

Lesson XIII

April 21, 1988

We are made in such a way that we repress things, and that each of us has thoughts and emotions that do not reach us, that do not have access to our consciousness. At the same time, we have a definition of consciousness—not a neurological definition, but a psychoanalytic one—because we could say that, after all, consciousness is what we are able to assume as the self. In other words, since the psychoanalytic "I" is not the place from which we are able to speak as we please, according to our will—it is the place of the subject of the unconscious—consciousness, therefore, is everything that can be assumed by the ego, which is the only instance from which we are able to speak to our neighbor by assuming it, by saying "I am the one saying this." If a slip of the tongue slips into this "I am the one saying this," then we are not obliged to acknowledge this "I" that is speaking; we can declare ourselves not responsible. The question that arises for us with this introduction, with this way of approaching the question of repression, concerns what can assure us of ownership—I mean, what we own—of what is repressed. How is it ours, since, precisely, it is only in the form of denial that this will be most clearly articulated? What can assure us of our ownership of what is repressed and also of its reality? Does what is repressed belong to reality, since the only thing that guarantees any reality whatsoever necessarily passes through intersubjectivity, that is, recognition by another person? There is no reality that you can somehow defend or uphold on your own. Reality is only that which has been stamped by at least one partner—it can be a delusion shared by two—but the very fact that there are two is what gives this delusion its consistency, its reality, its particular strength, since there is someone willing to participate in it, to recognize it.

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This introduction also leads to a reflection on confession, since, if you want to acknowledge the reality of what is repressed, there must be at least one person who recognizes it as such, and since it is repressed, this recognition generally takes the form of confession. If I ask you about the status of the repressed, regarding the question of who owns it, is it real? What is the reality? Another question immediately arises: is the repressed real? Is it really the truth, or is it an artifact, dross, nothing at all? What, after all, gives you the right to locate any truth precisely on the side of what you have taken care, even unconsciously, to reject? All of this, in a way, brings us back to the requirement—pointed out by Lacan—of the modern requirement of confession. For it to fall within the realm of attributable property and truth, what has been repressed must therefore be confessed. And here we come to what is indeed this modern demand for confession, since, as you know, evidence in criminal matters is subject to this requirement, which always seems strange to us. Why do we need someone to confess, with all the consequences that entails, even though, very often, this confession may be perfectly factual—how many confessions are completely "bogus" and then cause a lot of embarrassment for judges, since there are probably as many false confessions as there are true ones... but that doesn't matter. In making this

introduction concerning the strangeness of our status, the strangeness of the status of the repressed—and you see, all the questions that arise in passing: who owns it, does it have any reality, is it true, why do we wait, demand, call for confession so that what is repressed can be authenticated, even in therapy, why does the patient have to confess it, not to expect any kind of condemnation, but to expect some kind of progress, for the better? It occurred to me that ultimately the question of confession, if I am not mistaken, because it is a text that I have not reread for a long time — wrongly, I'm sure — is completely marginal in the Old Testament. Since it is a matter of testing, attesting, testifying—you may contradict me later, those who wish to do so, if necessary—but I do not remember that, in the Old Testament, confession—and, for that matter, repression—play a significant role. In these books, the nature of the creature is described — in the Old Testament — as it appears, that is to say, jealous, rapacious, criminal, deceitful, thieving, wicked, lustful, etc., without us seeing any of them seeking to defend themselves first and without any

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confession, that is, an acknowledgment of turpitude—since turpitude exists—without this requirement for confession being the slightest decisive factor in any reversal of the situation, nor offering the slightest relief. Perhaps—as I was just mentioning—this may ultimately explain the lack of interest in psychoanalysis among followers of the Old Testament. As you know, there is a certain antipathy, for example, between religious Jews and psychoanalysis. When what could be described as the principle of repression emerges in the world of ideas, the emergence of the cultural demand for an ideal, does this connect us directly to the famous "the Beautiful and the Good"? Perhaps this began with the Socratics. Not the pre-Socratics, precisely, which is perhaps what makes all the difference. I don't think we can find anything like that—but then again, I haven't gone back to the texts this week—but if my memory serves me correctly—and I'm putting this forward so that some of you can contradict me—I don't think we find anything like that in Heraclitus, for example. To evoke beauty and associate it with goodness introduces—and suddenly we enter a world that is familiar to us—the requirement, the dominance of the gaze. It is strange, moreover, that the Socratic method seems to consider authentic only that knowledge which, in a way, reveals itself as if it were a confession: the subject knew it without knowing it, like the famous slave in Meno, and the whole task consists in making him confess this knowledge. And authenticity, it seems, would be linked to this operation! It is a peculiarity, I do not think it warrants further comment or reflection. In any case, I will take the liberty of recounting a personal childhood experience—which is not very daring, fortunately—concerning the fact that when, as a child, I was led to read the Bible with the greatest interest, albeit as a layman, well, I have a very clear, very precise memory of my astonishment at discovering that it was made up of two halves, two parts, the Old and the New, which to my child's eyes seemed so clearly, or rather so intuitively, immediately, and compellingly — for I certainly did not take the same pleasure in both parts — that these two halves had nothing to do with each other, that there were two books that were, in a way, stuck together in the same volume, but one wondered what

could justify their juxtaposition; since if, in the Old Testament, it was, as a story, the account of the transgressions of the Ten Commandments, for example, there we have the beings as they actually were, with all the characteristics I mentioned earlier, among others:

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For inheritance, we kill our brother, we sell him, we deceive our blind father... In short, all we know is that in the New Testament, it was about the story of a man's sacrifice to make these commandments effective, to make them truly triumph, for example, love of neighbor, charity, temperance... everything we know. In other words, with the second, we enter into what we must consider to be a prescription, in a way, to remove a certain number of impulses from ourselves, in other words, to enter into the realm of repression. We can return here to Lacan's remark that the Christian concept of "ana luse," whose exact term he no longer remembers, was impossible or difficult. Perhaps we can point out here that what is rejected by religion, by this religion, through this process, this injunction, this reference, is that which is proposed as the same thing at once. point out that what is rejected by this process, by this injunction, by this reference, because of religion, because of this religion, what is rejected is what is presented as having no value and even less truth value, since what has value is precisely the fact that it has been rejected; that is what is emphasized. As for what has been rejected, it is nothing but waste without... without what? Well, first of all, without an owner, since you refuse to own it. So it is precisely this that at the same time becomes the property of whom... We could, of course, mention the devil, and anything else we want... but ultimately that doesn't really hold water. So, what presents itself from that moment on, as losing all attribution, and at the same time losing any subject capable of being the bearer of what is repressed there, is therefore what, at the same time, no longer has any place, any right to exist, any status in existence. I mean that in the register of phenomena, it is surely a very special, very particular status that is devolved to what is repressed, under the effect of, because of, the reference to this religion. And yet—and this is where psychoanalysis proves to be contrary—psychoanalysis will say, will maintain, that it is on the side of this waste that our being is located. This is, if I may say so, the misfortune of the speaking being, since it makes the effort, in a way, to detach, reject, and refuse what is prescribed to it, what is demanded of it, it abandons it, and then there will be people who say that it is nevertheless in this nothingness that is thus rejected, whose right to exist is denied, that the being of the one who thus operates is located. By what right can psychoanalysis support such a serious and, in fact, unexpected assertion, including, after all, in philosophical reflection, since this is to give the famous *dasein* a completely original status. Is psychoanalysis operating here purely metaphysically, or logically? Is it for reasons that can be described as purely phenomenological?

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In fact, what we observe, thanks to his practice, is that, ultimately, authentic saints—those who are not so embarrassed, repelled by what is repressed and rejected—authentic saints there are some, there have been some—seem particularly rare, and that we are so constructed that the

ideals we espouse and in whose name repression operates, from a phenomenological point of view, are systematically revealed to anyone willing to consider them—and not only to analysts—are systematically infiltrated by repressed antagonists, and this in a way that is all the more cruel for those who find themselves dealing with these ideals, because the effective character, I mean the fact that what actually dominates in the use of these ideals, the action inspired by these ideals, is precisely what is revealed phenomenologically: it is precisely what has been repressed, the repressed antagonist. One of the cruelest experiences we can have in our lives is, of course, to deal with these ideals insofar as they radically fail to recognize or refuse to acknowledge that they are infiltrated, dominated, in their effectiveness, by precisely what has been rejected, and that thus, in complete blindness, they can have effects that are radically contrary to what is, in a sense, promoted, proposed, praised, or displayed. Let us take the example that may seem the most innocent and that deserves to seem the purest to us: a mother's love for her child, since, as a general rule, this is the type of experience that almost all of us have had. Could there be anything purer? Freud already restricts this purity, I mean the fact that it is a love that has not been infiltrated by anything else, that this love is not a love in which the aggression that its imposition calls for is concealed. Freud restricts this love to that of the mother, not for her child, but for her boy... This is already a restriction, therefore, with regard to the daughter, whose love is perhaps a little more complex. But we need only ask the few boys in the audience. Are they so sure that their mother's love was as free of aggression, or even hatred, as one might hope and expect?

