which then, we must invent something other than simply the indication of a dimension which is supposed to be zero, which for its part has no dimension (*ne dimense pas*).

I am suggesting to you to try this out, that there is not simply here a banal stroke, namely, that this is also supported by three surfaces, I mean that with three surfaces you will obtain the effect described as a point in just as valid a way as the one depicted here, let us say, with three cords. That on the other hand, you can render tangible that you will obtain here these straight lines here, these cords from free (23) interplay, namely, on three surfaces that are not being squeezed, if you start not from the chain such as it is constituted in the Borromean knot, but in this chain two by two whose ghost I evoked earlier in passing, that in untying buckles knotted two by two, what

you get are three straight lines, free one on the other, namely, not being squeezed, not defining the point as such.

What I want to announce to you before leaving you, is then the following. It is clear [I-6], here, from the fact that we can see that with two infinite straight lines, we can, by knotting a single ring of string, maintain the property of the Borromean knot, on this single condition that the two straight lines are not able to cut themselves somewhere between this knot and infinity except in a single way. To take the straight line, R, it must be pulled forward, as I might say, while the line S of the figure on the right can only be pulled backwards. They must not, in a way, be brought to buckle with one another two by two, which, in any case excludes the central figure, which, having already made one of the buckles, that one of the rings, let's say the white ring on the red ring, defines by that simple fact, whatever may be its future fate, the strict position of the blue infinite straight line which must pass under what is below and over what is above, to express myself in a simple way. On this condition the Borromean knot functions.

I would like to indicate to you the fact that if we situate this blue ring of the Real, if we situate this ring of the Symbolic, and that of the Imaginary, I am allowing myself to indicate to you that here there is situated a flattening out, in other words a reduction of the Imaginary. For it is clear that the Imaginary always tends to be reduced to a (24) flattening out. It is on this that there is founded all depiction, it being well understood that it is not because we may have crumpled these three rings of string that they are any the less knotted in a Borromean way in the real, namely, with regard to the fact that each



one of them, unknotted, frees the two others. This thing will always be true. How does it happen that we must have this flattening out in order to be able to depict any topology whatsoever? It is very certainly a question which reaches out towards that of the defectiveness that I qualified as mental, in so far as it is rooted in the body itself.

- Small **o**, I have written here; in the Imaginary but just as well in the Symbolic, I am write the function described as meaning.
- The two other functions, those that stem from what is to be defined with respect to the central point allowing there to be added three other points, this is something to be defined. We have enjoyment...

It is a matter of knowing that there are two enjoyments:

- for example, one we could define, but which one? As enjoying life, if the Real is life, we are led to refer to it, but is it sure? Enjoyment, in so far as it participates in the Imaginary of meaning, the enjoying of life in a word, is something that we can situate in the fact that, let us note it, is no less a point than the central point, the point described as that of the **o**-object, because it links together, on this occasion, three surfaces which also are squeezed.
- And on the other hand what about this other mode of enjoyment, the one depicted by an overlapping, a squeezing where the Real comes here to squeeze it at the periphery of the two other rings of string? What about that enjoyment?

These are, close up, the points that we will have to elaborate, since moreover they are the ones that question us.

One point that I am suggesting here and now is this, to return to Freud, namely, to something triadic, he stated it as *Inhibition, Symptom, Anxiety*.

I would say that inhibition, as Freud himself articulates it, is always a matter of the body, or of functioning. And to indicate it already on this schema [I-8] I would say that inhibition is what somewhere stops interfering, as I might say, in a figure which is the figure of a hole, the hole of the Symbolic. We will have to discuss this inhibition in order to know if what is encountered in the animal, where there is in the nervous system these inhibiting centres, is something of the same order as this arrest of functioning *qua* Imaginary, *qua* specified in the speaking being, whether it is conceivable that something should be of the same order, namely, the bringing into function in the *nevras*, in the central nervous system, of an activity that is positive *qua* inhibiting. How is it conceivable that the being presumed not to have language finds itself joining in the term inhibition something of the same order as what we grasp there, at the level of the experiority of meaning, that what we grasp there as stemming from what is found in short outside the body, namely, as a surface to topologise it in the way in which I told you that it is assuredly only on two dimensions that this is depicted, how inhibition can have to deal with what is a type of arrest which results from its intrusion into the field of the Symbolic.

(26) It is starting from there, a not simply starting from, it is quite gripping to see that *anxiety*, in so far as it is something that starts from the Real, it is altogether tangible to see that it is this anxiety that is going to give its meaning to the nature of the enjoyment that is produced here, under **o**, of the cross-checking brought to the surface, the Eulerian cross-checking of the Real and Symbolic.

Finally, to define the third term, it is in the *symptom* that we identify what is produced in the field of the Real. If the Real manifests itself in analysis and not only in analysis, if the notion of the symptom was introduced, well before Freud by Marx, so as to make it the sign of something which is what is not working out in the Real, if in other words, we are capable of operating on the symptom, it is in as far as the symptom is the effect of the Symbolic in the Real. It is inasmuch as this Symbolic, as I it drew here, must be completed here, and why is it outside? This is what I will have to manipulate for you in what follows, it is in so far as the unconscious is, in a word, what responds to the symptom. It is inasmuch as this knot, this knot quite real for its part even though only reflected in the Imaginary, it is in so far as this knot accounts for a certain number of inscriptions by which the surfaces respond to one another, and that we will see that the unconscious can be responsible for the reduction of the symptom.

## **Seminar 2: Tuesday 17 December 1974**

*Voilà*. Hm! Like that, since I don't like much writing on the board, I am writing the minimum for you. This minimum is enough for you to

recognise in it on the left the Borromean knot [II-1]. I think so anyway, inasmuch as you remember what I say. In short, you take notes, or at least some of you do. I think I have justified how the Borromean knot can be written; since it is a writing, a writing that supports a real. This already, just by itself, designates that not only can the Real be supported by a writing but that there is no other tangible idea of the real.

This Real, this Real that is the knot, the knot which is a construction, this Real is enough to leave open this trait, this trait of writing, this trait which is written which supports the idea of the Real. This because of the fact that the knot being made only from the fact that each of its elements is only knotted by a third, you can leave open one of these three. Since this is a fact that I highlighted, that I believe I highlighted the last time, that each of its elements can have two forms, the form of the infinite straight line, and the form that I designate, because it seems to me the best for your imagination, that I designate by a ring of string, which proves when one studies it to be a torus.

Having made this little bit of knot with what I said the last time, as a way of bringing it back to you, I find myself like that, this morning, preferring rather to read what I elaborated with you in mind. It seems to me that there are remarks, preliminary remarks in short, that may (30) well be of use to you in responding, in justifying, as questions, questions that I suppose you must have asked.

So then I am not going to make these preliminary remarks numerous, I am going to make three of them. [On the board].

This may come to mind, in short, for some people who open books, they do not even need to open them. It's there on the covers! They may ask themselves...

[On the board] This knot that I put forward by way of uniting in it the R.S.I. in the most certain way, namely, when the S, this is the white ring that you see there, and the Imaginary, that's the red ring, this knot is held to be sufficiently defined, by not presenting an ambiguity, when the two rings are crossed by the Real, in a way, as I stated the last time, that the Real crosses them by being underneath the one of the two rings that is underneath and being above the one that is above. That is enough for the squeezing, whether you make it on the left or on the right. I point out to you in passing that it is impossible from this single knot to give the characterisation of this left or of this right; otherwise we would have the expected miracle that would allow us to make a message of the difference between the left and the right for the eventual subjects capable of receiving the aforesaid message. The Borromean knot can in no way serve as a basis for such a message which would permit the transmission of a difference between left and right. It is then a matter of indifference to place on the left or on the right what results because of the fact of this knot, something that we (31) will designate as external, as being the meaning, in so far as it is starting from it that there are defined the terms Real, Symbolic and Imaginary.

The very fact that I am advancing with these terms is something that ought to make you ask the question, it seems to me, by simply having read some titles of books, is the knot a model? A model in the sense

that this is understood for example with respect to mathematical models, those that frequently serve us to extrapolate as regards the Real? Namely, as in this case, to establish from a writing what can be imagined from the very fact of this writing, which finds itself then allowing there to be accounted for the questionings which will be brought by experience to this real itself, which in any case is only a supposition there, a supposition which consists in this meaning of the word Real. I claim to repudiate for this knot the qualification of model, this in the name of what we must suppose to a model; the model as I have just said and this, because of its writing, is situated from the Imaginary. There is no Imaginary which does not suppose a substance. This is a strange fact, but it is always in the Imaginary, from the spirit that gives a substance to this model, that the questions formulated from it are secondarily asked of the Real.

And this is why I claim that this apparent model that consists in this knot, this Borromean knot, is an exception even though it also is situated in the Imaginary, is an exception to this supposition, by the fact that what it proposes, is that the three function here as pure consistency, namely, that it is only by holding together among themselves that they are consistent. The three hold together among themselves really, which implies metaphor all the same, and asks the question of which one is the impetus (*erre*), in the sense that I meant it last year, which is the impetus of the metaphor. For if I state, which can only be done from the Symbolic, from the word, that the consistency of these three rings is only supported by the Real, it is indeed because I use the setting aside of meaning which is permitted between R.S.I. as individualising these three rings, specifying them as such. The setting aside of meaning is supposed there to be taken from a certain maximum. What is the accepted maximum of the setting aside of meaning? This is a question that I can only, in the present state of things, put to linguists. How the linguist – and there is one who honours me today by his presence in the front row – how can a linguist define the limits of metaphor? What can define a maximum

of the divergence of metaphor, in the sense that I have stated it, a (32) reference to the *Agency of the letter*, in my *Ecrits*; what is the permitted maximum of the substitution of one signifier for another? I apologise, perhaps I have been a little quick here but it is certain that we cannot afford to delay. We cannot afford to delay and, because of that, I must pass on to my second remark.

To operate with this knot in an appropriate manner, you have to ground yourselves on a little stupidity. The best thing is still to use stupidly what is meant by being its dupe. One must not get into this subject with obsessional doubt, or haggle too much. One thing struck me in reading a work which it happens my daughter had got wind of, though her work on Buffon. She borrowed it from someone who moreover promptly gave her indications on the appearance of this text. This text is by Maupertuis, who at the Berlin Academy, had given under the title of *The physical Venus* a report of what was in short at the high point, in his time, of what is known about the phenomenon of the reproduction of living bodies. For him to have introduced it with the term of *The physical Venus*, shows that he only wants to deal with sexed reproduction.

It is quite striking, to my eyes at least, to see that this reading of Maupertuis – on this occasion, for someone who can be located in history, certainly the first thing that stands out, is the date of this statement, 1756 – bears witness to the time taken by these speaking beasts which men are, let us take them as defined by that, to realise what was specific in sexed reproduction. It is quite clear to my eyes that it is because of not being simply dupe, of not sticking to what his time furnished him as material, namely, already a lot, the mapping out in the microscope by Leeuwenhoek and Swammerdam, of what were called at the time animalcules, namely, the spermatozoon and the eggs on the other hand; namely, what is ordinarily supported by two bodies which, by this fact, are defined as being of opposite sexes, with some exceptions of course, namely, that the same body, may support the

two, which happens with snails as you are not unaware of. It is assuredly because of not sticking to this massive fact of the distinction between the animalcul and the egg, nevertheless here and now present in the simple diversity of theories, that Maupertuis, by not being a dupe, by not sticking to this massive fact, and in a word by not being stupid enough, does not realise the point properly speaking of discovery that this constitutes for what is involved in terms of a real (33) apprehension of the distinction between the sexes, does not stick to what was he was brought. If he had been a dupe, he would have erred less. Not that of course his impetus was stupid because he gets to something that is in a way the prefiguration, as one might say, of what was revealed by the later examination of more powerful microscopes to constitute the existence of genes. Between ovism and animalculism, namely, what puts the whole stress on one of these elements or the whole stress on the other, he goes as far as to imagine that the facts of attraction and repulsion can lead things to this composition as regards which moreover the experiment, the experiment conducted by Harvey on the examination of what is stated as existing in terms of a first manifestation of what he calls the living point at the back of the uterus of does that Charles I had placed at his disposition. He manages certainly to have an idea, or at least to suggest it, about what may happen, and as regards which one can say that it effectively happens at the level of what might be a morula, for example, indeed at a further stage which is that of the gastrula, but precisely by guessing...by guessing he does not advance.

What escapes him is that each cell of what someone like Harvey discovered, and for him to blind himself to it as being the substance of the embryo, is the puzzle, the mixture apparently that one might imagine about it, namely, something that Maupertuis does not fail to imagine. The fact is that in this puzzle, in these cellular elements, there are some that are supposed to be male and others female. Which is certainly not true. It must be pushed much further, and to tell the truth in such a way that the living point can in no way be recognised.



We are at the level of these distinguishable genes in the caryosome in the innermost part of the cell. It is because one must go that far that the idea of the mixture, towards which Maupertuis leans, is simply a premature idea, not a forging ahead, precisely! It is, as I might say, by being a non-dupe that he imagines very badly. He is not dupe in the measure that he does not stick strictly to what is provided to him, that in short he makes hypotheses. *Hypotheses non fingere*. The repudiation of hypotheses seems to me to be what is appropriate and what I designate properly by this advice to be stupid enough not to ask oneself questions concerning the use of my knot, for example. It is certainly not with the help of this knot that one can go further than from where it emerges, namely, from analytic experience. It is analytic experience that it accounts for, and that is what gives it its value.

(34) Third remark, also preliminary. In what does there consist in the knot, as it is presented, this something which, from the first remark, made someone ask me the question of whether it was a model? The fact is of course, that apparently the Imaginary dominates in it; the Imaginary dominating in it is something in effect that reposes on the fact that this grounds its consistency. What I am introducing by this remark is the following. It is that enjoyment, with regard to this Imaginary consistency, can do nothing but ek-sist, or parody it, it is with regard to the Real, it is something other than meaning that is at stake in enjoyment. With that the signifier is what remains. For if the signifier, by this fact, is deprived of meaning, it is because the signifier, all that remains, proposes itself as intervening in this enjoyment. Not of course that the 'I think' is enough to assure ek-sistence – it is not for nothing that Descartes stumbled there – but up to a certain point, it is all the same true that it is only by effacing all meaning that ek-sistence is defined. And indeed, moreover, he himself floated between the *sum, ergo* and the *exsisto*. Assuredly the notion of ek-sistence, was not then assured. For something to ek-sist, there must be a hole somewhere. It is around this hole simulated by

Descartes' *I think*, since this *I think*, is empty, it is around this hole that the ek-sistence is suggested. Assuredly we have these holes here at the heart of each of these rings, since without this hole it would not even be thinkable that something can be knotted.

It is a matter of situating, not what Descartes thought, but what Freud touched, and for that, I propose that what ek-sists to the Real, to the Real of the hole, should be symbolised in writing by an intermediary field, intermediary like flattened out, because this is all that writing permits us. It is quite striking in effect that writing requires, as such, this flattening out. And if here I suggest that something supposes, incarnates I would say, that the Symbolic, for example, shows in two-dimensional space [II-2] defined by the fact that something ek-sists by

only being supposable in writing from the opening, the opening of the ring into this indefinite straight line, that is here what moreover with respect to one of the elements of the knot as to all the others, what allows to situate what stems from existence.

Why then, on the right, have I marked that what is concerned in ek-sistence is something that is metaphorised from phallic enjoyment? This is a proposition which presupposes that I should say more about this enjoyment. To situate it in a way which will not give rise to ambiguity, it is with a blue stroke that I draw what is involved in the Real, and with a red stroke, the Symbolic. I propose, even if only with the aim of completing it subsequently, to situate here, as such, phallic enjoyment, in so far as it is in relation to what ek-sists to the Real, namely, what is posited from the field produced by the fact that the

Real ring, that's how I am calling the ring connoted as the Real, from the fact that it opens out to posit itself as this infinite straight line, isolated, as one might say, in its consistency. It is to the Real as making a hole that enjoyment ek-sists.

This is due to what analytic experience has contributed to us as such. There is in Freud... - I am not going, quite simply for want of having collected them – there is in Freud a kow-towing, as I might say, before phallic enjoyment as such. This is what analytic experience discovers, the nodal function of this enjoyment *qua* phallic. And it is around it that there is founded what is involved in this sort of Real with which analysis has to deal.

What is important to see, is that if there is something by which the knot is supported it is precisely that there is with regard to this phallic enjoyment, as Real, this something that only situates it from the squeezing that results from nodality, as I might say...the nodality proper to the Borromean knot and from the fact that something which here is drawn as a ring, as a ring of string, as a ring *qua* consistency that constitutes the Symbolic. It is in the measure that a third point, which is defined as what defines meaning, is external to the more (36) central of the points of this nodality. It is in this sense that there is produced what is called phallic enjoyment. Phallic enjoyment always involves the knot that is made with the ring of the Symbolic, to name it only in the way as it ought to be. That this enjoyment as such is linked to the production of ek-sistence is something that I am proposing this year to put to the test.

For you see what results from it is that this knot, as I stated, this knot is reduplicated by another triplicity, the one linked to meaning in so far as it is from meaning that there starts the distinction of meanings which from these terms makes three terms. It is from this that we ought, can, start for the knot to consist as such. There are three elements, and it is as three that these elements are supported; we

reduce them to being three. That simply is what gives them their meaning. On the other hand, under the heading of ek-sistence they are each distinct, and moreover it is with regard to enjoyment as real that they are differentiated, and that at this level what analytic experience contributes, is that it is in the measure that enjoyment is what ek-sists, that it makes the Real, that it justifies it precisely by that, by ek-sisting. Assuredly, there is here a passage which is important, because to what does ek-sistence ek-sist? Certainly not to what consists. Ek-sistence as such is defined, is supported by what in each of these terms, R.S.I., creates a hole. There is in each something which means that it is from the circle, from a fundamental circularity, that it is defined, and this something is what has to be named.

It is striking that in Freud's time, all that is named about it is Imaginary. I mean that the function for example described as the ego, is this something that Freud, in conformity with this necessity, with this penchant which means that it is to the Imaginary that the substance as such goes, Freud designates it by what? Nothing other than what in representation creates a hole. He does not go so far as to say it but he represents it in this phantastical topography which the second is, while the first marked his amazed distance with regard to what he had discovered about the unconscious. It is in the sack, the sack of the body, it is with this sack that the ego is depicted, and this moreover induces him to having to specify something about this ego which is precisely to make a hole in it to allow the world to enter it, to necessitate that this sack should be, in a way stoppered by perception. It is in as far that Freud does not designate as such, but betrays, that the ego is only a hole.

(37) What are the holes constituted on the one hand by the Real and on the other by the Symbolic? This is something that we assuredly will have to examine very closely. For something, of course, is opened up to us, which seems in a way to be self-evident. Namely, to designate this hole in the Real by life, and moreover this is a slope

which Freud himself did not resist, in opposing life instincts to death instincts. I note that in questioning by our knot what is involved in the structure necessitated by Freud, that it is on the side of death that the function of the Symbolic is found. It is in so far as something is *urverdrängt* in the Symbolic that there is something that we can never give a meaning to, even though we are, it is almost a refrain to state it, we are capable logically of saying that *all men are mortal*. It is in so far as *all men are mortal* does not, from the very fact that this *all*, properly speaking has no meaning, that at least the plague must be propagated at Thebes, in order that this *all* may become something imaginable and not purely Symbolic; that each one must feel himself concerned in particular by the threat of the plague, that there is revealed at the same time what supposed that. Namely, that if Oedipus forced something, it is altogether without knowing it, that, as I might say, he only killed his father for want of having, if you will allow me to say it, for want of having taken the time to *laiusser*. If he had taken the time that was required, but it would have required certainly a time that would have been almost the time of an analysis, since for himself, it was precisely for that reason that he was on the road, namely, that he believed through a dream precisely, that he was going to kill the one who under the name of Polybus was well and truly his veritable father.

What Freud brings us concerning what is involved in the Other, is precisely this, that there is only an Other by saying it. But that this Total-Other (*Tout-autre*) is quite impossible to say completely, that there is an *urverdrängt*, an irreducible unconscious, and that to say it, is properly speaking what is not only defined as impossible, but introduces as such the category of the impossible.

That religion is true, is something that I said on occasion. It is surely more true than neurosis in that it represses this fact that it is not true that God simply *is* (*soit seulement*), as I might say, in which Voltaire had a cast iron belief. It says that he *ek-sists*, that he is ek-sistence par

excellence, namely, that in short he is repression in person, he is even the person presupposed for repression. And it is in that that it is true. (38) God is nothing other than what ensures that starting from language, there cannot be established a relationship between the sexes. Where is God in all of that? I never said that he was in language. Language, well then! Precisely, it is what we will have to question ourselves about this year. Where can it come from? I certainly did not say that this came to fill a hole, the one constituted by the non-relationship, the constitutive non-relationship of the sexual, because this non-relationship is only suspended on it. Language is not then simply a stopper, it is that in which there is inscribed this non-relationship. That is all we can say about it. God, for his part comprises the totality of the effects of language, including the psychoanalytic effects, which is no small thing to say!

To fix things, what are called ideas, is that not so, and which are not at all ideas, to fix things there where they deserve to be fixed, in logic, Freud does not believe in God, because he operates along his own line as is testified by the powder that he throws into our eyes in order to *en-moiser* us [play on Moses and *moi*?]. The *en-moisement* may also be the *en-moisement* of which I spoke earlier. Not alone does he perpetuate religion but he consecrates it as the ideal neurosis. This indeed is what he says moreover in attaching it to obsessional neurosis which is the ideal neurosis, which deserves to be called properly speaking ideal. And he cannot do otherwise because it is impossible namely, that he is dupe, for his part, in the right way, the one that does not err. Not like me! I cannot testify that I err; I err in these intervals that I try to situate for you, of Meaning, of Phallic Enjoyment, indeed of the Third Term, which I have not illuminated, because it is what gives us the key to the hole, the hole as I am designating it. It is Enjoyment in so far as it would involve, not the other of the signifier, but the other of the body, the other of the other sex.

When I say, state, announce that there is no sexual relationship does this not mean this fact that is there in experience, that everyone knows, but about which we must learn why Freud did not take it into account. Why Freud qualified Eros by the One, handing himself over to the myth of the body, of the united body, of the body with two backs, of the completely round body, by daring to refer himself to this Platonic blunder? Is it not that the fact that we may well embrace any other body whatsoever is nothing more than the sign of the most extreme perplexity? It happens that thanks to a fact that Freud (39) catalogues quite obviously as is required as regression, and what's more we suck it, what matter? Apart from breaking it into fragments, it is hard to see what one can really do to another body, I mean another body described as human! There is thus justified that if we seek what this enjoyment of the other body can be bordered by, in so far as it surely makes a hole, what we find is anxiety.

This indeed is why at a time, a time where it was certainly not for nothing that I had chosen this theme of anxiety, I had chosen it, because I knew that it would not last. I knew that it would not last because I had faithful followers who were busying themselves with giving rise to points of order which would subsequently have me declared unsuitable for transmitting analytic theory. Not at all that this provoked anguish in me, or even embarrassment. Anyway that can return any time. This provoked neither anxiety nor embarrassment in me. But I wanted all the same precisely in connection with this anxiety, *Inhibition, symptom, anxiety*, to say certain things which should now in short bear witness to the fact that it is quite compatible with the idea that the unconscious is conditioned by language, to situate affects in it. This simply means that it is to language and that it is from language we are manifestly and in an altogether overwhelming way affected. And what's more, at the time of my seminar on *anxiety*, if I introduced something, it is precisely the qualities of affect. That for a long time the affectionate, there, the affected had not simply not found them, but it was completely ruled

out that they should be even able to glimpse them. That indeed is why you can find in the mapping out that I made at the time, about what is involved in *Anxiety, inhibition, symptom* that I staggered on three planes

*Inhibition*

*Symptom*

*Anxiety*

in order precisely to be able to demonstrate what from that time is tangible, namely, that these three terms inhibition, symptom, anxiety are just as heterogeneous among themselves as my terms of Real, Symbolic and Imaginary. And that specifically, anxiety is that, it is (40) what is obvious, it is what within the body ek-sists, ek-sists when there is something that awakens it, which torments it. Look at little Hans, when it happens that there is made tangible the association to a body, specifically a male one on this occasion, defined as male, the association of a body and a phallic enjoyment. If *Little Hans* rushes into phobia, it is obviously to give body, I demonstrated it for a whole year, to give body to the embarrassment that he is in about this phallus, and for which he invents a whole series of differently prancing equivalents in the form of the phobia described as that of horses. *Little Hans*, in his anxiety, source of the phobia, source of the phobia and it is in this sense that in giving him what one might call this pure anxiety, they manage to get him to accommodate himself to this phallus about which, when all is said and done, like all of those who find themselves being charged with it, what I one day qualified as being a smuggler (*bandoulière*), well then, he simply has to accommodate himself to it, namely, that he is married to this phallus. This is something that the man can do nothing about. The woman, who does not ek-sist, can dream about having one, but the man is afflicted with it. He has no other wife than that.

This is what Freud said, is that not so on every register. What did he say, in saying in short that the phallic drive is not the genital drive, if not that the genital drive, in the man, make no mistake, is not at all



natural. Not only is it not natural, but if he did not have this devil of the symbolic pushing him from behind, so that when all is said and done he ejaculates and that this is of some use, but long ago there would have been no more of these speaking beings, of these beings who do not speak simply to be, but which are so by being [*parlêtres*]. Which is really the high point of the high point of futility.

Good! Well then, it is a quarter to two. For my part I find that today since I more or less improvised everything that I wanted to tell you, I am rather tired like that. This will all appear in a different shape, since after all I am not all that satisfied with this one.

### **Seminar 3: Tuesday 14 January 1975**

*Voilà!* What I am saying concerns, you are the proof of it, concerns everybody. It does not concern me, for my part, like everybody else. And that indeed is why it concerns everybody, because that is sensed in what I say. Why is that sensed? Because what I am saying is an opening up that concerns my practice, an opening up that starts from this question that of course I would not ask if I did not have the answer in my practice. It is: what is implied by the fact that psychoanalysis works?

You come to see me, but this has nothing to do with what I do in terms of psychoanalysis, you come to see me operating on the board. This was, as you have been able to see, no small matter...I corrected myself time after time, even though I had a piece of paper in my

pocket to guide me, otherwise I would have become even more entangled in it, I would have got into even more of a mess than I did! In effect...

What you see on the right [III-1] is the good old granddaddy Borromean knot, the Borromean knot of four, in which it is easy, immediate to see, that if you cut any one of these rings of string, the three others are free. There is then not the slightest complication in making a Borromean knot as long as you wish, namely, to knot to one another any number at all of rings of string. I already pointed out that as I draw it there, the number, the number of rings of string is not, as I might say, homogeneous. As you can see, simply by looking at this schema, there is what you might call a first and a last. The way it is done like that, there cannot be more than four and if I proceed in the same way for there to be five of them, I would have in a way to give to the one that – if you wish, the one on the extreme right – [here on the bottom figure] we will call the last, a different way of being knotted.

