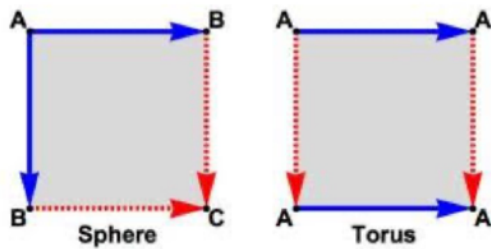# Blah Blah Blah

D. Kunze

Figure 1. Reference polygons for the sphere and torus, showing that a torus is, fundamentally, a sphere with a hole in it. Both figures, when 'immersed' into 3-space, are continent. The torus' best example is a bicycle tire. However, Lacan uses the torus to thematize the relation of demand, as the circular movement around the tube, and desire, the circle formed around the central void as the repetitions of demand spiral. For Lacan, demand is any speech to the Other, and repetition and demand are synonymous.

Nonsense is what happens when we subject our claim to exist, as an extension of our thinking about existing, to scrutiny. The Cartesian confidence of saying *cogito ergo sum* can be graphically traced to the intersection of two Venn circles, one labeled 'I think', the other 'I am'. If Euler circles replace the Venn ones, there is a union between thinking and being but no intersection. The lozenge-shaped 'overlap' is a void, owing to the Euler circle's pledge to cover only those conditions that can be encountered in 'everyday life'. Where Venn circles think nothing of falling into the routine of representing any and every logical condition and relation, the Euler circle 'has its principles'. If something is impossible, it simply refuses the assignment. Thus, for the Lacanian case of the Real, which is as impossible as things get, the Euler circle, not the Venn circle, is the only graphic means of designating the presence of the otherwise un-symbolizable Real. And, in the world of Lacan & Co., with its three domains of the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real (represented famously by the Borromeo knot, where each pair of rings is held together by a third: R+S=I, S+I=R, R+I=S), then you would lose a third of your business with Mr. Venn. The graphics contract is, accordingly, awarded to Mr. Euler.

Although topology and projective surfaces (see Fig. 1) are something many Lacanians would wish would go away, we cannot avoid Lacan's insistence on the 'toroid' nature of the subject-who-speaks. The diagram known as the 'reference polygon' tells the story. Both the sphere and the torus are, in their Euclidean existences, continent — that is, they can hold air or water or whatever you put inside them. They keep the inside from the outside. The torus, however, is a sphere with a hole in it in such a way that continence is retained in 3-space but lost in 2-space. This can be demonstrated by cutting a torus in a twisted cut that shows it to be the result of two Möbian surfaces.
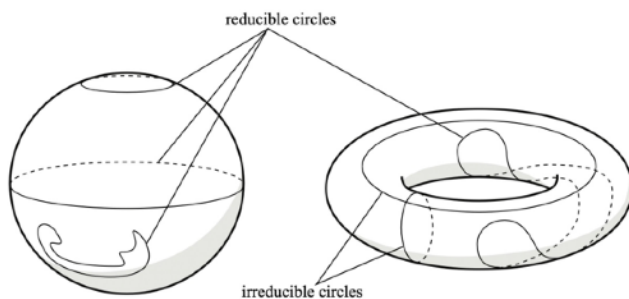

Figure 2. A comparison of the sphere and torus in terms of reducible and irreducible circles. Source, Will Greenshields (2016). A reducible circle, a curved disk, is one that can shrink to a point, an irreducible circle cannot. Like the Euler curve, it cannot trespass across a void, therein lies its relation to the psyche.

You can draw only reducible circles on a sphere, but on a torus you can draw not just one but two kinds of irreducible circles. The first is a benefit to bicycle riders, since thanks to it the tire will remain inflated. The second, around the circuit of the 'tire', is to the benefit of everyone, since this is the topology of our body's skin, which continues its coverage uninterrupted from the mouth to the anus. It is our

bagel–nature. But, considering the number and variety of distinctions we make out of tasting, eating, engorging, digesting, and shitting, our *fantasies* set up check–points at every 'opening' to mark border crossing, wanted and unwanted, real and imagined, fortunate and unfortunate, late or early. The irreducible circle is unable to trespass a void. Like the Euler circle and the Borromeo knot, any contiguous relationship is held together, or rather 'structured', thanks to a third element characterized by absence — hence the confederacy of 'thirdness' that merges negation, void, transgression, and impossibility. A good Lacanian would have to say, 'I think I smell the Unconscious here!'

·	e	a	b	c
e	e	a	b	c
a	a	e	c	b
b	b	c	e	a
c	c	b	a	e

Figure 3. The Klein–Cayley matrix.

The matrix known as the 'Klein–Cayley' square tells the story, not just of the Borromeo knot's two–by–one dependency, but of the entire idea of continence and incontinence, which I want to connect to the relation of the speaking subject to fantasy and, when fantasy fails, the Real (Fig. 3). In the Klein–Cayley matrix, each element paired with itself and the place–holder 'e' yields identity. Each of the 'a', 'b', and 'c' elements, when paired, yield the third. This is as much as saying that 2d relationships involve an *embodiment*, what in the mathematics of the Klein–Cayley group is called rigidity: the bicycle tire remains inflated, the bagel will support cream cheese, and the body, thank God, will not shit in its pants, at least not without being scared out of its wits.