You are all familiar, in clinical practice, with this impulse, so commonplace in its frequency, this impulse in mothers: the fear of hurting their child... What should surprise us is precisely the commonplace nature of this fear, its character, almost... and occurring at the very least without even a specific neurosis. We cannot say that this fear is characteristic of any particular neurosis. Where does it come from, where does it arise, in a mother—who loves her child—this fear that she might hurt him? Obviously, it comes from...

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repression, meaning that it comes from a place where the subject cannot recognize themselves. It is not their ego that thinks this. Where does it come from in their mind? - and especially since this child is willing to do anything for them, obviously. The most extraordinary thing is that the more she cares about doing good for him, the more this idea is likely to cross her mind. So you see, the question that arises for us is slightly different, and that is: why do emotions work this way, why do they work in opposing pairs? Why, in a way, does a mother's love for her child, even as that love asserts itself and at the same time seems to want to exclude anything that might upset it... seem, on the contrary, to provoke what would upset it, or at least bring it to the surface in her thoughts? Perhaps, during the course of the evening, we will have to answer this question. There is—and perhaps some of you may have noticed this objection—a major objection to this attempt to locate what the truth might be, the truth of being, on the side of what is repressed. This major objection, still in the realm of what is phenomenologically observable, concerns something very important that is rarely discussed because it is generally despised—wrongly—and is called

character. Why? Because it is obvious that when one has a particular character trait, it is something that is only worth imposing because of its effectiveness. Character is not like the ideal I was talking about earlier, which, in action, constantly contradicts itself and refuses to recognize the fact that everything it does is contrary to what it claims to practice... What defines character is precisely its effectiveness. Someone about whom we say, "That person is courageous," we say so because they have indeed demonstrated the effectiveness, the practicality, the impact of courage. That is their style; they are courageous, and we have no justification for attributing any truth to anything else that may exist. Even if, for example, this courage, this courageous character, is a reaction to a phobia—which is much more common than we think; there are many people who are daredevils because they react, through their character, to what is a phobia—I assure you, I have known people like that who were incredibly courageous, unfazed by anything, and who were truly fearless. But what difference does it make to effectiveness whether it is reactive? Who gives us the right to attribute the truth to the phobia, since, in practice, it is true that these are courageous people, and that's that. In other words, why not value the character

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trait at the expense of symptom? Suppose you are generous, and that this generosity is a reaction to your father's stinginess... So what? What does it matter? The truth is there: you are indeed a generous person. But psychoanalysis, on this point, still has a singular audacity, since it treats character as a symptom, that is, a character neurosis—which is not a very happy term—but in any case, it takes it as a reactive armor of the ego, that is, it says, nevertheless, that the truth is not on that side. Let us return to the question of why affects function in us in antagonistic pairs, why there is never, so to speak, one without the other. And this is before any repression! ... These biblical heroes I mentioned earlier, for them, it works perfectly like that, in pairs. So let us ask ourselves why this primordial and general ambivalence precedes neurotic ambivalence, which is of a completely different type. Why this fundamental and primordial ambivalence? We often say to people: "Oh, you're so ambivalent!" Who isn't ambivalent? If, for example, the Rat Man represses his hatred for his father to such an extent that his hatred becomes a compulsive and obsessive manifestation, we enter the realm of neurotic ambivalence, since one of the elements of the pair becomes a symptom, a symptom because of its obsessive and compulsive nature. But where does the Rat Man's famous hatred for his father come from? Freud, as I pointed out to you, was so struck by this polarity, by this contrasting nature of affects that come in pairs in obsessive neurosis, one of the elements of the pair being repressed, that he came up with some rather risky formulas, going so far as to say that the unconscious is the reverse of the conscious, which, you must admit, would be frighteningly simple, that it is the place of everything that is bad in us.

So how does Freud explain this hatred that the Rat Man feels for his father, a hatred that the intensity of his love would prevent him from expressing? He loves his father so much that he cannot express his hatred! Let us note in passing that religion prescribes that we must love our father, and therefore, this hatred must be dealt with in whatever way we can: suppressed,

repressed, sublimated, transformed, displaced, or whatever else you want, but in any case, it must be evacuated in some way. Freud explains this hatred by saying that the father of the Rat Man was an obstacle to the fulfillment of his sexual desire. He was the obstacle he encountered on his path. He encountered him as a child, you remember all those evocations and he

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He meets her as an adult, since his father is not in favor of him fulfilling his desires with the lady. As I would like to point out • very astutely, the real father, as Freud describes him, if he remains silent with his son on the question of sex, which I must say is part of the cultural mode of relations that are established in our areas between father and son—at least that's how it works in our culture—the real father, through his attitude, his simplicity, his frankness, his bon vivant character, etc., we cannot see how he could be someone who would "cut them off" from his son... Do you see anything in the style of the father in The Rat Man that would make him a castrating father? If he is not in favor of the lady, it is because he believes she is not a good match, that he has sensed something neurotic in his son; he would be better off marrying the young relative, who, first of all, has money and, secondly, is presumably "suitable." The father does not encourage him because this revered lady—as you saw from the first pages—whom the patient reveres as a saint—the father senses that there is something going on here—is also sterile. And so it is rather the patient who distances himself from sexual fulfillment with her! So why does Freud, who we know was certainly no fool—and what we know is that, first of all, thanks to him, you can see how we are studying texts that are full of everything there is to take in and question... — why does Freud attribute repression to this love for the father, and the fact that hatred is commanded by the fact that he is an obstacle to the fulfillment of sexual desires? Well, because what Freud refers to here as the support for both this love and this hatred, and as an obstacle to the fulfillment of sexual desires, is the symbolic father, that is to say, the one who is indeed the support of love, this love that will then become Übertragung, that will become transference, and which is also indeed the support of hatred, since through the establishment that he operates, that is to say, that of the phallus, at the same time and effectively, he stands in the way of any sexual fulfillment—no sexual intercourse. Thanks to him, there is a pleasure, as you know, a perverted one, that of the phallus, and one to which the patient will eventually joyfully indulge after his father's death, since now that he is dead, he is entitled to it, it is his turn to enjoy it: he will masturbate, offering this as an imaginary spectacle to his father. And it is also thanks to this, thanks to his father's intervention, that there is no sexual intercourse, and it is precisely in this that this father is also the father of castration. It is also for this reason that he is indeed the father of castration. It is true that, in what could be described as his originality in the structure...

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In this case, the father functions as an ideal, that is, as the father of castration, but also as the one who prescribes, in a superegoic manner, sexual enjoyment, who says that one must go all the way... And it is insofar as religion will, in a way, invest this ideal father that it will be able, on the

one hand, to demand that all love be reserved for this father, that we will leave hatred behind in order to get rid of it. It is also because religion, this ideal father, gives him substance, gives him a voice, that it is eventually assumed that renouncing sex is what would please him. We understand why, since by renouncing sex, it is God who is being saved... Better to renounce sex than to face the proof of one's incapacity, of one's senility! How can one be a priest, that is, the cantor of creation, and at the same time be married, that is, face the proof that this creation is a complete failure? I therefore believe that through this gradual process, we can understand why psychoanalysis can say that, ultimately, what is repressed is everything in us that concerns castration, why it is castration that we ultimately defend ourselves against. Because, you see, otherwise, there would be a risk, in following the story of the Rat Man, of thinking that what we repress is only that which is morally reprehensible! It is not nice to feel hatred for one's father, it is not nice for a woman to show that she wishes her sister-in-law dead so that she can take her boyfriend, just as it is not nice... So, that would be a kind of simplicity, of immediacy, which is dangerous because it completely obscures things, and I think we come back down to earth when we see how, ultimately, if there is this primordial, fundamental ambivalence—I would have to invent a word here, "ur-ambivalence," it must not exist—I think—an original ambivalence, if there is an original ambivalence in every subject and before any neurosis, it is that what is offered to them, what is offered to their enjoyment, is also what thwarts any possible fulfillment. This enjoyment is prescribed to them, and yet impossible to achieve, and what they will eventually be led to repress is that which, within them and through the medium of this ambivalence, bears witness to this failure of the sexual. See, for example, how in our cultures, the expression of hatred... the Rat Man represses it... but ask yourself the following question: do you yourselves tolerate the expression of hatred around you, do you tolerate its expression? Or does it not immediately strike you as a kind of breach of civility, of moderation, of politeness, of discretion, of decency, of whatever you want... Nothing is less tolerated in our culture than the expression of

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hatred, or violence. And yet, you all know that it exists, you all know how widespread this hatred is, how present it is in everyone. And yet our culture demands its suppression. And the same is true of violence. The Rat Man, as has been pointed out, had a terrible fear of being beaten. What are these beatings? They are the blows that come from the Other, which mark castration and are also the blows of his love; moreover, by dispensing with his blows, he is no longer certain of his love... That is precisely a typically obsessive problem. Without these blows, there is anxiety... Why anxiety? We will have to talk about that too...