Because when all is said and done, it is the last that holds the whole chain, which ensures that there are four of them there, and if I go a little further, there will be five, on condition that I do not give to the last the same role, because it will be holding five instead of four.

You know this by, I must have made an allusion in passing to it, the way of articulating the essence of number that Peano produced by means of a certain number of axioms, it seems that here the  $n+1$ , the successor that Peano highlights as structuring the whole number, this on a single condition, which is that there should be one at the start which is not the 'successor' of anyone, namely, what this ring of string imitates very well, what he designates by zero. It is in an axiomatic fashion that Peano expresses himself, that Peano makes his statement, namely, that he posits a certain number of axioms and that it is from there, in conformity with mathematical requirements, arithmetical on this occasion, that he constructs something that gives us the definition of a series which will be in numbers, in homological whole numbers let us say, since we are here homological, namely, that everything that will be done by means of such axioms will be homological to the series of whole numbers.

But what am I showing you here? Something different, since here there is specified the function of this  $+1$  as such. It is this  $+1$  which (43) ensures that, eliminate that one for example, there is no longer a chain here, there is no longer a series since from the simple fact of cutting out this one-among-others, all the others, let us say, are freed as ones. It is a way, would I call it material, to make it sensed that 1 is not a number, even though this sequence of numbers is made up of a sequence of ones.

By using rings of string, let us say that I am illustrating something that is not unrelated to this sequence of numbers which, as you know, we have the greatest difficulty not to take as a constituent of the Real. Every approach to the Real makes it very difficult not to take account of number. Number seems (*semble*)...why not welcome this word which comes to me here prematurely? First of all the Real is woven by number. There is in number a *consistency* which is indeed of a nature that we can say is not natural at all. Since, for me to make you sense that I am tackling this category of the Real in so far as there is

something which knots what I am led to give consistency to also – the Imaginary and the Symbolic – how does it happen that this, as I might say, pushes me first of all to use the knot?

It is by virtue of being the same consistency in these three something that I originated in terms of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, it is in virtue of being the same consistency that I produce – and why so, to give myself an explanation of my practice – that I produce this Borromean knot. That was never done, never done what consists...consists in what? Disregarding consistency as such. I isolate consistency as this something that I will call like that, to give you an image because I do not stint myself in giving images.

What is there here [on the board] if not images, images about which the most astonishing thing is that you can locate yourself in them. Because you must not believe that these images function just by themselves! No doubt you are used to the blackboard, but what do you see on it? The very trouble you have seen that I had to go to for these images, which have this property that flattened out, nevertheless a line must pass over, *crossing over* [III-1] or go underneath, *undercrossing* [III-2] that this should make an image is already in itself miraculous. I am moreover not quite sure that you will grasp these images as easily as that.

You clearly see that there is nevertheless a difference. I am putting (44) the problem to you: is this knot, as it is there, as it is made, in the granddaddy way that I have signalled to you for a long time, is it the same? In other words, by simply fiddling around with the thing, are you able I am not saying to transform it into this one here since it is supposed to be the same? Set yourself that as a little exercise...In other words, this is the meaning of what I am asking you, does it work in fours? Is it the same knot, or is one more required? For I am telling you already that in a chain made up like that one, the transformation can be obtained. But I am not telling you, to leave the

delight for yourselves, I am not telling you from how many on, because there is one thing certain, which is that with three, you will not produce this very particular little complication that apparently distinguishes the figure on the left from the figure on the right.

If there is something that illustrates that consistency, this something which is in a way underlies everything that we say, that this consistency is something other than what is qualified, in language, as non-contradiction, it is this sort of figure, in so far as it has this something that I am indeed forced to call a *real* consistency, because this is what is supposed.

The fact is that a cord holds together. We never think about it, we never think about the fact that there is a metaphor in the term consistency. There is even something more, which is that I am communicating to you this real consistency by way of an intuition of which, all the same, I can say, that since I transmit it to you by image, it is by way of an imaginary intuition that I am communicating it to you. And the fact that I am sure that you are not more familiar than I am with these sorts of figures – the few openings out that I am creating of it for you by drawing it on the board – I am sure that, let us say, for the great majority of you, the question I am posing, that of the transformation which is not a transformation, which would be a transformation if the knot had to be remade so that the one on the left is transformed into the one on the right, or inversely, I asked you this question, is it the same knot? There are not many who could tell me out of the blue like that. And still fewer tell me why.

Here we are then, as I might say, with this cord in hand as supposed foundation of consistency, in such a way that it cannot be said what is at stake there is something to which we are already habituated, (45) namely, the geometrical line. It is all the same something quite different. Not only is the geometrical line not that, but everyone knows that what it generates, are all sorts of problems about its

continuity, which are not nothing and which are not nothing, why? Precisely because we cannot support the line with something that has precisely this consistency, that makes a cord. This is even the principle, the principle of the fact that the first bluff perpetrated about the functions described as continuous. It seemed that one could not construct a line which does not somewhere have a tangent, that this tangent was straight or curved, moreover, was of little importance. It is from this idea that the line was not after all without width that there were produced these mirages with which mathematicians had to fight for a long time and that moreover it took time for them to wake up to the fact that one could make a perfectly continuous line which did not have a tangent.

This is to say all the same the importance of this image, but is it indeed an image? After all, it is not for nothing that you are told ‘Hold fast to the cord, huh’ (*T’nez bien la corde hein!*). ‘Hold fast to the cord’ means that when the other end of the cord is knotted, you can hold onto it. This has something to do with the Real, and it is that here indeed, good God, it does not seem to me to be missing the point to remind you that in his rule among the proper *Rules for the direction of the mind (esprit)*, someone called Descartes did not think it was superfluous, in this *Rule X*, to make the remark that ‘...since not all minds are equally inclined to spontaneously discover things by their own strength, this rule – the one that he is stating – teaches that one must not busy oneself immediately with the more difficult and arduous things – less important – but that one must first of all study thoroughly the less important and the simplest arts, those in particular where greater order reigns, like those of artisans who make cloth and carpets, or those of women who embroider or do lace work, as well as all the combinations of numbers and all the operations that refer to arithmetic, and other similar things...’.

There is not the slightest suspicion that in saying these things, Descartes had the feeling that there is a relationship between

arithmetic and the fact that women do lace work, indeed that upholsterers make knots. On the other hand it is certain that Descartes never in the slightest interested himself in knots. Quite the (46) contrary we had to be well advanced into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century for something to be outlined that could be called a theory of knots. You know on the other hand, what I have told you, that this theory of knots is in its infancy, is extremely clumsy. And as it is fabricated, there are many cases where at the sight of simple figures such as the ones that I have made for you on the board, you could not in any way give an explanation for the fact, whether yes or no, the tangle that you have drawn is or is not a knot, whatever may be the conventions that you have given yourself in advance to account for the knot as such. The fact is moreover that there is something that is worth dwelling on. Is it because of an intuition? But what I am demonstrating to you, is that it goes much further than that, it is not simply that vision always more or less makes a surface, it is for more profound reasons that in a way these knots make tangible for you, it is for more profound reasons for what is in the nature, in the nature of things as they say. The being who speaks, since after all we cannot say a whole lot about the others, at least until we have gone a little bit more keenly into the slant of their meaning, the being who speaks is always somewhere badly situated between two and three dimensions.

This indeed is why, you have heard me putting forward here something that is the same thing, the same thing as my knot, this equivocation on *dit-mansion*, that I write, as you know because I have dinned it into you, that I write as *d-i-t* hyphen *mansion*, a stage set [?] of the said. We do not know very well whether in the saying we have the three dimensions written as they customarily are. I mean whether we are able to move around in it so easily, *Ta zoa trexei* [animals run] And we are undoubtedly there, *zoon*. We walk, but it must not be imagined that because we walk, we are doing something that has the slightest relationship with three-dimensional space. That our body has three dimensions is something about which there is no doubt as long

as we can pierce the skin of this body. But this does not at all mean that what we call space is not always more or less flat. There are even mathematicians who wrote that explicitly, all space is flat.

Any manipulation of something real is situated in this case in a space that in fact we are able to handle very badly outside techniques that are required by this three-dimensional space. It is obviously quite (47) striking that it is a technique, a technique that can be reduced to what it apparently is, namely, this chatting which for me forces my hand about the weighing up, as I might say, of space as such.

If we start again from something that must indeed be said to be science, does science not allow us to suspect, that in treating space in the same way as the one a technique in fact requires, requires of me at least, what it encounters is a paradox. Because in short, one cannot say that matter, you have heard tell of it a little bit, that matter does not create a problem for it at every instant. A problem, namely, that's what problem means, an advance defence, something to crush before getting to see what it is defending. Science has perhaps not yet completely realised that if it treats matter, it is as if the aforesaid matter had an unconscious, as if it knew somewhere what it was doing. Naturally it is a truth that was very rapidly extinguished. People noticed it, there is a little moment of awakening, at the time of Newton, he was told, listen, this business of this blessed gravity that you are telling us about, be serious! How moreover how could it have been represented before, apart from Aristotle's *topos*! Anyway! Be serious! That is unthinkable for us! Unthinkable because...why? Because we have Newton's little formulae and we understand nothing about them, which is what gives them their value. Because when these formulae made their entry, it was to this that right away an objection was raised, namely, but how can each one of these little particles know the distance it is from all the others? Namely, what was evoked was the unconscious, in short, of the particle, of course!



All that, all that has died down. Because why? Because people have simply given up trying to understand anything about it and that, moreover, it is in the measure that people have come back to it that we have been able to arrive at more complicated formulae by knotting a few more dimensions into the affair. This indeed is the problem. What is this analysis, in the proper sense of my technique, one that I have in common with a certain number of people who are here, and what place does this technique occupy with regard to what constitutes science? Science counts, it counts matter, but what does it count in this matter? Namely, if there were not the language that number (48) already conveys, what meaning would have to count? Does the unconscious for example have an accountant (*comptable*) in it? I am not saying something that can be counted, I am asking whether there is an accountant in the sense of the character that you know who scribbles numbers. Is there an accountant in the unconscious? Quite obviously, yes. Each unconscious is not something of the accountant, it is an accountant, and an accountant who knows how to do addition. Naturally it has not yet, of course, got to multiplication, this is even what perplexes it. But as regards counting things, counting the blows, I will not say that it knows how to deal with it, it is extremely awkward, but it must count in the style, in the style of these knots.

It is from this that there comes the famous guilt feeling about which you have probably sometimes heard talk...the guilt feeling is something that does accounts, that does accounts and of course cannot work them out, can never work them out. It gets lost in its accounts. But it is indeed there that it can be felt that there is at least a knot, this knot of which, if you will allow me to say it, nature abhors. I mean a different sort than nature abhors a vacuum, nature abhors the knot. Nature abhors the knot, and very especially the Borromean and, a strange thing, that is why I am going over the thing with you. The thing, is nothing less than the *urverdrängt*, the original repressed, the primal repressed, and that is why I advise you to practice my two little things [III-1 & III-2]. It is not because it will tell you anything

whatsoever about the repressed, since this repressed is the hole. You will never get to it. But en route, by manipulating this little knot, you will familiarise yourselves, at least with your hands, with this something about which in any case you will never understand anything, because it is altogether ruled out that you should know this knot. That is indeed why, as history bears witness, that indeed is why geometry has gone through everything, through cubes, through pyramids, the different forms of hedgehog about which in short people have cogitated. In short, rigour is what means nothing other than solids! While it had within hand's reach, something which was well worth, good God, the stones with which it made the carriage, or the fields, precisely what could not be measured without stretching out cords. Never has anyone seemed to have reserved for these cords the slightest attention up to very recent times.

(49) In a certain sense, I would say that there is something new, in the fact that people have been interested in words, in terms like that for example of mesology; what is there between, between what and what? It is a matter of defining what does between mean. Yeah! I between you (*je t'entre*), it is my own *tentrisme*. Between, is a category that made its appearance, in short, quite recently in mathematics and, that indeed is why, in short, hat from time to time I consult a mathematician so that he can tell me where they have got to in this respect.

Yes! There is something that to take...[*on the board*].

You see, I am making progress. I have almost managed to draw a Borromean knot without being forced to rub bits out. I would like today, since already time is passing, to announce what I have to say, and what will occupy our year.

Here [III-3] at the joint of the Imaginary and of the Symbolic, and not just in any joint, in this joint here, where you may confuse these two

points – even though they still do not come from the same movement, from the same relative movement of the Imaginary and the Symbolic – here, in these two points which moreover are confused, when the squeezing between the Imaginary and the Symbolic occurs, in these

two points, there is meaning. I must split things a little, because I apologise, I must have delayed to give you a little of a *dit-mansion*, a *dit-mansion* that concerns me, that of the knot.

(50) Here, and there, you can see how difficult it is, I must all the same fiddle around a bit, we have something that is called phallic enjoyment. There you are! Why do we call it phallic enjoyment? Because there is something called ek-sistence. Ek-sistence, I ought to say, has a history. It is not a word that was used so easily, nor voluntarily, at least in the philosophical tradition, and since we do not know how people in the first centuries spoke, I mean that we certainly have glimpses, about a certain Latin tongue, the popular tongue. Perhaps it was spoken over a considerable area, this core tongue from which there came by differentiation the romance tongues. In this popular Latin tongue, we have no testimony that *existo* nor *existere* was used. Nevertheless, it is curious that this term emerged, and emerged in a field that we will call philosophico-religious. It is altogether in the measure that religion sucked in, the religious *humante*, that religion sucked in philosophy that we have seen emerging this word existence, which seems nevertheless to have had, make no mistake, many *raisons d'être*.

What is this existence, and where indeed can we situate it? This existence is very important in itself, because if we have the idea, the

idea that something that comes in place of this kind of naïve production and which only starts from words, namely, what Aristotle advanced into, namely, that the *dictum de omni et nullo*, he says somewhere, this is what the Universal is, *what is said about all can also be applied to a particular*. It is from this that the first linguistic disentangling took place. The serious thing is that what followed consisted in demonstrating to Aristotle, who could not accept it for a long time, that universality did not imply existence. But this is not what is serious in a certain apprehension of things. That universality does not imply existence, we sweep aside every day. It is that existence implies universality that is serious. It is that in what is existence, we chatter on about something which participates in the general, while the very reason that my little Borromean knot is made, is to show you that existence is of its nature what *eks*. What turns the consistent but what creates an interval, and which in this interval has many ways of being knotted, precisely in the measure that we do not (51) have the slightest manual or mental familiarity with these knots. Moreover, it is the same thing!

Many people have suspected, in short is that not so, that man is only a hand. If only he were a hand! There is his whole body. He thinks also with his feet, I even advised you to do so, because it is after all the best thing that can be wished for you. Here, what resists the test of existence, to be taken as what is squeezed in the knot?

There is all the same an opening up, the opening up made by Freud. Freud certainly did not have the notion of the Imaginary, of the Symbolic and of the Real that I have, because it is the least that one can have, call that what you wish, provided there are three consistencies, you have the knot. What Freud did is not unrelated to existence and, by this fact, comes close to the knot. I am going, like that, because I am nice and because I have pissed you off enough today, I am all the same going to show you something that I find for my part rather funny and it is naturally something I invented! And in

my opinion, this illustrates well something that gives its value to what I asked you to question yourselves about, namely, whether the two in the middle [on the board] are the same knot? [III-1 & III-2] Freud had no idea about the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, but he had all the same a suspicion of them. The fact that I have been able to extract, with time no doubt and with patience, that I began with the Imaginary and, that after that, I had to chew on this business of the Symbolic, with this whole reference, this linguistic reference in which I effectively did not find in short everything that would have suited me, and then, this famous Real that I end up by presenting to you in the very form of the knot.

There is in Freud a reference to something that he considers to be Real. It is not what people believe. It is not the *Realitätsprinzip*, because it is too obvious that this *Realitätsprinzip* is a matter of saying, namely, social. But let us suppose that he had the suspicion simply, that he did not say to himself that this could make a knot. In short, Freud, contrary to a prodigious number of people, from Plato to Tolstoi, Freud was not a Lacanian. I have to say it, but to slip this banana skin under his foot, in short, is that not so, of the R.S.I., of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary, let us try to see how he effectively disentangled himself from it.

(52) These here [on the board] do not hold up, huh! [III-4] I am pointing out to you, they are placed on top of one another, the Real is

there, the Imaginary there and the Symbolic is there, just like in the earlier schema. Ah! What did Freud do? Ah! I am going to tell you. He made the knot of four with these three, these three which I suppose to be a banana skin under his feet. But then, here is how he proceeded; he invented something that he calls *psychical reality*. I should have put the third knot here, the third field of ek-sistence, namely, the enjoyment of the Other. Since these two figures, since they are figures, are the same, you see that it is from a line that is found to cross, to cross these fields which are designated as ek-sistence of something around consistency, to cross these fields, namely, here to be in the enjoyment of the Other, then in the Imaginary, then in meaning, then from the hole of the Symbolic and by breaking through it, to be somewhere in an existence which is outside the Symbolic and the Real, that it returns towards this point which is none other than the one that I designate as the  $\circ$ -object. This is what can knot with a fourth term, the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, in so far as Symbolic, Imaginary and Real are left independent, go with the drift in Freud. It is as such that he requires a *psychical reality* that knots these three consistencies.

I said, I said here or if it was not here it was elsewhere, it is in my Rome discourse, the last one that I gave, the one called *La troisième*, I said that if I had not done the Names-of-the-father written this time correctly, I would have stated a consistency such that it would have (53) explained for us a certain number of slippages in Freud. Freud needed not three, the minimum, but four consistencies for it to hold together, to suppose it being initiated into the consistency of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. What he calls *psychical reality* has perfectly well a name, it is what he calls the Oedipus complex. Without the Oedipus complex, nothing holds together, nothing of the idea that he has holds together, about the way in which the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real hold onto the cord. That by which, with time, I was determined to proceed, comes from the fact that I believe

that, what Freud stated not, not I am saying about the Oedipus complex, is to be rejected, it is implicit.

And this is demonstrated and each one of the points can in itself be specified, it is implicit in that while having the same effect, but this time at a minimum, it is enough to make what was below pass above

into these two points [III-5]. In other words, the Real must surmount, as I might say, the Symbolic in order for the Borromean knot to be produced.

This is what by having four terms, Freud himself was not able to do, but it is very precisely what is involved in analysis. It is to ensure that the Real, not reality in the Freudian sense, that the Real at two points, that I will name as such, that the Real at two points surmounts the Symbolic.

It is clear that the thing that I am stating here in this form has nothing to do with the surmounting in the Imaginary sense that the Real ought, as I might say, dominate. Because it is enough for you to go back to this little thing for you to note that in the opposite sense, of course, this does not work and one cannot see why the Borromean knot would be less real, if you turn the thing over. I am pointing out to you, I pointed it out to you already once in passing, that if you turn it over, it has exactly the same aspect, namely, that if you turn it over, it is not (54) with its mirror image that you have to deal, it is exactly the same laevogyrotory thing that you have in the Borromean knot that you find at the back.

This to specify that it is not a matter, of course, of a change of order, of a change of plane between the Real and the Symbolic. It is simply that they are knotted differently. Being knotted differently is what

constitutes the essential of the Oedipus complex, and it is very precisely what analysis itself operates on, namely, it is by going into the finesse of these fields of ek-sistence, that we will proceed this year.

It is rather late already, I am renouncing, as I might say, given the difficulty, the slowness of what I presented to you today, I abandon going any further, putting off to our next meeting which will take place in a week's time the rest of what I wanted to say to you today.

I can all the same mark something, which is that if ek-sistence is defined with respect to a certain consistency, if ek-sistence is when all is said and done only this outside which is not a not-inside, if this ek-sistence is in a way that around which there is elaborated a substance, if ek-sistence, as someone like Kierkegaard puts it forward to us, is essentially pathetic, it nevertheless remains that the notion of a break, that the notion of a hole, even in something as worn out as ek-sistence, preserves its meaning. That if I told you first that there is in the Symbolic a repressed, there is also in the Real something that makes a hole, and there is also something of it in the Imaginary, as Freud clearly saw, he niggled out everything that is involved in drives in the body as being centred around the passage from one orifice to an other.

#### **Seminar 4: Tuesday 21 January 1975**

Precisely because – can you hear or not? – of what I am talking to you about, the knot, I cannot have, I cannot be sure of having a plan,



because the knot, if you see the way I draw it there, on the extreme right [IV-1], I will explain to you afterwards why it takes that form, let us say, of three pages. Let us imagine then stitched, [on the board] tied together here. Here then is the first, which is a piece of page, this to make myself understood, it seems to be self-evident, the second, is S which is just below and you see here the third that it is easy for you to imagine starting from this stitching on the left, it is necessary for the third to be palmed off (*refile*) on the first.

(56) Nevertheless, there are places [on the board] where by perforating these pages, you will only find one of them. [Here] there are three of them. Here, you only find page 2, here only page 1, and here, only page 3. But everywhere else you will find the three, which prevents me from having a plan, since there are three of them.

There are several modes of stating the meaning, that all refer back to the Real that they correspond to. So that you will not get entangled all the same, I am marking the Real for you here [IV-2]. It is marked by the edge of a hole, the Imaginary, here and there the Symbolic, that is so that you can follow. All these meanings refer back to the Real, to the Real that each corresponds to. It is here that there is confirmed the suppleness of the knot, which also creates its necessity. The principle of the knot is that it does not come undone, unless it is broken. What is this unknotting of the knot, which is impossible? It is the return to a

form described as trivial, and which is precisely that of the ring of string! So that it is a knot, it is a second degree knot, it is a knot that holds together, as you have already several times heard from my voice, it is a knot that holds together because it has three rings.

The true knot, the knot with which we busy ourselves in the theory of knots, is that which, as you see here on figure IV-3, I have just added, is precisely what is not transformed by a continuous distortion into the trivial figure of the ring.

If one starts from a knot [IV-3] made with three trivial figures, namely, three rings, it is something that is designated or rather is (57) drawn from the following, it is that by cutting in this way something which is, as one might say, the Borromean knot itself, you will obtain by joining together what you have cut every time, you will obtain the proper figure of a knot in the proper sense of the word [IV-4].

What is the most convenient way of showing that a knot is a knot?  
For this knot there, the one on the right, is the simplest knot that exists. You get it by simply making a ring of a cord and passing it for example over the right of the piece that you are holding. It is by making the cord re-enter by the left on the inside of the ring that you have thus formed, that you see there being made what is called a knot in a cord, a knot that you can unknot; but which can no longer be unknotted from when on? From the moment that you suppose that the two ends of the cord are rejoined by a splice or indeed that you suppose that this cord has no end, stretches to the thinkable limits or more exactly goes beyond even these limits. In which case, you will properly speaking be dealing with the most simple knot, this knot which, when you close it, has the form that you see there on the right, namely, what is called *un noeud-trèfle*, clover-leaf in English.

It is clover in that it is three. It outlines, flattened out it allows there to be drawn, not three fields, but four fields. These are fields that you rediscover in the form, the form of the Borromean knot, the one that is only made up of this: one of each figure that I called trivial, the ring of string, one of each of these figure makes from two others a knot, namely, that it is by being three that there is a link, knot-link that is constituted for the two others.

If you hear talk sometimes about a four dimensional world you will know that in this world, calculable but not imaginable, there could not be such knots. Impossible to knot a cord in it, if in fact this world exists, impossible to knot a cord in it because of the fact that every figure, whatever it may be, is supported not by a line but by a cord consistency, that every figure of this kind can be distorted into any other whatsoever.

Nevertheless, if the thing was imaginable for you, it would be possible to understand, namely, by hearsay, because moreover the demonstration of it is not simple, but is doable, the fact is that in a

space that is supposed to be of four dimensions, it is not the consistencies of lines but of surfaces that can make a knot. Namely, that there subsist in the indefinite order, dimensions supposable as being more than three with which there is constituted, this indeed is where I must stop, with which there is constituted assuredly our world, namely, our representation. When I said world, should I not have said our real, on this single condition that it is seen that the world, here as representation, depends on the conjunction of these three consistencies that I name Symbolic, Imaginary and Real, the consistencies moreover being supposed to them. But that it is a matter of three consistencies and that every representation depends on them, is something that is well designed to suggest to us that there is more in the experience that necessitates, I would say, this trivision, this division into three, of diverse consistencies, that it is from that, without our being able to settle it, that it can be supposed that the consequence should be our representation of space as it is, namely, in three dimensions.

The question evoked, at this time of my statement, is something that responds to the notion of consistency: what can be supposed, since the term consistency presupposes that of demonstration, what can be supposed to be a demonstration in the Real? Nothing other supposes it than the consistency of which the cord is here the support. The cord here is, as I might say, the foundation of agreement (*l'accord*). To make a leap into that which, from what I am stating, will only be produced a small later, I would say that the cord thus becomes the symptom of the way in which the Symbolic consists. Which does not go badly after all with the fact that language bears witness to us that the formula to be threadbare (*montrer la corde*), by which there is (59) designated the wearing-out of a cloth, has its bearing, since when all is said and done to be threadbare, namely, that the weaving is no longer camouflaged in something where metaphorical use is so permanent, is no longer camouflaged in what is called – with the idea that in saying that, one is saying something – in what is called the

material (*l'étoffe*). The material of something is what, as near as may be, will give the image of substance, and which moreover is usual in the use made of it. It is a matter in this formula of which I spoke, to be threadbare, of seeing that there is no material that is not woven.

I had prepared for you a paper, because it is too complicated to draw on the board, made a whole tissue, uniquely made up of Borromean knots. One could cover the surface of the blackboard with it. It is easy to see that one arrives at what I might call a hexagonal fabric. You must not believe nevertheless, that the section of any one of the rings of tissue, let us call them that here, will free anything whatsoever from what it is knotted to, since by only cutting a single one of them, the six other rings freed by one cut, held together moreover, held together by the six times three, eighteen other rings with which it is knotted in a Borromean way.

If I earlier produced prematurely, but it has to be done – it is even the law of language that something should come out before being able to be commented on – if I produced the term symptom, it is indeed because the Symbolic is what from consistency makes the simplest metaphor. Not that the circular figure is firstly a figure, namely imaginable. It is even there that the notion of the good form was founded. And this notion of the good form is indeed something that is designed, as I might say, to make re-enter into the Real what is involved in the Imaginary. And I would say more, there is a kinship of the good form with meaning, which should be noted. The order of meaning is configured, as one might say naturally from what this form of the circle designates. The consistency supposed to the Symbolic is in agreement with this image that is in a way primary and we had to wait for psychoanalysis to see that it is linked to the order of this body on which the Imaginary depends. For who doubts, it is even on this slender thread that there survived everything that is called philosophy down to today, who doubts that there is a different order than the one

in which the body believes it moves around in? But this order of the body is not any more explained for all that.

