

Notes for Session 14, Seminar XIV



1. The reference polygon of the torus: the diagonals as folds. Each fold is a hinge, a “Diana” — Jana — that is a hinge that, with each turn, *also* accomplishes a flip.¹
2. This is a metonymic/slide-rule thing, that in moving laterally you engage a flip-switch, that, like the parapraxis cloud, each new S2 involves a change of BOTH the indicative and mimetic functions.
3. EXPLAIN: the performative and the continent functions of a signifier. A signifier aims to FRAME a meaning, to contain it, although the signified is by definition incontinent (runs past the edges of the frame that attempts to restrict it).
4. the frame insulates the viewer from the viewed. the point of mentioning this is that insulation has the logic of the unary trait, i. e. $x + 1 = x$. This is the Fibonacci logic, that the addition of 1x1 squares to a rectangle of a certain proportion will never change the proportion; also subtraction. Idempotency is the basis of the homeostatic aims, which are a DOUBLE CIRCUIT, in the same way that the Diana hinge metonymy alters both mimetic and indicative.
5. The act and frame functions change simultaneously. 10>01 this is the palindrome in action: 12345/54321 = sigma 6. Reverse engineering, \emptyset = palindrome of 1/2, 2/3, 3/5 ...



The Thesean Labyrinth's seven passages count twice, making it also an emblem of the palindrome, and the idempotency formula, $x+1=x$, also the basis of insulation (contenance), but a prison based on bi-directional flow, so a combination of the functions of continence and incontinence. 1234567/7654321 = 1/7, 2/6, 3/5, 4/4, 5/3, 6/2, 7/1; $\Sigma=6$, an aliquot number ($1+2+3 = 1 \times 2 \times 3$).

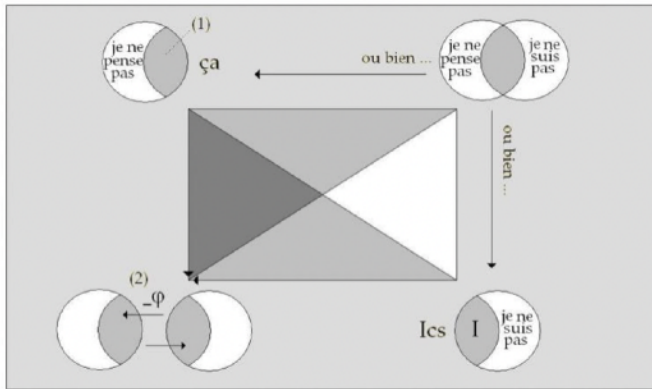
6. This seems to be the structure behind the interval designated as “between the two deaths.” We have two versions of this in Lacan. One is that of the ethnographical interval of mourning, where the human subject has died literally but not yet Symbolically; this is elaborated as a wandering or set of trials that will “authenticate” a second death and call the period of mourning to an official end. The second is that of a subject who, exiled from the Symbolic (Antigone) is dead without having literally died — the theme of premature burial, which is also carried into popular culture with the terror of being interred alive, or the “locked in” syndrome. Any exile or imprisonment counts as this second version of “between the two deaths.” The dual nature is a part of the structure of the labyrinth itself, where the number 14 doubles the seven layers of passageways, indicating that the labyrinth is equal to the IN-and-OUT function, entrapment and escape, an alternating current space.

7. Borges equates 14 with infinity in his story, “The House of Asterion,” told from the point of view of the Minotaur, in the form of the “unreliable narrator,” where the reader must learn how to look beyond the narrator’s POV to see the truth of the matter, making the

¹ We must remember that Diana is (among her other attributes) goddess of the crossroads. This reminds us that silent trade, marked by the stone formation known as the “herm,” inserted a delay between traders that allowed the transaction to be attributed as “gifts of Hermes,” i. e. from Hades.

narrator a negative agent for a positive transfer of truth to the reader (ex falso quodlibet sequitur — with the false, everything becomes possible, a favorite quote of Lacan's).

8. Because the Thesean labyrinth is customary emblem of Between the Two Deaths, we can take it also to be instructive for the standard polygon of the torus, whose x "sides" (inside the Symbolic for acting-out, outside the Symbolic for the psychosis of the *passage à l'acte*) multiply repetition, or rather show how DEMAND is constructed metonymically, as act and content (like language). As one is changed, so is the other, so the logic is that of a figure-ground reversal (when the figure becomes a ground the ground *must* become the figure).
9. Noise-cancelling headphones counter incoming stimulus directly by inverting the wave form, as in a palindrome 101010... is countered by 010101.... There is an unavoidable nano-delay, making a minimal level of white noise. In the same way, the most common idempotency switch we encounter in everyday life, the elevator button, calls the elevator and then resists further pushes, but we nonetheless have a belief that pushing the button more times will make it come faster. This is the *objet petit a* in everyday experience, in terms of homeostasis.



The "I think not" part of repetition-compulsion (demand, as the form of all communication to the A, Other) contributes the option of choosing to give the robber money and, although remaining alive, being "prematurely buried," i. e. between the two deaths. This interval has two modes, either a Symbolic death followed by literal death (Antigone) or a literal death followed by a Symbolic one (the death dream motif in popular culture; also the interval of mourning, set at the "insulating" number of 40).