We can nevertheless conclude, as I pointed out earlier, that if psychoanalysis says that the truth of being lies in what is repressed by it, not in what it flaunts, it is true that the result of repression on this primal ambivalence is indeed to tip the repressed to the side where, firstly, it is doomed to perpetuation, to indestructibility, and secondly, to now constantly infiltrate all feelings, including those that claim to be its antonym, its opposite, including those that claim to be love. So, for us

neurotics, the truth is not to be sought on the side of being, but rather on the side of existence, but existence as it is for us, which is where repression, in a way, petrifies us—that is the unconscious, that is where we are petrified—in our being. Still on this thread, a question keeps coming up, which I try to take up again at every turn, in every circumstance: why, in obsessive neurosis, why the obsessive nature of the symptom, and why this difference in expression between the obsessive symptom and the hysterical symptom? This is a big question that comes up again, since I have dealt with it so far in its very general form, talking about repression in general. Why shouldn't there be one type of neurotic, why are there two, and again... since the question would be whether hysteria is a neurosis? So, the question raised is that of the very different behavior, of what is repressed in obsessive neurosis and in hysteria, since, if we have to decide where what is repressed is located, it can only be in the real; otherwise, it would not be repressed! Obviously, it can return, it does return, but it returns as repressed, that is, recognized as such, with this particular quality. If it is therefore cut off from the symbolic, it is because it only takes on this quality of being repressed by remaining, by maintaining itself in a place that is supposed to keep it safe from circulation, from being put into circulation by the symbolic, which after all only happens by accident; it can be a symptom, a slip of the tongue, or whatever you like, a witty remark, a Freudian slip, etc.

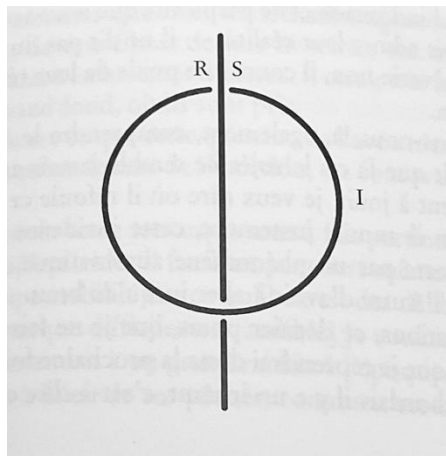
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We are thus led to evoke the same place for hysteria and obsessive neurosis, and yet what is repressed will manifest itself, in the register of symptoms, in such different ways! In obsessive neurosis, what is repressed occurs and manifests itself in the form of clearly articulated ideas, whereas, as you know, in hysteria, it takes the form of hieroglyphics, of rebuses that must be deciphered. It is not written in the same language... In obsessive neurosis, this occurs in the realm of ideas, whereas in hysteria, it is expressed in the realm of the body, essentially, in particular by using, if I may say so, the language of bodily functions. Earlier, I asked the question of who to attribute ownership of what is repressed to. In obsessive neurosis, the peculiarity is that the subject does not fail to attribute these ideas to himself, whereas in hysteria, what is articulated presents itself as having nothing to do with the subjectivity of the hysteric, as if she were inhabited by some demon who thus began to speak through her body. So we find ourselves on this occasion with the opportunity to move forward on this essential question—a question on which I once had the opportunity to read almost everything that had been written, but whose bibliography I have not renewed for a number of years. — on the comparison and differences between hysteria and obsessive neurosis, I can tell you that what could be read on the subject was not particularly stimulating. In any case, the procedure I have adopted here today will allow us to return to this question next time, that is, in a month, on May 19. But right now, this

evening, I would like to point out the following: I had drawn you the Borromean knot, which I proposed as being the one that would work for obsessive neurosis...

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I mean these two circles: that of the Imaginary and that of this straight line, ordered to infinity, which would be that of the Symbolic, but whose infinite character would come into obsessive neurosis, supporting a Real, a real that would only be worth being infinite. We can possibly use this diagram to answer immediately one of the questions we had addressed, which was that of the very particular status of these obsessive ideas that are not real, since they do not present themselves as hallucinations. It is therefore difficult to say that they come from the real. But, on the other hand, they do not present themselves as symbolic either, since if they were symbolic, the subject would be able to take them up under the title of the I, in an inverted form, to receive there, from the Other, a message that is silent, you, but taken up precisely by the subject from this You that comes to him from the Other.



You remember that we were wondering about the status of obsessive ideas, including the fact that they had this imperative character, from which the obsessive person nevertheless always protects himself with the greatest efficiency... Although they are ultimate and supreme commands, they are never fulfilled or realized. They are commands to go all the way; that famous enjoyment I mentioned earlier, of having to go to the end, of cutting one's throat, cutting the old lady's throat... we have seen that... In any case, wouldn't this mode, this type of writing, allow us to understand the particular status of the ideas that parasitize the obsessive and which are therefore neither real nor symbolic but—and this is where the difference lies—both at the same time, real and symbolic, but the subject not knowing, ultimately, unable to determine whether they are one or the other, and therefore remaining in that state of indecision and perplexity that we know, and in that disposition that both admits their reality—he does not say at all that they are fantasies, daydreams, no, he knows the weight of their reality—and yet he does nothing about them.

Perhaps we can also understand the obsessive nature of these ideas in the fact that where the subject never seems to articulate anything other than his desire to enjoy phallically, I mean where they repress this refusal, that is to say, where in a certain way they cancel out the incidence of the

names-of-the-father, they receive, as it were, through an automatic phenomenon, at the same time, this injunction from the Other to go all the way. It is on these questions, this last point, which I am only introducing this evening, that I will pause and then return to next time with the two levels I mentioned a moment ago, that is, in what way the

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manifestations of the obsessive. The manifestations of hysteria are of such a different type, so heterogeneous in comparison

So that's it for tonight... What are your comments? Jacqueline Pasmantier - It's possible that in the Jewish religion there is a statute of confession, I would have to check. I believe it concerns the period between Rosh Hashanah, the first blowing of the shofar, and the second, which takes place on Yom Kippur. I believe that the faithful are asked to make a kind of confession, perhaps a collective one, so that when the second shofar is blown, their transgressions are forgiven. I believe that's how it works. Ch. Melman - Is that right? (We hear yeses from the audience, and other inaudible remarks). Rebecca Majster - There's also Joseph... [inaudible]. Ch. Melman - Yes... That's very interesting, it's important. Nevertheless, I don't find that the way the protagonists, the heroes of the Old Testament, are described, that... I mean, they are described in... It's realistic writing... well, what you mention is worth remembering, but nevertheless, I think we understand why the confession ultimately... we don't really see what there is to hide, since everything is there, if I may say so, in plain sight. People behave openly, and ultimately do not hide their misdeeds. Christiane Rabant - It's not about confessing, but about naming what has been done, the plundering...

Ch. Melman - Yes, that's how I would interpret it. But ultimately, we don't feel that confessing in the Old Testament ever constitutes moral progress for anyone. It allows us to continue... I often say that all the scenarios that form the basis of our novels, films, stories, etc. are borrowed from the Bible... we haven't managed to invent any others. It would be very easy to show that this is where they are taken from. Jorge Cacho - But isn't this question of confession linked to the concept of the individual? Outside of the individual, is this question of

The confession?

Ch. Melman - I think your comment is entirely relevant, and I agree with it completely, but you say the individual, perhaps we should even say the subject, that is to say, placing responsibility on the subject's deliberations.