Why does the eye see spherically while it is indisputably perceived as (60) a sphere, while the ear, you should note hears sphere just as much, even though it is presented in a different form that everyone knows is that of a snail? So then can we not at least question whether, if the two organs so manifestly *diffeomorphic*, if I can express myself in this way, perceive in the same way spherically, is it by taking things starting from my object described as small **o** that by a necessary conjunction which links the small **o** itself to make a ball of in fact of the small **o** under different forms. Except for the fact that it does not have a form, but it is thinkable in a dominant way, orally or moreover, as I might say shittily (*chialement*), the common factor of the small **o**, is to be linked to the orifices of the body. And what is the impact of the fact that the eye and the ear are also orifices on the fact that perception for both is spherical?

Without the small **o**, something is lacking in any possible theory of any reference, of any appearance of harmony, and this from the fact that the condition of the subject, the supposed subject, is to be only supposable, only knowing something by being himself, *qua* subject, caused by an object which is not what he knows, what he imagines he knows (*connaitre*), namely, which is not the Other of knowing as such, but that on the contrary, this object, the small **o**-object, removes this Other. The Other is thus, the Other that I write with a capital O, the Other is thus a matrix with a double entrance, of which the small **o** constitutes one of these entrances, and of which the other... what are we going to say about it? Is it the One of the signifier?

Let us begin to question whether it is not thinkable there? I would say that it is even thanks to that, that I was able one day, if in fact that some of those who are here were there, to couple for you the One and my small **o**, that on that occasion, I had put it in relationship to the one

by supposing it to be of the golden number. This was rather useful to me in introducing that which, that where I had already been led to by the experience, namely, that it can be read rather well there that between this One and this small  $\mathfrak{o}$ , there is strictly no rationally determinable relationship. The golden number, as you remember, is  $1/\mathfrak{o} = 1 + \mathfrak{o}$ ; from this there results that no proportion is ever graspable between the 1 and the  $\mathfrak{o}$ , that the difference between the 1 and the  $\mathfrak{o}$  will always be an  $\mathfrak{o}^2$  and so on indefinitely, a power of  $\mathfrak{o}$ , namely, that there is never any reason for the overlapping of the one by the other to end, that the difference will be as small as it can be represented, that there is even a limit but that within this limit, there will never be a (61) conjunction, a copulation of any kind between 1 and  $\mathfrak{o}$ .

Does that mean that the One of meaning, for this is what the Symbolic has as a signifying effect, is something related to what I called the matrix, the matrix that removes the Other from its double entry. The One of meaning is not to be confused with what makes the One of the signifier. The One of meaning is being, being specified by the unconscious, in so far as it ek-sists, that it ek-sists at least to the body. For if there is one thing that is striking, it is that it ek-sists in the dis-body (*dis-corps*). There is nothing in the unconscious - if it is made as I have stated to you - that makes an agreement with the body. The unconscious is discordant. The unconscious is that which, by speaking, determines the subject as being, but being to be removed from this metonymy, by which *I* support desire, as forever impossible to say as such.

If I say that the small  $\mathfrak{o}$  is what causes desire, this means that it is not the object of it. It is not its direct or indirect complement, but simply this cause which, to play on the word as I did in my first discourse at Rome, this cause which always talks (*cause*). The subject is caused by an object that can only be noted by a writing, and that indeed is why a step is made in the theory. What is irreducible in this is not a language-effect, because the effect of language is *pathein*, it is the

passion of the body. But from language there is inscribable, there can be noted in so far as language does not have an effect, this radical abstraction which is the object, the object that I designate, that I write with the figure of writing *o* and about which nothing is thinkable, except for the fact that everything that is subject, subject of thought that one believes to be Being, is determined by it. The One of meaning is so little involved here that what it is as an effect, effect [is made up of] from the One of the signifier. We know it and I am insisting on it, the One of the signifier only operates in fact by being able to be employed to designate any signified whatsoever.

The Imaginary and the Real are here knotted to this One of the signifier. What would we say about it if not that as regards their quality, what Charles Sanders-Peirce calls the *firstness* of what divides them up as different qualities, where put for example, how divide among them on this occasion something like life or indeed death? Who knows where to situate them, since moreover the signifier, the one of the signifier as such, causes just as much on one or the other of the aspects? One would be wrong to believe that from two, from the (62) Real and from the Imaginary, it is the Imaginary that is mortal and that it is the Real that is living. Only the ordinary of the use of a signifier can be said to be arbitrary. But where does this arbitrary come from, if not from a structured discourse!

Will I evoke here the title of a journal, *Ornicar*, that you see appearing at Vincennes, under my auspices. Is it not an example of what the signifier determines? Here it does so by being agrammatical, this by presenting only one category of grammar. But it is by this that it demonstrates the configuration as such, the one, as I might say, which with regard to Icarus only ornaments it. Language is only an *ornure*. There is only rhetoric, as Descartes underlines in rule X. Dialectic can only be supposed from the use of what goes astray towards a mathematically ordered ordinary, namely, towards a discourse, the



one that associates, not the phoneme, even understood in the broadest sense, but the subject determined by Being, namely, by desire.

What is the affect of ek-sisting, starting from my terms? It is to see, with regard to this field where I situate here the unconscious, namely, this interval between, as I might say, two consistencies, the one that is noted here by an edge that I made the edge of a page [IV-1] and the one that is buckled here [IV-2], is buckled, being buckled implying the hole without which there is no knot. What is the affect of existing? It concerns this field in which not just anything whatsoever is said, but where already the texture, the trellis of what I designated for you earlier by a double entry, of the crossing of the small **o** with what is defined as being from the signifier. What is it that makes ek-sistence from this unconscious? This is what I depicted here [IV-2] and what I underline just now as a support of the symptom.

What is it to say the symptom? It is the function of the symptom, a function to be understood as the mathematical formulation  $f(x)$  would do. What is this  $x$ ? This is what can be expressed of the unconscious by a letter, in so far, that only in the letter is the identity of self to self isolated from every quality. From the unconscious every One, in so far as it sustains the signifier in which the unconscious consists, every One is capable of being written by a letter. No doubt, there needs to be a convention. But the strange thing is that this is what the symptom operates in an untamed way. What does not cease to be written in the symptom stems from that.

Not long ago someone, someone that I listen to in my practice – and nothing of what I tell you comes from anywhere other than from this (63) practice, this indeed is what constitutes the difficulty, the difficulty I have in transmitting it to you – someone with regard to the symptom articulated to me this something that would compare it to points of suspension.

The important thing is the reference to writing. The repetition of the symptom is this something that I have just said is writing in an untamed way, this for what is involved in the symptom as it is presented in my practice. That the term should have come from elsewhere, namely, from the symptom as Marx defined it in the social, takes nothing away from the well-foundedness of its employment, as I might say, in the private. That fact that the symptom in the social is defined by unreasonableness does not prevent it being signalled by all sorts of rationalisations as regards each one. All rationalisation comes from a particular rationale, namely, not of exception but of anyone whatsoever. Anyone whatsoever must be able to make an exception in order that the function of the exception may become a model. But the reciprocal is not true. The exception must not be found in just anyone to constitute, by this fact, a model. This is the ordinary state of affairs. Anyone at all who reaches the function of exception that the father has, we know with what result, that of his *Verwerfung*, or of his rejection, in most cases, through the filiation that the father generates with the psychotic results that I have exposed.

A father has only a right to respect, indeed to love, if the aforesaid, the aforesaid love, the aforesaid respect, is, you are not going to believe your ears, per-versely (*père-versement*) orientated, namely, made by a woman (*fait d'une femme*), the small **o**-object which causes her desire. But what this woman picks up in the small **o**, if I may express myself in this way, has nothing to do with the question! What she is occupied with, are the other **o**-objects who are the children with whom the father nevertheless intervenes, exceptionally in the right case, to maintain in repression, in the correct half-God (*mi-Dieu*) if you will allow me, the version of his perversion that is proper to him, the only guarantee of his function of father, which is the function, the function of the symptom that I wrote it there, as such. For that, it is enough that he should be a model of the function. That is what the father ought to be, in so far as he can only be an exception, he cannot be the model of the function except by realising its type. What matter if he

has symptoms, if he adds to that something of the paternal perversion, namely, that the cause of it is a woman that he has acquired to give her children and, that whether he wants to or not he takes paternal care of (64) them. Normality is not the paternal virtue par excellence, but simply the proper *mi-Dieu* described just now. In other words the correct non-saying, naturally on condition that this non-saying should not be stitched up in white thread, namely, that one does not see right away in short what is at stake in what he does not say.

It is rare! It is rare and it will renew the subject to say that it is rare that he succeeds in this correct *mi-Dieu*! It will renew the subject when I will have the time to take it up again for you. I said it simply in passing to you in an article on *Schreber*. Here there is nothing worse, there is nothing worse than the father who proclaims the law on everything, above all no father educator! But rather standing back from any magisterium.

I am going to end like that by talking to you about a woman. Well then, this indeed is all I did to avoid speaking about a woman, since I tell you that *The woman* does not ek-sist. Naturally all the journalists said that I had said that women did not exist! There are things like that that one cannot...*le donne*...that are expressed in short...things like that that one... They are not even, not even capable of noticing that to say *The woman*, is not the same thing as to say *women*, while they mouth on about the woman all the time, is that not so! The woman, is obviously something who can be perfectly, perfectly well outlined. *All women*, as they say, but I, I also say that women are not-all so then that creates a little objection, does it not! But *The woman* is, let us say that it is *all the women*, but then it is an empty set, because this set theory, is all the same something that allows a little bit of seriousness to be put into the use of this term *all*.

Yeah! A woman first of all, the question is only posed for the other, namely, of the one for whom there is a set definable by this thing that

is written on the board. It is not J( ), it is not phallic enjoyment, it is that ; ek-sists, is the phallus. What is the phallus? Well then, since of course people drag out...hum! anyway I am the one who drags things out...who drags along the whole convoy. So then I will not tell you today what the phallus is.

In short, all the same, you can have all the same a little suspicion about it. If phallic enjoyment is there, it must be that the phallus must be something else, huh? So then, the phallus, what is it? In short, I am asking you the question because I cannot go into it today for very (65) long. It is enjoyment without the organ, or the organ without enjoyment? In short, it is in this form that I am asking you to give meaning, alas, to this figure.

Anyway! I am going to skip this step. For the one encumbered with a phallus, what is a woman? It is a symptom. It is a symptom and that can be seen, that can be seen from the structure there that I am in the process of explaining to you. It is clear that if there is no enjoyment of the Other as such, namely, if there is no guarantee that can be met in the enjoyment of the body of the Other which ensures that to enjoy the Other as such exists, here is the most manifest example of the hole, of what is only supported from the small *o*-object itself, but by misunderstanding, by confusion. A woman, no more than a man, is not an *o*-object. She has her own, that I mentioned earlier, that she occupies herself with, that has nothing to do with the one by whom she is supported in some desire or other. To make this *a* woman a symptom is all the same to situate her in this articulation to the point where phallic enjoyment as such is moreover her affair. Contrary to what is said, the woman has to undergo castration neither more nor less than the man. She is, with regard to what is involved in her function of symptom all together at the same point as her man. It must simply be said how, for her, this ek-sistence, this ek-sistence of the real that is the phallus I mentioned earlier, the one on which I left you with your tongue hanging out, it's a matter of knowing what

corresponds to it for her. You must not imagine that it is the little yoke that Freud talks about! It has nothing to do with that.

These points of suspension of the symptom are in fact questioning points, as I might say, in the non-relationship. I would like all the same to open up what I am introducing here to show you from what angle this definition of the symptom is justified. What is striking in the symptom, in this something which gives a little peck to the unconscious, is that it is believed. There are so few sexual relationships that I recommend for that the reading of something which is a very beautiful novel *Ondine*. *Ondine* manifests what is at stake. A woman in the life of a man is something he believes in, he believes that there is one, sometimes two or three, and what moreover is interesting here is that he can only believe in one. He thinks that there is a species, in the style of sylphs or water sprites (*ondins*).

(66) What is it to believe in sylphs or water sprites? I point out to you that one says believe in (*croire à*) in this case. And even that the French tongue adds to it this reinforcement of what is not believe in, but believe in it (*croire y*), believe there. What does believing in it mean? Believing in it only strictly means as follows: it can only mean, semantically, believing in beings in so far as they can say something. I would ask you to find me an exception for this definition. If they are beings who can say nothing, say properly speaking, namely state what is distinguished as truth or as lie, it means nothing. Only that, the fragility of this *believing in it* to which manifestly there is reduced the fact of non-relationship so tangibly cross-checked everywhere, I mean that it crosschecks. There is no doubt that whoever comes to present us with a symptom believes in it. What does that mean? If he asks our help, our aid, it is because he believes the symptom is capable of saying something, that it must only be deciphered. It is the same for what is involved in a woman, except for this, which happens, but which is not obvious, the fact is that one believes that she effectively says something, it is there that you come a cropper. To believe in it, one believes her. One believes what she

says. This is what is called love. And that is why it is a feeling that I described on occasion as comic. It is the well known comic, the comic of psychosis. That is why we are usually told that love is a madness. The difference is nevertheless manifest between believing 'in', a symptom, or believing 'it'. This is what makes the difference between neurosis and psychosis. In psychosis, the voices, it's all there, they believe in them. Not only do they believe in them, but they believe them. Now it is all there, in this limit.

Believing her is, thank God, a widespread condition because, all the same, it provides company, you are no longer all alone. And that is why love is precious, eh!, rarely realised, as everyone knows only lasting for a time and all the same made up of the fact that it is essentially this breaking down of the wall where one can only give yourself a bump on the forehead, in short, that is at stake. If there is no sexual relationship, it is certain that love, love is classified according to a certain number of cases whose petals Stendhal has very well plucked, in short. There is the love of esteem, there is that in short. It is not at all incompatible with the love of passion, is that not so, nor with the love of taste; (*l'amour-estime, -passion, -gout*). But all the same it is the major love, it is the one which is founded on the (67) fact that one believes *her*, that one believes *her* because one has never had the proof that she is not absolutely authentic. But this believing *her* is all the same this something about which one is totally blinded, which acts as a stopper, as I might say, this is what I already said, to believing *it*, which is something that can be very seriously put in question. For to believe that there is one of them, God knows where that takes you, that takes you precisely towards believing that there is *The, The* which is altogether a fallacious belief. Nobody says the sylph or the water sprite. There is a water sprite or a sylph, there is a spirit. There are spirits, for some people. But all of this never gives anything except a plural. It is a matter of knowing what is its meaning. What meaning is there in *believing it* and whether there is

not something altogether necessitated in the fact that, in order to believe *in it*, there is no better way than to *believe her*.

*Voilà*, it is ten to two. I introduced today something, I introduced something that I believe to be able, to be able to be of use to you. Because the business of points of suspension earlier, it was someone who said this to me about a connection, is that not so about what is involved in women, and my God, that fits so well that in the practice, is that not so to say that a woman is a symptom, as no one has ever done up to the present, I believed I should do so.

### **Seminar 5: Tuesday 11 February 1975**

I was told that the last time people heard nothing. It was explained to me since that it is because tape recorders are being hung on the loudspeakers. So then I would be grateful to the people who are in the process precisely of hanging them to take them away, so that all the same the loudspeakers may be of some use. At the same time, I would like the people who might find themselves in the position of not hearing anything to make a sign to me, so that I do not trust the loudspeakers and try to raise my voice. Because it is obviously painful to hear the remark, since there are some people who come to see me, to hear the remark that perhaps indeed I said interesting things, the preceding day or the day before that, that they were there, but that they did not hear.

I am delighted that today all the same, because I chose to come on Mardi gras, that the doors are not too congested. This could be an opportunity for me, to confide something in you. I reported to you, reported because it was instructive for me, I reported to you the fact that I had been at Nice, that I had accepted any title whatsoever. In short, I would say that it was in virtue of any one whatsoever that I had accepted, this title, obviously a little shocking for me, of *The Lacanian phenomenon*. And then I had pointed out to you that, in sum, I had provoked it, but that this informed me about something, which is perhaps a presumption, that what I say, has meaning effects. It seems in measuring things that these effects are not immediate, but (70) with the time that I have put into it and also, it must be said, the perseverance, since when all is said and done, for me, at least, it took 20 years for me to notice them, I mean for me to record them, that it should appear to me that this has had effects and I told you how surprised I was. One never knows whether a surprise is good or bad, a surprise is a surprise, it is outside the field of the agreeable or the disagreeable, since after all what is called good or bad is agreeable or disagreeable. So then [when] a surprise is lucky, let us say, this signifies what is called an encounter, namely, when all is said and done something that comes to you from yourself. I hope that this happens to you from time to time. So then I was able to renew this surprise that I am calling lucky, rather than good or bad, by going since, since I left you until the first Tuesday of February, first, in short, the second, the one that I speak on, I made a little trip to Strasbourg where I was able to note without even being too surprised at it because it is the Strasbourg group that takes charge of it, that I had effects, meaning effects in Germany. I mean that, from the Germans that I met in the Strasbourg group, I obtained when all is said and done questions which gave me the lucky surprise that I spoke about just now.

I was less surprised than at Nice, given that it was the Strasbourg group that were taking care of it – not that no one was taking care of



what I was saying at Nice! – but in short it happened, like that, that I was expecting less. It must be said that, in the interval, I cheered up a little, and that that was perhaps the reason that however lucky it was, the surprise was less at Strasbourg. I had a greater one, because, I have just spent a week, you'll never guess where? I have just spent a week in London. It is quite certain that neither the English, nor I will not say English psychoanalysts, I only know one who is English, and even then he is probably a Scot!...*Lalangue*, I think it is the English *lalangue* that creates an obstacle. That is not very promising, because the English *lalangue* is in the process of becoming universal, I mean, that it is making its way. Anyway, I cannot say that there are not people who strive to translate me into it. Those who read me, like that, from time to time, can get, can have an idea in short of how difficult it is to translate me into the English *lalangue*.

(71) One must all the same recognise things as they are. I am not the first to have noted this resistance of the English *lalangue* to the unconscious. I made remarks, like that, I allowed myself to write something that was well or less received which I am used to, something on returning from a journey to Japan where I believe I said for the Japanese something that is opposed to the play, and even to the handling to the unconscious as such in what I called at the time, in a little article that I wrote, that I brought out I no longer know where, I completely forget, that I called *Lituraterre*. I thought I saw, in a certain, let us say, duplicity, duplicity in the case of the Japanese *lalangue*, of pronunciation, I thought I saw there something that reduplicated by the system of writing which is also double, I believed I saw there a certain special difficulty, a special difficulty in operating on the plane of the unconscious, and precisely in something which ought to appear a help to it, if what is involved in the unconscious is localised at the locus of the Other and if I made the remark that there is no Other of the Other, namely, that what in my little schema depicting the Borromean knot (IV-2) is characterised by a special accentuation of the hole in what faces up, as I might say, in what faces

up to the Symbolic and that I highlighted, I think the last time, by putting there, by putting there a J followed by a capital O, that I translated in short, that I tried to state as designating the enjoyment of the Other, not a subjective but an objective genitive. And I underlined that it is here that there is very especially situated something which, I believe, legitimately, healthily, corrects the notion that Freud has of Eros as a fusion, as a union.

I put the accent, in this connection, like that incidentally, more or less before having brought out this Borromean knot, I put the accent on the fact that it is very difficult to for two bodies to melt into one another. Not only is it very difficult but it is an obstacle of everyday experience and that if one finds its place well indicated in a schema, it is all the same of a nature to encourage us, concerning the value of what I am calling, here, a scheme (*schème*).

Today I must open up, open up the path to a certain number, I will not say of equivalences, but of correspondences. It is quite obvious that I have several times in my scribbling work, since it is with rough drawings that I prepare what I have to say to you here, encountered (72) these equivalences, and that I look twice at them before sharing them with you. I am rather prudent. I do not try to speak without rhyme or reason.

Good! Is there here, for example, anyone who knows, because I do not know whether François Wahl is there, is there someone here who knows whether *Queen Victoria* by Lytton Strachey – who is a well known, indeed celebrated author, I read at one time a little book translated, if I remember correctly, by *Stock*, about Elizabeth and the Count of Essex – is anyone here in a position to tell me, since there are people who are at *Seuil*, are there any of them here? I think that they would be able to tell me whether Lytton Strachey on *Queen Victoria* has been published in translation by *Seuil*. [In the audience]: ‘In *Seuil*, no’ – What’s that? I can’t hear properly. It has not been

published? That really pisses me off. It really pisses me off, because I would have recommended you to read it. Yes that really pisses me off! Who was it that said that to me? Good, anyway, I'm very annoyed, because that could be found everywhere in the form of a Penguin book, but it is *out of print* so then I cannot recommend you to read it, but in short, all those who can get their hands on it, because there are all the same libraries and there are also second hand bookshops, all those who can lay their hands on this *Queen Victoria* by Lytton Strachey, I warmly invite them to read it, because on my return from England, that is to say last Saturday and Sunday, I could not put this book down. I could not put it down and that does not mean that I am going to talk to you about it today, because I must, to make something of it, in short, make it enter into my discourse I would have to titrate it, I would have to melt it down, I would have to wring it dry, I would have to squeeze the juice out of it, it is – I may well have taken pleasure in it – it is too tiring, and then I don't have the time.

Nevertheless, it could, it seems to me, show that there is perhaps more than one origin of this stupefying phenomenon of the discovery of the unconscious. If the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, it seems to me, had not been so astonishingly dominated by what I must really call the action of a woman, namely, Queen Victoria, well then, it would perhaps not have been realised the degree to which this kind of havoc was required in order that with it there should occur what I am calling in short an awakening. The awakening is one of my old refrains. It is a flash of (73) lightning. It is situated for me, in short when it happens to me, not often, it is situated for me, for me, that does not mean that that is how it is for everybody, it is situated for me at the moment when effectively I am emerging from sleep. I have at that moment a brief flash of lucidity, that does not last, of course, I enter like everyone else into this dream that is called reality, namely, into the discourses of which I form part, and among which I try to open up for you the path of analytic discourse. It is a very painful effort.

I believe that this book seems to me to make something tangible for you, in short tangible with a particular relief, the fact that love has nothing to do with the sexual relationship. And to confirm that this starts, not, I am going to say, from the woman, since precisely as regards this, I saw, I saw once again, in short it is a point on which even people who are most friendly to me, I mean those who believe they should pay homage to me vacillate and even come off the tracks, it must be said! If, if I say that *The woman* does not exist, there is obviously no way back, as I might say, but *a woman*, a woman among others, a woman well isolated in the English context by this kind of prodigious selection that has nothing to do with the discourse of the master, it is because there is an aristocracy that there is a discourse of the master. This aristocracy moreover does not have a lot to do with a local selection, as I might say. The true masters, are not those who are the, those who could be called worldly, in short nice people, people who are good company, people who know one another, in short, or who believe they know one another... The fate which ensured that a certain Albert of Saxe-Coburg fell into the hands of the *Queen*, he had no penchant, that is what is marvellous in short, this is what Lytton Strachey underlines, not the slightest penchant for women. But when one encounters a *vagina dentata*, if I can express myself thus, of the exceptional proportions of Queen Victoria, in short, a woman who is Queen, namely, what is really the best thing done in terms of *vagina dentata*! It is even an essential condition. In short, Semiramis must have had a *vagina dentata*, it is inevitable, it can be seen moreover when Degas makes a drawing of her. Elizabeth of England must also, in short, that can be seen for Essex. It had consequences... Why did it not have the same for him who is called, when they designed the museum that subsists to their memory the *Victoria and Albert*, because you do not say *Victoria – and – you say Victor (ia) and Albert*, why did the Albert in question not suffer the fate of Essex? It (74) is because he did not... it is not even sure that he did not undergo it, because he died very young. He died very young of what is called

a natural death, but you will look very closely at that, I hope. You will look very closely at that, this seems to me the most marvellous thing there can be had as an announcement of this truth that I had found without it, in short, this truth of the sexual non-relationship.

It seems to me an altogether sensational illustration, and since all the same all of this happened very quickly, and in sum had gone through its principal episodes before the birth of Freud, it is not, it seems to me all the same not a reason for saying that if Freud had not emerged there, by some mysterious encounter of History, immediately after this exercise of what women have, I do not know if it is a power – people are very, very fascinated by notions, categories like that, power, knowledge, all that. They are silly notions in fact, silly notions which leave the whole place to women, and I did not say *The woman*, to the women who are not concerned with it, but whose power goes immeasurably beyond all the categories. Good, in short, God rest the soul of *r-and Albert!* It is certain that what I am saying does not quite go in the direction, despite everything, of what women can, nor take their chance, if one can call that a chance in a kind of integration into the categories of the man. I mean, neither power, nor knowledge, in fact they know about them, they know so much more about them, in short, is that not so, from the very fact of being a woman that it is to this indeed that I take off my hat. And the only thing that astonishes me, is not so much as I said like that on occasion, that they know better how to treat the unconscious, I am not too sure. Their category with respect to the unconscious is very obviously of a greater force, they are less bogged down in it. They treat it with a savagery, indeed a liberty of approach which is quite gripping for example in the case of Melanie Klein. It is something that, like that, I leave to the meditation of each one and women analysts are certainly more at ease with respect to the unconscious. They busy themselves with it, they do not busy themselves with it, it must be said, without it being, without it being at the expense...it is perhaps here that the idea of merit is upset, that they lose something of their chance in it which,

simply by being one among women is in a way without measure. If I (75) had, which obviously would never come into my head, if I had to localise somewhere the idea of liberty, it would obviously be in a woman that I would incarnate it. A woman, not obligatorily anyone whatsoever, because they are *not-all* and the anyone whatsoever slides towards the *all*.

Good, let us leave that to one side. Let us leave that to one side because it is a subject which, fundamentally, like Freud himself, I could say that I can make neither head nor tail of (*J'y perds mon latin*). Which is not a bad way of saying things. But in short, if you get your hands on it, I had the good luck that a person who is one of those who had invited me there, I mean to London, that a person gave me this out of print thing, in short, his own copy in a word, and I think it is a read that no one here should miss if he has a little something, a little touch, a little vibration with respect to what I am saying. Good...

