

Virginia Hasenbalg-Corabianu (VHC), Henri Cesbron-Lavau (HCL), and Jorge Cacho (JC)

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MARC DARMON

**In the penultimate lesson of *Encore*, Lacan inaugurates
a new discourse with knots.**

What is at stake in this break?

VHC: ...the summer seminar where Dugowson was a guest speaker, a real mathematician (laughs), someone who does fundamental research in mathematics and who talked about Lacanian spaces. The ALI website has the presentation he gave, and I was invited by Pierre-Christophe Cathelineau, and Marc was there too, to discuss it. Imagine the task of discussing it with a great mathematician! And I saw the ferment, how do you say it? How Marc and Pierre-Christophe were concerned about having to discuss with a mathematician who was talking about Lacanian spaces. We had the text of what he was going to tell us, and it was important for me, and I think for all of us, to see Marc and Pierre-Christophe's concerns, to take things from the right angle, to take what Henri said earlier, that is, can this mathematician talk about a Lacanian space? Does he say in mathematics...because it's very flattering that there's a mathematician who's taking Lacan's words and giving them a space and a place within mathematics. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case, in that what he was saying didn't fit with Lacan's theory, and more than that, the importance of this matter, at least for me and a few others, allowed us to grasp this passage, and Marc speaks well of rupture. That's the term, right? Rupture, in Lacan's work, in his theory, in this passage from the schema of sexuation to the Borromean knot. And Pierre-Christophe, his text is also on the ALI website, the way in which he very elegantly introduced and at the same time, in the positive sense of the term, criticized Dugowson's theory, this passage, then, from the schema of sexuation where we have become accustomed to we understand this necessity of at least one, which in the Borromean knot will occupy another place. That is to say, there is this break with the notion of the One, so I asked Marc, we would like Marc to talk about this break in Lacan's theory and its clinical implications, of course.

MD: Thank you, Virginia... So, to illustrate this break you just mentioned, I have chosen to comment on the lesson of May 15, 1973, from *Encore*, that is, the penultimate lesson in which Lacan truly introduced knots. He had already spoken of the Borromean knot in the previous seminar... or worse, if you remember, with the sentence: "I ask you to refuse what I offer you because it is not that." So, it is through a knot of language that plays on a certain syntactic structure that Lacan uses the knot for the first time, first trying to formalize this sentence, if you remember, with a graph.

So, he moves from the graph to the node, when commenting on this sentence, that sentence, or each part of a sentence: *I ask you what to refuse*, what? *What I offer you...* relies both on the Other and on the three. And this interplay between each piece, or rather, each sentence, highlights a gap. The "that's not it" is never that, pointing not

a being, nor a substance, but a hole. A hole in the object a. At the very end of the seminar Encore, Lacan returns to this discovery of the knot. If you read this lesson, there is still no mention of the knot as RSI, as the Borromean knot of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary; it is not yet designated as such, but it is a knot of language. So, "mathematical formalization," he says, "is our goal, our ideal. Why? Because only it is 'mathème,' that is, capable of being transmitted in its entirety. Mathematical formalization is writing, and that is where I will try to move forward today."

So, "mathematical formalization, our goal, our ideal." That is a strong and emphatic statement. Do you agree with it? Can you say today that "mathematical formalization is our goal, our ideal"? There is no unanimity...

(Laughter)

Comments from the audience: ...Not really!

MD: ...or at least there is eloquent unanimity.

Another comment: ...Perhaps without our knowledge...

MD: ...And yet, I clearly read this sentence, both in Miller's version and in ours: "Mathematical formalization, our goal, our ideal. Why?" Ah! Why? "Because only it is 'mathème,' that is, capable of being transmitted in its entirety. Mathematical formalization is writing, and that is where I will try to move forward today." So, he is telling us something here, that only mathematical formalization can be transmitted in its entirety and that it is written. And so, it is in writing that Lacan inaugurates this new discourse, as we might say with Rimbaud, "this new love," the knot, the Borromean knot, or the knot in general.

VHC: A small remark: you repeat this interesting sentence, but we immediately think of what cannot be written. That is to say, that is our ideal, it is the written word. Does the ideal necessarily pass through what is written? And what cannot be written... is not an ideal.

MD: So, Lacan specifies that, also in this lesson, he reminds us that there is no metalanguage. And that, indeed, this writing, this mathematical formalization, could be seen as a metalanguage.

VHC: Yes, that's right.

MD: But there is no metalanguage, in the sense that it allows for complete transmission, but it is necessary to talk about it. That is to say, if we don't talk about it, this writing remains a dead letter, so we have to say it, we have to say it for it to work. In that sense, there is no metalanguage, because the Symbolic includes this existence of saying, which, although it can be written, does exist, this writing.

