

Lecture at Professor Deniker's Clinic, Hôpital Sainte-Anne

Jacques Lacan

. . . cleared away the rubble with my discourse . . .
in truth, I articulated these things for ten years; this first clearing away, of course, bore upon the unconscious, and I had already, in what I had done before on my own, started to *present* Freudism.

I presented something that concerned Dora and then Little Hans; the word *presentation* is utterly essential.

I was gradually led to a presentation of the unconscious as arranged, arranged mathematically. That is only a presentation.

I presented these things under the form that already involved the Borromean knot.

What I call the Borromean knot I had already announced before 1953 in a lecture that I had given in this very place. Why call these circles Borromean because each holds via the other, is linked to the other by the third? Here the imaginary is what links the real and the symbolic.

From this, I started to announce in a form that assures the predominance of the symbolic over the real that it was the imaginary that linked them.

The imaginary is precisely what realizes mathematical reasoning.

Mathematical reasoning, properly speaking, has an imaginary consistency; what gives its consistency to mathematical reasoning under the name of topology is a part of the link by which the symbolic and the real depend on each other.

That's why I had knotted the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real in a certain way.

The imaginary sustains what we call the real and that's how topology is articulated.

The symbolic in relation to the real, the symbolic, that is, language, is really what states, what could be stated under the name of the unconscious.

And that is, in fact, why the real *is* the unconscious.

It's the unconscious, and that means something that I defined as impossible.

The unconscious *is* the impossible, that is, what we construct with language; in other words, a scam.

The association of ideas is the restoration of a little happiness; it's by this path of a little happiness that we proceed to liberate someone for what we call the symptom.

I sometimes wonder if it wouldn't have been better to play upon what is called the psychological. The thing that absolved me from that is what we call structure.

There are surely structures that are psychological, but that aren't defined in relation to the relative positions of the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real.

For in the Borromean knot, the real is placed in order there by the imaginary, and that's why I chose to state mathematical reasoning as primary.

It is in what we imagine of the Borromean knot that resides what makes the real dependent on the imaginary.

The unconscious *is the symbolic*, and that's how it holds on to the real. It holds onto the real and even puts it in place. That's how language regulates the real.

That's why I state that the real is impossible. It is completely impossible that language should regulate the real.

It is equally impossible that something presents itself as non-orientable; that's what trained me to *symbolize* how it is with the unconscious with what is called a Moebius strip.

In the unconscious, one is *disoriented*.

The preeminence of the symbolic over the real is, properly speaking, what constitutes the unconscious.

That there should be psychological incidences in all this is what kept me from recognizing it as such.

The unconscious is what imposes its law on the real.

Between mathematical reasoning and the unconscious there is all the difference of a link that imposes its law on the real.

That's why the real is there in the role of an intermediary.

This is also what I tried for with topology, that is, what one could consider as being more advanced than mathematical reasoning.

This is also why I tried to understand, to *present* what there was of the unconscious.

—translated by Dan Collins

Note

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