It is obviously quite extraordinary, I am passing onto another subject, quite extraordinary to see that the art, the very art that has treated subjects that are called geometrical in the name of the fact that a prohibition is brought to bear by a certain religion on human representation, that even Arab art then, to call it by its name, makes the friezes but that among the friezes and these plaits that it involves, there is no Borromean knot. Even though the Borromean knot lends itself, lends itself to a quite flourishing richness of figures of which there is precisely no trace of in any art. It is something that in itself is very surprising. It is not easy, it is not easy to give an explanation for that, if not perhaps that if no one has sensed its importance this is all the same designed to give us this dimension that something was required that does not at all go without the requirement of the emergence of what I will call certain consistencies. It is precisely those I give to the Symbolic, to the Imaginary and to the Real. But it is by homogenising them that I give them this consistency, and to

homogenise them is to restore them to the value of what commonly in short is considered as the lowest. One might well ask in the name of what? It is to give them a consistency in a word from the Imaginary. It is indeed in that that there is something to be corrected. The consistency of the Imaginary is strictly equivalent to that of the Symbolic, as to that of the Real. It is even by reason of the fact that they are knotted in this way, namely, in a way that puts them strictly in a relationship to one another, the one with respect to the two others, (76) in the same relationship; it is even here that an effort must be made which is of the order of a meaning effect, that is of the order of a meaning effect, I mean that analytic interpretation altogether implies a tipping over in the bearing of this meaning effect. It is certain that it is brought to bear, analytic interpretation is brought to bear in a way that goes much further than the word. The word is an object of elaboration for the analysand, but what the analyst says – for he says – what the analyst says has effects about which it is not nothing to say that transference plays a role in it, but, it is not nothing but it does not illuminate anything. It would be a matter of saying how the interpretation is brought to bear, and that it does not inevitably imply a stating. It is quite obvious that too many analysts have the habit of keeping their mouths shut, I dare to believe, I mean to shut up, not to open it, as they say, I am talking about the mouth. But I dare to believe that their silence is not simply the result of a bad habit but of a sufficient apprehension of the import of a silent saying. I dare to believe it, but I am not sure of it. From the moment we enter into this field, there is no proof. There is no proof, if not in the fact that an appropriate silence does not always succeed.

What I am trying to do here – where, alas, I chatter, I chatter a lot – is all the same designed to change the perspective about what is involved in a meaning effect. I would say that this meaning effect consists in squeezing it, squeezing it but of course on condition that it is done in the right way, namely, squeezing it by a knot, and not just any one. I am very astonished at succeeding in substituting, I believe, this

meaning effect as it makes a knot, and a knot in the right way, for what I would call what happens at a perfectly designatable point, designatable on the knot itself, something in which I do not believe I participate at all, if not at this precise point, and which is called the fascination effect. For, to tell the truth, it is what, it is on this cord that there slides, that there are brought to bear most of the effects of art, and it is the only criterion that can be found which separates it from what science, for its part, manages to co-ordinate. That indeed why that a man of letters, like I don't know, Valery, for example, is content with remaining on the fact that it is a matter of explaining, on fascination effects, whose analysis is all the same required.

The meaning effect required of analytic discourse is not Imaginary, it is not Symbolic either, it must be Real. And what I am occupied with (77) this year, is in trying to closely squeeze what the Real of a meaning effect may be. Because on the one hand, it is clear that we are used to this meaning effect being conveyed by words and not being without reflection, without Imaginary undulation. One could even say that even on my little schema [on the board] as I reproduced it for you the last time, as I am going to redo it no – get into the habit, is that not so, of drawing it like that, namely, not to do what is done, what is regularly done, in short the junction once one has started with this élan – the meaning effect is that, it is at the connection of the Symbolic and the Imaginary that I situated it. It does not in appearance have a relationship with this, namely, the circle consisting of the Real, in principle it only has a relationship of exteriority. I say in principle, because that is why it is there, flattened out. It is flattened out from this fact that we cannot think otherwise. We only think on the flat.

It is enough to depict this Borromean knot [on the board] differently. You are going to see the trouble of course that this is going to give us, is that not so. You see already...Ah! That is what is marvellous, it's



that...[he draws on the board],[ V-1]. Let us take it like that. I could of course have taken it in any way whatsoever.

You clearly see that what is at stake is to make this knot Borromean, namely, that you clearly see the two that are depicted here separate easily from one another. There is not only one way and only one single way, because there is more than one to make this knot Borromean. This is what I am depicting to you with all the awkwardness which, I hope, will also be yours on this occasion. Because I want to show you that the difficulty is this. You see that by (78) the fact that the third buckle that I added passes, as I might say, across the two ears that allow to be distinguished the passage of this element of the knot to the inside of what I would call the hole of the third knot, it is in this measure that the knot holds together.

Do we have to stop there? Namely, to think that three consistent elements are enough, one of which makes a knot of the two others. There is already something that we posit with this knot, something which goes against the image described as concatenation. It is in so far as the discourse at stake does not constitute a chain, namely, that there is no reciprocity of the passage of one of these consistencies into the hole that the other offers it, namely, that one of the consistencies, in the common sense of the term, is not knotted to the other, I mean, does not make a chain, it is in this that there is specified the relationship of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. This is how the question is put first of knowing whether the meaning effect in its Real stems from the use of words, I am saying use in the usual sense of the term, or simply by there being uttered (*leur jaculation*), as I

might say, it is the term that is used for what concerns words. From all time many things have made people think, but the distinction was not

made in this use of the uttering. People believed that it was the words that were important. While if we give ourselves the trouble of isolating the character of the signifier we clearly see that uttering preserves a meaning, a meaning that can be isolated.

Does that mean that it is here, in this that we should trust, for it to come about that the saying makes a knot? As distinct from the word which very often slips, allows there to slip, and that our intervention with regard to what the analysand is asked to provide, namely, as they say, everything that passes through his head, which does not for all that in any way imply that this only bla-blah, for behind precisely there is the unconscious. And it is because of the fact that there is the unconscious that already in what he says, there are things that make a knot, that there is already saying (*du dire*), if we specify the saying as being what makes a knot.

It is not enough to call this knot the Real - the Imaginary in this schema is not an imaginary ring. If the knot holds together, it is precisely because the Imaginary ought to be taken in its proper consistency and that, no doubt, since this schema is what presses us, at least through my mediation, the fact is that the use of the Symbolic is obviously not to be taken there, as everything indicates in the technique of analysis, in the common sense of the word. The

Symbolic is not simply blah-blah. What they have in common is that. It is not the Real, that is the Real! The Real, is that there should be something that is common to them in their consistency. Now, this consistency resides simply in the fact of being able to make a knot. Is a mental knot real? That is the question. I agree that I am not making things easy for you today, but it is all the same to give you the answer immediately: there is the Real, the mental knot, there is the Real of ek-sistence. There is the Real of ek-sistence, as I write it from these equivalences which I told you earlier it was my goal to introduce today. I am speaking, I am speaking prudently about correspondence, I am speaking now about functions. And that is why I am putting forward the word *equivalence*.

It is rather curious, if we wish to give some support to what we are putting forward, that this precisely forces us not to put the Real in consistency. And consistency, to designate it by its name, I mean by its correspondence, consistency, I would say, is of the Imaginary order, which is demonstrated, which is demonstrated lengthily in all human history. And what ought to inspire in us a singular prudence, is that much of the consistency, all the consistency that already has been proved is pure imagination. I am bringing back the Imaginary here to its stress on meaning. Consistency for the *parlêtre*, for the (80) speaking-being, is what is fabricated and what is invented. On this occasion, it is the knot in so far as it is plaited. But precisely this is the last word on the business, as I might say. It is not in so far as it has been plaited that it ek-sists, even if I do not make a figure of my Borromean knot on the board, it ek-sists. For, once it is traced out, anyone can clearly see that it is impossible for it not to remain what it is in the Real, namely, a knot. And this indeed is why I believe I am putting forward something which may perhaps be useful to the analysts who are listening to me in their practice. It is that they should know that what they are plaiting, that what they are plaiting in terms of the Imaginary does not any the less ek-sist. That this ek-sistence is what corresponds to the Real. There is something, thank God, that has

introduced us to this notion of ek-sistence, it is the use of the writing in connection with this something which, on this occasion, is called a variable, linked, designated by the letter  $x$ . There exists an  $x$  that can be brought into  $f(x)$ , namely, into a function of  $x$ , whether this function is a function in the general sense of the term or simply an equation. In the case of an equation, it can happen that no root exists, as it is expressed, if an equation is always something equal to zero. It can happen that there is no root, that no root exists, and when it does not exist, that does not upset us, we make it exist, namely, that we invent the category of the imaginary root and what is more, that gives results.

Here lies the vacillating point by which one sees that the term imaginary does not mean pure imagination, since moreover, if we can bring it about that the Imaginary ek-sists, it is because another Real is at stake. I am saying that the meaning effect ek-sists, and that in this, it is Real. This is not apologetics, it is consistency, Imaginary consistency, no doubt, but it seems that there is a whole common domain of the Imaginary function that for its part lasts and holds together. I can only dialogue with someone that I have fabricated to understand me at the level at which I speak, and this indeed is why I am not only astonished that you are so numerous, but I cannot even believe that I fabricated each one of you to comprehend me. You should know simply that this is not what is at stake in analysis. It is simply a matter of accounting for what ek-sists as interpretation. The astonishing thing is that to work, as I might say, on these three functions, of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, I fabricated enough people at a distance who had only to open – when all is said (81) and done I cannot even believe that there was ever an Englishman who did more than that, to look a little bit or to open my books, when they know French, because it is not yet translated – and that all the same there is something that allowed them to respond to in it. What is meant by the fact that there ek-sists a construction whose consistency must not be imaginary? There is only a single condition which is

quite readable, readable here on the blackboard, for that there must be a hole. And this is what brings us to what is called the topology of the torus which is the one by which for a long time I was, I cannot say altogether willingly, it was not one of these things that were so familiar to me, even though everyone knows well what a bangle is, simply what I note, is that mathematical topology, the one being entitled such and constituting the introduction of these relationships to the soft (*mou*), to the woolly (*flou*), as my dear friend Guilbaud expresses it, and with that to the knot, should be something, which, in mathematical theory, gives me so much trouble and will give you just as much, I must say, because I do not see how a theory of knots needs to pass through the function described as filters, for example, or to require the consideration of sets, the ones open, the others closed, when these terms of open and of closed take on an imaginary consistency no doubt, but a consistency quite different from the practice of knots.

The hole of which I speak, which seems to me ought to be put in the centre of this, which seems to me the point from which we can take off from this circular thinking, from this thinking that obligatorily flattens out, and which by that fact, simply by that fact, says that what is within it [V-3], is something other than what is outside, while it is

(82) enough to imagine it, to imagine it as consistent cord to clearly see that the inside that is at stake here and the outside, are exactly the same thing. There is only one inside, the one that we imagine as being the interior of the torus. But precisely, the introduction of the figure

of the torus consists, in not taking account of this inside of the torus. This indeed is the relief and the importance of what is provided to us.

The last time, in connection with my knot, I made the remark and I even drew the figure of the fact that if we start from the requirement

of making a Borromean knot not of three, but of four, we must suppose these three independent toruses [on the board] namely, to draw them like this [V-4, an error of Lacan's, taken up in the following session]: here is the one above, the one that is intermediary and the one that is beneath.

I depicted for you the last time how, by a figure which is that of a fourth torus, these three depicted as independent can be knotted, can and must be knotted, and I even made an allusion to the fact, which is that in Freud, there is an elision of my reduction to the Imaginary, to the Symbolic and to the Real, and as being all three knotted with one another, and that what Freud establishes with his Name-of-the-Father, which is identical to psychical reality, to what he calls psychical reality, specifically to religious reality, for it is exactly the same thing, that it is thus by this function, by this function of the dream that Freud establishes the link of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real.

Those who, I hope, were here the last time, preserved, I think, the notes, the outline, of the simply way in which here there can be traced out this torus [on the board] like, of course, here. I believe if I remember correctly...I could draw it, it is possible that I might make a (83) mistake, because it is not at all easy. Let us try like that, all the same this amuses me, it amuses me because each time one gets lost in it! Let's see, starting from this...Ah! What do we get from that?

Yeah, this seems to have succeeded by good luck, namely, to hold together, namely, to reproduce what I gave you the last time.

But this is not what is important. What is important to me, is the following; this figure, this figure here, let us suppose it is my knot, namely,, as you see, here what I traced out the last time as third circle, as third cord, knots nothing. How can we make the drawing on this of what would knot these three?

I am going to present it to you in another way which is this one [V-5]. It is very easy to conceive of it, in the form that was materialised in a thousand and one ways throughout the ages, namely, astrolabes. It is very easy to conceive of three metallic circles here where we find our bearings much more easily, of course, since we are only able to make a geometry of solids. [On the board] Here is how I am going to represent them; suppose something which was very frequently produced throughout the ages, in naval instruments. I am going to draw it for you simply. Here is a circle seen head on. The equatorial circle that I am drawing for you now is seen flattened out, and that is why I pretended to draw it for you in perspective. Let us now make a third vertical circle and let us trace out this little dotted line to give you the notion of the way in which you ought to see it in perspective. It is a distinct way because it appeals, it appeals, without any hope moreover, to your sense of space, you who do not have one anymore than anybody else! You think you are seeing things in relief, but you do not even imagine in relief.

I would like here [V-6] to depict how there is conceived in space the outline of what I gave you earlier, what I posed as a problem to you earlier about what can unite these three, the disunited Imaginary, Symbolic and Real. If you proceed in this way, you will see that you have to trace out this line, this consistency; that it is necessary and sufficient that this should be, let us say, depicted for there to be a knot here, a knot of four, a knot starting from a disjunction conceived as originating the Symbolic the Imaginary and the Real. I would advise you to keep a note of it because it is of a rather fruitful nature to make you reflect on what is involved in this function of knot, namely, why, for example, this line that I isolated as pink [in black on the drawing] must pass twice for us in front and above of this circle the only flattened out one, and pass, be content to pass in short within the one which here occupies the second rank with regard to an idea that we could have of the outside, of the middle and of the inside, of depth. This is largely sufficient in effect and it is illustrative of the function of the knot.

I will posit, as I might say, this year the question of knowing whether, as regards what is involved, namely, the knotting of the Imaginary, of the Symbolic and of the Real, there is required in short this supplementary function of an extra torus, the one whose consistency is to be referred to the function described as that of the Father. It is indeed because these things have interested me for a long time, even though I had not yet at that time found this way of depicting them, that



I began *The Names-of-the-father*. There are in effect many ways of illustrating the way in which Freud, as is obvious in his text, only makes the conjunction of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real (85) hold up through the *Names-of-the father*. Is this indispensable? It is not because that would be indispensable and I am saying the contrary that it could always be shown to be false that it is in fact so, always!

It is certain that when I began to do the seminar on *The Names-of-the-Father*, and that I, as some people know, at least those who were there, that I put an end to, I had surely – it is not for nothing that I had called it *The (Les) Names-of-the-Father* and not *The (Le) Name-of-the-Father*! I had a certain number of ideas about the way in which the analytic domain, discourse, takes temporary support (*suppléance*) from Freud's putting forward of the Names-of-the-Father. It is not because this support is not indispensable that it does not take place. Our Imaginary, our Symbolic and our Real are perhaps for each one of us still in a state of sufficient dissociation for the Name-of-the-Father alone to be able to make the Borromean knot, and to hold all that together, to make a knot of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and of the Real. But you must not imagine that - it would indeed not be my usual tone – that I am in the process of prophesying that we can in any way do without the Name- of-the-Father in analysis and for that matter the Name-of-the- Father elsewhere, that we can in any way do without for our Symbolic, our Imaginary and our Real since it is the fate of all of you not to take off quite well each one in his own direction. It is certain, without our being able to say that this constitutes a progress, because it is hard to see how a further knot on one's back, on one's neck and elsewhere, it is hard to see how a knot, a knot reduced to its strictest would constitute a progress, from the simple fact that it is a minimum. It surely constitutes a progress in the Imaginary, namely, a progress in consistency. It is quite certain that in the present state of things, you are each and every one of you as

inconsistent as your fathers, but it is precisely from the fact of being entirely dependent on them that you are in your present condition.

**Seminar 6: Tuesday 18 February 1975**

The last time, I bore witness to you about my experiences of wandering, and since I was disappointed that the Mardi-gras had not thinned out the fullness of this room, since I was disappointed about that, I allowed myself to slide into telling you what I think.

Nevertheless today for reasons that, I must say, are personal to me, because my work was a bit disturbed this week, I would like to take up the relay of what seemed to me to be required and which, after all, I can imagine, demanded some time. Today this time seems to me, I repeat, for simple personal reasons, the time might well have come – at least, I hope so – for some, some among you, to ask me, to ask me questions to which, I repeat, I would be happy at least to be able to answer to what I might seem in the present state of things to have an answer for.

I would really be very, very grateful to these people who certainly in the sense that I understand it, ek-sist, to these people if they would throw me the ball, as I might say; and to the person that will devote himself to it first, because after all, it is enough for one to decide, for others to be found who will open up the path. There you are! I am appealing to whoever would be willing to speak first, man or woman (*le premier ou la première*). I would really like to be asked a

question. First of all that would give me the note of what might take hold. It seems to me that the last time already, in putting forward what I said about an effort made, to distinguish, not simply to distinguish, and I will show you when the occasion arises where that starts from... it starts from a flattening out of the knot. In the knot there must be distinguished the fact that it is very difficult to bring it (88) into mathematical theory, this to the point that, let us say, I have found nothing whatsoever that corresponds to this knot, to this knot which – I was led to it in short step by step – to the knot qua Borromean that I ended up with. How did I end up with it? It is certain that currently, in short, if I, of course, know what is coming subsequently, the only thing that will allow the thread to be found, namely,, what gives it its consistency, the only thing that will allow the thread of the sequence, the sequence of seminars of which you have the first and the last, thanks to the care of someone, and also the one that is not the median, the one that is the eleventh. This is assuredly what will give to it what I designate as consistency.

How does it happen that something which, I recalled it, might have been the start of a different mode of thinking, with rigour, *more geometrico*, is what, is what Spinoza, for example, prided himself on spinning out, on deducing something according to the mode and the model given by the Ancients. It is clear that this *more geometrico* defines a mode of intuition which is properly mathematical and that this mode of intuition, after all, is not self-evident.

The way in which the point, the line, is in a way fomented from a fiction, and for that matter the surface which is only sustained by the split, by the break, by a break that is no doubt specified, specified as being in two dimensions – but since the line is only a dimension by being without consistency properly speaking, it is not saying a lot to say that one is going to add on one – and on the other hand the third, the one that in sum is erected by a line perpendicular to the surface, is something very strange. How, without something giving a support to

what must be said to be an abstraction founded on the cut of a saw, how, without rediscovering the cord, make such a construction hold up? But on the other hand, it is not by chance either that things happen like that. No doubt there is here a necessity which is, let us say, my God, because I do not find any better, which is the weakness of a manual being, *homo faber* as he was described. But why should this manual being, the *homo faber* who for that matter, if only, as I remarked, for carrying around what he attacks, what he manipulates, starts from something that has consistency, starts from the cord? What necessity requires that this cord, this cord – which in the tenth rule, that of Descartes, that I recalled – Descartes evokes that moreover, after all, the art of the weaver, the art of the plait, the art of the sewer could give the model, how does it happen that these things (89) become so exhausted, become exhausted to this point that their thread becomes inconsistent?

Perhaps there is here this something which is related to a repression? Before going as far as to say that this repression, is the primordial one, is the *Urverdrängt*, is what Freud designated as inaccessible in the unconscious... [*Uproar at the back of the hall*]. It would perhaps be no bad thing if someone at the back should take the floor and ask me a question, that would show me how loudly I must raise my voice for people to hear me, since these things seem to work badly. Could someone at the back open up this path that I wished for earlier?

We must start from the fact, is that not so, of how easy it is to make a mistake in the depiction of this knot, of this special knot that I designate as being Borromean and which has this singular property that it is enough to break something which nevertheless is simply depicted in it, namely, a torus, namely, a torus which precisely it is enough to cut to have in one's hand this thickness, this consistency, namely, what makes a cord.

This indeed is why, questioning, questioning my knot that can be drawn in this way [on the board, VI-1] and in fact is drawn, I noted the fact that it was no less drawable and that it remained a knot on this single condition that one of its buckles is opened out [VI-2] and that it is transformed into a straight line. We rediscover here the question that I asked at the start, that of the straight line and the slightness of its mathematical, geometrical consistency. Here this restored consistency supposes that we extend it to infinity for it to continue to fulfil its function. We must then see this cord infinitely prolonged, on the top and on the bottom, for the knot to remain such, to remain a knot. This (90) indeed is how the straight line, the straight line on which in short this cord takes its support in its present state, the straight line is scarcely consistent and it is indeed on this moreover that geometry has, as one might say, slipped. In other words starting from the moment when, in a geometry described as spherical, one has restored infinity to this straight line, by making of it a new ring. Without noticing that from the position of the knot, of the Borromean knot, this ring is implicated and that there was no need then perhaps to have made this whole circuit.

In any case, the last time you saw me extending this geometry of the Borromean knot of three, to the depiction of what is required for it to be valid for four. This was to give you the experience of the difficulty of what I called the mental knot. But I know well that it is with the attempt to flatten it, to flatten out this mental knot, namely, to submit oneself to the fact that this supposed thought, namely, something that sticks to extension, has a condition. Far from being separated from it, as Descartes supposes, thought is only extended, and again, it needs an extension, not just any one whatsoever, an extension in two dimensions, an extension that can be drawn. For this indeed is the way that it will not be displaced, in which it will not be inopportune to define this surface whose geometry I showed earlier, the one that is

imagined, that is essentially sustained by an Imaginary. It is indeed like that that one could moreover define this surface, this cut of a saw on a solid, the fact is that it presents something, something to draw.

It is singular that the only way people have managed in short to reproduce this ideal surface, is precisely something that people back away from, namely, the plait of a canvas. And that it should be on a canvas that the painter has in short to draw, because it is all that he finds himself able to do to tame the look, as I expressed it at one time, what is involved in this function of the painter. And that here also it is on something specified, the blackboard, that I find myself inevitably flattening out, flattening out what I have to communicate to you about the knot. It is indeed here that in effect there is sensed in a particular way, there is sensed the fact that, the knot that I have on the other hand depicted thanks to your perspective imagination, namely, how the Borromean knot of three holds up, how it is made. It is made of two knots which are independent of one another, and it is a matter of knowing where the third passes for this to make a knot.

I asked you the same question concerning what was required for it to (91) be a knot, even if at the start we leave the three rings of string of the first problem, we leave them independent, and I depicted for you by also flattening it out, even though in a way which bore its perspective, by depicting for you what is involved in what happens for these three rings that I drew independent, contenting myself, to simplify things for you, to show how they must be traced out in order that the fourth, the fourth that I represented a bit differently from the way in which I am now doing, highlighting for you the quadruple function of the fourth ring of string [VI-3].

But when I wanted to flatten it out in a way that reproduces in modifying it, namely, in making the three knots, the three rings of string independent from the start, I found that I had made an error. And I can say that this error was a matter rather of a mistake linked to the fact that being weary of it, weary of remembering these things that I had seen myself as correctly depicting what results from the flattening out, from a flattening out modelled on that of the knot of three, I omitted, I missed as I might say, I explicitly missed, through weariness, and moreover to give you, good God, an example of how little naturalness there is in the way these things work, namely, the representation of the knot. [On the board]. Here then, to take up the mental thing, the way in which first of all this operates. If from the upper to the lower, you note by 1, 2, 3 [VI-4] that which, of course, has nothing to do with an upper and a lower, since moreover it would be enough to turn them upside down for the problem to be renewed, here is how one should proceed. That I knew, but precisely it was by neglecting the fact that I found myself operating in the way that you have seen, and which left circle 1 outside the knot, but at the same time moreover all the others. It would be well to start from the fact (92) that the three circles flattened out in this way, and the 3 outside the 1, and to finish by the 3 in the 2. When one operates in this way, things work.

It is no less true that it is easy to see that they can also function in a different way, but that there is a third one, precisely the one that I took the last time and which leaves one of these knots free and specifically the 1, by which at the same time, it leaves the others free.

Why in short did the blundered action work here, if not in order to testify that no analysis, after all, can avoid something, something not resisting in this theory of the knot. And it is indeed what after all, I do not think it is a bad thing to have made you sense, and to have made you aware of in an extremely experimental way. It is quite clear that the other way, that the other way, the other way that is distinguished by this, which is that by inverting these two propositions, namely, starting from what of the 2 is outside the 1, but what I am doing there has not...[on the board] what I am doing there and what I did not do at first confuses, since moreover it is by depicting things for you in a way which makes the two green rings of string seem to re-cross one another. Simply cancel out these four points and you will see that in every case the two ways of proceeding are quite appropriate.

How are they so appropriate? They are so appropriate in that the function of the 2 and then of the 3, like the other figure, the one that is in perspective shows, as the other figure makes it appear, the function of the 2 and of the 3 are strictly equivalent and that with regard to the circle that might here be designated as 1, these two others are strictly equivalent, namely, as regards the way in which the pink ring goes around them, the mode is the same if we adopt this depiction.

What is there to say? What is there to say except that what this central figure highlights, is that the infinite straight line that figures there, the straight line described as infinite, but about which I remarked on one (93) occasion what it presupposes, namely, properly speaking the impossible, that this infinite straight line is opposed, is opposed by virtue of its rupture, and how can this rupture not be considered as a refinement (*affine*) of something which is quite essential to the knot, this straight line is opposed to what constitutes a ring as to what I called consistency, on the other hand to something on which I did not insist the last time and which is indeed what is essential to what we call a ring, and specifically a ring of string, namely, the hole that it has



in the middle. Hence the question that I put the last time as to whether there was not a correspondence, a correspondence between consistency, ek-sistence and the hole and each one of the terms that I am putting forward as Imaginary, Symbolic and Real. If consistency is indeed as I stated the last time of the order of the Imaginary, since moreover the cord goes towards this vanishing point of the mathematical line, we have to question ourselves about what is involved in making the ring of string as such, and that if we say it is the hole, it is a fact that we are not satisfied with it: what is a hole, if nothing circumscribes it?

Now, the last time, I had clearly marked that ek-sistence [on the board] namely, this something which, with regard to the opening and of what makes a hole, that the ek-sistence, namely, to flatten out things, this something that we ought, in the flattening out, to depict [VI-5] that ek-sistence belongs to this field, which is, as I might say, supposed by the rupture itself and that it is through it, through this in, in the a – write that l apostrophe a – that there is played out as one might say the fate of the knot, that if the knot has an ek-sistence, it is by belonging to this field and this indeed is why I stated that ek-sistence is with regard to this correspondence of the order of the Real, that the ek-sistence of the knot is Real to such a degree that I was able to say, I was able to put forward that the mental knot ek-sists, that the *mens* depicts it or not to itself, since what we see is that this ek-sistence of the knot is still to be explored, to be explored not without trouble, since there is not, to the best of my knowledge, anything at all, except to learn to constitute it and to learn it by the plait, which assuredly is not properly speaking a mental way of resolving the question, while it seems, it

seems that there is properly speaking a resistance of the *mens* to 'mentaling' this knot. I gave you an example of it earlier.

No doubt it is by a procedure called that of the remainder and which supposes as fundamental the order explored, explored starting from my experience, explored from the properly analytic experience which I said had led me to this infernal trinity, let us call it by its name, this infernal trinity of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. I do not think that I am playing a tune (*cord*) here which is not Freudian.

*Flectere si nequeo Superos* our dear Freud wrote at the head of the *Traumdeutung, Acheronta movebo*. And it is no doubt here that there is illustrated, in short, what I called the truth, the truth of a certain religion, for which I highlighted that it is not at all by chance that it arrived at a divine notion which is of a trinity this one, contrary to the tradition to which it is itself connected. I am not telling you how I let myself go in confiding to an audience that was none other, if I remember correctly, than the one I believe in England, unless it was the one in Strasbourg. What matter, I did not go so far as to tell this secret that the desire of man, which is nevertheless tangible, is hell, hell very precisely in that it is hell that he is missing! And with this consequence that it is what he aspires to, and we have the testimony of it, the testimony in neurosis which is very exactly the fact is that neurosis is something that only happens in so far as it is for him a mirage in which he might be satisfied, namely, a perversion, that a neurosis is a failed perversion.