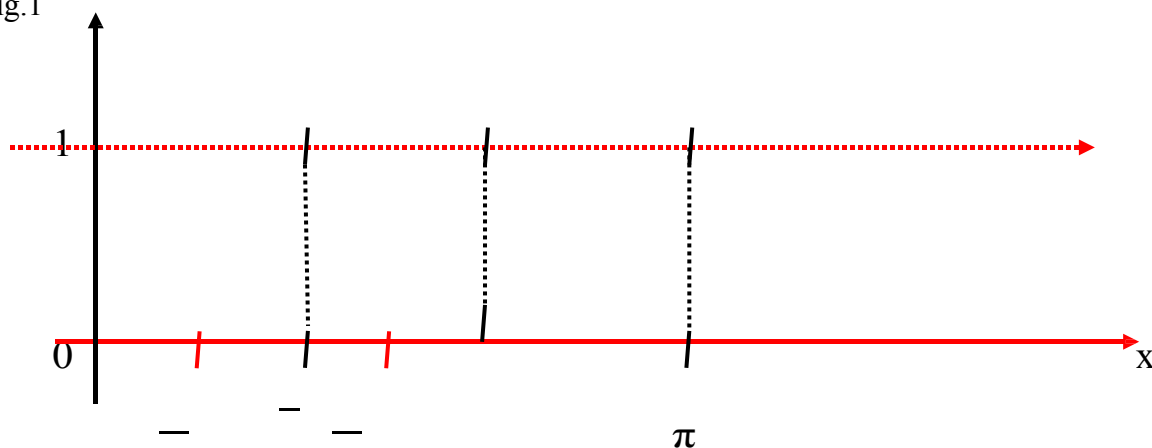
VHC: Yes, that's the point.

MD: Okay, I'll move on. "Writing is a trace where an effect of language can be read. When you scribble something down, and I certainly don't refrain from doing so myself, it's how I prepare what I have to say, and it's remarkable that writing is necessary to ensure this. It is not metalanguage, although it can be made to fulfill a function that resembles it, but it remains nonetheless secondary in relation to the Other, where language is inscribed as truth. For nothing I could write on the board, no general formulas linking energy to matter at the point where we are now, such as Heisenberg's latest formulas, which Henri has just told us about, nothing will hold up if I don't back it up with words, which are those of language, and with a practice that is that of people who give orders in the name of a certain knowledge."

So, "when I doodle [he says], we are immediately immersed in the history of dimensions. Since what cuts a line is a point, and a point has zero dimensions, the line will be defined as having one dimension; since what cuts a line is a surface, the surface will be defined as having two dimensions; since what cuts a surface is space, space will have three dimensions."

So, you see, he's wondering about the act of scribbling, of writing, and it's on a page with lines. So here we are, immersed in the history of dimensions, and what comes to him? It's dimensions as cuts. What Henri did earlier is very useful for understanding what this is all about:

Fig.1



You can see that in the graph he has drawn for us at the bottom, the real number $\sqrt{2}$ is a point that breaks up the set of rational numbers. In other words, depending on your point of view, it is either a hole in the set of rational numbers or a point.

"What cuts a line is the point, the point has zero dimension." So, the shift that Lacan makes in this lesson, and which is confirmed by the comment he makes a few months later. A few months later, because it is October 22, it is a lesson from May 15, 1973, and on October 22, he says, at Miller's request for comment, he replies: "It is remarkable that a figure as simple as the Borromean knot is not used as a starting point for topology." This is the sentence that Dugowson had highlighted in his work:

"There are indeed several ways to approach space. Capturing it through the notion of dimension, that is, through division, is the characterization of a sawing technique.

She will reflect on the notion of a point, which is simply to describe something that has, to put it plainly, zero dimensions. In other words, something that does not exist. On the contrary, starting with the loops of string, the result is a jam, as if the intersection of two continuities were stopping a third. Don't we feel, don't we sense, that this jam could constitute the starting point of a topology?

So, a few months later, he returns to this lesson and what strikes him about it is that... no, it's that there is ultimately no introduction to the knot, which is what happens in the lesson, through the cut, through considerations about the cut. But that, unlike this saw technique, which defines the point by cutting the line, the line by cutting the surface, the surface by cutting the space... In the saw technique... The knot substitutes, presents the point as a jam. Do you see the difference?

The point as a junction, that is, at an abstract point, at zero dimension, a break in the line, he contrasts the junction point, how does he put it? "which results from the intersection of two continuities, which halt a third." Of two continuities, he does not say "consistency." But this justifies Henri's approach earlier, when he spoke to us about consistency through continuity.

An audience member: *So does it exist, since others do not exist?*

MD: It exists, the point exists, this jamming. It exists, since it manifests itself in the Real. It manifests itself in the Real as a stopping point, as a jamming point; we cannot go any further. So, I'll resume the lesson.