Think of it this way. Imagine a kingdom on a small planet whose tyrannical monarch wished to expand his domain. More and more stones are needed to expand the ever–growing defensive wall, until the point is reached when the wall meets the globe's circumferential limit, the great circle. Past this, the wall–builders are baffled. Territory is enlarged, the kingdom increases, but every new wall returns stones rather than demanding more. Construction speeds up and finally the 'wilderness' is conquered. No longer is it a vast unknown expanse but a small garden. This would never happen on a toroidal planet (such as the miniature planets we call our bodies). 'Rigidity' is maintained, by which is meant that, thanks to the Borromean principle, things hold together thanks to some third, *non-tangent* thing. This third thing is not simply a minus to every plus, but an 'unassimilable' element where the idea of negation itself is defused. As in the dream, where we may meet dead friends and relatives and binary signifiers lose their powers of confrontation, the third zone becomes, for the two that are united, an invisible force–field, both outside and, like some kind of glue or magnetism, inside. Lacan of course had the good sense to give this quality a name: *extimité*. In effect, the topology of this first–named inside-out-ness preceded the naming of the things affected, which, like the torus, *itself switches around*: first the Imaginary and the Symbolic (held together by the Real); then the Symbolic and the Real, united in marriage by the Imaginary; then the Imaginary and the Real, good friends thanks to the Symbolic, who never shows up for their meetings. The Borromeo rules for Lacan's RSI domains is a principle of *the same*. The knot, the 'rigid body' of physics, is the principle that the body moves along with all its parts in space. And, in time, when it wakes up in the morning it is the same person that went to sleep.

This is not a pleasure experienced by non-speaking beings who do not have the benefit of the RSI system and its 'remote glue'. The famous butterfly implicated by the Taoist philosopher Zhuangzi might conceivably dream of being a human being, but it would not trouble itself to consider the *fantasy* correlate of this dream, the opposite condition. The Imaginary–Real of the dream would be supportable only
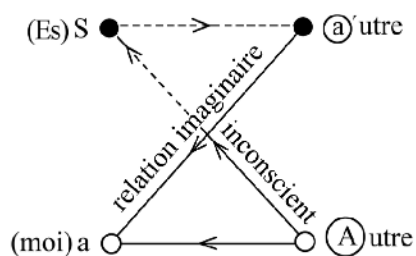
Figure 5. Lacan's L-schema, showing the *relation imaginaire* as the vector of the blah blah blah. This is the connection of the Analysand's Imaginary ego (a) with the Analyst's (a'), the Other as object provoking transference. For the unconscious (*Autre*) to break through this barrier, the Analyst must find weak points: slips of the tongue, repetitions, or bungled explanations — grouped under the heading of 'parapraxis'.
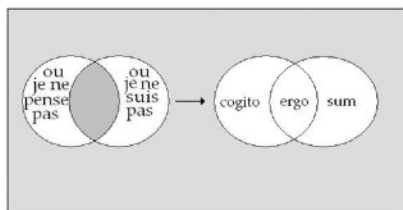

Figure 6. Lacan's diagrams for the negative and positive versions of Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*. For his version (left), Euler circles replace the Venn ones that cover all Boolean conditions and are thought to be the ground of any possible science. Instead, Lacan asserts that psychoanalysis comes from the *objet petit a* that is the only possible name for the in-between of either not thinking or not being. 'Ergo' becomes the 'bungled explanation'.

through the Symbolic construct. No 'S', no glue for the I–R, remotely beaming in its proposition of reversed conditions (Žižek 1989: 45–49; Möller 1999). Butterflies have 'rigid bodies' no doubt, but they do not have the benefit of metempsychosis and would not be caught dead in a Taoist philosopher.

Lacan's point in Seminar XIV, *The logic of phantasy* (1966–1967), is that there is structure to what would seem not to require or obey the rules of structure, let alone a structure coming from projective geometry, Euler circles, or Klein–Cayley groups. However, the 'principle of rigidity' of the absent third holding any two elements in a fixed relationship despite the lack of any apparent bond — rays from outer space??? — would seem the stuff of science fiction, where the most futuristic fictions are grounded in a science whose books we never bothered to check out of the library. As Greenshields complains (2016: 158),

It is a reputation from which Lacan's topologisation of psychoanalysis has never quite managed to extricate itself: the impression of utter superfluity, an unnecessary extra layer of self-indulgent difficulty that has come to represent the worst excesses of Lacanian obscurity. And yet, there is, throughout Lacan's work, the frequently asserted declaration of topology's non-trivial and self-evident relevance to psychoanalysis — its supreme precision cutting through the obscurantism that language, no matter how concise, invariably generates — which critics find as, if not more, off-putting. How could it possibly be appropriate to point to a tangle of rings, as Lacan did, and say not only that this peculiar weave is the most suitable support of the psychoanalytic subject but — further scandalising those who expect a little more post-structuralism inspired hand–wringing when it comes to the stability of representation from their continental thinkers — also straightforwardly assert that such a depiction is not a metaphor, image or model?