A simple illustration of the knot, of the knot and why it is to the knot that I come to try to sustain, as I might say, what is produced and which your number here bears witness to, namely, some interest. It is indeed because you are much more interested in short than you suppose each one of you, in this nodalising of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real, that you are there, it seems to me. For moreover why would you take this strange satisfaction in listening to my stammering on this occasion, for moreover this is what I have to

accept today, namely, that I can only clear the way to what this involves in terms of consequences.

If it is indeed in effect in this mode that the ek-sistence of the knot is supported, namely, from this field that, flattened out, is intermediary to what gives rise to a question in this knot, intermediary to what makes a body out of the hole, while what the body supports, is something quite different, it is the line of consistency. A body, a body such as the one that you are supported by, is very precisely this something which for you has only the aspect of being what resists, what consists before being dissolved. And if the Real is to be localised somewhere, namely, in this field intermediary to the flattening out that I depicted, denoted as ek-sistence, it remains that it can only be by elimination that we may do it, and this is what gives rise to a question for us, that it is only, it is only by asking the question of whether the hole is indeed what is of the order of the Symbolic that I founded on the signifier, this indeed is the point that we will find ourselves having to settle in the course of this year.

[On the board] We find ourselves then at present, under an interrogative form, to put here the hole with a question mark and nothing else.....

*[break in the recording]*

...in question what is involved in the Symbolic while here it is the Real, it is ek-sistence, and that consistency here corresponds to the Imaginary.

It is certain that these categories are not easily handled. They have in their favour nevertheless the fact of having left some traces in history, namely, that if it is at the end of the account, of the account of a traditional philosophical extenuation whose summit is given by Hegel that something sprung forth again under the name of someone called Kierkegaard, and you know the degree that I exposed him as converging with the experience that appeared much later in Freud, his promotion as such of ek-sistence. There is there something, it seems,

of which one cannot say and of which one cannot find in Kierkegaard himself the testimony for, that it is not simply by the promotion of repetition as something more fundamental in experience than the resolution described as thesis, antithesis, synthesis on which Hegel wove History. The highlighting of this repetition as being a (96) fundamental function whose stamp is found in enjoyment and whose relations, the relations lived by the Kierkegaard in question, are those of a knot never avowed no doubt, but which is that of his father to sin. Namely, the introduction not of his own experience, but of the experience of the one who is found, with respect to him, to occupy the place of the father, that this place of the father at the same time becomes problematic. Namely that, a singular thing for a tradition that manipulated the *Abba* without rhyme or reason, that it should be at this date, and only at this date that there was promoted at the same time existence as such, which no doubt does not have the same accent as the one that I put in it by fragmenting it with a hyphen that it should be at this epoch that ek-sistence emerges, as I might say, emerges for me, emerges so that I can make something of it that is written differently, and that this is what is touchable, tangible in something that is defined by the knot. I do not believe that this is something of a nature to put me, as I might say, in continuity with a philosophical questioning, but much more rather into a mode of rupture which is moreover what is imposed if the emergence of the unconscious as a knowledge, as a knowledge proper to each one, to each particular person, is of a nature to completely change the conditions in which the very notion of knowledge has dominated, let us say, from ancient times, let us say even Antiquity. There has entered this character of knowledge along paths that we must question, that we must question in a way which, in any case puts its substance in question. If knowledge is something so dependent, so dependent on the relationships of generations to the Symbolic, to the hole of which I spoke of earlier, to call it by its name, if it is so dependent on the fact that the succession of generations fomented as knowledge, how can we not re-question its status. Is there, one, some knowledge in the

Real? It is quite clear that the supposition from all time, but a supposition that was not properly speaking made, not avowed, is that to all appearances there was, since the Real worked, it operated properly. And this indeed is what manifests that for all of us, there is a change, because this *in the Real* we touch a knowledge in it in a quite different form.

It is specifically to take up again here my construction [goes to the board], it is specifically this that if we insist that a knowledge, should have as a support, not, I am not saying a hole, the consistency of the (97) Symbolic, what appears in the Real... What appears in the Real, is properly speaking this, because perhaps you remember that the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary are situated in this way. It is the something which, flattened out, flattened out because we think, that flattened out appears in the Real, namely, within the domain that the consistency of the ring of string alone allows to be defined, that is presented not like the knowledge immanent to the Real that there is no way of resolving except of putting it into it in the form of, of *nous*, in the form of something that the Real would know what it has to do, and when it is not this *nous* well then, it is the whole power and wisdom of God! I do not have to come back on the fact that you know, that you know because I dinned it into you, namely, that the world is not thinkable without God. I am talking about the Newtonian world, because how would each one of the masses know the distance it is at from all the others? There is no way out! Voltaire believed in the Supreme Being. I was not let into his confidence, I do not know what idea he had of it, but it could scarcely be far from the idea of all-knowing, namely, that he was the one who made the machine work. The old business of knowledge in the Real, we know that it has, good God, sustained in short all these old metaphors. These old metaphors when all is said and done, it must be said! Aristotle was a populist in short, was he not! It is the artisan who gives him the model for all his causes, his final cause if I may express myself thus, his formal cause, it (*sa*) causes, it even causes at full tilt, it causes even material and that

is only the most hopeless of them [*causer*: cause, chat] It is certain that at the level of the cause, of the physical cause, of that which is inscribed by him in his *Physics*, all the haughtiness, is that not so of the *nous*, of the *nous* present to the world is reduced, is reduced to what I described in short as the artiginal, the artiginal which means that this was received with open arms everywhere the metaphor of the potter dominates and where it is a divine hand that makes the pot. How does it continue to turn nevertheless all by itself? This indeed is the question and the question on which the refinements of knowledge, if it continue to occupy itself with it, namely, to make it turn, or whether it leaves it turn all by itself after having ejected it, is truly secondary.

But the whole question of knowledge is to be taken up again simply starting from the fact that a knowledge is only supposed from a relation to the Symbolic, namely, to this something that is incarnated by a material as signifying, which is not all by itself to ask an easy question. Because what is a signifying material? We have only the (98) tip of its muzzle in Aristotle, at the place where he talks about *stoicheion* but it is certain that the very idea of material is only strictly thinkable as coming from signifying material in which it finds its first examples.

So then! To try simply to note something, which will be what my notation will unfold around, it is certain that it is from an experience, from an experience of the depiction of the symptom as reflecting in the Real the fact that there is something that is not working and where, not in the Real of course, in the field of the Real, this something that does not work holds up. Holds up how? Holds up only by what I support in my language as a *parlêtre*, from what is only a speaking being, because if he did not speak, he would not have the word being, and that to this speaking being, there is a field, a field connected to the hole that I depicted here – I apologise, I do not insist especially that my figures should be elegant, or symmetrical – it is in the measure

that there is no possible opening, rupture, consistency coming from this hole, the locus of ek-sistence, Real, that the unconscious is here [VI-6] and that what here is tenuous (*y fait tenue*) passing behind the hole of the Real, behind on this figure, because if you turn it over, it is in front, that there is coherence, that there is consistency between the symptom and the unconscious. Except for the fact that the symptom cannot be defined otherwise than by the way in which each one enjoys the unconscious in so far as the unconscious determines it.

To look for the origin of the notion of symptom, which is not at all to be looked for in Hippocrates, which is to be looked for in Marx, who was the first in the link that he made between capitalism, and what? The good old times, what people call them when they want, in short, (99) to try to call them something else, feudal times. Read all the literature on this. Capitalism is considered as having certain effects, and why in effect would it not have some! These effects are on the whole beneficial, since it has the advantage of reducing to nothing the proletarian man, thanks to which the proletarian man realises the essence of man, and by being stripped of everything is charged with being the Messiah of the future. Such is the way in which Marx analyses the notion of symptom. He gives of course crowds of other symptoms, but the relation of this with a faith in man is quite indisputable.

If we make of man, no longer anything whatsoever who conveys a future ideal, but if we determine him from the particularity, in every

case, of his unconscious and the way in which he enjoys it, the symptom remains at the same place that Marx put it, but it takes on a different meaning. It is not a social symptom, it is a particular symptom. No doubt, these particular symptoms have types, and the symptom of the obsessional is not the symptom of the hysteric. This is very precisely what I will try to get across to you in what follows.

For the obsessional nevertheless, I note it right away, there is a very particular symptom. No one, of course, has the slightest apprehension of death, otherwise you would not be so calm there. For the obsessional, death is a parapraxis (*un acte manqué*). It is not so stupid, because death is only approachable by an act. Again, for it to be successful, someone would have to commit suicide knowing that it is an act, which happens very rarely. Even though it was very widespread at a certain epoch, at the epoch when philosophy had a certain import, an import other than that of sustaining the social edifice, there are some people who managed to group themselves in a school in a way that had consequences. But it is quite singular and indeed of a nature also to make us suspect the authenticity of commitment in these so-called schools, that there was no need to have reached any wisdom whatsoever, that it was enough to be a good obsessional to know from a sure source that death is a parapraxis. Not of course that this presumes that I will not give some development to it, but I will stay with that today, since moreover I have not been able, as one might have expected, to tackle the difficulty (*l'os*) of what I wanted to tell you, namely, whether by saying that the woman does not ek-sist, as someone has objected to me, I did not make her ek-sist! Don't believe a word of it. This will be the thing that I will tackle the next time. I think I can sustain that it is in the state of one or of innumerable ones...but ones that are numerable, I will not say innumerable, but from perfectly numerable one, that women ek-sist, and not in the state of *The*.



**Seminar 7: Tuesday 11 March 1975**

I have two reasons for being encouraged, in short, to take things from an angle different to the one which you saw me at the last time.

The fact is, since I had the frailty to authorise the publication of these seminars in a certain bulletin I was, at the same time, constrained to look at the first two which were due to come out in the second number of this bulletin. And all things considered, I said to myself...in short, despite the difficulty, not, of course, in orientating myself but in sustaining your interest, in sustaining your interest because I am talking this year about the R.S.I., well then, good God, even these first explorations, these two first seminars did not seem to be so intolerable.

The second reason for encouragement was brought to me by the response, in short the response, I am not sure that it is simply a response... I mean that the people who sent me two papers on knots, and very especially on Borromean knots, namely, Michel Thomé and Pierre Soury, their paper had something that was altogether worthy of interest. It is to these papers that the little drawings on the lower row respond to. For the first, those of the first row, they continue, follow on from what I had to tell you, from what I proposed to myself to tell you this year.

So then, R.S.I., I write this year as a title. They are only letters, and as such presuppose an equivalence. What results from the fact that I speak these letters, by using them as initials, and that I speak them as

Real, Symbolic and Imaginary? That takes on a meaning, and this (102) question of meaning is indeed what, nothing less, I am trying to situate this year. It takes on a meaning, but what is proper to meaning, is that one names something in it. And this gives rise to the *dit-mansion*, the *dit-mansion* precisely of this vague thing that are called things, and that only take on their foundation from the Real, namely, from one of the three terms from which I made something that could be called the emergence of meaning.

Names them, I said. What I did in, I am not saying yet in demonstrating (*démontrant*), because this amounts to something that is no more demonstrable than the Borromean knot, this amounts to a showing (*monstration*). If I have been led to the showing of this knot, while what I was looking for was a demonstration of a doing, the doing of analytic discourse, that is already enough, I would say, whether it is a showing or a demonstrating. In any case what I would like to advance today, is something about which I – it is not without guile, because I always slip in things like that, quite gently, there is something of a ruse in it and it is not nothing either to recognise it – the fact is that I indicated to you one day that Freud's work revolves around the Name-of-the-Father. It makes no use at all of the Symbolic, the Imaginary nor of the Real, but it nevertheless implies them. And what I want to tell you, is that it is not for nothing that I did not speak about *the Name-of-the-Father*, when I began, as I imagine some know because I go over it enough, I spoke about *the Names-of- the-Father*. Well then, the Names-of-the-father is this:

[On the board] the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real according to my meaning, with the weight that I gave earlier to the word meaning.

That is what the Names-of-the-father are, the first names, in so far as they name something as is indicated – yes, as the Bible indicates in (103) connection with this extraordinary yoke that is called the Father there, the first phase of this human imagination that is God is consecrated on giving a name, good God, to something that is not indifferent, namely, a name to each of the animals. Of course, before the Bible, namely writing, there was a tradition. This did not come from nothing. It is tangible, tangible to the point that it ought to strike the lovers of tradition, the fact is that a tradition is always, what I would call fucked-up. That is even why people have a devotion to it, there is no other way of being attached to it than devotion, it is always so appallingly... what I have just said. All that one can hope from a tradition is that it should be less fucked up than another one. How can that be judged? There we enter into the more and the less. That is judged by the surplus-enjoying (*plus-de-jouir*) as production.

The surplus-enjoying, is obviously all we have to get our teeth into. It is because it is a matter of enjoying that one believes in it. Enjoying, as one might say, is at the horizon of this more and of this less, it is an ideal point. An ideal point that one calls as one can, the phallus, and I already underlined at one time that in the speaking being, this always has the closest relationship, it is the essence of the comic. Once you talk about something that has a relationship to the phallus, it is the comic. The comic has nothing to do with the witticism as I underlined at one time when I spoke about the witticism. The phallus is something else, it is comical like everything comical. It is a sad comic. When you read *Lysistrata*, you can take it from two sides, laugh or find it bitter. It must be said that the phallus is what gives body to the Imaginary. I recall here something that greatly struck me at one time. I saw a little film that Jenny Aubry brought to propose to me, by way of illustration, what I called at that time the mirror stage. There was a child before the mirror, and I no longer know whether it was a little girl or a little boy – it is even quite striking that I no longer remember... someone here perhaps remembers – but what is certain, is

that the little girl or the little boy, grasps there, in a gesture, something that to my eyes had this value: that in supposing as I do on foundations that are not too sure, that this mirror stage consists in the unity that is grasped, in the collecting together, in the assumed mastery by reason of this image of the fact that this premature body, uncoordinated up to then, seems to be collected together. By making (104) a body of it, a knowledge that he masters it – this does not happen, without one being able to affirm it, of course, to the same degree in animals that are born mature, there is not this joy of the mirror stage – what I called jubilation. Well then, there is truly a link, a link between that and something which was made tangible in this film, by something which, whether it was a little boy or a little girl, I underline for you had the same value, the elision, in the form of a gesture, the hand that goes in front, the elision of what was perhaps a phallus, or perhaps its absence. A gesture, clearly, removed it from the image. And this was tangible to me as a correlate, as I might say of this prematurity. There is here something whose link is in a way primordial with respect to something that will later be called shame, but which it would be exaggerated to take into account at the stage described as that of the mirror.

The phallus then is the Real. Especially in so far as it is elided. If you come back to what I opened up this year by trying to harmonise for you consistence, ek-sistence and hole, with, on the other hand, Imaginary, Real, for ek-sistence, and Symbolic, I would say then that the phallus, is not the ek-sistence of the Real. There is a Real that ek-sists with respect to this phallus, which is called enjoyment, but it is rather its consistency. It is the concept, as I might say, of the phallus. With the concept, I am echoing the word *Begriff*, which does not work out so badly since in sum it is, it is this phallus that is taken in the hand! There is something in the concept that is not unrelated with this announcement, this announcement this prefiguring of an organ that is not yet taken as consistency, but as an appendix and which is fairly well manifest in what prepares man, as we are told...in short, or what

resembles him, what is not far, namely, the monkey (*singe*). The monkey masturbates, it well known! And that is how he resembles man, it is quite certain! In the concept, there is always something of the order of the grimace (*singerie*). The only difference between the monkey and the man, is that the phallus does not consist any less in him in his female aspects than in what are described as male in what he has, a phallus, as I illustrated it by this brief vision earlier, being equivalent to its absence.

Hence the special accent that the speaking being puts on the phallus, in this sense that enjoyment ek-sists in it, that this is the emphasis proper to the Real. The Real, in so far as it ek-sists, namely, the Real (105) as Real, the Real to the power of two. It is all that this speaking being knows about the two, it is the power, or a semblance through which he remains the one, alone. This is what is called being. This from the start, one to the power of two equals one,  $1^2 = 1$ .

There must be a link, since I told you like that, indicated it at one time, there must be a link between that and meaning, in other words that by which one is so well applied to zero. It is Frege who discovered it and I chattered at one time about the difference between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, namely, something which... where there can be seen the difference between zero and one, while suggesting that it is not a difference. There is nothing as good as an empty set to suggest the one.

There you are. So then, how the Symbolic – the Symbolic like that, about which I simply remarked that it has its weight in analytic practice, how the Symbolic, namely, what is ordinarily called blah-blah, or again the Verb, all that is the same, how does it cause meaning? Here is the question that I am only asking you because I have the answer. Is it in the idea of the unconscious? Is that what I have been saying since the first Rome discourse? – Question marks, huh! – It is not in the idea of the unconscious, it is in the idea that the

unconscious ek-sists, written as I write it, namely, that it conditions the Real, the Real of this being that I designate as a speaking being. He names things, as I recalled earlier, here, in connection with this first fooling around of the Bible in the Terrestrial Paradise. He names things for this speaking being, namely, that this being who himself is a kind of animal, but who singularly differs from one. He is only animal in this, because animal means nothing, huh, it means nothing except to characterise the animal by his way of reproducing, sexed or not sexed, an animal is that, it is what reproduces itself.

Only, how is this animal is parasited by the Symbolic, by the blah-blah? Yes, there, it seems to me, it seems to me but it is not very probable, that I distinguish myself from people of the same animal species, who as far as human memory goes, make no mistake, know that they speak but do not pay explicit attention to it. And what shows that they do not pay explicit attention to it, is not, of course, that they have not said it, everything is said in the blah-blah, they do not pay explicit attention to it for this reason: they dream of not being the only ones (*les seuls*). That, that catches them in the gut! Write *laisseuls*, if you wish, to evoke the left alone (*laissés seuls*) in this talk.

(106) In our day, it is manifested like that, by this frantic need to discover language in dolphins, in bees. Anyway! Why not.! It is always a dream! Formerly, it had different forms, which shows clearly that it is always a dream. They dreamt that there is *at least one* God who speaks, and who does not speak especially without that having an effect. Who causes/talks! The unheard of thing is this tangling of paws which means that they absolutely must shore up this God with sub-speakers, angles they are called, I mean by the commentators!

In short there is all the same something more serious, is that not so, which has come from this fact that there is all the same a tiny little advance, not a progress, of course, because there is no reason for

people not continuing to get their paws entangled. The fact is that in linguistics, namely, as regards talking there is all the same distinguished the *giving a name*, *naming*, and *consecrating a thing*, in the name of speech (*parlotte*). You see all the same here that it is distinct from communication. That it is there that speech, properly speaking, is knotted to something of the Real. *Naming* yes! *Naming*. [English] What is the relationship of this *naming*, as the title of a book puts it, with necessity?

The unheard of thing is that for a long time, is that not so, there was someone named Plato who realised that the third was required in it, the third term, of the idea, of the *eidos*, which is all the same a very good Greek word to translate what I call the Imaginary, huh! Because that means image! He very clearly saw that without the *eidos*, there was no chance that names would stick to things. This did not get to the point of him stating the Borromean knot of three, of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary. But it is because chance had not provided him with it. The idea gave, for him, the consistency of the Real. Nevertheless the idea being nothing in his time except the nameable, the result was what was deduced; of course! What was deduced like that, with the university discourse, the realism of the name. It must be said, the realism of the name is worth more than the nominalism of the Real, namely, that the name, well, good God, one can put any one at all on it to designate the Real. Philosophical nominalism, like that, it is not so that I am marking a preference, I note simply that nominalism is an enigma that is tangible in this sense, that it pays homage to the effect of the name on the Real, namely, to what is added to it by the fact of naming it. All nominalism, to distinguish itself from the realism of the name, has founded itself on (107) the Imaginary. The fact is that there is a saying less. One is forbidden to admit this homage, this is found in the prestige of the University, but this does not appear to us, to us analysts, to constitute an advantage. We remain in thought. You will tell me that I am having a good time with it and even to the point that it tires you, but I

do not see why the fact that I have a good time with it, on occasion, should be expressed by anything other than an effort to extricate myself from it. To extricate myself from what is fundamental for thought, namely, what I would call the imbecility typical, typical of the *mens*, of the human mood, with respect to the Real that it nevertheless has to deal with. Hence the urgency that the meaning of this word Real should be discerned.

Up to the present what I said there, in connection with tradition, preserves all its value. There is nothing more negotiable than religion, the 'green pasture' [English], to go here straight to the goal, the at-least-one God, huh, the true about the true, is Him – capital H! Who taught the speaking being to give a name to each thing? The non-dupe of the name of the name of the Name-of-the-Father, the non-dupers without that, for the *siste* or the zest eternity. Hence it results all the same, by standing back a little, that the Real, is what ek-sists with regard to meaning, in so far as I define it by the effect of *lalangue* on the idea, in other words on the imaginary supposed by Plato, in the speaking animal, among others animal-bodies or the devil-in-the-body, as you wish. Because why not like that, since we are dealing with mental deficiency, one mental defective is as good as another, why not Plato? Aristotle who, for his part, argues about the idea of the donkey, in order to say that the donkey is a donkey, and that it is indeed him, and that there is no capital donkey, huh, and well! He also *anistotes!*

The Real must be conceived as what is expelled from meaning. It is the impossible as such. It is the aversion from meaning...it is also, if you wish, the aversion of meaning into anti-meaning and ante-meaning. It is the return shock of the Verb, in so far as the Verb is only there for that. A that (*un ça*) which is not for nothing, if it takes into account what is at stake, namely, the filth from which the world cleanses itself, in principle, if in fact there is a world. That does not mean that it manages to do it! Man is still there. The ek-sistence of



the filthy (*immonde*), namely, of what is not world (*monde*), this is the Real full stop! But it is worthwhile pushing this as far as the elaboration of the quantifier  $\exists$ , there ek-sists an  $x$  such, which rather than an  $x$ , it would be better to say, yes one (*une*)  $x$  in order that she henceforth ek-sists, this one, the ek-sistence as one. This is what (108) we must ask ourselves, it is to what does she ek-sist? She ek-sists with respect to the ideic consistency of the body, that which, reproduces this body, just as Plato situates it very well, according to the formula, now that we are contaminating the idea with the supposed message of genes. It ek-sists with regard to the Symbolic in so far as the Symbolic turn in circles around an inviolable hole, otherwise the knot of three would not be Borromean. Because that is what it means, the Borromean knot, it is that the hole, the hole of the Symbolic is inviolable.

There you are. So then why not write it like this, in the order where it is simplest to write it, the Symbolic, here [VII-1] this is what I make into a ring, there, this Symbolic imposing itself on the Imaginary that I put in green, the colour of hope, huh!

We see how the Real ek-sists there, by no longer being compromised by being knotted with the said Symbolic in particular, any more than the Imaginary does. So there, I showed you while I was at it that whatever may be the meaning, is that not so, into which one turns this Imaginary and this Real, they will cross one another, as it is here flattened out, in a way in any case that will not make a chain. For the indication here, in this form of crossing, is moreover that these two consistencies may be straight lines at infinity; but that what must be

specified, is that however one conceives of this point at infinity, which was dreamt up by Desargues as being specific to the straight line, a straight line that returns from one of its ends to the other, this must be carefully pointed out, that there is in no way a question that it is imagined as folding back on itself, without that which, first passed over, still passing over the other.

So then what we come to is that to demonstrate that the Name-of-the-Father is nothing other than this knot, there is no other way of managing than to suppose them unknotted [on the board]. let us no longer pass the Symbolic in front of the Imaginary. Let us do it like that. Here is what you have then. And then, how knot them? By a ring which knots these three independent consistencies. There is a way which is the one that I call the Name-of-the-Father which is what Freud did. And at the same time I reduce the Name-of-the-Father to

its radical function which is to give a name to things, with all the consequences that this involves, because it does not fail to have consequences! And, up to the day in particular, which I indicated to you earlier.

I already made a drawing for you, a drawing of these four knotted, as such. I even made one that failed. But the big one, the right one, is that one here that I am reproducing for you today but in profile namely, that instead of seeing it vertically, I see it transversely. It is this one, the big circle about which I showed you that by distinguishing these three circles as they are in an armillary sphere, namely, containing one another, one must hook the innermost circle,

pass over the outermost circle, by putting oneself before returning (110) onto the outermost circle within the middle circle. This is what was expressed by the first schema that I gave you.

Who can fail to see that this business leaves us in the three, namely, as one might expect, what is involved in the distinction in the Symbolic of *name-giving* forms part of this Symbolic, as is demonstrated by the fact that the addition of this four is in a way superfluous. Namely, that what you see here in a particularly clear way, I repeated it because here perhaps this does not stand out clearly, is that the Borromean knot is that.

It is that before being flattened out in any way whatsoever. The Borromean knot is what, for two circles that circumscribe one another, introduces this third to penetrate into one of these circles in such a way that the other, as I might say, should with respect to the third be brought into the same relationship as it is with the first circle.

Is there a discernible order here? Is the Borromean knot a whole, a conceivable whole, make no mistake, or indeed does it imply an order? At first approach, one could say that it implies an order in the

case where each of these circles remains coloured, as was very correctly expressed precisely by someone who sent me a text where he uses the word coloured, which means on this occasion that each one remains identified to itself. One could say that if they are coloured, there is an order, that 1, 2, 3, is not 1, 3, 2. The question nevertheless is to be left in suspense. It is perhaps with regard to all the effects of the knot that this order is indifferent: 1, 2, 3, 1, 3, 2, which would put us on the path indeed that they are not to be identified. It was in so far as three making a knot, making a Borromean knot, namely, of which (111) no ring forms a chain at any moment with another of these rings, it is as such that we must support the idea of the Symbolic, of the Imaginary and of the Real. What suggests it to me is what I received from one of those who are interested in the knot, as I said earlier: someone named Michel Thomé sent me a little letter to show me that in a certain figure, a figure that I did not check out and that I never drew here in any case, that in a certain figure, someone who had introduced into the publication of my seminar XX, had made what he calls an error, and an error of perspective. He had highlighted the fact that from one circle to the other of the three the first by being knotted to it, the simplest form of the Borromean knot, was, since I have used this term, the circle folded in two ears. The person who had the goodness to edit me (*m'éditer*, m-apostrophe), the person who had the goodness to edit me, made this error of perspective while keeping the folded form in the same order, [on the board] here corresponding to this, and here corresponding to this, and so on, to consider that the two wings of these two ears simply made two and not to cross them. Hence there results immediately this succession of consequences that Michel Thomé has very clearly seen, namely, that these knots are intertwined and that, as a consequence, [on the board] by cutting the one that here is supposed to hold together the totality of these two buckles, these two ears that I spoke about earlier, would end up with what it is easy to see, this figure here first, indeed those at the extreme end, where one clearly sees that these knots are intertwined.