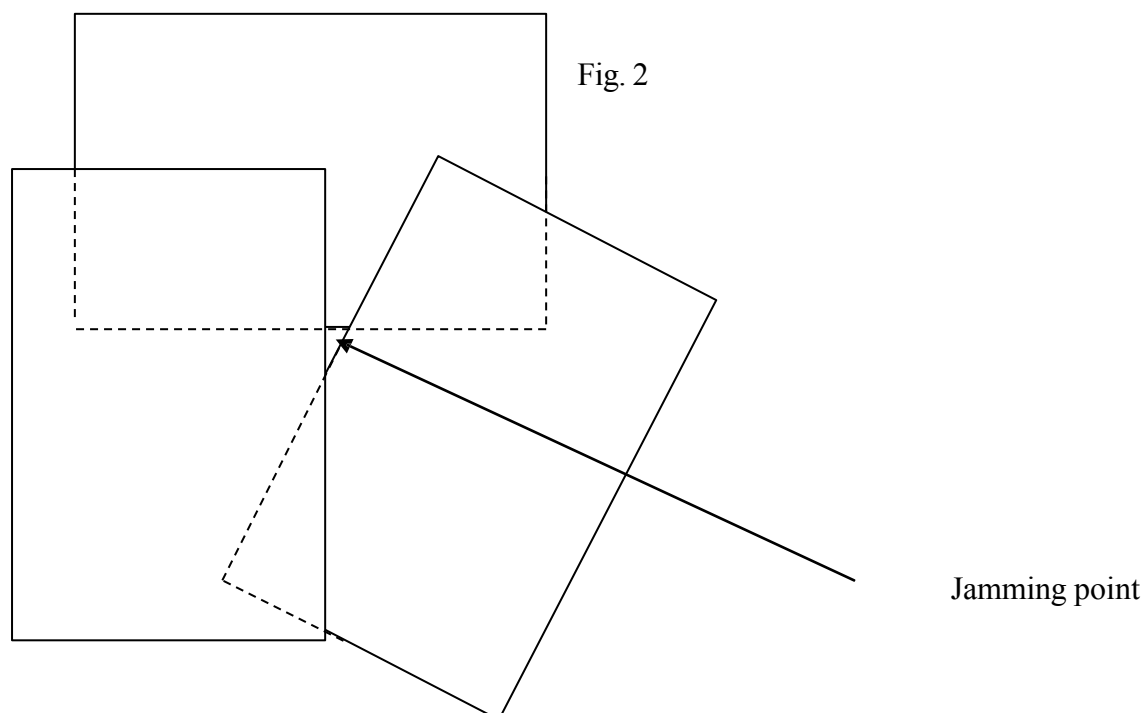
An audience member: *It is at the intersection of three surfaces.*

MD: It is at the jamming of three continuities. So, in terms of surfaces, Lacan has already presented it that way. It can also be three straight lines.

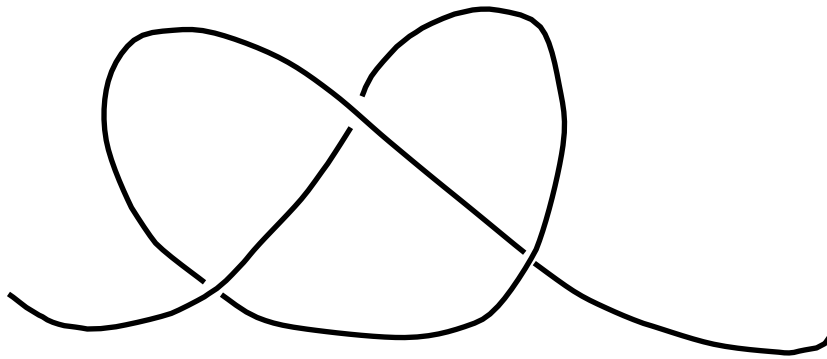
Same listener: *Two stop a third? What does "stop" mean here?*

MD: Stop!

(Laughter) [HCL illustrates this point with three sheets of paper:]



MD: So there you have it: an evocation of writing, of his literary text, which defines writing as precipitation and writing of the line, and Lacan draws a first knot, with a line: fig. 3.



There you go, it looks like a letter, but it's a knot, because of the passages above and below, which are indicated by a break in the line, a break in the line that indicates that although this writing is done on a surface, it is a flattening and that when the line stops, it does not mean that it is actually cut off, but that it passes underneath.

So, I would point out that when we draw a knot, the simplest of knots, there is an effect that should be emphasized, which is that there is an anticipation. That is to say, when we begin to draw the knot, we interrupt here. Why do we pause at the beginning? It is to allow the line that will complete the sign, complete the knot, to pass over it.

So, in the very drawing of the knot, there is this effect of anticipation and aftereffect that is familiar to us when we look closely at language and the signifying chain. In the signifying chain, there is this effect of anticipation and feedback, which we find simply in the drawing of the knot.

So, I'll read you a sentence at the end of page 204.

"This line is quite different from the definition we gave earlier in terms of space, that is, in short, a cut that creates a hole, an interior and an exterior of the line."

You see, "it's still something different from what I said earlier." "A cut that creates a hole, an interior and an exterior to the line."

"This other line, this string as I called it, is not so easily embodied in space. The proof is that the ideal string, the simplest one, would be a torus. And it took us a very long time to realize, thanks to topology, that what is enclosed in a torus is something that has absolutely nothing to do with what is enclosed in a bubble." Okay?

...That is to say, the space delimited by the torus, the space inside the torus, has completely different topological properties than the space enclosed in a sphere. And it took us a long time, he said, to realize this.

"It's not a matter of cutting the torus, because no matter what you do with the surface of a torus, you won't make a knot." Well... what do you think of that sentence? "It's not a matter of cutting the torus, because no matter what you do with the surface of a torus, you won't make a knot."

An audience member: It's not on the surface that you have to work to make a knot, it's not on the surface.

MD: But Lacan says: "Whatever you do with the surface of a torus, you won't make a knot."

An audience member: You can't work on a hole...

A listener: It's a break with identification; it's the whole topology that brings it to the torus in identification. Here, there is a real break with this sentence in the way he seeks to make the knot in the seminar on Identification, by making a cut... the torus of desire, the torus of demand, and the cuts he tries to make on the surface and the knots he tries to make. Here, with this sentence, there is a break.

MD: Yes, that's very perceptive, but it's the same mistake that Lacan makes in Identification, he makes it here.

VHC: Meaning?