M. X. - [Another remark that is difficult to hear] I wanted to recall a story... where someone asked a great rabbi at the time... how, since we asked God for forgiveness for our sins, how did we know that the

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Forgiveness was granted... and he replied that it was when the sin was not repeated. Ch. Melman - He probably meant by that — he was very subtle, this wise man — that he did not hear God often. It is written that way, and even if Martin Buber did not hear it that way, I would say he is wrong. All these texts should be read that way. If he was wise, he knew it would happen again. J. Cacho - I get the impression that in your presentation you are linking the question of confession to the establishment of an ideal... particularly a Greek ideal, which would be articulated around the question of the gaze... Couldn't we articulate this question of confession around another aspect, which is that of the father... the question of confession, why link it so strictly to the question of the gaze, when we can suppose it to be linked to the dimension of fault, which would be... Ch. Melman - That's a bit of an oversimplification on my part. The question of confession does not concern the Greeks either, but I would not immediately link this dimension to the ideal of beauty and goodness; I was simply pointing out this strange thing, that authentic knowledge was, it seems, that which the subject found himself confessing, even without knowing it, that is to say, that it strangely presents itself as if in a dimension of confession. I believe that what should be emphasized is that the index of truth of this knowledge would be precisely that it functions as a confession, which in this context does not refer at all to a subject or to a relationship with the father, does it? But there is, nevertheless, it seems to me, a possible connection that is perhaps not purely fortuitous, not just a coincidence... well, the whole approach... We are going to question the virtuous person, we are going to ask him: do you know what virtue is? So he says yes, yes, I am virtuous, I know what virtue is... And he gives his speech on virtue, and then it becomes clear that he does not know what virtue is. But the famous maieutics will be in something that functions as an admission that he knew without knowing, and that at the same time, virtue would be attached, inherent in this knowledge... It's worth what it's worth, but it's a remark that seems possible. It's strange, this idea, the index of truth, which is carried there... why would it be in self-knowledge that the truth of the world would be revealed, and therefore in something that from that moment on would present itself. Choula Emerich - What is interesting, precisely, is that in the Meno, it seemed to me that the division was not between the conscious subject and its unconscious, as Socrates expresses it, but rather between the master

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and the slave, namely that it would always be the master who would give there as ga... and when we look closely at the demonstration of this knowledge that is unknown to the slave, it is constantly instilled by what the master says to the slave; the answer is given there—everything we say comes from the Other—almost directly and not inversely, and the division seemed to me to be between one and the other rather than between oneself and oneself, in the Meno, at least. Ch. Melman - I don't entirely agree with your formulation, but we'll come back to that. I will undoubtedly have the advantage of not jumping to conclusions too quickly; that knowledge resides in the slave is something that is very, if I may say so, very anti-Aristotelian... We cannot say that the division is between the conscious and the unconscious; I do not believe that we can

invoke the dimension of the unconscious here. We can simply say that this knowledge that the subject conceals, which he possesses and which he does not know... The Socratic approach would be to show that everyone can thus bring themselves up to date with regard to this knowledge if they are properly questioned. But Lacan said some very interesting things about this, concerning the position of the master... And what Lacan says is that if the master questions the slave so well, it is because in reality the master has already stolen the slave's way of questioning from the slave. You know the famous opposition found in Aristotle between the knowledge of the craftsman and the knowledge of the architect: the craftsman does not know his knowledge, he practices it, but stupidly... he fucks without knowing... whereas the architect fucks with knowledge, he makes plans before fucking, he fucks according to the plans. This division haunts us and is of great importance for our own cultural life, our teachings, our university life, etc.; our teaching system is inspired by this Aristotelian division, about which there is much to say and on which Lacan, in any case, has said a great deal. He does not place knowledge on the side of the master at all, since he says that the master has only stolen it from the slave in order to make it master's knowledge, that is, to justify his mastery, and at the same time to make knowledge only that which is capable of being recognized as delivering master's power. That is how knowledge functions in our culture today: knowledge is only valuable if it gives you access to some kind of license and some kind of mastery. And then when you become a doctor, well...

... Well... listen... in May.

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Lesson II

October 20, 1988

I will ask Bernard Vandermersch if he would be willing to come and share his thoughts on what the particularities of cross-cap might be in obsessive neurosis, based on his own reflections and imagination.

So perhaps you could come to the blackboard?

Contribution by B. Vandermersch in dialogue with Ch. Melman

I understand that you are proposing that the cancellation of the ϕ point on the cross-cap, at least temporarily, would result in the cancellation of the object's cut. Ch. Melman - No, not the cancellation of the cut of the object, but the cancellation of the Möbius property of the cross-cap. B. Vandermersch - Yes...? Ch. Melman - That is to say, the cancellation of the Möbius property of the cross-cap based precisely on the cancellation of the q point. B. Vandermersch - Yes. The problem is that, once the paternal metaphor is in place, it is a little difficult to think that the phallic meaning can occasionally be skipped. Ch. Melman - You could say that. Obsessive neurosis about the Wolf Man, quite incidentally, by the way... It was about the Wolf Man's screen memory when he remembers being with his nurse, playing with her knife on a tree. Suddenly, he

cut his finger, which was hanging by a thread. It was in connection with what we are doing about the "trait."

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The obsessive neurosis of the case" where there was a patient who had a history of this kind. Lacan often shows how this presents itself; the object a is cut out from this double loop which essentially revolves around the point ϕ , as if there were a kind of gravitational pull.

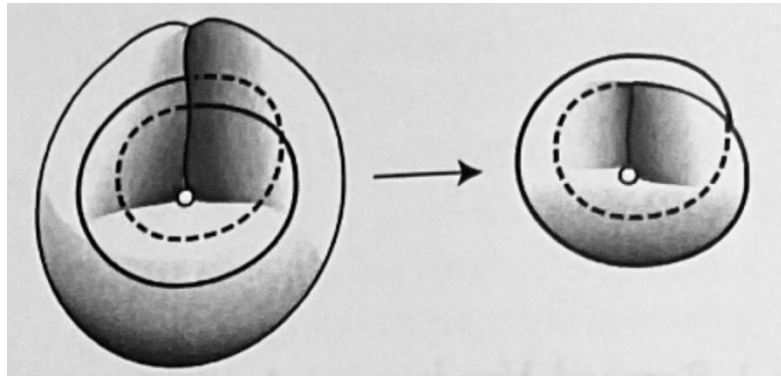


Fig. II - 1

The signifier fails in the first round but recovers in the second, and in this gap falls the object a . Already in relation to psychosomatics, I had thought that... after all, there were other types of breaks possible: for example, the signifier might not fail itself and be totally identical to itself; we would obtain this simple loop, which is in fact a double loop, if we look closely, the second loop running backwards from the first.

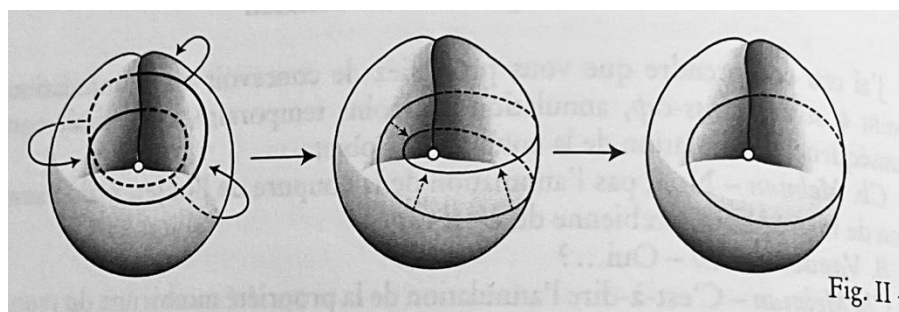


Fig. II - 2

It is a kind of double loop whose two arms come so close together that they merge. And at that point, if we walk along the surface like a tiny ant, we will still have to go around twice before returning to the starting point. But if we use a pair of scissors to cut the surface along the dotted line, we only make one turn, which opens up the surface and gives us a disc with a front and a back... [figure II — 3].

So there were already two possibilities for making a meaningful cut.

1- Psychoanalytic clinical work at Henri Rousselle Hospital.