But that is not all. This is not all for, as Michel Thomé had very well deduced right away, is that there will result a Borromean knot of a special type, which will be such that to limit ourselves here, for example, to four, but you can see that it works just as well with three, since I have pointed it out to you, these two here remain knotted, either this one, or that one, remain knotted; if one sections the third, no need then to put four of them.

(112) To see this, that only the four highlight, the fact is that there is no means of manifesting the Borromean quality of this knot of four for example, except by cutting a single one of them, namely, the one that we can call here the last, as a result of which each of the others will be freed from its follower up to the first. But as one might say, a distinction must be made here, they will not be freed together, they will be freed one after the other. While on the contrary, if you begin to cut the one that I have called the first, all the others up to the last will remain knotted. There is something here that is very interesting to demonstrate something particular about certain knots, that one can call Borromean in one sense but not in the other. Which evokes already the idea of the cycle and of orientation.

I am not insisting because I think that it is really only those who devote themselves to a searching study of this knot, that are likely to take a veritable interest in it.

[On the board] Here I had myself drawn a knot whose only interest is that it cannot be produced from this error of perspective to which Michel Thomé has given its fruitfulness. It is only strictly producible (113) by having been explicitly made, as I might say, by confusing the two buckles which hold on each side the forms of the ears which are the ones that I proposed as the simplest form to generate the Borromean knot. You see it here. Here there could be an external knot, an external ring that would hold these two buckles, these two buckles of ears, why not say it, and so on if you reunite these two knots, these two rings, I already alluded to it at one time, you obtain the following form which is a buckle that is quite distinct from the forms that I will call on this occasion, as I might say *thoméenes*, namely, those that are produced from an error of perspective such as

this one, indeed an error of perspective such as this one which is not the same.

I will not insist and I will pursue what is involved in the Name-of-the-Father to bring it back to its prototype and to say that God, God in the elaboration that we give to this Symbolic, to this Imaginary and to this Real, God is *The* woman made all. I told you, she is not-all. In the

case in which she might ek-sist from a discourse which might not be a semblance, we would have this that I formerly noted for you, such that , the God of castration. This is a wish that comes from the man with a capital M, a wish that there might exist women who would order castration. The trouble is that there are none, that in conformity with what I wrote in a first formulation which was correlative to the not-all, , there does not exist *The* woman, as I said. But the fact that *The* woman does not exist, *The* all-woman does not imply, contrary to Aristotelian logic that there are some who order castration. ‘Protect what is the most loved’, they say, in Rabelais. Naturally, that belongs to the comic, as I told you earlier.

(114) This nevertheless not-all, does not mean that any one of them say the contrary, that there exists an  $x$  of the woman who formulates the ‘do not protect it’; very little for them, the nay-saying. They simply say nothing. They say nothing, except as *The-all* (*La-toute*) which I said earlier was God, *The-all*, if she existed. There are none to carry castration for the Other and this has got to the point that it does not prevent her, as they say, wanting the phallus for herself as I indicated earlier. There is nothing more phallogocentric, as was written somewhere about me, there is nothing more phallogocentric than a woman, except for the fact none *ne-toute* wants the aforesaid phallus. Each of them of course want it, except for the fact that this does not weigh too heavily on them. It is just like what I highlighted in the dream described as that of the butcher’s beautiful wife. She indeed does want some of the smoked salmon as you know on condition of not making use of it. She only gives it in the measure that she does not have it. This is what is called love. It is even the definition that I gave of it, to give what one does not have, is love. It is the love of women, in so far, namely, that it is true that one by one, they ek-sist. They are real and even terribly so, they are even nothing but that. They only consist in so far as the symbolic ek-sists, namely, what I was saying earlier, the unconscious. This indeed is how they ek-sist as symptom, the consistency of which is provoked by this

unconscious, this apparently in the flattened out field of the Real. This is what must be called really, which means, not enough attention is paid to this distinction between the adverb and the adjective, to the way of the Real, but in reality to the way in which there is imagined in the Real. I do not need to redo this schema, I think, in which there is imagined in the Real the effect of the Symbolic. [On the board] This is something all the same that I must draw, yeah! *Voilà*. Here is the symptom, the effect of the Symbolic in so far as it appears in the Real, and even it is in this direction here.

I apologise to Soury who sent me a very beautiful little schema concerning the Borromean knot about which I will not have the time to speak today. I am going all the same to indicate something to him, which is that the two schemas that he sent me precisely involve an orientation, a direction. In other words, that these three essential elements of the Borromean knot are orientated in what I might call a centrifugal way. To which he opposes to me the contrary form, that in which the three are – did I say centrifugal just now? It was a slip – centripetal, to which he opposes me with the centrifugal form. I am (115) pointing out this to him like that in passing, which is that by not identifying, namely, colouring the three rings, by not specifying which is the Symbolic and which is the Real, these knots, very far from being untransformable into one another, are only the same, seen from another side. I ought to add to it the fact that if you make of this the Real, by taking things from the other side, the Real and the Symbolic are inverted, which is not foreseen in his schema. And that leaves nevertheless intact for us the question as to whether, the one that I asked earlier, whether it is indifferent that in this form [VII-4] this form that is not flattened out, that in this form the order ek-sists or does not ek-sist. I am allowing myself to signal to him that there is a distinction between the order of the three terms, the orientation given to each one and the equivalence of the knots.



This having been said, I could and I point out that the idea of supplying for the unreal woman, is not for nothing. That the imbeciles of *L'amour fou* call themselves Surrealists. They were themselves, I should say, symptoms, symptoms of the post-war of 14-18, except for being social symptoms. But it is not said either that what is social is not linked to a knot of resemblance. Their idea then of supplying for the woman who does not ek-sist as *The*, to the woman about whom I said in short that she was the very type of wandering (*l'errance*), put them back into the angle, into the rut of the Name-of-the-Father, of the Father as naming, about whom I said that it was a thing that came out of the Bible, but about which I add that it is for man a way of getting out of the phallic venture without loss.

That a God, good God, as tribal as the others but perhaps used with a greater purity of means, does not prevent the fact that we must touch the weight of it, in the same way as operating with this knot. The fact is that this tribal God, whether it is this one or indeed another, is only the quite useless complement, that is what this expresses, of the conjugation of this knot four to the Symbolic [VII-3]. It is the quite useless complement of the fact that it is the signifier one and without a hole, without a hole that it is permitted to use in the Borromean knot, which, to the body of the man a-sexed in itself, Freud underlines, gives the partner what she is lacking. Which she is lacking how? By the fact that he is, as I might say *aphligé*, *aphligé* to be written like that, really *aphligé* by a phallus which is what prohibits for him the enjoyment of the body of the other. He would need an Other of the Other for the body of the Other should not be for him a semblance, for (116) him not to be so different from animals, of not being able like all sexed animals to make of the female, the God of his life. For the mental of man, namely, the Imaginary, there is the affliction of the phallic Real because of which he does not know how to be anything but the semblance of power. The Real, is meaning in a blank, in other words the blank meaning by which the body pretends (*fait semblant*). A semblance on which there is grounded all discourse, in the first

rank, the discourse of the Master which makes of the phallus the signifier index 1. Which does not prevent that if in the unconscious there were not a crowd of signifier to copulate among one another, to be indexed by flourishing two by two, there would be no chance that the idea of a subject, of a *pathème* of the phallus of which the signifier is the One who essentially divides him, would come to light. Thanks to which he sees that there is unconscious knowledge, namely, unconscious copulation. Hence the crazy idea of making this knowledge a semblance in its turn with respect to what partner? If not the product of what is produced, by a blind copulation, make no mistake, for only signifiers copulate among one another in the unconscious, but the *pathématiques* subjects that result from it in the form of body are led, good God, to do the same, they call that fucking. It is not a bad formula. Because something warned them that they could do no better than to suck the body signified other, other simply because of some writing in a civil register. To enjoy it, what would be called to enjoy it like that, it would have to be torn to pieces, huh! Not that there are not in the other body dispositions for it, like that, being born prematurely, it is not inconceivable. The concept here is not lacking. It is called sadomasochism, I do not know why. But it can only be dreamt from the unconscious naturally since it is the path about which it must be said, about which it must be said that it is a slap in the face to call it royal.

King, another name, another name in the business and about which everyone knows that it always springs from the business of the Name-of-the-Father. But it is a name to lose like the others, to let drop in its perpetuity. The Names-of-the-Father huh! The *Anons* of the Father, what a herd had I not prepared to do it, or to shove their braying back down their throats if I had not done my seminar. I would have *h-uni*, a word that comes from the *hune* woman, some new stupidity. But why these *hanes-à-liste*, a waiting list of course, were queuing at the doors of the *Interfamilial Analytic Association* and Anna was humming/Freuding in the corridor the return to the cradle by making

(117) up for me upper crust motions? I am certainly not insensible to the weariness of ek-sisting (*d'ek-sisterre*) Land (*terre*)! Land! that one always believes one will reach! At last! I have only persevered in my impetus ever since. 'Laurent, bring my hairshirt and my discipline' [Molière], because this one benefits from it.

### **Seminar 8: Tuesday 18 March 1975**

- *Soury, where are you? Good! So then have you distributed them? I saw, huh! Good, you have distributed how many of them?*
- *There are three texts each of 150 copies.*
- *What?*
- *There are three texts with 150 copies each.*
- *Yeah! So nobody has them! That's very annoying! You had told me that you would make...distribute 500?*
- *We can bring more the next time, but there we only brought 150.*
- *Yes, no but it's already very kind of you, I am not reproaching you, it is already very kind of you only, only it is...some people are not going to have it. They are not going to have it moreover uniquely because others have it!*

Good! So then I am forced to say, for those who do not have it, what there is in these papers that Pierre Soury and Michel Thomé have distributed. There is this something that you saw the last time, I cannot say the explanation of, because precisely I did not really explain it, this drawing which, it seems to me, in so far as I know

something about it, which is a discovery, a discovery that Michel Thomé made on a certain figure 6 which is somewhere in my last (120) nseminar, that which is called, which is entitled *Encore*. He made there the discovery of an error, an error in this drawing.

I presume, I cannot say any more about it, I presume that it is a lucky error, *felix culpa*, as they say. It is a fortunate error if it is on the occasion of this error that Michel Thomé – but perhaps he invented it all by himself – invented all by himself what I have indicated – in short, the last time, in one of these pages that I have had stuck to the board – and which demonstrates that there is in short, that it is possible to depict, I am not saying to write, to depict the Borromean knots, in such a way, let us things rapidly, that they only come undone from one end, starting from one end. If – ah! it's not easy! – if we attack any one of them, any one at all of the rings of string that are knotted in a certain way, precisely in a non-Borromean way since if it were Borromean, it would be enough to break any one of them at all for all the others to be immediately independent of one another, while the definition of these knots, of these knots such that they only come undone from one end signifies that in attacking any one whatsoever, it is only in one direction, and not in the other, that all are unknotted, but in the direction where all are unknotted, it is one by one and not immediately that they are unknotted.

I do not know whether it was on the occasion of this error or off his own bat that Michel Thomé made what I called earlier this discovery. He is perhaps there, so let him say it! Is he there?

- You made this discovery on the occasion of the error? It was on the occasion of the error? Yes? It is indeed what I am saying, it is a lucky error! But this proves at least the following, the fact is – I must admit my surprise because I do not get proof of it every day – that I do not speak absolutely without effect. You will tell me that I cannot measure these effects since I am not given any trace of them. But in

short, precisely, it something about which I know thanks to this couple of friends, Soury and Thomé, to have given me a trace of it, it is encouraging all the same! I would like from time to time to have other traces of it! It must be said that people look twice at it before giving it to me, not unreasonably moreover because it might well be that the traces that I collect, are not as solid, are not such well-made knots.

That obviously gives an idea that these knots are something rather (121) original, I would say, with the ambiguity perhaps, I am not sure, of original. What they would confirm, is that it is not so easy to go back, and then, the original does not mean that it is from there that one starts. It is even quite sure that historically well let us say...the Borromean knot was not found under a horses hoof! It was very late when people got interested in it. Let us say that, if in fact I have the shadow of a merit, I do not know what that means moreover, merit, it is that when I got wind of this thing, the Borromean knot – I found that in the notes of a person that I meet from time to time and who had picked it up at Guilbaud's seminar – there is one things certain, it is that I immediately had, in short, the certainty that it was something precious. Precious for me, for what I had to explain.

I immediately related this knot to what from then on, appeared to me like rings of string. Something provided with a particular consistency, that remains to be supported and which was for me recognisable in what I had stated from the start of my teaching. Which, no doubt, I would not have expressed, being little inclined to it by nature, without an appeal, an appeal linked in a more or less contingent way, to let us say a crisis in analytic discourse. It is possible that with time, I would have glimpsed that this crisis all the same would have to be unknotted, but circumstances were required for me to pass into action.

So then, these Borromean knots came to me like a ring on the finger and I immediately knew that this had a relationship that put the

Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real into a certain position with respect to one another, about which the knot encouraged me to state something which, as I already said here, homogenised them. What is meant by homogenised? It is obviously, as Pierre Soury previously remarked in a little note that he communicated to me, because I am very keen to give everyone his due, that they have something similar. As the same Pierre Soury remarked to me ‘between the similar and the same’ – that’s from him – between the similar and the same, there is room for a difference. But it is very precisely in putting the accent on the similar in that that homogenisation consists, the pushing forward of the *homoios* which is not the same, which is similar.

What is similar about them? Well then, this is what I believe I have to (122) designate by the term of consistency, which is already to put forward something unbelievable! What can the consistency of the Imaginary, that of the Symbolic and that of the Real have in common? By this mode, this statement, do I make tangible for you - it seems to me that it is difficult to make it more tangible for you - that the term consistency henceforth belongs to the Imaginary?

Yeah! Here I stop to make a parenthesis designed to show you that the knot is not easy to depict. I am not saying to depict it to *oneself*, because in this business I eliminate completely the subject who is depicting it, since I start from the thesis that the subject is what is determined by the figure in question, determined, not that in any way he is the double of it, but that it is by the squeezing of the knot, of what in the knot determines the triple points from the fact of the tightening of the knot that the subject is conditioned. I am going perhaps later to remind you of this in the form of a drawing on the board. In any case, to depict this knot is not easy. I already gave you the proof in messing about more or less myself with one or other little drawings that I made. In any case the last episode of my relationships with the aforementioned Pierre Soury consists, make no mistake, in something which is certainly very strange, it is that after having

acceded on one occasion to what he had put forward, put forward very correctly, namely, that there was in the Real of the Borromean knot, a Real to which you add the fact that you orientate each of these rings.

To orientate it is a business which only seems to concern each one of the rings. There is supposed to be another way, let us not say of recognising these rings, for recognise would already be to enter into all sorts of implications, let us say differentiating them, which would be to colour them. You clearly sense the whole distance there is between colouring, and this is something that ought to come in at the level where Goethe took up things: but there is not the slightest trace of it in *The theory of colours*, and a level where that by which colour is something which is heavy with differentiation. Obviously, there is a limit, namely, that there are not an infinite number of colours. There are nuances no doubt. But thanks to the colour, there is difference.

I had asked the question at one of my preceding seminars, whether these knots, I had taken one, a bit more complicated than the (123) Borromean knot of three, not that they were not three, but I had asked the question of whether this knot was only one, namely, whether the introduction of differentiation into the knot left the knot not similar, but always the same. It is effectively always the same, but there is only a single way of demonstrating it, which is to demonstrate that in every case – what is meant by ‘case’? – it is reducible to the similar.

This indeed in effect is what happened. In fact I was in effect quite convinced that there is only one coloured knot, but I had a vacillation, which is what I call my last adventure concerning the orientated knot. Because oriented concerns a *yes* or a *no* for each one of these knots and I allowed myself, there, to stray by way of something that stems from the relationship of each one of these *yeses* or *no* with the two others. And for a moment, I said to myself – I did not go as far as to say to myself that there were eight knots, I’m not that stupid!

Namely,  $2 \times 2 \times 2$ , *yes* or *no* x *yes* or *no* x *yes* or *no*. I did not even go so far as to think that there were four of them, but I do not know why I was racking my brain over the fact that there were two of them and it is not all the same something that does not have a bearing. That after having asked in an explicit way, I obtained from Pierre Soury, who, I hope, will distribute it to you the next time, I obtained, am I going to say the demonstration, what I asked for, namely, the showing (*monstration*) that there is only one orientated Borromean knot. The showing in question, that Pierre Soury communicated to me within a time span, as I might say – he is not without merit – he had to [wrestle with it], it is a shaky thing to demonstrate, he provided me in time for me to read it and for me to be quite convinced of it, the showing, not the demonstration, the showing that in terms of orientated knot there is only one, well and truly the same.

The only thing that this leads us to, and here I am challenging him, is the following. It is that this similar he reduces to the same, he can only do it starting from the fact that this something about which I am questioning him on this occasion. It is why it is required for this showing to be depicted, why must it pass by way of what I am calling, and what I already called, my flattening-out of the knot? It is something that deserved to be individualised, this flattening-out. Because, as I think you have already seen by this pencil sketch that I had to make on the board, namely, flattened-out, a perspective pencil sketch, you have indeed been able to see that if this knot is not of its nature a flat knot, far from it, the fact that it has to pass by way of the (124) flattening-out to highlight the sameness of the knot, whatever may be the orientation that you give to each one, which, I already made you sense it, indicated, will evoke that there will be eight of them, I told you that I did not let myself be taken in. But anyway all the same I still got bogged down in thinking that there were two of them. This simply proves the extraordinary debility of thought, at least of mine and in a general fashion that thought, the one that proceeds by way of what I said earlier in terms of a *yes* or a *no*,



thought, must be looked at twice before accepting what must indeed be entitled its verdict.

Is there not, as I might say, a sort of *fatum* of thought which, in attaching it too closely to the true, allows there to slip between its fingers, as I might say, the Real? This indeed is what I brought out the last time by a remark on the concept in so far as the concept is not the same thing as the truth; in so far as the concept is limited to a grasp as the word *capere* implies, and that a grasp is not enough to be sure that it is the Real that one has in one's hand.

There you are! These remarks that I am making to you that you have, I do not know why, the patience to accept, mean that it is impossible for me to warn you at every instant about what I am doing in speaking to you. That I am doing something that concerns you, your presence proves, but that is not enough to say the mode under which this is happening. To say that you comprehend something about it is not even certain, not certain at the level that what I am saying is sustained. But there is something worthwhile and it is indeed because of situating this thing, I am saying it in this way, that we comprehend one another. It is difficult not to sense, in the very text of what is said, in the sense that we comprehend one another has no other substratum than we embrace one another. And I see all the same that this is not quite what we are doing, and that there is here an equivocation, an equivocation which, it must be said, like all equivocations has an aspect of smut, to call things by their name. And what I strive to do, let us say, is to put a bit of humour into the recognition of this smut as a presence. This indeed is what gives its weight to the way I cut the knot in stating this point whose bearing should be clearly specified, that there is no sexual relationship.

What does that mean when I say it? It does not mean that we do not find the sexual relationship at every street corner! And that in (125) highlighting that everything must be re-centred on this scumble,

this stew, to appeal to what! To the Real, to the Real of the knot. Freud obviously did not take a step, a step which moreover consisted, is that not so quite simply in noticing that from all time people spoke about nothing but that, that everything that was done in terms of philosophy oozed the sexual relationship from every pore.

So then, what does it mean when I state that there is no sexual relationship? It is to designate a very local point, to manifest the logic of the relation, to mark that R to designate the relation, or to be put between x and y, is to enter here and now into the operation of writing, and that, as regards what is involved in the sexual relationship, it is strictly impossible to write  $x R y$ , in any way, that no elaboration of the sexual relationship can be made that is logical and at the same time mathematical. This is exactly the accent that I put on this statement *there is no sexual relationship*, and this then is to say that without having recourse to different consistencies – for the moment I am only taking them as consistencies – to these different consistencies which nevertheless are distinguished by being named Imaginary, Symbolic and Real, without the recourse to these consistencies in so far as they are different, there is no possibility of this scumble. That there is no reduction possible of the difference of these consistencies to something that will be simply written in a way that is supported, I mean that resists the test of mathematics and which allows the sexual relationship to be assured.

These modes which are those under which I took the floor, Symbolic Imaginary and Real. I would not say at all that they are obvious (*évidents*). I strive simply to empty them (*les é-vider*), which does not mean the same thing because to empty out is based on a void and that the obvious is based on seeing. Does this mean that I believe in it? I believe in it in the sense that it affects me as a symptom. I already said what the symptom owed to believing in it (*l'y croire*) and what I strive to do, what I try, is to give to this *I believe in it* a different form of credibility. It is certain that I will fail at it. It is not a reason for not

undertaking it, if only to demonstrate something which is the beginning of the impossible, already my impotence.

The knot is supposed by me to be the Real in the fact that it determines as ek-sistence, I mean, in that by which it forces a certain mode of *turning-around*, the mode under which there ek-sists a ring of string with respect to another, it is in this that I have managed to shift the question, insoluble of itself, of objectivity.

(126) This seems to me less silly, objectivity thus shifted seems to me to be less silly than the noumenon; because, try to think a little about what people persisted at for more than two millennia of history the noumenon, conceived in opposition to the phenomenon. It is strictly impossible not to bring out in its connection – but as you are going to see it is in retrospect – not to bring out in its connection the metaphor of the hole. Nothing to say about the noumenon, except that perception has the value of deception. But why here not remark that it is we who say that this perception is deceptive? For perception properly speaking says nothing precisely. It does not say, it is we who make it say, we talk all by ourselves. This indeed is what I am saying, in connection with any saying whatsoever, we lend our voice. The saying is a consequence, it is not the voice, the saying is an act.

So then, if the noumenon is nothing other than what I have stated as a hole, perhaps this hole, by finding it named as such in our Symbolic starting from the topology of the torus, of the torus *qua* distinguished from the sphere by a mode of writing by which there are defined as a matter of fact *homo-* as well as *homeo -*, as well as *auto-morphism*, whose foundation is always the possibility of being founded on what is called a continuous distortion and a distortion which is defined by encountering what creates an obstacle – that is what topology is - to another cord that is supposed to consist, this is what makes the torus, t-o-r-u-s, that I would be happy to call here the tube-torus (*tore-boyau*).

In order to depict for you the torus in a way that may be tangible do  
I...[on the board] Here is a torus [VIII-1], make a hole in it, put in your  
hand and catch what is at the centre, the centre of the torus. That  
leaves like that a feeling of which the least that can be said is that  
there is a discordance between this hand and what it squeezes.

(127) There is a way other than that to show it, which would be to  
suppose another torus inside the torus [VIII-2]. How far can one go  
like that? You must not believe that it is enough here to place another  
inside the second torus, because this would not at all be something  
homogenous despite the appearance given by the cup (*coupe*), that  
would not be something homogenous to what is depicted here.

[On the board] As is clearly demonstrated by the correct way of drawing  
a torus, when one does it in a mathematical way [VIII-3] it would  
have to be another ring placed here [VIII-2] in order for this one to be,  
equivalent to the one that I first cut to give here the figure of the torus.

In short, if these cords supposed to consist give some support to the  
metaphor of the hole, it is only starting from the topology of the torus  
in so far as it elaborates mathematically the difference between an

implicit... topology and a topology which, by being distinguished from it, becomes explicit, namely, the sphere, in so far as every supposition of the Imaginary participates first of all implicitly in this sphere in so far as it radiates. *Let there be light!* That is not a *tube-torus!*

The annoying thing, this is what analysis reveals concerning what is involved in the consistency of the body, it is to the tube that one must come instead of the polyhedrons which occupied the ‘Timaeon’, ‘Timaeic’ imagination throughout the centuries. It is what I earlier called the tube-torus that prevails, and when I say tube-torus, that is (128) not enough, as you see sufficiently from these drawings, it is not enough to orientate things towards the tube, it is as a matter of fact a sphincter.

Here we are then, in what renders more tangible than anything, the relationship of the body to the Imaginary, and what I want to point out to you is the following: can one think the Imaginary, the Imaginary itself in so far as we are caught up in it by our bodies, can one think the Imaginary as imaginary to reduce, as I might say imaginarity or imaginarity, as you wish? One *is* in the Imaginary, that is what must be recalled. However elaborated you makes it, this is what analysis brings you back to; however elaborated you make it, in the Imaginary, you are. There is no way of reducing it in its imaginarity. It is in this that topology takes a step. It allows you to think, but it is a retrospective thought, that aesthetics, that what you sense, in other words, is not in itself, as they say, transcendental, that it is linked to what we can very well conceive of as contingency, namely, that it is this topology that is valid for a body. Again it is not a body all by itself! If there were not the Symbolic and the ek-sistence of the Real, this body would simply have no aesthetics at all, because it would have no tube-torus. The tube-torus, torus with the hyphen as I write it, is a mathematical construction, namely, made of this inek-sistent relationship, *qua* ek-sistent, that there is between the Symbolic and the Real. The notion of knot that I am putting forward can no doubt be

imagined, as I said, be depicted between the Imaginary the Symbolic and the Real, without losing for all that its weight of Real, but precisely why? Because there is an effective knot, namely, that the cords are squeezed, that there are these cases where the ek-sistence, the turning around, no longer happens because of these triple points whose ek-sistence is suppressed. This is what I indicated in telling you that the Real is demonstrated as having no meaning, having no meaning because it begins. Because it begins with what?

[On the board] With the fact that here, if this Real, to indicate it, if this Symbolic to indicate it by a different colour, I make in this way, reducing the place, the one that I indicated as being that of small **o**, I reduce meaning to this triple point that is here. Only this meaning, *qua* vanishing gives meaning to the term of Real. In the same way, here, at this other triple point which is defined by this corner, it is enjoyment *qua* phallic that implies its liaison to the Imaginary as ek-sistence, the Imaginary is the *pas-de-jouissance* (the step/not of enjoyment). Just as for the Symbolic, it is very specifically that there is no Other of the Other which gives it its consistency.

Does that mean that all of these are only models? I already said and put forward, which is no reason for me not to repeat it, that models have recourse as such to the pure Imaginary, the knots have recourse to the Real and take their value from the fact that they have no less bearing in the mental than the Real, even if the mental is Imaginary for the good reason that they have their bearing on the two. Any couple, anything involved in the couple is reduced to the Imaginary. Negation is also a way of acknowledging, *Verneinung*, Freud insists on it from the start, a way of acknowledging where alone, the

acknowledgement is possible because the Imaginary is the place where all truth is stated and a truth denied has just as much Imaginary weight as an acknowledged truth, *Verneinung* as *Bejahung*.