Since neither the torus nor the Borromeo knot nor the Klein–Cayley group nor the Euler circle allow us to draw anything lying flat on a piece of paper; nor do they allow us to attempt to designate the impossible without some cut, rip, or origami fold — this saying that both the medium and the message must be left inside the burning building set on fire by the Real; nor do they allow us to think that *the same* (the 'rigidity' of the subject and its

Figure 4. Emblems related to architecture frequently involved dividers/compasses pointing to the heavens then, with 'practice', the earth. Is this not a forerunner of modern linguistic's division of language and speech, or Lacan's distinction of speech's content (*énoncé*) from the speech act (*énonciation*)?

body) depends on *an argument*, we have to give in to topology of the projective plane, its significance, but also its *everyday reality*. This is psychoanalysis's achievement and gift to the world, we had better not squander it! With one hand, it points to the stars, with the other, it indicates not just the ground we walk on but the very *dirt* that mingles with our discarded thoughts, guilty feelings, and unwanted/suppressed truths. In this, the emblem for psychoanalysis would have to be borrowed, thanks to the chronology that delayed its official beginnings to the historical era of Sigmund Freud, from architecture, where the emblem tradition combines the heavenly and mundane with dividers pointing in opposite directions (Tung 1994; Fig. 4).

The Blah Blah Blah

The groundwork of the downward cast dividers brings us to the issue of blah blah blah. A short introduction would be that the blah blah blah is the 'bread and butter' of psychoanalysis. Let's see where it came from. When Freud visited Italy and France to inspect the great works of art, he was influenced by the thesis of one 'Giovanni Morelli', actually the Russian scholar Ivan Lermolieff, which claimed that the test of authenticity of any painting was to be found not in the general subject matter, or majesty of technique, but rather in the mostly unnoticed details — fingernails, aureoles, ear–lobes, etc. — where no one would think to look (Ginzburg 1989: 96–125; Freud 1914). Even if it's saying too much to credit Morelli's thesis with the birth of psychoanalysis's central idea of chain–of–consciousness (allowing the Analysand to rattle on whatever comes into his/her mind), it would not be out of bounds to connect this idea to modernism's interest in the mundane, particularly in the writings of James Joyce, where *Ulysses* did its double caliper thing by finding how the details of a day in Dublin could be pre-figured by Homer's poem about the itinerant hero of Troy.

The logic of the blah blah blah is 'the lower the better', to the point where any jewel would be covered with grime, and pearls would be cast down to meet the snouts of swine 1:1. Analysis could be compared to a treasure hunt for jewels so successfully hidden by the 'trash-talk' of the blah blah blah that only the Unconscious can be credited for such devious misdirection. This 'only if' argument is an inference, but it is an inference that is the grounding presupposition of psychoanalysis *as a science*. In this, it becomes the alternative to the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*. As Lacan discusses laboriously in Seminar XIV, the *ergo* occupies the position of 'union without intersection' that is evident if the Euler circle, not the Venn, is allowed to map the territory. As shown in the diagram (Fig. 6), the question whether either I'm not thinking or I'm not existing — both negatives to be sure — is answered by a void. By replacing the positive *ergo*, the inferential, Lacan makes the point that, although not speaking and not being can be logically articulated, to hear them *voiced* means a joke is being played. Like the Cretan Liar who undercuts his own credibility, the *act of speaking* (the voice) by saying he's one of a group that is incapable of telling the truth, the psychoanalytical subject, by covering its pearls in the shit of blah blah blah tells 'the truth *about* the truth'. Psychoanalysis is therefore a science of this 'truth *about* the truth', a *secondary* science but secondary only in the sense that, although it is encountered *first*, it implicates something that is *logically prior*. Historical firstness and
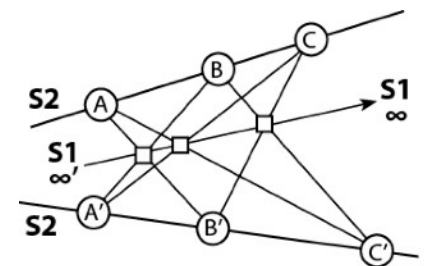
Figure 7. Pappus' Theorem, showing the 'chirality' of the eigenvector (S1/S1) produced by the crisscross relations of two sets of randomly placed points on two randomly placed lines. I have used S1 and S2 to designate, respectively, the connection to the eigenvector to the 'Unconscious truth of truth' of psychoanalysis, and the S2 lines as representing the 'any' of the blah blah blah.

logical secondness of the blah blah blah means that the truth of truth is discovered *retroactively*. Its 'instance' comes first in experience, but it indicates that 'something else has come before'.

It's not just interesting but necessary to mention another important connection. When Pappus of Alexandria discovered projective geometry in 300 a.d., he additionally discovered that it was *logically prior* to the geometry that had existed for six centuries. Even more incredible is the fact that Pappus' famous theorem is *itself about the role of retroaction*. How? The simplest graphic form of Pappus' Theorem shows two lines drawn on a sheet of paper, at any angle. On each of these lines (S2's in Fig. 7), three points are placed at any distance from each other (imagine A, B, C and A', B', C'). If the dots are connected by *inverse pairs* (A to B, A' to A; B to C', B' to C; A to C', A' to C) an amazing thing happens at the intersections: the crosses are co-linear; they lie along a *single straight line* (S1/S1 in Fig. 7). This graphic theorem is a version of what Lacan says happens with overlapping Euler circles. The overlap is a void, but the void is *symmetrical* and *different* (Lacan 1962: 180, 184) in such a way that we can point to the fact that this 'void' of the Unconscious is simultaneously a Real *and* chiralistic — that is, it has a left-handed and right-handed version, just as chirality (the A-to-B'/A'-to-B) produced Pappus's famous theorem.