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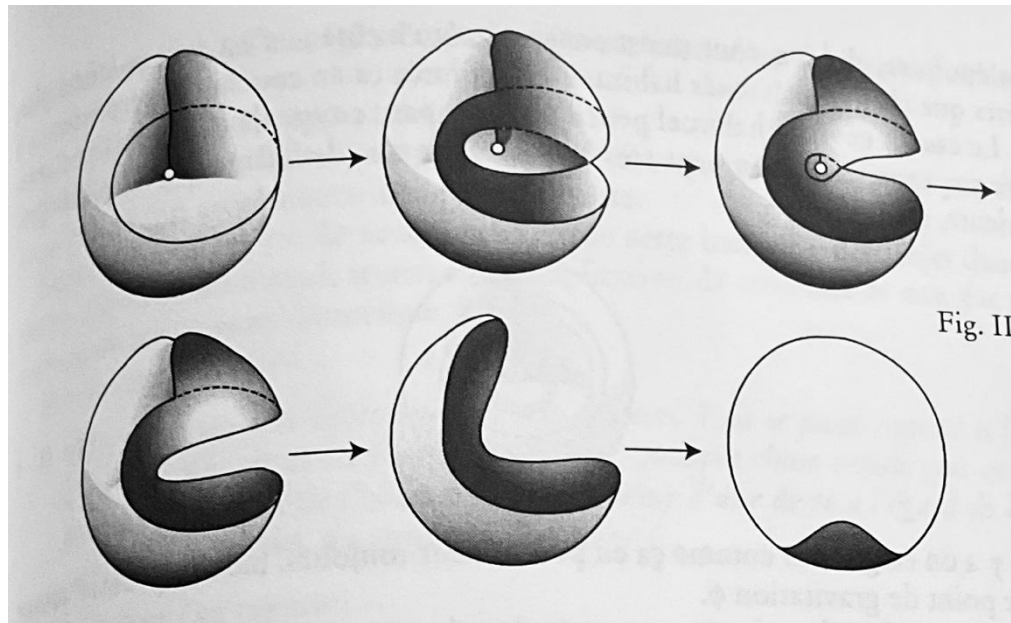


Fig. II - 3

First, the simple cut [Figure II-3], which does not cut out any object but where the entire surface becomes an object, so to speak, taking on the properties of the object, which I believed I could advance in psychosomatics. Ch. Melman - Absolutely. B. Vandermersch - And here, then, is the double loop [figure II - 1], which is based on the point ϕ and divides the surface into two parts: the field of reality, which is the Mobian part, which in this figure is the peripheral part, and this part, which stands out. This part that can detach itself is the object a. It's a bit complicated, it has the structure of a disc with two sides. So I thought: what happens in obsessive neurosis? And this is especially based on what you were saying, what Freud also says, about the Wolf Man. First, there is the notion of the term that comes up very frequently. A term is missing. In fact, Freud, in The Wolf Man, puts a term right there! Last time, you talked about the Termin in relation to The Rat Man, who came up very often, and about this difficulty precisely in relation to this question of the term. On the other hand, Freud, in The Wolf Man, talks about three traits: first, "the particular tenacity of fixation"; second, "an extraordinary development of the tendency toward ambivalence"; and third, "an archaic constitution," he says, which is "the ability to maintain the most diverse and contradictory libidinal investments side by side." And he says it's a little like in Egyptian religion; we see all

The different periods are preserved side by side... they are on the same level, whereas in the case of typical neurotics, they tend to be layered on top of each other. The case of the typical neurotic can be illustrated by this type of break. We notice, for example, that we can easily suppress a second one that represses the previous one, and so on.

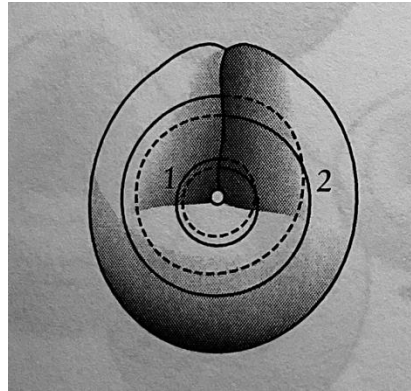


Fig. II - 4

There is always a layering like this in depth, of course, centered around this point of gravity. This is what should not be found in obsessive neurosis... or at least in that of the Wolf Man. On the other hand, if the Wolf Man's hallucination also tells us something about his structure, it is that, after all, it is cut off but still holds together a little. [Questionable murmurs in the room]. Ch. Melman - It is indeed the Wolf Man. B. Vandermersch - Yes. That's why I was a little annoyed, because I'm relying on a case whose structure is highly debatable... So, obviously, that suggests an incomplete cut. Well... what were you saying about the Rat Man this time? You said, "This forbidden thought is uttered from this object that should have been abandoned to the Other and that the obsessive retains for his enjoyment. It comes from the object and not from the subject... The object would certainly be cut off, you say, but kept in place in a way that raises questions about the relevance of the cut, since ultimately it would not be renounced" (the object).

So if we want to avoid resorting to dotted lines or semi-permeable membranes... — because after all, anything is possible!.... but if we still want to stick with the practice of cutting... and on the other hand, it comes from him, as an object, and goes towards the big Other. It's not like in psychosis. It doesn't come from the Other to him. The thoughts come from him. It's not like the psychotic hallucination that would treat him as an object: slut, whore, etc. So, unlike psychosis, where the insult comes from the Other to

denouncing the subject, here it is rather a one that is addressed to the little a included in Ch. Melman - Is it a one that is addressed?... B. Vandermersch - It is a one that is addressed — I may be going a little fast, — to the little a that is always included in the Other. So the problem is to

account for this inclusion of the object in the chain in the obsessive, to find an explanation of structure and not simply a historical explanation. And you also said, "There is a kind of invitation to the final act. It is as if, from a founding act, the right one, something constantly comes to mind for the obsessive person. A memory of a debt to the camouflaged, diverted act, a semblance of an act. You see, I'm adding to it! ... "In any account, there is one missing ... To count the sacred is to cancel out its difference" ...

So here's the thing, it's very silly, but Lacan says you have to use it foolishly, which is the only consolation we have in this matter! [Laughter. Well, I hope it won't be too silly!... So here we are [laughter] first case, it can be very clever [laughter] and catch on right away. It has disastrous effects on meaning... It [figure II - 3] catches everything and we see that what is lost is the structure itself (allusion to the case of psychosomatics). Second case, there is the double loop, which lets something escape (price of castration), and in this case there is a possible meaning, a direction, an orientation (allusion to the normal case), [figure II — 1]

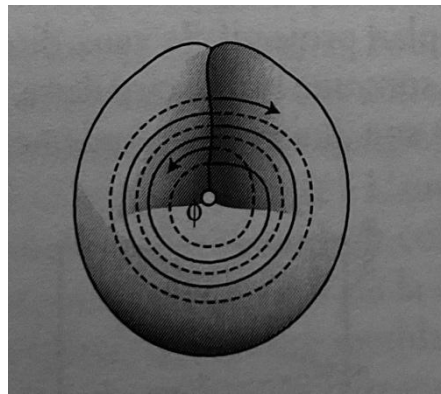


Fig. II - 5

For obsessive people, I simply suggest that we take a turn [see Figure II — 1] and instead of recovering, we don't recover. That is to say, driven, I was going to say by the gravity of point ϕ — gravity isn't

A forced fact — there are references to this, for example, in "La direction de la cure" (The Direction of the Cure), things like that, eh... So here is this loop that can continue its journey indefinitely, and on the other side we can see it going off like this, etc. [Figure II - 5).

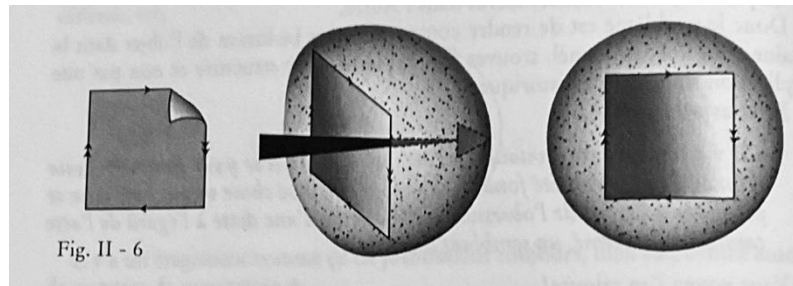


Fig. II - 6

I will now spread out the projective plane (cross-cap) to see things a little more clearly [Figure II-6]. This is the same thing I did earlier, except that here we have a sphere with a hole in it. The hole is on the periphery instead of in the middle, but it is exactly the same thing. If you imagine that the fabric is elastic but the edge of the square remains rigid, all you have to do is push it behind the board and you have this ['inside of the rectangle] which becomes hollow, and here [hatched part of figure II - 6] is the fabric; and here the fabric is there [hatched], but it's exactly the same. Ch. Melman - Is it a sphere with a hole in it? B. Vandermersch - It's a sphere with a hole in it, the hole of which is sewn up according to the principles of the projective plane, i.e., each point on the edge of the hole corresponds to the diametrically opposite point. I did this in a square. It's not absolutely necessary for the projective plane. I mean, you could very well do it, make the hole circular. The important thing is to match each point with its diametrically opposite point. If I took this