How does it happen, this is the question that I ask in bringing you the answer, that the Real only begins with number 3 (*chiffre 3*)? All Imaginary has something of the 2 involved, as I might say, as a remainder of this 2 effaced from the Real. This indeed is why the 2 ek-sists with respect to the Real, and that it is not out of place to confirm that ek-sistence, namely, what plays on every cord as ek-sistence, has the consistency of the others. That this ek-sistence, namely, this operation, this limited field, where the trajectory or the path as someone said to me recently someone who was speaking to me about this subject, which again is nobody but Soury, that the ek-sistence, the operation of the cord up to the point that something squeezes is indeed the zone where one can say that consistency, the consistency of the Real, namely, what Freud put the accent on, renewed the accent, no doubt using an ancient term, the phallus. But how know what the Mysteries put under this term of phallus? By accentuating it, Freud exhausted himself, but it is in no other way than (130) by its flattening-out. Now, what is at stake is to give its whole weight to this consistency, not simply the ek-sistence of the Real. To name, to name (*nommer*) that moreover you could n-apostrophe-h-o-two ms-e-r, write *n'hommer*. To say is an act; what makes saying an act, is the adding of a dimension, a dimension of flattening-out.

No doubt, in what I encouraged Pierre Soury to share with us just now, namely, his demonstration of the fact that there is only one knot, by taking it as orientated, he distinguishes all sorts of elements that only stem from the flattening-out: the turning over of planes, the turning over of rings, the turning over of bands, indeed internal or external exchanges. These are only, you will read them, at least I hope so, these are only the effects of the flattening-out as regards which it would be well to highlight that there is here only a recourse,

an exemplary recourse to the distance there is between the Real of the knot and this conjunction of domains, the one that is inscribed, that I inscribed here earlier on the board to give weight to meaning. That all of this may illuminate, illuminate in fact the practice of a discourse, of the discourse properly called analytic, is what I will leave you to decide, without making any more concessions today. I acknowledge, I did not make many of them. But consult simply these terms such as the ones that Freud puts forward concerning what he calls identification. I am proposing to you in closing this session today the fact that identification, the triple identification as he puts it forward, I am formulating the way in which I define it: if there is a real Other, it is nowhere else than in the knot itself and that is why there is no Other of the Other. This real Other, make yourselves identify yourself to its Imaginary, you have then the identification of the hysteric to the desire of the Other, the one that is happening here at this central point. Identify yourselves to the Symbolic of the real Other, you have then this identification that I specified as being the *einzigster Zug*, the unary trait. Identify yourselves to the Real of the real Other, you obtain what I indicate as the Name-of-the-Father, and that is where Freud designated what this identification has to do with love.

I will speak the next time about three forms of the Names-of-the-father, those that name as such the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real, for it is in these names themselves that the knot holds up.

**Seminar 9: Tuesday 8 April 1975**



*Voilà!* I am struck by one thing, which is that – nevertheless I searched, I searched for traces, for traces somewhere of what I call cogitation, whose cogitation, I will say later – cogitation remains limed in an Imaginary which is, as I have, let us say, suggested for a long time, the Imaginary of the body. What is cogitated – you must not believe that I put the emphasis on the Symbolic – what is cogitated is in a way, retained by the Imaginary as rooted in the body. Well then, it strikes me not to have, not to be able, in the literature which is not simply philosophical - philosophy is moreover in no way to be distinguished from the artistic, from the literary... I am going to emphasise that progressively, is that not so? And to put my cards immediately on the table, I am going to announce something that I will take up later.

It is hard to imagine, make no mistake, because one must stand back a little it is hard to imagine the degree to which the Imaginary is sticky and has a stickiness that I am right away going to designate, that of the sphere and of the cross. It is fearsome! I have been, in short why not say it, I have been strolling through Joyce because I was requested, like that, to speak at a Joyce congress which should take place in June. I cannot say that it is not imaginable, it is only too imaginable! It is not Joyce who is responsible for it. To be limed like that in this sphere and the cross, one can say that it is because he read a lot of St Thomas. Because that was what was taught in the Jesuits where he received his formation. But it is not only due to that, you are just as limed in the (132) sphere and in the cross. It is there on the little page [IX-1] a circle, a section of a sphere, and then inside the cross. What's more that makes the + sign. You cannot imagine how much you are retained in this circle and in this + sign.

It can happen, is that not so, that by chance an artist, who sticks something in plaster on a wall, makes something that by chance is like that [IX-2]. But nobody notices that this is already the Borromean knot.

Try, like that to tackle it for yourselves. When you see it like that, what do you make of it imaginarily? You make of it two things that hook onto one another and which come back to fold over, this A and this B [IX-3], to fold them over in this way. As a result of which, the circle, the ring, the cycle, I will come back later to what that means, has only to slip over what is thus knotted.

It is not, as I might say, natural, what does natural mean? Once one approaches it, in short, it disappears, but in short, natural to your imagination, it is not natural to do exactly the opposite, namely, to distort the circle, the cycle like that [IX-4], which seems to be dictated for all that, in short, if one (133) makes a simply different use of A and B.. That is a fact, it is a fact of which the least that can be said is that it is curious that I should be interested in the Borromean knot because you can be sure that the Borromean knot is not obligatorily what I have drawn for you a hundred times. Is that not so in fact! That is also a Borromean knot [IX-5], just as valid as that in the form in which I usually flatten it out. It is a true Borromean knot, I mean this one.

Look at it closely, I already said that if I was, like that, gripped one day by the Borromean knot, it is altogether linked to this order of event or advent, as you wish, that is called the analytic discourse, and in so far as I defined it as a social bond emerging in our day. This discourse has a historic value that has to be mapped out. It is true that mine is a weak voice to sustain it, but it is perhaps so much the better because if it were stronger, well then I would perhaps in short have less chance of subsisting. I mean that it seems difficult to me, throughout all history, like that, for the social bonds prevalent up to now not to silence any voice that is designed to sustain a different emerging discourse. This is what has always been seen up to now and it is not because there is no longer the Inquisition that it should be believed that the social links that I defined, the discourse of the master the discourse of the university, indeed the hysterico-diabolic discourse should not stifle, as I might say, whatever voice I may have. This having been said in short, I within this, I am a subject. I am caught up in this business, like that, because I set about existing as an analyst. That does not mean that I believe that I have a mission of truth. There were people like that, in short, in the past, who were crackers. No mission of the truth because the truth, I insist, cannot be said, it can only be half-said. So then let us rejoice that my voice is low....

(134) In every philosophy...Up to the present like that, there is philosophy, the right one, huh, the current one, and then from time to time there are crazy people who precisely believe they have a mission of truth; the whole thing is simply buffoonery! But that I should say so has no importance, luckily for me, I am not believed! Because when all is said and done, believe this for the time being, the right dominates, the right philosophy, it is indeed still there. I made, like that, a little visit during these holidays, as a way of making him a little sign before both of us disintegrate, to someone called Heidegger. In fact I am very fond of him. He is still very stout hearted...There is already something that he is trying to get out of. There is something

in him like a, like a presentiment of *sicanalise*, as Aragon said. But it is only a presentiment because Freud, in short he does not what way to turn when he... it does not interest him.

Nevertheless something emerged through him, through Freud, is that not so? Yes, whose consequences I am drawing out, by weighing it in its effects which are no small thing. But this supposes, this would suppose that the psychoanalyst ek-sists, ek-sists a little bit more. Anyway! He has already begun... there is already that, huh, begun to ek-sist, there, as I write it. But what to do so that the knot to which I have come, there, not of course without getting entangled in it just as much as you, what to do to make him tighten this knot, to the point that the speaking being as I call him, no longer believes, no longer believes what? That outside the being of speaking, he believes in being, huh! Is it too crude to say that it is uniquely because there is the verb to be? No, that is why I said the being of speaking. He believes that because he speaks, well then that is where his salvation lies. It is a track (*erre*) and I would even say a unary track (*trait-une-erre*). Yes! It is thanks to this that what I will call an orientated decoding has prevailed in what is called thought, the thought that is described as human. I am letting myself go like that, something gets into me from time to time, and I would say that this track deserves rather to be pinpointed by the words on the move (*transhumant*), its so called humanity depending only on a naturalness of transit, like that – and what is more, which postulates transcendence...

My success as I might say, which has of course no connotation of a result to my eyes and with good reason... I only believe, like Freud, in the bungled action, but in the bungled action in so far as it is revelatory of the site, of the situation of the *transit* in question, with *transfer* in one's grasp of course, all of that, gives something of the *trans* [trance?]. This *trans* must simply be brought back to its proper (135) measure. My success then, my succession, that's what that means, will it remain in this transitory? Well then this is the best

thing that could happen to it because in any case there is no chance that the *humant-trans* should ever tackle anything whatsoever. So then just as well have an endless peregrination! Simply Freud made the remark that there is perhaps a saying which takes on the validity that I am going to tell you, as only being up to now forbidden (*interdit*). That means to say between, nothing more, between the lines. This is what he called, like that, the repressed. Naturally, I am not going to get up on my high horse. But why, if really as I have just said, there is not, even in people who would be made in a way to meet it, no trace of this Borromean knot, despite what I am telling you, since the sphere and the cross, can be found everywhere, someone might have noticed that this could make a Borromean knot, as I have just explained to you.

Good, as it happens I made this discovery of the Borromean knot, without looking for it of course! It seems to me like that, it must also appear like that to you, of course, that seems to me to be a notable discovery in order to salvage not the air of Freud, a-i-r, but precisely his track (*erre*), what exists of it, which is rigorously a matter of the knot. Good! Now let us pass on to something like that, to get our teeth into – and this [IX-2] is what is important; why the devil did no one draw this plus which consists in writing this sign like that, in the proper way? [IX-4]

There is all the same someone, like that, who one day, you do not remember, of course, because you have not read all of Aragon – who reads the whole of Aragon! – there is a passage in the young Aragon, where he begins to fume, I mean to get heated up, by claiming that at one time...who went so far as to suppress the crossroads, *quadrivii*, he was thinking of autoroutes, because autoroute is a rather funny word huh! What is meant by an auto-route? A road in itself or a road for itself? Anyway, who found this time, there are still a lot of crossroads, a lot of street corners, of course! In short, I do not know what got into him, like that, to think that there would no longer be any

crossroads, that there would always be subterranean passages, that this time deserves a better fate than to remain in general theology? What is curious is that he in no way drew a conclusion. That is the surrealist mode, is that not so? It never culminates in anything. He did not spatialise the Borromean knot in the right way. Thanks to which, is (136) that not so, we are still at being, as Heidegger said to me there, that I was able earlier to extract from his brain, being *in-der-Welt*, at *in-der-Welt-sein*. It is a cosmeticology, which is also cosmeticological. It is a tradition like that, thanks to what? Thanks to this *Welt* there is a *Umwelt* and then there is a *Innenwelt*. This should make you suspicious, this repetition of the bubble (*bulle*) yes I learned that in cartoons it is by bubbles, I had never noticed it, because I should tell the truth, I never look at cartoons. In short I am ashamed, I am ashamed because it is marvellous is it not? They are not even cartoons, they are photo-montages, in short they are sublime! They are photo-montages, and I read in *Nous deux* photo-montages with words! And then thoughts, is when there are bubbles!

I don't know why you are laughing, because for you this is familiar! At least I suppose so because...yes! Does the question I am asking here in the form of this bubble prove that the Real makes up a universe? It is here, the question that I ask, it is one that I asked starting from Freud, in something which is only a beginning, which is that Freud suggested that this universe had a hole. And what is more, a hole that there is no way of knowing. So then I follow the track of this hole, as I might say, and I encounter, it is not I who invented it, I encounter the Borromean knot which, as they always say, fits me like a ring on my finger...here we again have the hole! Only there is all the same something, when one goes ahead like that in following the track of things, which is that one notices that there is not only one thing to make a cycle. It is not obligatorily and only the hole. Yes, if you take two of them, from that, from these cycles, from these things that turn, from this circle in question [IX-2], and if you knot both of them, in the right way...you must not make a mistake of course – and

I must say that I make mistakes all the time, it is not only Jacques-Alain Miller! The proof that...look at that! When I wanted earlier to make the Borromean knot for you, that one there is shocking, I put my foot in it! Because made like that, it is not a Borromean knot.

Namely, that you can always cut one of them, the two others will remain knotted. It's not the right yoke! But in short, provided you fold them in the right way, you notice that if you add this straight line to it [IX-6] nothing more than this straight line, well then! It is a Borromean knot. The straight line, infinite of course as I said, stated

at the beginning of this seminar. That makes a Borromean knot that is just as valid as the one that I usually draw and that I am not going to start on again. If the straight line is an infinite straight line, and how not refer to it as the string in itself, the consistency reduced to the last it has, well then, it makes a knot! Naturally, it is much more convenient for us to close this consistency. I mean to notice that it is enough here to make a buckle to rediscover the familiar knot, the knot in the way in which I usually draw it [IX-6]. What is interesting, is that not so, in representing it in this way, is to notice that starting from there [IX-7], the way, the first, of writing the Borromean knot rebounds on this cycle [IX-6] and that it is one of the ways of showing how the knot can be, as I might say, doubly Borromean, namely, that we pass to the bo-bo knot of four.

(138) There you are! I showed you here [IX-8] another illustration of this knot of four. But the question that this poses is what is the order of equivalence of the straight line [IX-6], of the infinite straight line, as it is there, of the straight line to the cycle? There is someone, a man of genius called Desargues, to whom I made an allusion at one time – in short ‘at one time’, at the time when I made an allusion to him... – to whom the idea came that every straight line, every infinite straight line achieved closure, created a buckle at a point at infinity. How could this idea have come to him? It is an absolutely sublime idea around which I constructed my whole commentary on *las Meninas*, the one about which people say, in short, if we are to believe the hacks, was completely incomprehensible. I do not know. It did not seem to be so to me, at least! What is the equivalence of the straight line to the circle? It is obviously to make a knot. It is a consequence, is it not, of the Borromean knot. It is a recourse to efficiency, to effectiveness, to *Wirklichkeit*.

That is not, that is not the important thing! For if we find them equivalent in efficiency, in the efficiency of the knot, what is the difference? I am not telling you at all that I am satisfied huh! I approach, I approach so painfully, good God, that this will make you suffer, everything that concerns thinking-out-the-Borromean-knot. Because I told you, it is not easy to imagine it, which gives a proper measure of what all thinking (pensation) is, as I might say. It is all the same curious in short that even Descartes, is that not so. His *Regula decima*, namely, the one that I highlighted, even read for you

(139) concerning what is not said literally, concerning the use of thread, the use of weaving, the use of what might have led him to the knot, and to the Borromean knot in particular, he never made anything of it. That he never made anything of it is a sign.



Good! So then the difference? I am not saying that it is my last word, is that not so, the difference is in the passage from the one to the other, and in something that for the moment I content myself with illustrating, with illustrating without doing it in a definitive way. The fact is that between the two, there is an interplay. And since this whole interplay only culminates in their equivalence, it is perhaps in this journey of something which, by being a cycle, buckles a hole. It is perhaps in the interplay of ek-sistence, of the track in short, of the fact that there is an interplay, in short, that this moves, that this opens as they say, that the difference consists, a difference of ek-sistence. One ek-sists, heads off into the track until it only encounters simply consistency, and the other, the other, the cycle, is centred on the hole.

Naturally, no one knows what this hole is. That the hole, should be what the emphasis is put on in the corporal by all analytic thought, well, this rather puts a stopper in the hole! It is not clear. By the fact that it is the orifice on which there is suspended everything that is involved in the pre-Oedipal as they say, that all perversity is orientated, which is that of all our behaviour, integrally, is quite strange! This is not going to illuminate the nature of the hole for us. There is something else like that that might come to mind, which is quite unrepresentable. It is what is called, in short, like that by a name that only dazzles because of language, it is what is called death. Good, that puts no less a stopper in it! Because we do not know what death is.

There is all the same an approach, an approach that is expressed in what mathematics has described as topology which envisages space differently. Note this differently, it is worthwhile remembering it. Well then, one cannot say that this leads us to notions that are all that easy. One sees clearly there the weight of imaginary inertia. Why did geometry find itself so much at ease in what it combines? Is it by adhering to the Imaginary, or is it by a sort of injection of the

Symbolic? This is what would deserve to be posed as a question to a mathematician. In any case, the twisted character of this topology, the (140) establishment of notions like that of neighbourhood, indeed of accumulating point, this emphasis put on something – we see very well what the aspect is - on discontinuity as such, while manifestly there is here a resistance. Continuity is indeed a natural aspect of the imagination.

Good, I am not going to develop this any more. What I note, is that the difficulty of the introduction, like that, of the mental to topology, the fact that it is not more easily thinkable gives a good idea of what there is to be learned from this topology as regards what is involved in our repressed.

The effective difficulty, is that not so, of cogitating about the Borro-knot, here, reduplicated by the fact that the accessibility constituted by this sphere and the cross presents it as an example of a missed *mathesis*, missed inexplicably by a hairs breath, never familiar in any case, why not see in the manifest aversion that this entails, the very trace of this first repression? And why not become engaged along this furrow, just like a dog who picks up a scent? Except for this of course, that the sense of smell is not what characterises us, and that we must take into account this smell effect in the dog. How? This can imitate, imitate a perception effect which would be the supplement for a lack that we must indeed admit if we have, and this is a question, had our eyes opened. If we open our eyes to the ek-sistence of the *Urverdrängt*, of something affirmed by analysis which is that there is a repression that is not simply first but irreducible. This is what we should be following the trace of, and this is in short what I am doing before you in so far as I am able. Naturally, all the same, I take care to tell you that I am not getting up on my high horse, I mean that I do not believe that I have found here the last word, not at all! To think that one has found the last word, would be properly speaking paranoia. Paranoia, is not that, paranoia is being stuck in the

Imaginary. It is the voice that sounds, the look that becomes all-prevailing it is a matter of the congealing of a desire. But in short, all the same that would be paranoia, Freud told us not to worry. I mean to say why not? This could be a vein to follow, huh! There is no need to be so afraid if that leads us somewhere! It is quite clear that this has only ever led to...well to the truth. Which indeed makes it the measure of the truth itself, namely, what the paranoia of President Schreber shows, which is that there is no sexual relationship except (141) with God. It's the truth! And it is indeed what puts in question the ek-sistence of God, we are here in something failed in creation, if I can thus express myself. The saying is to trust something which, probably dupes us. But to not be its dupe is to be nothing other than the first occupant of the non-dupe, in other words what I called the impetus (*erre*). But this impetus is our only chance of really fixing the knot in its existence, because it is only ek-sistence *qua* knot. It is what only ek-sists by being knotted in such a way that it can only be squeezed. Even in confusion! [On the board] What I have not been able to draw for you here is the Borromean knot; it is enough to have one of three. You know, you can very well draw it in a totally confused way, so that you won't hear a peep out of it!

To say that *there is no sexual relationship* starts from the idea of a *phusis*, namely, from something that would make of sex a principle of harmony. Relationship, up to today means for us proportion. The idea that one could reproduce this with words, that words were designed to mean something, that if being is, the result is for example that non-being is not. Yes! There are still people for whom that means something. The Parmenides meaning there, like that, at the origin, has become chit-chat, and that it does not come into anyone's mind that this is not properly speaking a sign that it is only wind, *flatus vocis*! I am not saying at all that they are wrong, quite the contrary, they are precious to me, they prove that meaning goes as far in equivocation as one may desire for my theses, namely, for the analytic discourse. Namely, that starting from meaning there is

enjoyed, *s'oui-je, j'ouisse* myself, *souis-je m'assoter* with words. Naturally, naturally, there is something better. Except for the fact that the better, as popular wisdom has it, is the enemy of the good. Just as surplus enjoying comes from the *père-version*, from the *a-per-(e)-itive* version of enjoying. We can do nothing about it. The speaking being aspires only to the good, as a result of which he plunges always into the worst. That does not mean that he cannot refuse it, huh! Not even me. Here, I am a grain like all of you, ground down in this salad. The trouble is, is that everyone knows that this has good effects...I am talking about analysis! That the good effects only last for a while does not stop it being a respite, and that it is better, make no mistake, than doing nothing. It is a little annoying all the same! It is an annoyance that one can try to go against, despite the current, is that (142) not so. Because it is, despite everything, of a nature to prove the ek-sistence of God himself. Everyone believes in him! I defy each one of you [to show] that I will not prove to him that he believes in the ek-sistence of God! This is even the scandal. The scandal that psychoanalysis alone highlights. It highlights it because at present it is only psychoanalysis that proves it. I am talking about proving it. It is not at all the same as proving to you that you believe in him. Formally, this is only due to Freud's Jewish tradition, which is a literal tradition that links it to science, and at the same time to the Real. This is the cape that must be rounded.

God is Father, hyphen, towards, *père-vers*. This is a fact made obvious by the Jew himself. But we will indeed finish up by, in short I cannot say that I hope for it, I am saying it – by going against this current, we will finish up by inventing something less stereotyped than perversion. This is even the only reason why I am interested in psychoanalysis, I am saying that I am interested and why should I try to do what is currently called galvanising it. But I am not stupid enough to have the least hope of a result that nothing promises and which no doubt has been taken from the wrong end. This thanks to this unbelievable story of Sodom and Gomorrah, huh! There are even

days, when it can come to me that Christian charity is on the path of a perversion that illuminates a little the non-relationship. You can see how far I am going, huh. It is nevertheless not to my inclination, but anyway, make no mistake, we must not exaggerate (*charrier*)...nor be charitable (*chariter*)! There is no chance that we have the key to the road accident which means that sex has ended up by being an illness in the speaking being, and the worst illness, huh! The one by which he is reproduced. It is obvious that it is to the advantage of biology to strive, to become with a slightly different emphasis, 'viology', the 'logy' of violence and to force itself to the side of mouldiness with which the aforesaid speaking being has many analogies. You never know, a lucky encounter! Someone like Francois Jacob is Jew enough to allow the non-relationship to be rectified, which in the present state of knowing can only mean replacing this fundamental disproportion of the aforesaid relationship by a different formula, by something that can only be conceived of as a detour that is destined to err (*erre*), but an error limited by a knot.

Yeah! I would not like all the same to leave you without pointing out something to you, pointing out something which I think is opportune. I think that you have had a pile of little pages distributed, because I (143) have been told so by Michel Thomé and Pierre Soury? Yes! They are little pages that are very important because they demonstrate something, that there is only a single orientated Borromean knot.

There you are! So then, for them I want, like that, because probably they will be the only ones to appreciate it, to point out the following for them, which is that what I contributed today like that – I don't know what I contributed today moreover – what I contributed today, namely, the remark that there is a way of making a cycle with two circles, this remark has consequences as regards their proposal, that there is only one orientated knot. On the fact that there is only one orientated knot when there are three rings of string, but not when there are more, I agree. Nevertheless, there is something amusing, which is

that if you transform one of these rings into an infinite straight line...  
– that was the import of the remark that I had made to them, but,  
against which they were right to hold out – I had made the remark to  
them that it was on the side of this third that there was something that  
seemed to me to require the ek-sistence, not of one knot, but of two  
orientated knots. It is to them that I am addressing myself for the  
moment is that not so, and because of that I am charging them to  
respond to me. I am addressing myself to them. I am not asking a  
question, I am not saying does it not appear to you? I affirm, I affirm  
that if there is one that is transformed into an infinite straight line,  
there is no longer simply one orientated knot, but two. I did not make  
the little drawing of it, but I am going to do so. I am going to do so on  
this last piece of paper that I explicitly left blank, and I am pointing  
out to them that the infinite straight line is not orientatable. From  
where could it be orientated? It is only orientatable, it is obvious, it is  
well known, starting from any chosen point whatsoever on this  
straight line from which orientations diverge. But diverging doesn't  
give it one. So then, with respect...you are going to see that I am  
going to do exactly what should not be done, namely,... Ah! all the  
same, I have managed it. Good. Namely, the following which is that  
by sticking to a simple formulation, let us point out that in the double  
circle [IX-9] there is an orientation, namely, what we will designate  
by the word *gyre* (*gyrie*). Not of course  
that we can say that it is dextro-yratory  
or laevo-yratory, everyone knows that  
now. For with all the time that people  
have been racking their brains to do so,  
it seems all the same, not that it is  
demonstrated, but that one could consider  
that, in short, there were enough clever  
people racking their brains, to do something about which it would be  
conceivable that we should send it as a message to someone who  
is supposed to be on another planet, and who would know the  
distinction between right and left. As regards that, we can admit it, as

we have ended up by admitting it for the squaring of the circle, even though there it has been demonstrated, we can admit that nothing can be done. But to distinguish the gyres as being two, that we can do. We could do it with words in a message for the inhabitants of another planet.

[on the board] It is enough for them to have the notion of a horizon, which gives at the same time that of a plain. If we put just these two circles [IX-10] flattened out, this is what is supposed by the notion of horizon. We can say for example that we define one of them as being further from the point from which we will start on the straight line as a point of view, and that there is something external, which, as you see, because of the straight line highlighted by Soury and Thomé, concerning the knot of these two circles is, from a dextro-gyratory side, if we define dextro-gyratory by the fact that the most external one goes underneath, goes above the band of the circle, of the ring of string, and that there is another which, by this fact, also goes over, because this is how we define the gyre, but it is found to be in a different direction with regard to the circle. This circle [IX-9] has then two orientations, this one and that one, this one dextro-gyratory, that one laevo-gyratory; we are incapable of saying which is dextro, which is (145) laevo, we are incapable of transmitting it in a message. No manipulation of the knot of three – I tried it because I had hoped that the Borromean knot would perhaps give it to us – gives unambiguously the definition of laevo or of dextro. We always find ourselves confronted with the situation of having two gyres, but that to define them by the fact that the most external strip passes over the other strip, and that this is what ought to give the orientation, always fails. Since, as you see there, if we define the fact that the most external strip passes over the other, we find ourselves before an ambiguity, is it this one or that one? On the contrary, the ek-sistence

of two gyres is made manifest by that. There are two gyres, two orientated Borromean knots, not just one, starting from the moment when we made an infinite straight line from one of the three, in so far as the infinite straight line is defined as non-orientatable. Namely, if you want it again, that we have the difference with what quite properly Soury and Thomé reasoned, namely, that there are three centrifugal, we are going to put a little e to say centrifugal, going towards the outside, there are there centripetal, three i's, there can be one i and two e's, one e and two i's.

These diverse specifications are those on which Soury and Thomé depend to demonstrate that there is only a single orientated knot.

If we have one straight line, one bar without orientation, we have then one-zero, one-i, one-e, and it is starting from that that there does not come a similar order, namely, that there is one-without-orientation, one-with-a centrifugal-direction, towards the outside, one-with-a centripetal-direction, towards the inside.