Lacan does not mention Pappus anywhere, but he does cite in several key places the work of the 16c. architect and geometer, Girard Desargues, who re-discovered Pappus and elaborated his theorems to create a non-Euclidean method of drawing perspectives as well as a stereotomy for stone-cutting. Although it was beyond the willingness or capabilities of the masons of his time, Desargues and his close friend Blaise Pascal elaborated variations on Pappus' any–every space, calling it 'projective' on behalf of its revisionary impact on perspective drawings (Schneider 1983). Desargues' writings were rejected in his own time. Jacques Curabelle wrote in 1644 that one could 'find nothing in them but mediocrity, errors, plagiarism, and information of no practical interest'. Even Schneider, in his dissertation, blamed Desargues for the entirety of the Industrial Revolution: 'As a friend of Rene Descartes and Marin Mersenne, Desargues participated in the development of the mechanistic world–view which accompanied the emergence of experimental science and the renewed interest in mathematics and geometry as axiomatic, deductive systems' (i). Blah blah blah. Whatever architecture educators have done to discredit projective geometry in the late 20c., Lacan was already promoting as the topology of the unconscious. And, however much, as Greenshields laments, Lacanians themselves were complaining and/or ignoring this new kind of virtual space, Lacan himself was diversifying his holdings. From the Mirror Stage on, the idea of projective geometry as a tangible, fungible, and element of the speaking subject's unconscious became an indispensable assumption. There simply was no other way to explain just how the psychoanalytical human was not able, as Freud put it, to be a 'master in his own house'.

The non-master is in fact the Master of Lacan's Master's discourse: a master who, demanding recognition, structures a situation in which this recognition will be impossible. Drawing his irony from Alexandre Kojève's famous lectures on Hegel's *Phenomenology* to Parisian intellectuals in the 1930s (1969). The Master, thanks to his *demand*, creates a toroidal situation. The demand for recognition applies to *any* other potential master, but the qualification for this Other is that he be capable of being a master himself. The implication is that, to resolve this rivalry completely, nothing less than a fight to the death is required. A simple extrapolation leads to the conclusion that, the Master, having eliminated all competition, will *ipso facto* have eliminated all potential sources of respect. The only subjects left after this iterative elimination will be the servant–subject given a forced choice: to give respect or die. Servitude then as now will be a

matter of ironic respect formally given but in reality withheld. Like Lacan's example of the forced choice (the robber who demands 'Your money or your life!') neither alternative works because of the circularity that flips conditions and consequences at the same time — again, the theme of *symmetrical difference*, with its tacit acknowledgement of Pappus' famous Theorem.

If the blah blah blah of the Analysand of psychoanalysis is in any way connected to the 'anywhere' of the dots and lines in Pappus' Theorem, it is in the form of symmetrical difference that we meet up with it in Lacan's interest in the region between the two Euler circles denying, in Cretan fashion, thought and being. The Cretan in essence shows that it is possible to say anything, including things that discredit our very *act* of saying them … but that this possibility runs up against a void of its own creation, in effect making any speaking subject, automatically, a creature: a being with a hole in it, thanks to its own speech (= demand, an expectation of a response from an Other) in its preferred form of the line that circles back to its origin point but 'gets nothing' and so moves on to a repeat circling.

	true?	believed?	justifiable?
knowledge	1	1	1
faith	1	1	0
resistance	1	0	1
ignorance	1	0	0
error	0	1	1
rumor	0	1	0
rationalization	0	0	1
science	0	0	0

Figure 8. The Gettier Table, shown here as expanded by Dan Collins (2019), shows that justification attempts to validate three kinds of 'failed truth': resistance, error, and rationalization, all commodities of the psychoanalytical blah blah blah. If fact, justification is the essence of the Symbolic as it *imagines* itself to be true, at least 'true for someone' who is intending to misrepresent.

In my adopted/annotated version of Pappus' Theorem, I have suggested that the 'anywhere' lines are the S_2 … S_2 Lacan uses to designate the signifying chain. In particular, this chain is the 'nothing in particular' of the blah blah blah. Although speaking subjects intend their signifying chains to mean something and get a response, from the perspective of Analysis they are all reducible to blah blah blah — i. e. nothing more than what the subject *believes* to be an effective way of gaining recognition from the Imaginary Other. Ultimately, this belief is not justifiable, because, as Dan Collins has shown (2019), justification is ruled out by Science but a component of what the subject *imagines* to be true, even when (as in the case of rationalization) he/she doesn't actually believe it to be true. Justification is particularly interesting to psychoanalysis in the case of resistance, where truth that is justifiable is nonetheless believed to not exist — the essence of the symptom.[1]