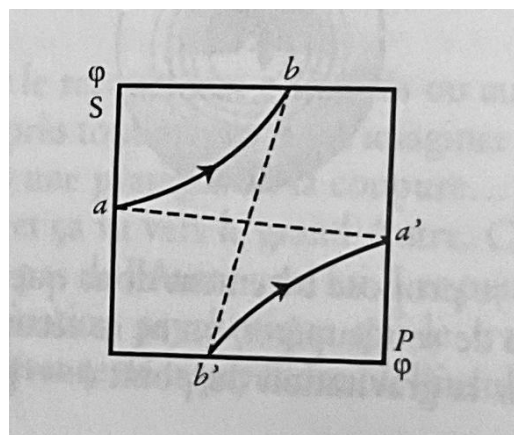
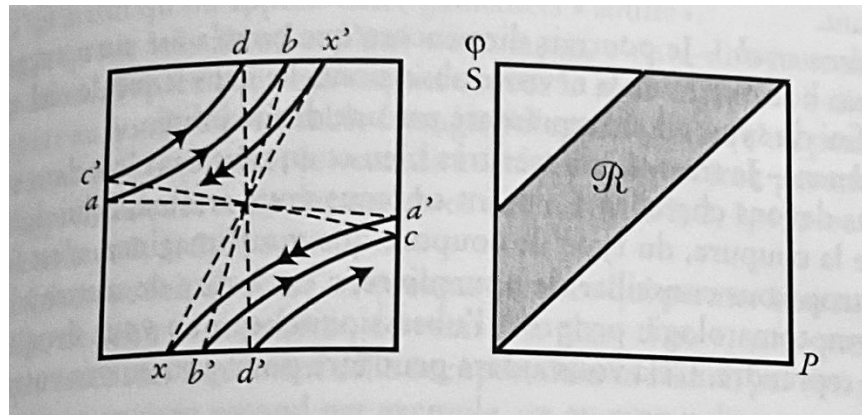


Fig. II - 7

square configuration is that it also allows you to make a torus, as well as a Klein bottle. For the torus and the Klein bottle, you have to close the hole differently. Okay. So here is a double loop [drawn in Figure II-7). It starts at this point (a) and goes to that point (b). This point (b) corresponds to that point (b'). From point (b') we go to (a), which corresponds to (a). This is the point o that we find on both sides. We might also remember that in Les Ecrits, in the "R diagram," Lacan proposes and constructs the cross-cap in much the same way, with a square divided into two parts: the symbolic triangle and the imaginary triangle. You have read Marc Darmon's article in Topique [laughter] yes, well!... in Nodd No. 1; here l \hat{o} at the top left is figure II - 7) this is the place of the phallus where the subject (S) will be placed and here [at the bottom right] the name-of-the-father. Isn't that right? There you go, the two points ϕ merge together. I'm now transforming that into a cross-cap using a trick. What I've just done there [figure II - 7] corresponds to this [figure II - 1]. Do you agree?

Fig. II - 8



Ch. Melman - [Sign of agreement]. B. Vandermersch - Let us now consider what might happen in obsessive neurosis [Figure II - 8]. If, after the path (ab), the signifier line starting from (b'), instead of returning to (a') to close the loop, arrives at (c), it will start again from (c') to arrive at (d), and so on. We can then see that this branch can approach point ϕ infinitely without ever encompassing it, since it can no longer close the loop. What happens at the other end? The other branch of the same signifier (which would be an infinite spiral line) would colonize the part that, in Lacan's "R schema," corresponds to the R field of reality. So this infinite spiral-shaped line seems to me to constitute another possible variation of the signifier. It accounts for the counting error, since here the count does not start from zero. In L'Étourdit, Lacan said: "The turn exists only in the number in which it is inscribed in the cut, which alone

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The closure matters. The turn that turns without closing may well repeat itself, but it is neither said nor to be said. As for the tendency toward ambivalence, I saw it reflected in this expansion in opposite directions of the two branches [Figure II-5]: one toward the object o and the other in the opposite direction. Finally, this spiral structure, which does not go directly, but rather goes in

the worst direction, could account for the third trait of the Wolf Man, which is the possibility of maintaining the most diverse libidinal investments side by side, but I will not draw a diagram because it is too complicated. However, if we imagine two signifiers, or rather two cuts of this type, side by side, then we see that unless we go all the way to the intini, there is always a moment when they end up converging and invading everything that starts from there [center of Figure II-5], ending up invading reality side by side. Ch. Melman - Well, I find that very, very beautiful. I find it very good and very encouraging.

B. Vandermersch - I could also say that this was suggested to me by your Borromean diagram of obsessive neurosis, in which the real appears to be located at infinity from the symbolic, represented by an infinite straight line. Ch. Melman - I think that's very good, and in any case, that's the direction we should be looking in. The point where you stop, that of the consequences of the cut, of the type of cut you imagine, is where we would strongly advise you to continue, that is, to test the symptomatology specific to the obsessive, which you mention here and which I will take up again. This may help you to continue your work on this. I will take it up again in another way, by asking the following question: why is the symptom for which the Rat Man comes to Freud that he feels like a great criminal? It is his impulses, his homicidal formulations that torment him. In previous years, I have already sketched out an answer, revolving around the idea that, in effect, the sin for each of us consists first and foremost, of course, in feeding off the dead father. I mean that the subject's existence is somehow experienced as linked to the debt owed to the one who died so that this existence could be possible, that is, so that this break could take place. But there is undoubtedly another way to approach the question of this feeling of being a criminal, which belongs more directly to the clinic of the obsessive. It consists in pointing out that, for him, the father is above all a real obstacle, that is to say, everything happens for him as if—and this is a major clinical feature—he were obliged to wait for this real obstacle to be removed.

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He left, stepped out of reality to gain access to what? To slip into her bed. That's pretty much how it feels. It is obvious, when I say this, that I am glossing over something, so as not to immediately complicate matters, which is that if it is true that for the obsessive, the symbolic and the real are in a way constituted by the same circle, there is always a possible interplay between knowing whether this father is real or symbolic. In any case, in his symptomatology, it seems that everything happens as if the father were above all a real obstacle and that therefore he only had to hope for his disappearance in order to have access to the object. That is to say, in this construction, castration is in a way supported only by reality, by the real character of the father. It is therefore easy to understand how the wish for his disappearance can be one of the inevitable desires of someone who wants access to what? Well, to simplify matters, I would say the mother, but it is also access to what we might call, in quotation marks, "adult" status. This is where I will approach it in another way, namely in terms of numbers. What you are sketching out with the cross-cap. That is to say, it is his relationship to numbers that seems strange, since in what we

might consider normal, I mean in what would not be neurotic, he is able to grasp the sequence of so-called natural numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, with 0 coming before: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. It is necessary that there be something in place that allows a subject to come to Sidenify, to come to support himself, to come to the place of a 1, without this place necessarily being the one occupied, in reality, by his father. It is enough for it to come second, for example, or *n*th, when we are in the sequence of natural numbers. This is how the succession of generations is inscribed. However, what we are dealing with, it seems, in obsessive neurosis, is something that functions as if the number 2 were an inaccessible limit in itself, so that the only way to claim oneself as 1 was to evacuate what is no longer symbolized by a sequence of numbers, that is, the succession of 1s in natural numbers, but what now depends only on the existence of a place. If we continue with this approach, what can we say? Let us put forward this hypothesis: for the obsessive, the register of numbers would be active not in the apprehension of the sequence of natural numbers but of real numbers, in that between any two numbers, classically 0, 1 or, for us, I should say 1, 2 because that's how it works for us, since zero — I'll come back to that later — is precisely what

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which causes him problems. Every time a number between 1 and 2 is proposed, there is inevitably another possible number that comes along, that pops up, and then another, and then another, and then all of them. In such a way, as seen in this deprenelson, I would almost want to say it like this, we find the etymological meaning of the word calculation... that is to say, the string of small pebbles... with the fact that between two pebbles we can always put another one, and then between the three we can put another one, and so on. Since this is a dimension that is transfinite, we never arrive—even though it is called the power of the continuum—we never arrive at this continuity, we can never ensure it. Between two numbers, however close they may be, there will always be an epsilon that will allow another to appear, and so on to infinity, infinity itself being uncountable. What I am trying to explain is this peculiarity which means that, contrary to what the understanding of the sequence of natural numbers allows, i.e. a series, which is the series of 1s, as we know, at least since Frege, zero is needed to somehow establish this interval, authorizing and allowing this succession of 1s. I no longer remember Frege's exact wording, but in any case, zero is the only representative of what is not identical to itself. This is of no importance to us, if only because denial is, in a way, one of the forms of revelation of truth. This is what happens to the obsessive. So it doesn't matter that Frége says this, because for us, it is rather on the side of zero that we place, on the contrary, the identity that is perfectly assumed by oneself, the identity of the one who says "I am who I am," since the loop, in a way, only comes back on itself... but that doesn't matter. If it is true that the difficulty of the obsessive is linked to the fact, — as you said in a way, Bernard — to the fact that they missed the second signifier and that no matter how many tricks they performed, they would never get close to it, we could assume that their mental functioning is taken, structured by what we call real numbers; we can easily conceive how these can form a potentially convergent sequence, that is, one that potentially approaches this limit. I say potentially convergent because the obsessive's great fear

may also be that his sequence is, as we say in mathematics, divergent, that is, that it exceeds the goal, and as we know, this is one of the great fears of the obsessive, one of their great anxieties, to find themselves, without having wanted to, exceeding the ideal. What would I say from an intellectual point of view, that is, from our own speculation as obsessive people, since that is what the intellect is... except, of course, if we try to be a little bit analytical, and that clearly shows the value of what Lacan taught us. Intellectual speculation means nothing.