1o	1i	1e
1o	1e	1i

(146) This is of interest, since for their demonstration, they started from the notion of the same, namely, that in all, reducing all the projections, all the flattening-outs that they made, they demonstrated that from these different flattening-outs there resulted the fact that it was the same, it was the same, as I might say, from all the flattened-out points of view. But it is sufficient that one, taken moreover from the knot point of view, should ek-sist, for it to demonstrate the orientations, namely, the Borromean knot *qua* orientated as being two. The knot is certainly not orientated, this from the fact that the three are



so. If one of the three is not so, and it is sufficient for that that it should be coloured which means identical to itself, this makes it comprehensible that there are two of them. Once it is, either coloured or disorientated, what distinguishes it, there were already two provided one is specified. This remark consists in saying that a single coloured knot is sufficient, is sufficient by being equivalent to the fact that one of the knots is not orientated. The word orientatable which is in the dictionary of what was distributed to you is striking. The word orientatable already means that there are two orientations. The knot, certainly, can reabsorb these orientations among themselves, but it does not reabsorb them, once there is carried out on one of the elements of the knot this thing of distinguishing it by the fact that it is not orientatable, namely, that it is transformed into a straight line.

I, do not propose, but I think I have sufficiently indicated what is involved in this knot as doubly orientated, and that it alone is what explains by the rapprochement that I made with the coloured one, that one of these knots should be by the fact of not being orientatable, by this very fact coloured, requires that there are two knots, and that is why the coloured one and the orientated one at the same time, makes (147) two. No doubt Thomé and Soury will think, no doubt it will come to them that the flattening-out here introduces a suspect element. Nevertheless, I point out the following to them, that the same articulations concerning orientation are valid, if we draw these two knots these two circles in the following way, that I believe, that perspective sufficiently indicates and that makes no reference to exteriority of one of the curves, of the one with respect to the curve of the other. There is neither external nor internal with the simple reference to these spatial way of saying, put into three dimensions, by

representing the two circles, the circles that become cycles, already with this way, there is a way to demonstrate that there are two knots, and not a single one orientated, two Borromean knots of three orientated.

There you are, I will stick with that for today.

### **Seminar 10: Tuesday 15 April 1975**

Just like that, I imagined this morning, as I awoke, two little drawings, the two on top [on the board], on the extreme right. I imagined then two little nondescript drawings – you were able to see the difficulty I had in simply reproducing them. It is a matter in these two drawings: [X-1 and 2] those on top, of two triangles, and in addition, two triangles of the most ordinary type, in short, they do not even have curved sides; two triangles that cross over one another.

There is all the same, I think that it will be tangible for you who look at that, as I fabricated it, that there are in twos, those of the left, the red, that is why I put the others in black, which are knotted in a chain, which make just by those two, a chain, which are by this fact, comparable in every way to what I will talk about later, two toruses, one of which would pass through the hole of the other. The two

others are not knotted. They can be pulled apart from one another. It (150) is like a torus that would be flattened out to operate, not at all to be knotted, but to operate in the hole of the other.

The case is the same, that is also why I put them in black, for these two triangles that are drawn underneath, except for the fact that one of these triangles is in sum bent around what is presented as – but of course that means nothing at this level – one of the sides of the other, I am saying side because people imagine that a triangle has three sides.

It is simply to get you into the swing of a geometry, to put you into the dimensions of a geometry that is repugnant for the word geometry; not without reason, because it is not a geometry, it is radically distinct from it. A topology is what, at the start, indicates how what is not knotted two by two can nevertheless make a knot.

We call a Borromean knot what is constituted in such a way that by subtracting one of these elements that I depicted, I say depicted, because it is only a figure, it is not its consistency, for each one of these couples of two that I made, it is enough to break – what is meant by break we will try to say later – that it is enough to break one of these elements in order that all the others should be also unknotted from each of them; and this can be done for as great a number of them as one wishes to state. You know that there is no limit to this stating. It is in that that it seems to me that there can be supported in a sayable (*dicible*) way, a term that I will comment on later, it is in it that there can be supported the term of sexual non-relationship, sexual in so far, I can only repeat, as it is supported essentially by a non-relationship of

the couple. Does the knot as a chain suffice to represent the couple relationship?

(151) At a time when most of you were not at my seminar, since it was a time when I brought out what was involved in demand and desire, I illustrated with two toruses the link to be made between demand and desire, two toruses, namely, two orientatable cycles. I am going all the same to make the two toruses for you or at least to indicate them to you. It is something that begins to be drawn like that.

[On the board] You see, what is more, one gets entangled in it. Obviously, I am not very gifted, but you are no more so than I. Here's how this is drawn, if you want to make something complete. Since I put a wrong line there, I am going to indicate that there is on this torus, this particular torus, something which on its circuit comes to enter into the hole of the other torus. It is by depicting in each one of these toruses something that turns around that I showed what winds around this one, is shifted onto the other by a series of windings around the central hole of the torus. What does that mean if not that demand and desire, for their part, are knotted. They are knotted in the measure that a torus represents a cycle and is therefore orientatable.

You know, because all the same you have heard talk of that, of what constitutes the difference between the sexes, that this is situated at the level of the cell and especially at the level of the cellular nucleus or in the chromosomes which, since they are microscopic, seem to guarantee for us a defined level of the Real. But why the devil should people want what is microscopic to be more real than what is macroscopic! Something usually differentiates the sex which in each

species is situated as male from that which is female, the fact is that in one case, there is a homozygotism, namely, a certain gene which is paired with another gene, without one ever knowing in advance how (152) in each species it is divided up, I mean, whether it is the male or the female that is homozygotic. The difference to the other sex, is that in the other sex, there is a heterozygotism somewhere, namely, that there are two genes which are not paired, pair meaning that they are h-o-m-o, homozygotic, that they are similar.

It is an opportunity to give its whole weight to what André Gide makes great play of in *Paludes*, namely, the famous proverb *Numero deus [sic] impare gaudet*, which he translates by, the number two rejoices at being odd, as I said a long time ago; he is quite right, because nothing would produce this two, if there was not an odd. This odd in so far as it begins at the number three - which, of course, is not immediately seen - and which makes it necessary to display openly more developed knots, specifically what I call the Borromean knot.

With the Borromean knot, what we have within our reach is something that for us is essential, crucial, for our practice and we have no need of a microscope for there to appear the reason, the reason for what I stated as a first truth, namely, that love is *h-a-i-n-a-m-o-r-a-t-i-o-n*, hainamoration. Why love is not the *velle bonum alicui*, as St Augustine states, if the word *bonum* has the slightest support, namely, if it means wellbeing? Not that certainly on occasion love is not preoccupied a little bit, the minimum, with the wellbeing of the other, but it is clear that it only does so up to a certain limit, and I have found nothing better, up to now, than the Borromean knot to represent this limit. To represent it, you should clearly understand that it is not a matter of a figure, of a representation, it is a matter of positing that it is the Real that is at stake, that this limit is only conceivable in the terms of ek-sistence, which for me, in my vocabulary, my own nomination, means the interplay, the interplay permitted to one of the cycles, to one of the consistencies, permitted by the Borromean knot.

Starting from this limit, love persists (*s'obstine*) because there is something of the Real in the affair, love persists, quite contrary to the wellbeing of the other. This indeed is why I called it *hainamoration*, with the substantified vocabulary of the writing with which I support it.

This notion of limit implies then an oscillation, a yes or a no, it is to wish the good of someone or to wish strictly the contrary, it is all the same something which suggests to us the idea of a sinusoid. So then, (153) what is this sinusoid like? If there is a limit, it is a circle. The sinusoid is like this [X-5].

Does this sinusoid wind around? Does it make a knot or not by being wound around or not? This is the question that is posed by the notion of consistency, more nodal, as I might say than that of line, since the knot underlies it. There is no consistency that is not supported by the knot. That is why from the knot the very idea of the Real is dictated. The Real is characterised by being knotted. But still this knot must be made.

The notion of the unconscious is supported by the fact that not only is this knot found to be already made, but it is found made in a different emphasis of the term 'One is made (*on est fait!*)'. One is made by this act X by which the knot is already made. To my mind there is no other possible definition of the unconscious. The unconscious is the Real, I am measuring my terms. If I say it is the Real in so far as it is holed, I advance. I advance a little more than I have the right to, because I am not the only one who says it, who still says it, soon everyone will repeat it and, by being rained on, it will finish up by becoming a very pretty fossil. But meanwhile it's new! But up to the

present, I am the only one who has said that there was no sexual relationship, and that this made a hole at a point of being, of the speaking being. The speaking being is not very widespread, huh! But all the same, it is like mould, it has a tendency to expand. So then, will we content ourselves with saying that the unconscious is the Real in so far as it is afflicted...- You're leaving, you're quite right. How can people put up with what I am telling them! – that the unconscious is the Real, in so far as in the speaking being, it is afflicted by the only thing that makes a hole, which assures us of the hole. This is what I called the Symbolic, by incarnating it in the signifier, of which when all is said and done there is no other definition than that, the hole. The signifier makes a hole.

(154) That is why I am putting forward, I already said it, the knot is not a model. Not alone is what makes the knot not Imaginary, not a representation, but its characteristic is precisely the following, that is why it escapes from being represented, and that I assure you that it is not to make grimaces, that every time I represent one, I put in a wrong line; since I believe I am no less imaginative than anybody else, this demonstrates already the point to which the knot is repugnant to us as a model. There is no affinity between the body and the knot, even if in the body, it plays a damned important function for analysts. The knot is not the model, it is the support. It is not reality, it is the Real. That means that if there is a distinction between the Real and reality, it is the knot, not which gives a model of it, until of course finally, fossilisation arrives, you pass your time making knots between your fingers. It is desirable. That will suggest to you a little more ingenuity.

In bringing back the unconscious to the Symbolic, namely, to what makes a hole from the signifier, I am doing something, my God, that will be judged by its effect, its fruitfulness. This seems to me to be dictated by our very practice, which is far from being able to be content with an obscure reference to instinct, as people persist in

translating the word *Trieb* into English. Instinct at its emergence and which, of course, is immemorial, and how even know what it meant, before Fabre, who only supports it from one thing, how the devil can a little insect know, because we affirm this knowledge from the precision of its gestures, how it must at a particular point of the body of another insect, at a particular joint, and what is more since it is a matter of an insect slipping underneath what is called the carapace and which, of course, is only a figurative mythology because there must be somewhere something to pierce, to reach what, a particular precise point of what we know now comes from the ectoderm, namely, the invaginated part that is called the nervous system and there, breaks something which means that the other insect can be preserved.

What is this knowledge? What interest has it? How is it explicatory to transport it into a behaviour which is like the one that we see in the human being, every day, and who obviously has no instinctual knowledge, who does not see any further than the tip of his nose, but who, for his part also, from a different source, finds himself able to do a lot of things. And specifically, in short, knowing how to make, it is a way of putting it, to say that he knows how to make love is probably (155) very exaggerated. This pushes all the same this idea that I stated, of course, because I for my part take risks like that, that pushes this idea that, the one that I came to, like that in little steps, that the Real is not all (*tout*) and when I say that it is not all, that puts a lot of things in question. At the same time it implies that science, well, only extracts little bits of this Real. That it extracts manifestly up to the present with the idea of the universe, which it seems is indispensable for it but why? So that it can manage to assure, to make sure. Obviously it manages to make some things sure, when there is number, and that is truly what it is all about. How does it happen that language conveys a certain number of numbers so that one finally arrives at qualifying as real number properly ungraspable numbers, that are not otherwise defined, namely, that they are not in the series, that they even cannot be in it, that they are fundamentally excluded



from it. How these numbers one, two, three, four came to peoples' minds says a lot about the subject of knowledge. For my part, I took like that a certain side, pushed by what? I will not say by my experience because an experience only means one thing, namely, that one engages in it, and I do not see why my engagement would be preferable. If I were the only one for example anything I might say would have no import. It is indeed because there is something that I am trying to situate, in the form, in the species of psychoanalytic discourse, namely, that I am not alone in carrying out this experiment, that thanks to the fact that I am like everybody else, I am a speaking being. That thanks to this fact I am led to formulate what can account for this analytic discourse, in a certain way. Good!

There is someone who – this was reported to me – like that, he is a complete bastard; he said that, I do not know, that my theory was dead! It is not as dead as all that, it will indeed end up by becoming so, is that not so, with the crusting over that I spoke about earlier. Meanwhile, this guy who obviously is not of my persuasion, he is one of these guys who talk...who talk like that...they talk...they don't know what they are saying, who talk about psychical reality! Yes! I would not call anything whatsoever by such a name, because the psyche, precisely is what everyone has tried to avoid, it gives rise to incredible difficulties, it involves a world of suppositions, it supposes (156) everything, it supposes God in any case. Where would the soul be if there were no God, and if, what's more, God had not explicitly created us to have one! This cannot be eliminated from any psychology.

What I am doing, at least what I am trying to do, is to talk about an operational reality. Naturally it is much more limited, but that requires, it seems to me, from the fact that the simple word, the blah-blah...the blah-blah of the bastard I mentioned just now, who says that my theory is dead, in short, he literally does not know what he is saying, it means that he is only talking, he is blathering, and I am sure,

that in his analysis that works. That works with a certain limitation, of course, but I am sure that it works, otherwise, he would not continue to be an analyst. Even the word of those who believe in psychical reality works. Yes! Despite you, for you, and this is what, I don't know, I would like a little bit to make you grasp, that for you, for you if simply you experience things a little, the structure of the world (*monde*), if I can express myself thus, to talk about what is filthy (*immonde*), the structure of the world, I would ask you to try to grasp the points, the points where you can grasp that for you the structure of the world consists in putting you off with fine words. And that this is even why the world is more futile, I mean that flees, it is more futile than the Real, this Real that I am trying to suggest to you, in its *dit-mansion*, the dwelling of the said, that I try to get you to grasp by this said of mine, namely, through my saying.

The fuss that is being made about this psychoanalytic business is crazy, and it is badly read. There are very serious people, there are very serious people, who busy themselves with the dreams of animals. They cannot of course, there is no way of knowing whether the animal dreams, I beg your pardon, they cannot of course know whether the animal dreams, but really they know that it has all the appearances of it, is that not so, of the dream. The animal sleeps and then, it is obvious that if he stirs, it is because something is going through him, and since of course, naturally, no one doubts that ideas are images, nothing more, that is even what it means; what is marvellous, is that language is always there as a witness. So then there are images, so he has ideas, which does not mean that he names them. So then, there are guys like that who get excited around the idea that the dream is not there, as Freud said, to protect sleep. The trouble is that Freud did not (157) say that. Sleep in itself can only designate *qua* sleep what is called a need, the need to sleep. What Freud says, is that the dream in the speaking being...because he did not experiment on rats, nor on anything else like that of which we have the proof that it dreams, no one knows whether a fly dreams, nor a rat, one can imagine it because

we are all a bit of a rat from some angle, and in particular we are failures (*raté*)! And the experiments in question are such more than the others, they are ratified, they are Ratmen. In short when one is a man one is inhabited by a lot of Ratmen. In any case we have men who are at the level (*au ras*) of science. Freud said that the dream protects, not the need, but the desire to sleep. It is quite certain that this *dit-mansion* alone adds to this Real like that, this insignificant Real in short, that is supposed to be scientific, where people imagine needs. But on the contrary, if there is one thing that Freud really made us sense, and there we should follow the text, and notice that for his part, he knows what he is saying, which is that the dream protects something that is called a desire. Now a desire is not conceivable without my Borromean knot.

This is simply in short a remark by which I am trying to show that my saying is all the same, for its part, orientated, and to say that what I am saying is only conditioned by the fact that – I would not say that the word acts in the analytic discourse – that only the word acts. *Im anfang war die Tat* as someone or other has said, and he believes that he invented something there! Yes in short, it's not too bad, he thinks that it contradicts *das Wort*, but if there is not *dat Wort* before the *die Tat*, well then, there is no *Tat* at all. While analysis grasps a point, very limited of course, a very limited point where the word has a *Wirklichkeit*. Of course, it does what it can, it perhaps cannot do a lot, but in short it is all the same a fact, a fact that is all the more exemplary, that this gives us the hope of having a little light on something which is manifest, that there is no action that is not rooted – I will not even say in the word, in the *wawah* in *das Wort*, *das Wort* is that, it is to go *ouah-ouah*. Only the unconscious allows it to be seen how there is a knowledge, not in the Real, [but as a support of the Symbolic]. It is already a lot that it should be supported by this Symbolic that I tried to get you to sense as conceivable, not at the limit, but by the limit, as being made up of the consistency required for the hole, and by this fact requiring it. The Symbolic, certainly,

(158) goes round in circles, and it only consists in the hole that it makes. So then everything that has been said about instinct, only means that we had to go towards the Real, towards the supposed Real, that one goes to the Real in order to have a presentiment of the unconscious. And in the sense that the body means consistency, the unconscious gives body to this instinct in a practice. If we want body to mean consistency there is only the unconscious to give body to instinct.

Yes! Of course, why would all this not be a vain debate between specialists, huh! But in short, this supports a saying, a saying which could have consequences, if analysts said something other than tittle-tattle, it's a fact that they say nothing. Have you ever seen something come out of the *Institut psychanalytique de Paris*, for example? Something readable? It's funny all the same, yeah, you will tell me that there is my School. Of course my School, I have just had an experience, like that, in the *Journées* which have even, that's what's marvellous, what is tiredness! Nevertheless I was very happy, I was completely in my element. Everybody said things that proved that I had been read and I could not get over it. Not only which proved that I had been read, but even, faith, that people were able to bring out of it, like that, pseudopodiums which proved that my saying was being extended. Even I mean to the extent of drawing a certain number of consequences and which were no small thing. You must not imagine that because I question them here that they do not react. They react for reasons which stem from the function of saying, which stem from ek-sistence, namely, from the knot, when all is said and done. But it existed bloody well in these *Journées*. I, naturally have a tendency to think that what I am saying, namely, this discourse founded on a hole, the only hole that is certain, the hole constituted by the Symbolic, because there is one thing whose demonstration, everything on the board is designed to demonstrate it, a hole provided it is consistent, that is circumscribed, a hole is sufficient to knot together a strictly indefinite number of consistencies. And this begins with two as is

manifest by this Borromean knot here [IX-2]; that it begins with two guarantees it. That is why the two is only supported by the fundamental hole of the knot. A striking thing, the four [X-6], namely, how it happens that a hole, this one for example, is sufficient (159) to knot together three consistencies that you can make rectilinear – for it is clear that here I can reduce this buckle to be parallel to the one that is here, which on this occasion I designated by a small b.

Why would I give a hole, a hole circumscribed by a consistency this privilege, this privilege of highlighting the first time that the fact that the hole makes a knot is not limited to two. The fact is that the couple, all by itself, is always unknottable, unless it is knotted by the Symbolic.

I had put that forward as I could at one time, I was recently reminded, in what is called my Rome Discourse, the one for which finally I am delaying a repetition of, I spoke about the full word. Obviously, it was not bad, even though what the words were worth does not amount to much namely, as I told the person who was talking to me about it, the full word, if indeed it supports what creates a knot in the *you are my wife*, I all the same showed a little bit, because I said it since, of course, I did not say it right away like that because I had Lagache and Favez-Boutonnier on my back. In short, anyway, you can imagine if I had said *tuer ma femme* huh, like that, yeah! To kill her, yes, good. That would have made a bad impression (*mauvais effet*), and I am all

the same...I look twice at it, I do not lack all common sense, I look twice at it before creating a bad impression. Someone asked me recently in the name of what did the *Jury d'Accueil* (Reception Committee) proceeded in order to stretch its benevolent hand over a certain number of people in the School. It is simply that, they will not (160) make a bad impression, they will not make a bad impression right away - they will do so later when they have got older, and have won a little authority.

Good, well, the couple, of course, was knotable, whatever may have been the full words that founded it. What analysis demonstrates, is that not so, what it demonstrates in a quite tangible way, is that it is knotted despite that. It is knotted by what, huh? By the hole. By the prohibition of incest. Yes, there are not many people who have highlighted that. It must all the same be said, in the Jewish religion, there was a thing all the same that I wanted to tell you like that, in passing – why do the Jews not get a good press huh? Well, I am going to put that in your pocket, it corrects a certain number of things. It is because they are not nice/gentiles (*gentils*). If they were gentiles, well, they would not be Jews would they? That would settle everything! It is the prohibition of incest. There are all the same people who managed to make that emerge in myths, and even, the Hindus are after all really the only ones who said that if one has slept with one's mother you had to go away, I don't know whether it is towards the East or towards the West, I think it is towards the West, towards the West with one's own prick between one's teeth, after having cut it off of course!

Yeah! We will not consider the fact of the prohibition of incest as historical. It is of course historical, but one has to look so much in history that, as you see, I ended up by finding it among the Hindus, and one can say that here one gets hold of one end of it, huh! It is not historical, it is structural. Why is it structural? Because there is the Symbolic. What one must manage to clearly conceive of is that this

prohibition consists in the hole of the Symbolic. There must be something of the Symbolic for there to appear individualised in the knot this something that I, I do not so much call the Oedipus complex, it is not so complex as all that. I call that the Name of the Father. Which means nothing but the Father as Name, which means nothing at the start, not simply the father as name, but the father as naming. There, one cannot say that in this regard the Jews are not nice huh! They really did explain to us what the Father was, the Father that they call, the Father that they stick into a point of the hole that one cannot even imagine, *I am what I am*, that is a hole, no! Well! It is from (161) there, that by an inverse movement, for a hole, if you can believe my little schemas, the hole whirls around, or rather it gulps down, huh, then there are moments when it spits out again. It spits out what? The Name. It is the Father as Name.

Obviously one must have all the same a little idea of what that involves, namely, that the prohibition of incest, is propagated. It is propagated on the side of castration, like the other gentiles, in short here the Greeks showed us all the same in a certain number of myths, namely, where they made a genealogy uniquely founded on the Father. Uranus, Chronus, and so on and so forth, until the moment when Zeus after having made a lot of love, faints, faints before what, before a breath. There is all the same a further step to be taken otherwise we comprehend nothing about the link of this castration with the prohibition of incest. It is to see that the link is what I call the sexual non-relationship.

When I say the Name-of-the-Father, that means that there can be like in the Borromean knot an indefinite number of them. That is the core point. It is that this indefinite number in so far as they are knotted everything rests on one. On one, *qua* hole it communicates its consistency to all the others, hence the fact that, you understand, the year when I wanted to speak about the Names-of-the-Father, I would all the same have spoken about a few more than two or three, huh!

And what upset that would have caused among analysts, if they had had in short, a whole series of Names-of-the-Father! You can well imagine that I could not have stated an indefinite number of them. A little bit more than the two or three that I had prepared, I am quite satisfied all the same to let them high and dry, namely, to have never taken up these Names-of-the-Father, except, like last year, in the form of the *Non-dupes*, the *Nons-dupes-qui-z'errent*. Obviously, they cannot but err because the more of them there are, the more they will become entangled, and I am certainly very happy to have not brought out a single one.

But, this indeed is why I found myself at the end of these *Journées* having to answer for something that naturally no one had paid attention to in the School, namely, as to what constituted what is called a *cartel*. Why a *cartel*? This is the question that I asked, and – to which miraculously I obtained indicative responses, pseudopodiums as I said earlier, things that made a little bit of a knot, is that not so! (162) Why did I posit very precisely that a cartel starts from three plus-one person, which in principle makes four and gave as a maximum this five, thanks to which that gives six. Does that mean that I think that like the Borromean knot, there are three that must incarnate the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. After all the question could be put, I might be crazy! Have you heard tell, I asked the question yesterday, at the *Journées* because I wanted above all to receive, to instruct myself, have you heard tell of identification? Identification in Freud is quite simply inspired. What I want is what? The identification to the group. Because it is certain that human beings identify to a group. When they do not identify to a group, they're finished and should be locked up. But I am not saying by this to what point of the group they must be identified. The start of any social knot is constituted, I am saying, by the sexual non-relationship as a hole, not of two, at least three, and what I mean, is that even if you are only three, that will give four. The plus-one person will be there, even if you are only three, as is very precisely shown by this



schema here [IX-7], this giving the example of the fact that this will make a Borromean knot [X-7] if one started from the idea of the cycle, as it is made from two knotted [X-6] even if you were only three, that will make four, hence my expression plus-one. And it is by withdrawing a real one that the group will be unknotted. For this you must be able to withdraw a real one to give the proof that the knot is Borromean and that it is indeed the three minimal consistencies that constitute it. In the three, one never knows which of the three is real, (163) and that indeed is why there must be four, because the four is what in this double buckle [IX-7] supports the Symbolic by what in effect it is made up of, namely, the Name-of-the-Father. Nomination is the only thing about which we can be sure that it makes a hole. And that is why in the cartel I gave this number four as giving the minimum, not without considering that one can all the same have a little bit of slack about what ek-sists and perhaps one day, why not next year, at the rate I am persisting, I will try all the same to show you what all the same the Names-of-the-father...if I couple this Name-of-the-Father to the Symbolic, to make of it the plus-one, by which there is manifestly assured...while here [On the board, IX-2], with three there is something that is not seen right away in the fact that neither *a* nor *b* cross over the hole and make a chain. When there are two of them [IX-6] one sees that even with one it does not cross any of the two holes, that the hole is between the two. That indeed is why the couple does not exist. But perhaps we can specify that there is only after all the Symbolic which has the privilege of the Names-of-the-father, that it is not obligatory that it should be to the hole in the Symbolic that nomination should be joined. I will indicate it next year.

But to come back from this, because I want to end on something which has substance, did not Freud state properly that in identification, he said, nobody sees its support, namely, its import. There is no love except from the identification brought to bear on this fourth term, namely, the Name-of-the-Father. Is it not strange that he only states three identifications for us, and that in this three there is

everything you need to read my Borromean knot. Namely, that he goes as far as to designate properly consistency as such, in so far as in this knot, it is everywhere. Whether it makes a hole or not, consistency is the basis namely, you see, the *triskel*, namely, this [X-7] for example because I only have the example of it there, the *triskel* which is not a knot. It is only inscribed from consistency, he called that the unary trait, one could not say better! Which is a component of the knot, not without having got the idea that there is only love, I would say, because of the fact that the Name-of-the-Father makes a buckle between the three, makes a buckle of the three of the *triskel*. This term *triskel*, I think that it perhaps means something to a certain number of you. It is strictly that, in so far as extended you see what in (164) it? Three batons (*fusils*) which make a bundle, that support one another in 3's, this is what as you know perhaps, and this is where the name comes from, the Bretons took up to make up their coat of arms, the coat of arms of modern Brittany.

That gets us away from the cross, there is already that in short. Yeah! Apart from the fact that one can say that the cross of Lorraine, in its way if it is drawn in the correct way also makes a *triskel*. And what did Freud add to it? He added minimal identification to it in order that this term of identification is supported with respect to the Borromean knot.

I repeat for you, precisely, [On the board] that it is in so far as the Name-of-the-Father is what makes a knot here, and it is a matter of the *triskel*, the Name- of-the-Father, here, makes a knot of the *triskel*, it is in so far then as the *triskel* ek-sists that there can be identification, identification to what? To that which in the Borromean knot, I remind you, in every Borromean knot, I remind you... There, you see, here is my *triskel* here in every Borromean knot it constitutes the heart, the

centre of the knot. And where did I mark for you that already desire was situated, the desire which is also a possibility of identification? It is here, namely, there, where I situated for you the place of the **o**-object as being the one that dominates what Freud makes the third possibility of identification, the desire of the hysteric.