MD: That is to say, to say that with the cut of the torus, of the surface of the torus, you cannot make a knot. And in Identification, as you noticed, Lacan talks about knots. There is a passage where he talks to us about knots, and he tells us that on the surface of a torus, you cannot make a knot.

VHC: Is that a mistake?

MD: It is a mistake, yes. You know very well that since he came back to this in his last seminars, he cut out tori to make knots, etc.

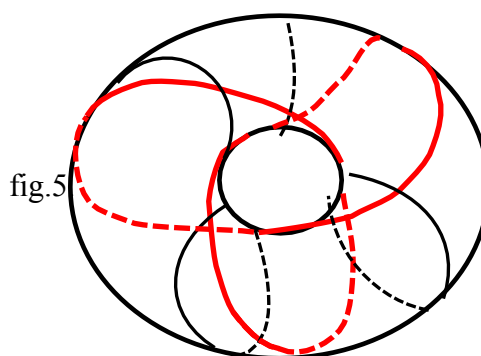
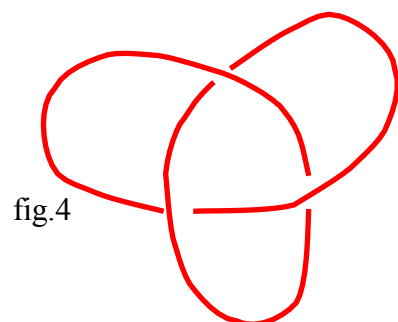
An audience member: In The Failure?

MD: In Failure, I think, yes.

VHC: He managed to cut out the inner eight.

MD: Yes, we'll talk about that if we have time...

Here is a trefoil knot, which is inscribed on the surface of the torus and can cut it by forming a knot:



I remember that very well, because a long time ago I commented on this lesson from Identification on knots. Blindly repeating Lacan's phrase "you can't tie a knot on a torus," someone who had followed the last seminars showed me this figure. That is to say, Lacan returned to this story to try to make the connection between his topology of surfaces and his topology of knots. But, indeed, as you say, it is indeed a break that he points out here. That is to say, he leaves the topology of surfaces, which will leave traces, as we will see in the lesson, for that of knots.

I continue... "but on the other hand, with the place of the torus, like this, you can make a knot. That is why, allow me to say to you: 'the torus is reason! It is what allows the knot.' " And he draws us the clover knot, saying: "This knot that I mentioned the other day as the trinity. One and three, a single throw."

An audience member: Is there such a discontinuity, insofar as we can say that a node is the edge of a surface?

MD: Yes, that is what Lacan will exploit in his later seminars, namely the knot as the edge of the surface, and that is what will appear a few moments later in this lesson when Lacan constructs what is called the knot of fantasy. But what he highlights here, and what he will comment on a few months later, is an opposition between a topology of cutting, between a logic of sawing and castration, and a completely different way of approaching space, which is wedging. But of course, this break is barely visible in the lesson; it is affirmed in the commentary on the lesson.

VHC: It's not in the ALI version. It's in Miller's version.

MD: Yes, since it's a response to a question from Miller when he was writing the lesson text. So, I will skip the presentation of the Borromean knot, which you know by heart. Lacan presents this Borromean knot and generalizes the Borromean property to chains, even infinite chains. That is to say, he presents the Borromean knot as something that can be made with this 1, which is the circle, the circle of string, which we are going to fold like an ear, he says, and we are going to fold inside our circle, and inside a third one. This is the process of making the Borromean knot that is described in this lesson.

Fig. 6.



MD: (aside) Can you pass me another coin?

VHC: Another one? Here you

go... Laughter

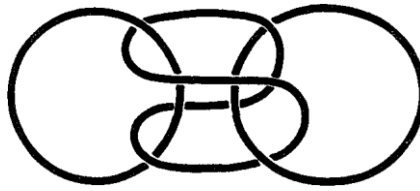


Fig.7.

MD: So, it's clear that instead of the third loop, which completes the three-loop Borromean knot, we can add another loop, which we can close with a loop if we want, and we'll have a four-loop knot. And we can continue like this indefinitely, and we can even make sure that...

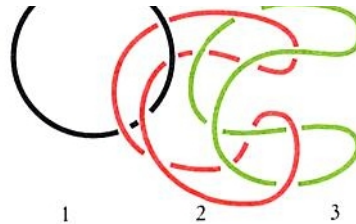


Fig.8.

VHC: *Would you like a circle, perhaps?*

MD: No, no... Another ear... So, instead of tying this knot, for example, at 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, for example, a circle, we can make the knot come back on itself and the same circle that was used at the beginning to fold the first ear comes to take the last ear, and we have a chain, you see, a Borromean chain made with ears. A necklace of ears!

Laughter.

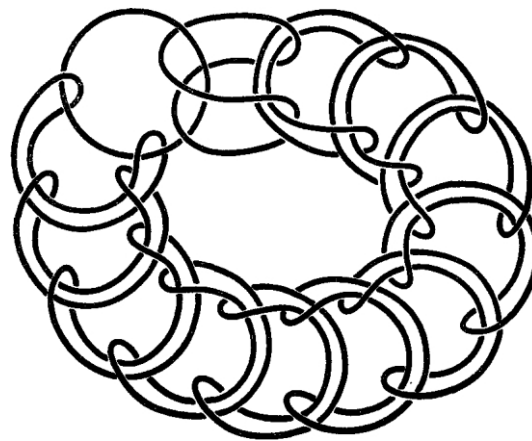


Fig. 7.