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other than to make chains of thought consistent: and even better, of course, in the refined form of sequences of symbols. In what we call consistent thinking, logical thinking, each term owes its validity only to what precedes it in the chain; we are in complete agreement on that. One must be a psychoanalyst to dare to say, as Lacan does, that this is a very particular type of thinking, perhaps paranoid? In any case, I propose it as active in the register of obsession—and that the cause lies elsewhere, that the truth lies elsewhere. From what could be called an epistemological point of view, this dimension of the real, which the consistency of the chain naturally tends to foreclose, is undoubtedly one of Lacan's most remarkable contributions to our problems. Although Lacan uses phrases such as, "even a mathematical formula must be spoken," you cannot write a mathematics book that contains only formulas from the first page to the last: the author must, of course, take the trouble to explain his formulas a little. In other words, these formulas ultimately depend on what he is going to say about them. There are even—and this is a very particular talent in the United States—mathematicians who strive to highlight the spiritual and humorous side of the quality of expression that results for them. I mean, there are Anglo-Saxon works of this kind that are strong in this regard. Russell was also a bit of a spirit of this kind. Everything would therefore happen as if denial... which is why the obsessive is not psychotic — since, as far as he is concerned, it is not a question of a foreclosure of the name-of-the-father — it is a question... precisely through this confusion between the symbolic and the real, of denying or canceling out the relevance of the name-of-the-father. So through this denial, it is as if the founding split, being denied, resurfaces at every moment in the chain. In what way? In a good way, because if you are indeed caught up in a chain of real numbers, it is quite obvious that you can get as close as you want — we classically refer to $\sqrt{2}$ as being between 1.4114 something like that and 1.4115. — you can narrow this interval as much as you want, but you will always find yourself faced with a phenomenon that mathematicians call, in a way... — let's not be too misled by these signifiers — but in any case, they call it a cut. This cut exists everywhere, since all you have to do is take two numbers in the field, in this dimension of real numbers, for a third number to appear between them, immediately creating an interval that you can no longer fill. In other words, the break seems to resurface here, if I may say so, under the feet of those caught up in this mechanism with an insistence... how to describe it... I was going to say obsessive!

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What do we find in this clinic? Well, what is obviously striking is that there are no obsessive symptoms without the dimension of cutting arising with... — so here too, I believe, is a phenomenon that deserves our admiration — this endopsychia that is so particular to the obsessive. I believe that if we can understand it, it is only in him, perhaps, that we could grasp why he has this ability to make endopsychic phenomena, this endoscopy of psychic phenomena, so prevalent. I mean, where is he himself, to be so exposed to this perception of psychic phenomena? But in any case, the cutting, the severing—then it obviously goes from what the children did, that is, walking down the street avoiding the space between the cobblestones or assuming that if they crossed that space, well, it would cause some inconvenience, or even something a little more unpleasant, such as the impulses that come to mind, like "take your razor and slit your throat." As if—as I mentioned earlier—as if some kind of terminal cut were the only thing that could bring some relief to his torment.

How can this kind of fixation with so-called real numbers be verified by other clinical features? We must not confuse these so-called real numbers with reality as Lacan understands it, although... but we can leave that aside for the moment. Finally, we can clearly see that the symbolic implies the recognition of this famous zero and therefore the establishment of this series of natural numbers. We have another clinical testimony, which I believe is essential, and which is as follows: authority, but I have already drawn your attention to this, for the obsessive, authority is only valid, and this is very strange! through the place of the antecedent, I mean the quality of the antecedent, that is to say, that it comes before. It is being before, that is to say, not referring to some exteriority, precisely to some reality, to some at least one to stay within our categories, but referring to what would be the first; and therefore it would be the fact of occupying this function of first that would give all its authority and all its value to the one who would come to occupy it. Strangely enough, a successor is also capable of occupying this place, that is to say, the birth, for example, of a little brother... then of course it's a surprise! Why the successor? Why, for example, this jealousy towards the younger brother? ... who is more successful than him. No doubt we can understand it as the valorization, I mean, the attribution to this child who has just been born and who

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dethrones the precedent of his relationship with his mother. We can undoubtedly frame it as marked by a phallic index, as constituting itself a phallic testimony to the phallicism that causes so many problems for the obsessive, such that although it is a successor in chronology, it would be ranked among the antecedents... among the predecessors. This is, moreover, a type of renunciation that is not exceptional in other families... but ultimately, it does not generate any further development. This device is necessarily rich in consequences since, in a way, if we try to imagine his world, there would be something that stands out as belonging to the category of the real 1, and then a succession of elements that would always be lacking in relation to this, which in any case would never allow access to the repetition of this 1, which in the ordinal can appear as second. So, among the consequences, let's start from the following point: what is the

relationship we know him to have with the temme or even... with the little girl? It is clear that the future or already obsessive little boy has gone through castration. Otherwise, none of this would exist, since it is a defense. This marvelous cathedral, this formidable, this superb lacework, finally, of his symptomatology, is only a defense against... Well... he has gone through it. That is to say, he finds himself in a state of deprivation. On the other hand, it is likely that the little girl, because of her specificity as a little girl, immediately finds herself, in a way, representative, invested with this object a—this object a which he had to give up, he feels impoverished, he feels effectively deprived, he feels emasculated—whereas the little girl, it seems, continues to shine with impunity, as it were, from the possession of this object; he cannot know, of course, that firstly she has gone through castration like him, and secondly that if she finds herself shining with this object, it is as a result of a displacement, not so much a displacement of an organ as Freud tried to construct, that is, from the clitoris to the vagina, but a topological displacement. It is because she has come to another place that she always finds herself there—she does not always find herself there in reality—it is a surprising return for her and, as we know, quite willingly, a disgusting return to the place of this object.

4. But in any case, it is indeed a paradox for him as a little boy to have... his sisters or these little girls as being somehow privileged because they are kept in possession of this object, while he himself seems to belong to this grayness. And we know the symptomatology of Rat Man, that is, the attempt to find in the little girl, this time... this object. Because she is its custodian, hence undoubtedly a devaluation of his own organ, as we have seen.

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This is to say he is sensitive to the difference of the sexes because, well, of course it's true, but I don't think that exempts us from... how should I put it? from trying to refine—if we are not mistaken—to refine a little the process in question, that is to say, why he is convinced, insofar as there has been perception of the phallus and therefore of the relationship between the penis and the phallus, that the woman has it and that his next to it is worthless. And he seeks it. I believe we are dealing here with obvious facts and clinical banalities. What will happen later, or very quickly in the interpretation of the family situation, because of what is, if I may say so, an imbalance, is the surprise of realizing that it is the father who may be laying down the law to the mother, and therefore the interpretation that the father is depriving the mother, as he himself was deprived. Or even that the mother, through some delegation, which also happens, would somehow show her child that it is ultimately through charity, through the charity of her conduct and her submission, that she ensures that the father has something. If she were not there to submit... Well. Because the style of her existence obviously consists in—as we have already mentioned—giving to her mother, giving her what the father deprived her of. And giving what one does not have, as you know, is the most beautiful gesture of love. And, in a fantasy that I don't know if you'll find crude, but I'm telling you some pretty crude things about obsessive neurosis because, to tell you the truth, I don't see how you can avoid them since we're wading through reality, I don't really know how to be a little less hands-on myself, but the fantasy, which

is still one of the great fantasies—and which, I must say, is part of the obsessive's lifestyle—is that after giving it to the woman, you get fucked by her. Why am I telling you this? You're going to think it's, I don't know, malicious! [Laughter]. In the story we're studying, there's something wonderful that I don't think has ever been seen in its erotic aspect; I haven't seen it: I mean, I haven't seen any existing psychoanalytic literature about the Rat Man. I would have to get hold of it, but I'm a bit lazy, no doubt, to go and read what has been written, and you know that when you put forward an idea, it's usually the case that someone else has already been there. In the famous episode of the circulation of the debt, of the object of the debt between the postwoman, Lieutenant A, Lieutenant B, and himself, there is no effort of imagination required; but this famous circulation of the object between these four characters, insofar as the obsessive's phantasms are those of absorption, of the intrusion of the object... — as for absorption, I refer you to the famous work of a French psychoanalyst named Bouvet, I don't think many of you