The expanded Gettier Field could be considered as a *catalogue raisonné* of the blah blah blah and, hence, a grammar of the Imaginary vector that constitutes the barrier to the Unconscious but, simultaneously, the place where there is buried treasure. As the binary numbers show, the Field is simultaneously different and symmetrical. It is the subject–as–impostor, caught in the act of imposture. Justification is the *charade* element, covering over, for the sake of argument, what is either not true or not actually believed. Since humans' speech interactions for almost always fail the Gettier test of Justified True

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[1] I have converted Collins' pluses and minuses into binary 0s and 1s to show that the Gettier Field he has expanded to eight cases is, in binary number terms, a count from 0 (science) to 7 (knowledge). As binary numbers, it is easier to demonstrate situations of symmetry and reversal. 'Palindromic' conditions include knowledge, resistance, rumor, and science. Reversible 'twins' are faith (110) and rationalization (001) and ignorance (100) and error (011). The pairings are intuitive. Flips (faith and error; rationalization and ignorance) seem able to write the histories of notable conflicts, even in our own times.

Belief *by definition* (see Gettier 1963)*,* imposture and charade tint the Imaginary of the Symbolic — the way we picture our interactions with others, making the Real the *odd man out*, or, as Alenka Zupančič has put it *the odd man in* — the element that is simultaneously expelled and radically central in the life of the subject. While the aim of comedy would seem to be the expulsion of the scapegoat or fool, the actual result is a demonstration of the centrality of the fool in the social order, and a radical centrality of idiocy in the individual subject. Void as center, center as void. Think of the torus.

If our speech is never the right mix of justified true belief, and even science is a statutory abstention from relying on JTB for anything, then in essence *all discourse* is fundamentally blah blah blah, with the only distinction being the markers we put in to call out others on their zeros and ones. Although no scholar in the area of fool studies has tried this out, they have intuited the territory by which the religious zealot becomes the True Believer who berates others with idiotic justifications. In an important sense, the Gettier Field is the sports field discourse, with boundary lines continually erased and relocated. As those even mildly familiar with Freud's writings go, the joke plays a big role in showing that the Unconscious regards error, folly, and idiocy as its personal playground, and is the one most responsible for moving the boundaries and goal-posts around.

In the Witz in particular, we have an incredibly efficient way of demonstrating the Borromeo 2/1 principle. When a connection needs to be made in a joke, it is never given; the joke allows the listener to supply it silently. Sometimes the joke itself is about the silent connection. Mrs. Greenberg attends her dying husband. In despair, she asks him what is final wishes are. 'Marry Feinman' he replies. 'Feinman!' she exclaims with surprise, 'But, he's your worst enemy!' 'That's right'. In this metaleptic performance, the listener supplies the silent middle term at the same time poor Mrs. Greenberg figures out that her marriage was not the perfect union she had always that it was. The name of the rhetorical trick of silencing the middle is the enthymeme, and we can imagine a syllogism where the 'middle term' is literally the element connecting the term in the major premise with the term in the second, which will constitute the synthetic connection. Socrates is a man, all men are mortal, therefore Socrates is mortal. The big deal is that the middle term 'man/men' must not just be known before these statements, but we must understand it as a hinge between the local and the universal, something that can have a '*any*-one' and, explicitly, an *every*-one. Without thinking, we glide from local to universal; and silently we add this glide whenever the we hear the predication 'Socrates is, after all, only human'.

The enthymeme is useful when persuading others of something personal, when opinions are likely to differ from individual to individual but where a common action is required. If the differences were to be exposed, as logic would require, the argument would fail. If the middle term is silenced so that *individual* listeners are required to supply it on their own, the result is more likely to be consensus. Is this not a case of the 2/1 Borromeo principle? Is not discourse at its best when its blah blah blah level is turned up to max?

This is the thesis put forward by A. M. Klein, the Canadian poet and enthusiast of James Joyce as a dedicated user of the theories of Giambattista Vico, the Neapolitan cultural theorist. Joyce admired Vico's thesis of the 'ideal eternal history', a sequence of three ages (gods, heroes, men, mirrored in their respective 'expressive', 'representative', and conceptual' mentalities) that he had, according to Klein, applied the Vichian sequence to the Dalkey episode in *Ulysses* — down to the structure of individual sentences.

Klein's analysis was so thoroughgoing that many of his colleagues thought that he was succumbing to psychosis. My thesis is that over-determination on this scale is the essence of the blah blah blah's necessary correlation with 'epiphany', and have as evidence that Joyce elsewhere defined his own collection of epiphanies as over-heard conversations that meant nothing to any outsider and very little to those who were actually the conversants. The excision of such 'snippets' of speech revealed an inner revelational content, an *agalma* of which the interlocutors were completely unaware — *hence* the connection to the Unconscious.

The enthymeme logic of silencing the middle, connective term is both Borromean and poetically over-determinative. But, of more importance is the way that the enthymeme seems not just to enjoy but require the blah blah blah as its preferred ground and atmospheric medium. As a 'basis phenomenon', the blah blah blah is the 'zero degree' that Roland Barthes wrote of in *Le degré zéro de l'écriture* (1953). In what for me is the most revolutionary chapter in that book, 'Writing and

Of Gods	The phrase the world had remembered	The phrase of impatience, thud of wings, noise up above, thunder, which primitive man thought was God reproving his bestiality.
Of Heroes	A general speaking to his officers, leaned upon his spear.	The general, of course, is patrician. So is his weapon; Vico (paragraphs 112 and 562) makes a point of the fact tht the Latin word for citizens, *quirites* is from *quiris*, a spear.