10. The forced choice example Lacan liked to give was the robber's demand, "Your money or your life." The alternatives are not fully symmetrical. Although you won't enjoy your life without your money, you will be thrown into the interval of "between the two deaths": premature burial. Bruce Fink has missed this opportunity to connect the forced choice represented at the lower left corner of the standard polygon of the torus by equating the two options perfectly. The remainder, the *objet petit a*, is also in the 7-fold space of the labyrinth, the "not quite zero" of the double circuit that maintains homeostasis, i. e. idempotency. The point of the forced choice is that there is no opportunity to "think about it," because there is nothing to think about (cf. the "I don't think" of the psychotic's *passage à l'acte* in combination with the acting-out of the neurotic).

11. The neurotic who loses being as a result of remaining within the site of the Symbolic, reduced to thinking in terms of REBUS signifiers. Just as Freud thought he recognized "signor" in Signorelli, he reduced the name to a metonymy where the latent signifier HERR haunted the indicative function of signifiers whose indicative content (Boltraffio, Herzegovena, Trafei, etc.) in a way we could designate as "audioactive." This is one way of describing the unary trait, as some symptom that contains a latent (unconscious) component, a "one of 1," rewritten as 11 to disguise it as a second level, also subject to audioactivity ("two 1's," or 21). Audioactivity explains how, in metaphor, suppression (the lower left corner of the standard polygon of the torus) "flips itself" into emergence of an "audioactive cloud" of metonyms held together by the signified, X, the unknown/latent signifier-turned-signified.

12. The audioactive function makes possible the “tell” or inadvertent way a proper (given) name marks the bearer with a fate. Lacan gives the example of *The Hostage*, a play written by Paul Claudel about a heroin, Synge de Coûfontaine, who in choosing this name creates a problem for typographers who must write the name in all-caps, COÛFONTAINE, something not easy to do in the age before word processors.² The û in French often indicates the omission of an “s,” as in hôte, where in earlier version of the word the connection to *hostes* (L. for “host”) was clear. “Cous” is French for “cousin,” and it is Synge’s cousin Georges who plays the pivotal role of the good guy who becomes the bad guy in the figure-ground reversal of Toussaint Turelure, who is the bad guy who is “positioned” to be the good guy when Synge takes the bullet from Georges’ pistol to save him at the end, and then, before dying, gives her famous “no,” making her sacrifice absolutely meaningless and refusing absolution that is offered by the saintly priest Badilon.
13. Just before this final scene, the audience learns of Synge’s own unary trait, a facial tic that mars her otherwise perfect beauty. This goes back to the original trauma, the missing letter by which Synge is fatally bonded to her cousin, an “endogamy” that contrast to the “exogamy” of her forced marriage to Turelure. The outsider/insider conflict brings us back to the polygon of the torus, and to the forced-choice theme of Claudel’s play.
14. The double aspect of the part- or partial object — *a* — discussed in the footnote below runs parallel to Lacan’s discussion of Synge’s tick, a *grimace de la vie*, followed by the wincing of death, *grimace de la mort* (*Transference*, 277). This may seem to be an obscure point but Lacan wants to indicate a certain “beyond of beauty” that makes, of every beautiful woman, a partial object in both senses, i. e. of having a small imperfection or of being placed outside of the context where her beauty is a figure on a ground. Either way, we have an inversion, an extimacy. This seems to be what is pictured by the “suppression” component of the standard polygon of the torus, helping us to understand how the two diagonals indicate the way the projective plane folds twice whenever it folds once, and how the circuit to maintain homeostasis must always be a double circuit.
15. Lacan is not direct in any of his presentations. Rather, he presents us with a set of signifiers that are essentially metonymies (part-objects) held together by an “audioactive” gravity force, where everything comes in as a double, something manifest and something latent. This is his *mi-dire*, speaking by half, so that the half may be doubled in the auditors’ minds, and it is his *lexus*, or style, given precedence over *phasis* or indicative content. Only by tuning into his style can we devise our own method of reading.
16. What is the take-away of this part of session 14? Whatever we can manage to understand about the double nature of the partial object and its relation to beauty, the unary trait, the torus, or anything else, we have evidence of how Lacan is a thinker who visualizes in order to establish an audioactive field of linked metonymies, i. e. *metaphorically*. His dictum, that there is no such thing as literal meaning, *leaves us no choice* but to conclude that thought is

² Lacan mentions *The Hostage* only in passing in Seminar XIV but he goes into it in detail in Seminar VIII, *Transference*. Note that Lacan’s idea of the “part-object” is both the body part or organ that continues to act without the knowledge or support of the body and the body that is *missing something*, such as the beautiful woman with a facial tick or the name with a missing letter, such as Coûfontaine. In this regard, Georges Perec’s *A Void*, missing the letter “e,” also becomes the organ able to act without the body when, at the end of the novel, he gives examples of famous texts rewritten using the same rule of omission. They are beautiful but “missing something” on one hand; and at the same time texts thrown outside their original contexts (Symbolic *loci*) that continue to sound their meaning, one could say, “beyond the beautiful.”

metaphoric, but here we have a model of how we can “think without thinking,” meaning that we are in the position of the lower left corner of the standard torus polygon.