VHC: *A necklace of analysts!*

MD: Analysts, of course! And wrapped around the ring that was used to bend the first ear. So, there's one of the rings that plays a special role, if you like. It's at least one...

VHC: *The founder!*

MD: ...who made the chain possible.

HCL: *Which in this case is represented by your finger.*

MD: That's right, it's me!

Laughter

An audience member: Is it the "at least one" or is it the other one?

MD: It's the at least one circle, which is different from the others. Something that appears in this very simple node is that we can easily replace this circle with an ear. In this case, the trace of this at least one disappears. That is to say, everyone goes, everyone...

VHC: Wait, can we close it with the white? MD:

Yes, wait, wait. I'll do it. *VHC: Do we have to open it?*

MD: Yes, you have to open it... wait, I'll do it like this... *VHC: No, you can't...*

MD: Yes, you have to.

VHC: But how do you do it then?

MD: You close it there...

VHC: If I close it like it was before. There! Like that! MD: No, no! It's easy to get tangled up with these things! *VHC: You have to open it anyway, since the principle is...*

You have to close it and open it and then... You create an ear...

No!

You have to catch it in the loop at the start. Has it already gone through the other loop?

General hubbub

Can there only be ears?

It's not an ear.

VHC: Ah, and you attach it there, okay, wait. No, but we have to see if we make a slip of the tongue!

MD: You see, this last loop will take the shape of an ear, it's not tied, so it's a circle. There's still a circle.

VHC: We can see the difficulty!

MD: Anyway!

(Laughter)

MD: You have the drawing on page 214!

VHC: Is that what we're supposed to end up with?

MD: That's pretty much what we need to achieve.

VHC: But that's three.

MD: Yes, but with three or an infinite number, it's the same thing. It's a three-way knot that isn't the classic Borromean knot.

VHC: But you can't flatten it like the other one?

MD: Yes.

VHC: Because flattening this one gives you the classic knot. The three ears.

MD: One of the flattened versions. The simplest flattened version. That is, the one with the fewest crossing points. Well, anyway...

(Laughter)

VHC: There's a problem there, though.

MD: There's no problem, it just shows that when you start messing around with knots, you go crazy!

(Laughter)

HCL: That's why you're encouraged to do it! (Laughs)

VHC: At the end of the year, I'm not telling you! (Laughs)

MD: In other words, it's not that we become stupid, but rather that we demonstrate our imaginary stupidity. That is to say, how much the Imaginary masks this very simple topology. You see, these are elementary things.

Well, there you go, well done!

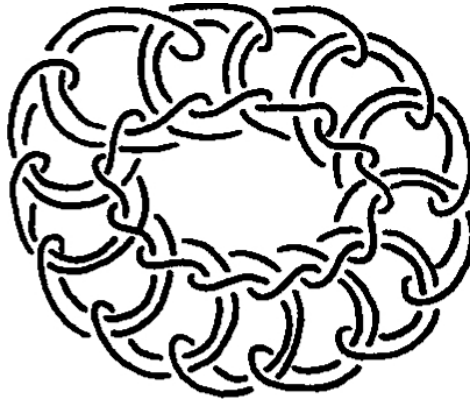


Fig. 8.

VHC: But you did it earlier!

MD: Oh, really? Was that me?

VHC: You did it earlier, yes.

MD: He looks fine...

HCL: We needed a woman!

VHC: At least one!...

(Laughter)

MD: ...We need to confirm that. Very well. So, the circle that plays a special role disappears. Its trace disappears, and each circle will play the role of at least one for the others, since it only takes cutting one, any one, for the knot to come undone.

As I said earlier, we are not yet talking about the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary; we will be talking about that in the next seminar. What are we dealing with in these knots? As we saw earlier, it is essentially a knot of language. It served to formalize the sentence: "I ask you to refuse what I offer you, because it's not that..." So, we thought a lot about "because that's not it," "because it's not that"... Lacan says: "because that, that's not it"!

(Laughter)

...At least, if I believe the transcript, that is. And precisely, I don't remember who was talking to me about the topology of surfaces in Identification, but to give a topology, we could say a refined one, in relation to that of surfaces. That is to say, we move from cutting to wedging and from surface to line. Lacan gives us an example that he will take up in his commentary on the question from Miller: it is

the homogenization of two circles of the Borromean knot: that is to say, if we connect two of the circles of the Borromean knot, then I'm not going to repeat the series of drawings he makes, but I'm simply going to do this... So this continuity of the Borromean chain, of the Borromean interlacing, will produce a knot, or rather a chain... he calls chains "knots" at that time, where we will find, let me put it this way. We will find the writing of the subject on the one hand, and that of the object on the other.



Fig. 9.

VHC: Here? In what you just did there?

MD: Yes, but that is to say... on page 123 of Miller's edition, there is a commentary on what he does on page 211 of our edition.

VHC: Only 211, there isn't a circle denying the inner void, is that right?

MD: Yes, that's right, on page 211, the drawing is introduced by the following sentence: "I think I have said enough about the symmetry of the relationship between the first and second, since I have called the last one the third. This symmetry still holds (well, here he was manipulating the three-part knot made with one ear and two circles, so he explains that each of the circles can take the place of the second one, can form an ear)... this symmetry still holds if you unify the third circle with either of the other two." This is the homogenization from earlier, you unify. "You will then simply have a figure like this one, the one that faces a simple circle with what I called the inner eight."