Figure 9. James Joyce (left) and A. M. Klein (right). Below is a sample of Klein's analysis of the Dalkey Chapter of *Ulysses*, with Joyce's text in the middle column, Klein's annotation on the right, and Vico's designation of the first two eras of humankind on the left.

Silence', Barthes describe the pure poetry of language intentionally bleached of color. Without naming it, Barthes defines the blah blah blah as depending on 'the existence of a third term, called a neutral term or zero element; thus between the subjunctive and imperative moods [the proposition and the argument or instruction], the indicative is according to them an amodal form … writing at the degree zero' (76). The zero degree is not simply a pharmacological antidote to binary signification; it is the gateway to the Unconscious, not for us to visit and survey but to offer an escape route for contents concealed by Nothing.

There exists, although I have not been able to trace its whereabouts, software capable of removing all vocalizations recognized as words from recorded speech. The left-overs are the sighs, puffs, gasps, murmurs, coughs, and wheezes that, when all is said and done, fill speech out with its emotive life. This extracted breath, deprived of the body it had animated, lives on, like the smile of the Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland* (Alice: 'Well! I've often seen a cat without a grin … but a grin without a cat! It's the most curious thing i ever saw in my life!'). Carroll has put his finger upon it: the zero degree of the blah blah

blah is portable and metempsychotic, able to sneak into other 'unwitting vessels' and animate them, as would a voice of a ventriloquist would his/her dummy. The object that speaks is not the exception, it is the rule. This is precisely what happens in psychoanalysis, when the Analysand–dummy is reduced or self-reduces to the blah blah blah of the 'stream of consciousness'. This stream is Lucretian, in that meaning emerges as a *clinamen* or swerve of signifiers around the gaps, gasps, pauses, jerks, and puffs that are 'lipograms' in that flow, invisible but solid voids, rigid thanks to their Klein–Cayley 2/1 ratio, a bond that is 'symptomatic' in its relation to the 1 that is not simply numeric but the *unary trait* that is the signifier signifying itself, the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*: words about words, in other words, blah blah blah.

We know it's portable because blah blah blah weakens the immune system of the speaking organism to the point where it is easily infected. The Unconscious is something that *happens*, obeying more or less the rules of contagious transmission, air-born, food-born, or surface contact. It is not just symptomatic, it *is* the symptom. You get sick when you are at your weakest, when you are blah blah blah-iest.

Given that all of these relate to the toroid skin of the subject's body, we might relate this zero degree of the instance of infection to the 'any' of Pappus and Desargues — how random alignment and locale nonetheless determine a *vector*, and not just any vector, an *eigen*-vector. Strictly speaking, this is the mathematical entity found in linear equations, for example factor analysis, where a number of seemingly unrelated correlations have an invisible line, a hinge or fold, about which all variance revolves. The eigenvector eludes definition. It is not the result of some A-to-B relationship. It is emergent and character-istic; it *character-izes*. If the two lines Pappus drew on the sheet of paper were real; and if the points he randomly placed on those lines were real, the line discovered by the co-linearity of crisscrossing those points — in a sense folding the space *around* the two lines — is even more real. It is the plague to the cold, the amputation to the scratch, the atomic explosion to the fire-cracker. It is authentic due to a *difference in degree*.
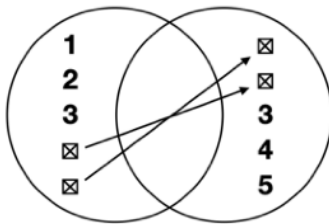

Figure 10. When two Euler circles overlap, the resulting intersection is a void that creates, in the two adjacent circles, a *lack* that is symmetrical. This is, in logical terms, 'union without intersection', which Lacan connected to the situation of the forced choice and, later, the Lying Cretan Paradox.

The Orthogonal, or the Perfect Shadow

Returning to Figure 4, emblems of Theory and Practice using large dividers to point, respectively, to the heavens and to earth, can we imagine getting rid of this middle man and lady? This is already done in the language of emblem construction, since the figures are present as agencies rather than historical personages. They are the *actions* of relating, first, to the heavens, then, second, the return to the earth, a *zu Grunde Gehen*, what Hegel singled out as 'absolute recoil'. This is not the literal 'falling to pieces' but, as Žižek explains, the 'relationship of reflection, [where] every term (every determination) is posited (mediated) by another (its opposite)….' In the case of self-cancelation — i. e. with blah blah blah's zero degree, 'essence is no longer directly determined by an external Other [environment, relationships, etc.] [r]ather it determines itself, it is "within itself the absolute recoil upon itself" — the gap, or discord, that introduces dynamism into it is absolutely immanent' (2014: 4; quoting Hegel 1989: 444).
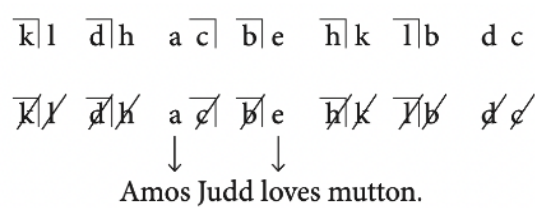
Zu Grunde Gehen taken literally is what the figure in Figure 4 is doing literally, 'going to ground', but let's imagine that it is, as Barthes says, not in the imperative or subjective mood but in the *indicative*. After all, the dividers are pointing, and doing so with an instrument that transmits an angle, a proportion. This