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You knew him, but when I started out, it was on obsessive neurosis, the great theorist; and Bouvet very directly makes the obsessive's absorption of the analyst's phallus something that is likely to put an end to the cure. To tell you that the concern, the fury to heal can go a long way! (Laughter). If the obsessive person gets what they want... but this is obviously a colorful way of describing what it would take to allow the obsessive person to regain a relationship with the phallus that is no longer this insurmountable gap; to the point of turning it into a cannibalistic object as... When you are obsessive, there is immediately, as I mentioned just now, a way of introducing yourself that inevitably comes to mind, which means that I believe the undertaking is quite risky... Well... thanks to this detour, I no longer know where I was myself... [Laughter]. Mr. X. - You were talking about how the obsessive person gets screwed by women! [Laughter]. Ch. Melman - Ah yes. So it's this transmission of the object between these four characters, you don't have to hesitate for a moment, it's a fantasy of... — I'll look for a delicate term! [Laughter] of... passing through crowns, and so that no one is harmed in the affair, because that is the great concern of the obsessive: how to pay one's debt and yet recover it [Laughter] and ensure that the characters who may be intermediaries in the affair also find profit in it. That's why obsessive fantasies, if you take the example of these four characters — then I'll come back to the question of why there are two lieutenants when he knows from the outset that he has been given the wrong information. He knows from the outset that it was the post office clerk who paid for him. But how does his whole scheme work, how does he pay, how does he go with the guy? So he would give the money to the post office clerk, who would give it to the guy, who would give it to the other guy... He has the glasses, that is, the famous instrument that allows him this vision, the famous sovereign vision. So he has the trick. Well, it's, as I was saying just now, an erotic fantasy specific to the obsession of the obsessive in this concern to ensure a circulation of the object that would not harm anyone. Since what he refuses is an exchange—that of having to give up this object—it is an exchange that he considers fraudulent since the enjoyment that could have been experienced at the moment of recognition, that is, the descent from pretense, is therefore

prejudicial to him. As you know, we have entered a globalized economy of exchange on a planetary scale. But the first exchange we have

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dimension, and it is undoubtedly the one that continues to govern us in all our subsequent interactions with our peers, this first interaction is based on the one with the big Other. And in this symbolic pact that is concluded, the obsessive refuses what he considers to be theft.

The question, and I will conclude here tonight, is the question of the homosexuality of the obsessional. What is unique about it is that it is not constructed in the same way as other forms of homosexuality. It is organized in a completely different manner. How so? It is different in that, in his fantasies, there is the idea that he could finally be a homosexual object for a man, in whose fantasy choice we most often readily recognize an older man, an element of this fantasy that I mentioned just now is the idea that at the cost of this sacrifice, a transmission as real will take place; Strangely enough, in the end, it is not fundamentally different from being fucked by a woman, since there too what works in his economy is that he gives it to her as a gift and she generously returns it to him! And we pass it on, don't we?

And one last remark: it is commonly and rightly said that obsessive neurosis is a construct—and Freud calls it superb—there is no construct without mathematics: what is constructed belongs to an order that is necessarily mathematical. What is remarkable for us from a methodological point of view is to note how much speculation there is on the unary trait, on the place of numbers in the unconscious, even on the value of zero, on the fact that the unconscious may, according to what I propose, have an understanding of so-called real numbers. I believe that from a methodological point of view, this is obviously of the utmost importance to us, since we would find there, if we are not mistaken, confirmation of theses that might otherwise seem abstract... a vain and unfounded abstraction, outside of Lacan's words. Now, it seems clear that we are seeing at work in the unconscious mechanisms that not only perfectly isolate what would be the unary trait, but also numbers—I mean numbers—found elsewhere, isolated elsewhere by mathematicians, or even qualities such as those of the transfinite. So you see how, through this setup, we come back to the question of the obsessive's doubt and also to the question of why, for him, the count is never right. Doubt, of course, because if we can no longer even trust numbers to be sure that the total is correct, then who can we really trust? And on the other hand, how can we know if this excessive concern for justice, that is, for equalization, which I was talking about earlier, how can we know if it has been achieved? Because even with numbers, isn't it... let's suppose that in his unconscious, it's always about deciding...

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males, or rather the approach of a limit that can never be reached, how can we be sure of the accuracy of the result? And finally, I will conclude with this last point: I drew your attention to the prevalence of his 1 1/2 symptomatology—remember?—which you find everywhere, but

since this $1 \frac{1}{2}$ originates from him, I mean symptoms that "recur a year and a half later." Okay. It is obvious that with $1 \frac{1}{2}$ you find the two numbers around which I have based my presentation today. You find the beginning of a sequence... the beginning of a sequence $1 + \dots \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{8} \dots$ which is a convergent sequence that never arrives... whose limit is 2, no matter how far you go.

So we are obviously dealing with something a little bit magical here. But... but what? It is up to us to try to decipher this magic. The risk, the great risk in science—and this has been one of the great difficulties of science—is that of analogy. For us, it is even more complicated because analogy is at work in the unconscious. I mean, it is not because we are faced with manifestations that seem to be related only by their analogy that we are necessarily mistaken. The unconscious works by analogy. But this is not a matter of analogy. It would seem that we can, through references that may seem abstract, account for a clinical situation that would otherwise remain subject to purely intuitive and poetic apprehension.

Well, that's it for tonight. Any comments?

Mr. X. - Last time, you mentioned the problem of "finishing." It turns out that there are languages in which "to enjoy" and "to finish" are the same word. Ch. Melman - Yes. But that is precisely why, in therapy, the analyst may eventually have to impose an end. It's the only thing, really. It's, how shall I put it? It seems to me that it's symbolically richer—whether it's successful or not—than trying to get that end to be introjected in the form I mentioned earlier, with, for example, the speculations of Mr. Bouvet. The fact that the analyst imposes an end to the treatment clearly shows that in some cases he may have no other recourse. So we would obviously have to account for this way of doing things... not just in a global, intuitive way, but by understanding how it might work. But in any case, it fully accounts for the analyst's sensitivity to what would be the internal impossibility for the obsessive to... So is it

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an internal impossibility or is it merely its refusal? That is to say, its concern with maintaining this denial of what counts as a term? Perla Dupuis - I don't think it's too much of a stretch to say that what you've just brought up about series, about continuity... is a verification of the fact that reality is woven by numbers? Ch. Melman - Yes, yes, yes... of course. B. Vandermersch - In the story of the four characters in the crown of the Rat Man, there is also a whole meaning around that, a historical meaning. It seems that his father... did not marry the young girl... is that right, and that there is a whole interpretation of this phantasmagoria as a kind of reparation, of taking on the father's debt... And well, in short, you are inviting us here in a certain way... well... to gradually annihilate all this meaning in order to arrive, in the end, at a structure that is simply that nothing must be lost, nothing must be created in this matter. Ch. Melman - Listen... I don't think we're annihilating this whole dimension. B. Vandermersch - Not annihilating, I mean reducing. Ch. Melman - I don't think reducing it, I mean that just because I shed light on one aspect, that doesn't mean that the others, being in the shadows, are suddenly eliminated; it's not

possible to maintain everything at the same time... on the contrary... the father's debt... — and I will come back to the problem of the specificity of this debt one day, won't I? Why is it a particularly tormenting debt for the Rat Man? But the father's debt obviously remains the essential thing. That doesn't prevent him, since basically his system is to succeed in repairing everything at once and without it costing anyone anything. It's an extremely subtle accounting system, I would say. It's like a company's balance sheet... Debit, credit... There are fantastic sums that are exact, strictly exact to the penny, aren't they? \$1,298,879.74, isn't it? You find that in the debit register and you find exactly the same amount in the credit register—well, that's the kind of accounting exercise that obsessive people devote themselves to. Okay. See you next month.