Unfortunately, in our edition, we only drew the "inner eight," and we should have drawn this last diagram that you see on the board. "That is to say, a figure that confronts a simple circle with what I call the inner eight. So you will have had the disappearance of the other, but at the cost of the emergence of something that is the inner eight, and which, as you know... The disappearance of the other, that is to say, of the third..."

VHC: You mean the other one, right?

MD: The other one, yes, the third one, I won't specify. But, "at the cost of the resurgence of something." So, resurgence... what is that? (laughs) "Something that is the inner eight and which, as you know, is what I support in Moebius's band. In other words, in what, in strict support of this path that I am trying to pave for you from the function of the knot, is expressed by the inner eight. I mean...", excuse me, his wording is a little confusing... "I can only begin here, why? Because I have put forward something here that seems to me to be crucial before I leave you."

So, he stops there, because he is going to talk about something crucial, but he picks up the thread here, in Miller's edition, that we must... That we must keep deep in our... You cut out the useful pages!

(Laughter)... which comment

on...! VHC: ...to complete!

(Laughter)

MD: So, the sign of the object *a*, that is, the disc, is the sign of, he says, the subject, that is, the inner eight. With this possibility of inversion, that is, the eight can become a circle, and the circle can become an eight. That is, with this reversibility of subject and object in fantasy.

*VHC: That's what he said before, "the reciprocity, to put it bluntly, between the subject and the object *a* is total."*

MD: That's right, "For every speaking being, the cause of their desire is strictly equivalent, in terms of structure, if I may say so, to its fold, to what I have called the division of the subject. And this is what we have been explaining for as long as the subject could believe that the world knew as much as he did, that it is symmetrical, that the world, what I called last time 'thinking', is the equivalent, the mirror image of thought. This is precisely why the subject, insofar as it fantasizes, until the advent of the most modern science, there was nothing but fantasy in terms of knowledge.

VHC: That's to illustrate what you were saying.

MD: Not only to illustrate, but the structure of what he has just stated is manifested in this structure of reversibility. Whereas there is no symmetry...

HCL: The reference to cross-cap, for example, is that what you're talking about?

MD: Yes, yes, absolutely. So, before moving on to the next sentence, if you would kindly save your questions for later... there, I lost my place... Wait, wait, I need to find it again... Yes, so there is no symmetry, it's not two linked circles. There is reversibility, but reversibility in a system where each element takes on a particular form. It's true that we can give symmetry to this chain. There is a perfectly symmetrical representation of this chain.

So who has a question about the cross-cap, the division of the cross-cap? Indeed, at a time when I was looking for a little consistency in Lacan's various formalizations, I wondered why the circles were put in continuity, and why the third one was left as it was, and whether this could be justified by a reference to the cutting of the cross-cap.

In diagram *R*, do you remember diagram *R*? You spread out the cross-cap with the Moebius strip and then the disc. To read this diagram properly, you have to imagine that this triangle, the Symbolic triangle, has the Imaginary triangle as its reverse.

VHC: Reverse, you say?

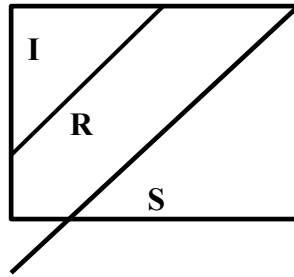


Fig. 10 (diagram R)

MD: It's the reverse. And the Real is the Moebius strip, which is also the break. That is to say, in this R diagram you have a double-sided disc, one side consisting of the Symbolic and the other of the Imaginary, but with the Real forming the break in the Moebius strip, and the whole forming the cross-cap.

So, I thought that we could justify the continuity of two of the circles by the fact that in the cross-cap, as Lacan presents it in his writings in the form of the R diagram, there was, in a way, the Imaginary, which constitutes the other side of the Symbolic, just as there was a relationship like that between the two sides of the disc and the cut of the Real. My hypothesis was that this continuity between two elements, assuming that it was already an RSI, was justified by the previous topology, and that it established a certain coherence, a thread between the topology of surfaces and that of knots. The passage that Lacan was keen to mention before the end of the seminar, and which forced him to interrupt his explanation of the knot of fantasy, is a reference, a connection between this Borromean knot made by a series of folded circles and what happens in language. He takes psychosis as an example, with these interrupted sentences that Schreber describes, reports... these interrupted sentences: "now I'm going to..."; "as for you, you must...". These interrupted sentences, which I have called "code messages," these interrupted sentences leave some kind of substance hanging in the air. What can this requirement of a sentence, whatever it may be, which is such that by cutting off the One, that is to say, by removing one of each of its links, all the others are freed at the same time, tell us? Is this not, in the end, the best support we can give to what I have called mathematical language? The characteristic of mathematical language, once it is sufficiently tightened in terms of its requirements for pure demonstration, is precisely this: that everything that comes before it, not so much in spoken commentary as in the handling of letters, assumes that it is enough for one to fail for everything else, all the rest of the other letters, not only constitute nothing valid in their arrangement, but also disperse. And it is precisely in this that the Borromean knot can serve as the best metaphor for what is at stake in this requirement: that we proceed only from the One."