is a 1:x:1, not a 1:1, heaven to earth. It is heaven to earth with a silent middle, an enthymemic transmission bleached of any coloration to qualify it as this or that. This is the pure condition of the Euler circles in overlap position, where there is difference with symmetry. This requires a circulation of the elements excluded by the overlap, about the lozenge–shaped void (Fig. 10).

How is this related to the blah blah blah of discourse, the *Imaginary* of the *Symbolic*, in terms of the two Lacanian domains held together by the Real (the void)? The answer has been playfully supplied by Lewis Carroll, who has already clarified the matter of the unary trait in terms of the portable smile of the Cheshire Cat. If we were grateful to him for clearing up one Lacanian mystery, we will be thoroughly in his debt for bringing light to an even more difficult situation. In his *Symbolic Logic*, Carroll devises a means of constructing puzzles called 'The Amos Judd Puzzles'. These are numbered statements about Amos Judd and his associates, about seemingly random things. They are an example of blah blah blah at its best.

(1) All the policemen on this beat sup with our cook;

(2) No man with long hair can fail to be a poet;

(3) Amos Judd has never been in prison;

(4) Our cook's 'cousins' all love cold mutton;

(5) None but policemen on this beat are poets;

(6) None but her 'cousins' ever sup with our cook;

(7) Men with short hair have all been in prison.

However, if we carefully assign letters to these statements, we designate: a = Amos Judd; b = cousins of our cook; c = having been in prison; d = long-haired; e = loving cold mutton; h = poets; k = policemen on this beat; l = supping with our cook. Fortunately, the logician George Spencer-Brown has applied his notation system to allow a fast analysis:

$$\overline{k}|l \quad \overline{d}|h \quad a\,\overline{c}| \quad \overline{b}|e \quad \overline{h}|k \quad \overline{l}|b \quad d\,c$$

$$\overline{\cancel{k}}|\cancel{l} \quad \overline{\cancel{d}}|\cancel{h} \quad a\,\overline{\cancel{c}}| \quad \overline{\cancel{b}}|e \quad \overline{\cancel{h}}|\cancel{k} \quad \overline{\cancel{l}}|\cancel{b} \quad \cancel{d}\,\cancel{c}$$

$$\downarrow \qquad\qquad \downarrow$$

Amos Judd loves mutton.

With this graphic conversion, we see immediately that Carroll has taken all but two of the elements and doubled them, once in a predicat-*ing* position, and again in a predicat-*ed* position. The middle is silenced by separating them to join other predicating and predicated elements to compose such statements as 'None but her "cousins" ever sup with our cook'. The nonsense quality of these clues makes us despair until we have discovered Carroll's method of composition. The 'answer' is not existential. It is a statement of the understanding of the *logic of composition,* a 'circulation about the void of meaning' — in effect, a 'writing degree zero'.

This heaven goes to the ground of the matter, and it does so using a 'purity of form' appropriate to the maiden of theory with upward-pointing dividers. There is no middle, just the joint, the hinge, the pivot of symmetrical difference. Just as 'long-haired' is something containing another signifier (being a poet) and contained *by* another signifier (staying out of prison), this nonsense is sustained by the *flip* between signifier and signified that has them appear as twins, self-negating thanks to their logical function,

containing and being contained. There is the sense of meaning but, as the 'answer' reveals, there is, actually, in the end none: *Vorstellungsrepräzentanz,* or 'talk for the sake of it'.

If the Amos Judd puzzle can be seen as an attempt to obscure a 'jewel' (the fact that Amos Judd loves mutton … something rather trivial except for its *structural presence* as a *coincidentia oppositorum*) there are two take-aways. The first is that the blah blah blah is a matter of sorites, the logic by which gradual accumulation slowly leads to a sudden point of recognition, as in the common examples of the 'one grain more' of a pile of sand', or the 'one hair less' of a balding head. The pile and bald head exist, but it is impossible to trace back to the exact point where the non-pile became a pile or the hairy head became bald. This is the process of *exaptation*, or more commonly, *emergence*. The sorites is considered to be a logical paradox because, despite the evidence of the pile of sand or bald head, there is no single moment when the properties of non-pile or non-baldness suddenly flipped to be a pile of sand and bald head. In counting backward, one reaches the absurd end-point, the single grain of sand and the full head of hair.[2]

The blah blah blah combines our interest in the zero degree of language with the following:

(1) The conditions under which the Freudian/Lacanian unconscious is able to 'invade' the Imaginary of speech and thought and, hence, serve writers such as Joyce in overhearing 'epiphanies'; the close alignment of modernist writing with the Freudian unconscious has been widely recognized, but its principles of alignment have not been defined.