So, this extremely interesting phrase, a phrase that Jean-Claude Milner used, in my opinion incorrectly, in his book L'Œuvre claire, and then this phrase is very enlightening in terms of clinical practice, since he takes as an example... Lacan says, "It's a better metaphor." He talks about the knot as a better metaphor; he's not yet talking about the knot as the Real, that is, as not being a model. And a better metaphor than what? Than the metaphor he has used until now of

"signifying chain," because Lacan has been using this term for a long time.

"Signifying chain." But here, it adds to this metaphor of the "signifying chain" a feature specific to the Borromean knot: when one of the knots breaks, the chain no longer holds. The illustration is Schreber's interrupted sentences, that is, the dissociation between coded messages and message codes. The revival of this distinction was supported by the logic of the graph at the time of the first seminars. Here, you see, the one who plays the role of the Name of the Father has the role of holding the entire signifying chain together. With this contribution that I pointed out to you earlier, it is that this One, let's call it the Name of the Father, can be well located, like this circle that has this privileged role, but it can also be, one might say... scattered throughout the chain. That is to say, it is the Borromean property of the entire chain that manifests this Name of the Father, without this Name of the Father being localized, defined, identified, etc. These are things that, in my opinion, are not without interest for clinical practice. So, I will end here for this introductory lesson on knots, new discourse.

VHC: And just one question regarding what follows, on one less. Because it is from there that he will introduce the function of the other, the big other, and he will arrive at what Pierre-Christophe commented on when he addressed this at the summer seminar, as being for him the key point. You've arrived at the question of the Name of the Father, which is: how do we move from the at least one as being well located to the Name of the Father to each of the circles that make up the chain. But there...

MD: In the nodality of this chain.

VHC: Yes, so he will of course talk about something that concerns the relationship between man and woman and how a woman, the one in question, from the angle of "the one less." That is to say, it is not a One who leaves and causes the chain to collapse, but a woman, precisely as a One, a One, who will be taken into account as being less. What the Other, the big Other, is "one less," without that being the consequence of what you just told us! That's the question, of course. Concerning the question of the feminine.

MD: It's the question of sexual relations and femininity. So, it's a way of revisiting what Lacan developed throughout the seminar Encore with the knot. So how do you understand "the one less"?

*VHC: Listen, I have to tell you that I'm starting to take a serious interest in the question, because from the moment it became clear to me, in my journey, and it was very powerful, the way you criticized Dugowson. And Pierre-Christophe insisted on this dimension of "the one less." That is to say, it's not the "at least one" that we might be tempted to think, because that's the trap, the "at least one" refers to the schema of sexuation, or something that we already sense is imaginary. And here, what does that mean? Lacan talks about the object *a*, how the big Other is constituted by the object *a*, it's something we hear when we work, *S* of big *A* barré, and I think the *S* of big *A* barré, and that's what he's alluding to?*

MD: But how, what is the connection... how do you see it?

VHC: I'll answer you separately. There's a quote from Lacan that I haven't been able to find, but it's there somewhere: "The first thing a woman must learn, he says, is to keep quiet."

MB: Well, I'm sorry for trying to get you to talk!

(Laughter)

VHC: So, I'll answer you with Lacan's injunction, but the question is: should women leave, shut up, make room for all these... so that some can chain themselves to a concept that can only be defined in terms of a phallic function or castration that operates in an integral way? I am defining a virile position here. Behind this question is: how can a woman position herself in a way that is relevant in speech, as a woman? It's a rather broad question...

HCL: Yes, I would like to thank Marc, because what interested me greatly was the return to the question of language. That is to say, the knot came to Lacan through his work on language. This is very, very important, because it allows us, since it is his cradle, so to speak, to subsequently work on the question of the relationship between the knot and language. So, I have a question to ask that anticipates a little bit the work I am planning to do this year, and since we are lucky to have you here this morning, Marc, it is to ask you: in the analyst's work, there is this work of nodality, of denodality, that is to say, that what happens to us happens in a very confused way, to use imaginary terms, and that there is, it seems to me, and you have already mentioned this, a whole period of the treatment in which this nodality is unraveled, so that the patient, like the analyst, even if they don't draw pictures of it, can identify how it all fits together, the issue in question, the patient. So my question is, at a certain point, is there a surgical procedure, that is, a possible transformation of the knot, since I believe that is the only possible means... Is this a moment that you identify in clinical practice, and is it desirable or not, because it can also correspond to decompensation or other difficult things... How do you articulate this time of unfolding and this possible time of structural change, because that's what it would correspond to? Do you work with that, or do you...?

MD: That's a question I addressed in a previous conference...

HCL: Yes, yes, you talked about it

MD: ...that I... It's a question that still preoccupies me, and I think it will for a long time. That is to say, to what extent would there be two different stages of analytical work... A stage that you call unfolding, I call disentangling.

You'll have to wait...

(Laughter)

VHC: Yes, it makes some people laugh.

(Laughter)

MB: ...and which consists of undoing what I have called false knots, false passages above/below. Passages above/below that add to it, in a way, but which can get stuck...very, very permanently. So, there is this work that does not transform the structure of the knot, that does not transform the structure of the knot, but makes it more and more obvious. So, is that what analysis is? Is it that once we have reduced the false knots, the false jams, well, ciao, deal with it yourself, with your knot...Can it go further? Can it go further in certain cases, for certain knots? We're not going to call them subjects or patients, we're going to call them "knots." That is to say, to the extent that... does that then change the knot? Well, I think, insofar as someone embarks on this somewhat crazy adventure of psychoanalysis, the analyst is part of the knot. It is precisely because the analyst is part of the knot that these operations of unfolding and unraveling can take place, which can take... Lacan says it, "the place of the symptom." So, based on that, can surgery be performed? That is the whole question of the seminar The Synthome. That is to say, starting from a knot, can surgery be performed, with expertise, to hold a pseudo-Borromean knot or something similar? So, I tend to believe that in relation to the duration of treatment for psychotic patients, or so-called psychotic patients, because what does "psychotic" mean in this context? It is certainly not the psychiatric meaning, since the analyst is part of the symptom. So, the duration of treatment, which is very often indefinite or infinite in cases of psychosis, may lead us to think that surgery is at work.

VHC: Meaning?

MB: It means that there has been a...

VHC: Is at work... that is, in the treatment?

MB: In the treatment, that is to say, there has been a kind of repair of the knot, that bad term "repair," Lacan used it... repair of the knot...

VHC: Through presence... with presence?

MB: Through presence or through the operation in which the analyst is one of the elements of the knot. That's a little bit how I see things.

An audience member: And why "surgery"? Why use that word, which implies cutting, rather than "jamming," as you used earlier?

VHC: Splicing...

MD: Yes, you're right, it comes from the side of the cut.

Listener: There are prosthetic surgeries. There are prosthetic surgeries. There's an ambiguity there.

Another listener: Because there are both. Because there are both: there is cutting and there is linking.

MD: That is to say, the term "surgery" comes from mathematics. That's where it comes from. We talk about "knot surgery" in knot mathematics.

HCL: Not castration?

MD: That also comes from Freud. Freud said that analysis has more to do with surgery than with the rest of medicine. But it's a... in the case I'm describing, it's orthopedic surgery. So, well... those are hypotheses... I...

HCL: In this case, the surgeon is the patient.

No, but what I mean is that the analyst has to hold his place in the loop.

MD: That is to say, there is only one node. Only one node.

An audience member: Why do you say that it's the length of the treatments that demonstrates this, when in the end it may happen very quickly, this... this, um...

MD: This repair...

Same listener: This introduction into the node in a way, and then it stays that way.

MD: Yes, but that remains the case as long as the link is maintained.

Same listener: Yes, yes, yes, but that doesn't prove that this surgery will take place at some point in the future, or that it has been prepared and everything... I mean, the cure doesn't prove that.

No, it's not once and for all.

HCL: Maybe that's how long it takes the analyst to wonder about the duration and the reason why.

MD: No, but in relation to, in relation to... in relation to the situation before the transference, before the

VHC: Yes, that's right, it's the situation of transference...

MD: ...the transference. There is a change that persists... as long as the transference link persists. So often, often it's not easy. But...

Listener: I wanted to say that, basically, the surgery would be to show that it is possible to extract the analyst. That would be the surgery.

MD: No, I mean... Yes, I mean that in this case, imagining that there is, that there is, that there is a change in the patient's node...

Same listener: That's what I thought...

MD: But I don't know if we can reason in... an essentialist way with the patient's knot. I believe that the knot only reveals itself under transference. And as for what happens to the knot before or after... I imagine that transfers are formed in a wild way, or in an... unenlightened way. The encounter, the encounter with a father, in the psychotic, isn't that a kind of surgery? Is something that was more or less holding together before, the encounter with a father...

A listener: ...Fracture

MD: Operate!... a break in the knot or... well. You see how we are stammering.

Another listener: Allouch's hypothesis would apparently be the encounter of a psychotic with two peers and a non-psychotic.

MD: That sounds very scholarly to me! Yes, he's referring to...

Same listener: Between a psychotic and a fourth...

MD: He refers to... He refers to the knot of the symptom. Lacan evokes the four-way knot, made up of a three-way knot. Is that right? Indeed, Lacan seems to ask himself such questions, asking his audience whether he was not in the process of raving! Huh? There was that passage, that "you may think I am raving." When he talks about a case with three personalities, a fourth would be knotted, symptomatic, and neurotic. Yes, it's not... it's an example where Lacan follows the logic of the knot he implements. He follows it rigorously and almost blindly. That is to say, once it's in place, what are the logical consequences, what can we say about it? Even if it means saying things that seem a little crazy to the uninitiated? It would take three, two fathers and one, and a third...

Auditor: That's Allouch's thesis, saying that on Aimée it was that... MD: On

Aimée, on Aimée. Yes, yes. I do have some reservations, though... HCL: Well,

I think we can thank Marc!

Applause.

HCL: Yes, and I invite Marc to tell us too, yes, you can thank him... Applause.

HCL: To tell us a few words about the seminar you're leading this year, on Tuesdays, with Pierre-Christophe.

MD: It will be on the second Tuesday of the month, so it's a seminar on the clinical consequences of knot topology. So topology in general. That is to say, Pierre-Christophe Cathelineau, Jean-Jacques Tizler, and I have decided to hold a joint seminar. That is to say, the topology workshop that I have been leading for several years and the Cordoba group will be working together...

HCL: Tie ourselves together!

MD: That's right, with a view to preparing for the topology conference in early May. I mean... so the different groups, including yours, will participate in this preparatory work. That is to say, all the study groups on topology... on my theme or on topology from a psychoanalytic perspective are invited to prepare something, with, if possible, a process of knotting between the different members of the group and then the different groups...

HCL: Very well. Thank you very much...