(2) Expanding the idea of what 'the Imaginary of speech' actually is: is this literally the space-time accommodations of discourse? In the Imaginary of Lacan's RSI (Borromean) system, the 2/1 rule applies. The 'glue' holding together each pair of domains constitutes a *virtuality of effectiveness*. Unlike the 'primary virtuality' that accompanies Euclidean-based theories of space's 'perspectival' structure, this 'secondary virtuality' is radically separate, but both in a peripheral and central sense. The glue–function is central and centripetal; it holds things together; the peripheral aspect addresses the horizon at infinity as a workable, indeed model-able entity. Unlike the Euclidean horizon, it is where parallel lines actually *do* meet at a point, which allows mathematicians to model their properties with algebraic coordinates (this is what enabled Desargues's method of stereotomy and perspective drawing without having to construct vanishing points lying far off the drafting table.

(3) The status of the blah blah blah as a 'soretic' condition, connecting the *instance* of recognition — the pile of sand or bald head — to the *instance* of epiphany by which Unconscious suddenly emerges in Analysis or art. I add 'art' to suggest that the critical role played by astonishment, as in twists of the plot or, more globally, in the *anagnorisis* of a surprise ending, where the audience's recognition of the meaningfulness of the work of art is akin to the Analysand's experience of the meaning of long–term symptoms. Art of course cannot do without the element of surprise. It is key to timing, even in works of art primarily regarded as spatial. Temporality is the basis of the reception of art of all kinds, performative or 'static' (a

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[2] Note that this is related to the famous example of the 'Ship of Theseus': In the metaphysics of identity, the Ship of Theseus is a thought experiment that raises the question of whether an object that has had all of its components replaced remains fundamentally the same object. The concept is one of the oldest in Western philosophy, having been discussed by Heraclitus and Plato by c. 500–400 BC. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ship_of_Theseus
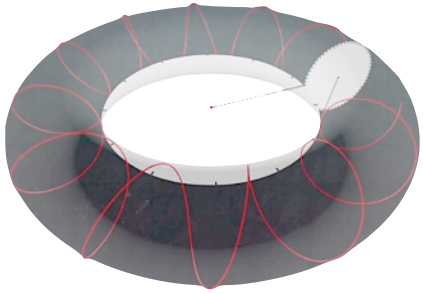
misleading term); there is no experience of art that is intricately structured by the element of astonishment. Otherwise, what is the point of art?

At every point, the matter of projective geometry is brought into stark outline as an indispensable feature and function. Whether as the 'symmetrical difference' of overlapping Euler circles, the Klein–Cayley matrix, the Borromeo system of the RSI, the unary trait of the self-signifying signifier, the emergence of the sorites, or the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, we cannot defer attending to what Lacan grouped under the figure of the torus. Why the torus?

In concluding this study paper, I would return to the main reason that the torus complements the sphere as characterizing the fundamental *form* of human space-time. In Fig. 10, a working clock revolves around an empty center, marking the 360º cycle of the 12-hour period and another circuit that can be calibrated as a day, week, month, year, or even eon. The spiral corresponds to the dynamic of demand — our expectations through our symbolic behavior of getting recognition from our variously constructed 'others'. In psychoanalysis, there is no formal distinction between repetition and demand; both define *desire* as the void that holds our demands in place, as a circuit held within a gravitational field, completing its own circuit.

Figure 10. The 'torus clock', showing how a clock face simulates the torus's double rotation around dual voids. As the hand of the clock rotates 360º, the clock face simultaneously rotates around the central void. The two cycles are required to distinguish 12-hour periods from the days and nights constituting weeks, months, years, etc. The ability to draw non-collapsable circuits on the torus's surface demonstrates that this indisputably correct 'surface of time' is also non-orienting and self-intersecting

Psychoanalysis is fundamentally about homeostasis (Boothby 1991). Ever since Freud's neural investigations, which discovered that every stimulus must be counter-balanced to maintain a near-zero neural flow (1950 [1895]), homeostasis has uncovered mysteries or paradoxes. Why is it that pleasurable and unpleasurable sensations are often indistinguishable? Why are unpleasurable stimuli as attractive and addictive as pleasurable ones? Why does the hysteric experience pleasure but report pain? Why the combination of annihilation with Nirvana as the two 'contronymic' components of the drive? Why does we compulsively return to situations/conditions where there is a lack or loss — almost always of something we never possessed? If the issues of nonsense, projective space, secondary virtuality, the blah blah blah, the zero degree, overdetermination, symmetrical difference, or theory's 'orthogonal' relation to the 'ground' of practice have any connections, it must be to this central issue of homeostasis, where there is no way out other than to push deeper into the issue of *negation*. Negation is what prevents us from dismissing the idea of a durable soul, able to survive the death of the body, even if only in the imagination. Negation is what allows us to say what is clearly impossible, 'I do not exist' and 'I am not thinking'. Negation is even capable of producing a durable form of itself in the unconscious and the dream, by suspending its binary operations to allow, within the parapraxis of forgetting specifically and the unconscious in general, the suspension of negation's 'disbelief'. If this essay could have another title, it would be 'Negation and Homeostasis', the root of the problem of the blah blah blah. Otherwise I am a butterfly dreaming I am a man.

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