

The Inherent Twisting of the Gaze

Jeanne Lafont

Ed. by Ellie Ragland

I will begin my reflection by a clinical example.

Two years ago, I received a young girl, four years old, as a patient. She comes from a social establishment where she lives because her mother is hospitalized in a psychiatric service for paranoia. When she came in, she was catatonic, over strained and she stayed all the day long, on her chair—still. During the first months in the institution, she relaxed, she began to shout, to move, and she found again the quite normal pattern of her age with older children. She has been at school for just two weeks. It is at this point that this pupil is sent to me. It is because of her teacher's *Angst*. Any hypothesis is that this *Angst*, perhaps without words, already shows a malaise, or a lateness, or something to do with knowledge that is so difficult for the teacher to comprehend that she feels anxious. So I take this girl as a patient.

She arrives quite joyful and talkative, she looks at the toys, she makes little stories, she asks me for things, as do all children at this age. And she takes a pencil to scribble. I always give children pencils to scribble with, to perform something like a play. This gives me something to write down about the session.

This day now, it is raining, and beyond my window the rain is furiously falling. My office is on the ground floor. She hears the rain, and she puts the pencil to the paper to make points on the surface, during which time she tells me, “il pleut, il pleut”. “It is raining, it's raining.” The French word is an impersonal verb and French impersonal forms are used mostly for weather verbs. The movement of the pencil is the same as the movement of the water falling down. On the paper, there are only points, dropped by the pencil lead on the sheet of paper, like the ground of my little garden, beyond my window.

All the children learn at school to draw the movement of rain as long vertical lines. These lines describe the rain. These lines represent the rain. There is, between this representation and the lines, a picture, a picture created by sight, by the

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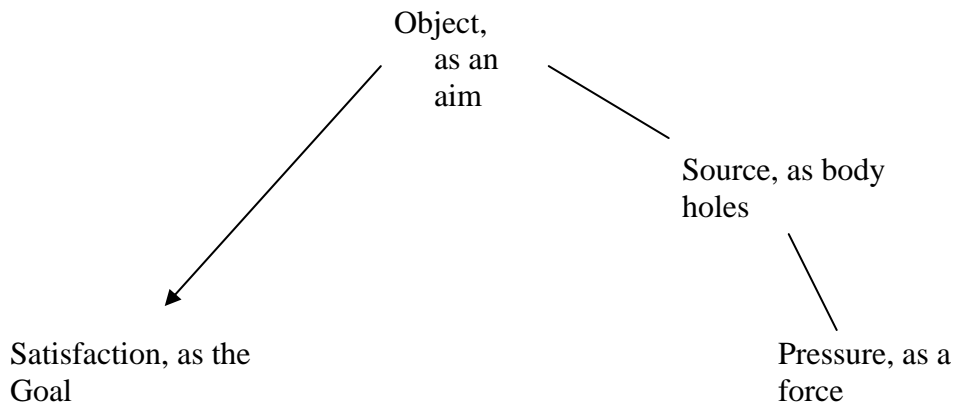
topology of the gaze, the global world subsumed by the gaze.

Do you understand what I mean? When she draws, this little girl is identified with the act of rain, and she held her pencil down. At school, this child is identified by the movement looked at by her body standing up, in front of the rain. And the pencil describes the movement of rain with long lines from the top of the paper sheet down to the bottom of the surface. There is no evidence of that representation. There is a quarter twisting all along the way.

Do you perceive the twisting of the gaze? Between the act and the representation, there is a quarter of a twist. I think it is always important to understand what is the “*pulsion*”¹ of this gaze, this twist.

It is evident for the adult, evident even to the children, that we do not know it. Therefore the *pulsion* inherent in the vision is a question about this¹ twisting and the capacity to return from it, return to the subject or the object.

1. The point of view is a topological view of the *pulsion*. The knot of the *pulsion* is this figured detail²:



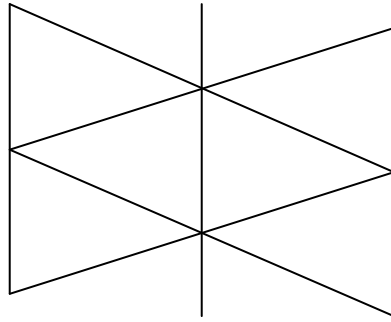
On this diagram, the different characteristics of the Freudian definition of the drive are outlined. The object pushes the drive to move out, through a body hole (mouth, anus, eye tear, ear tunnel) around it, before the conclusive satisfaction, and thus is repeated.

I would argue that this figure is a part of the Borromean knot, as this drawing depicts:

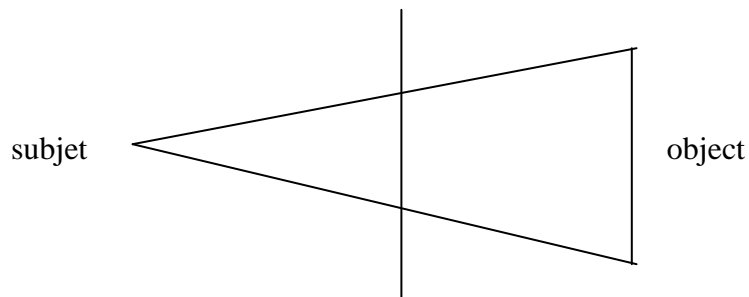


Two over and under are added: They show the function of two concepts, a Lacanian one “*le manque dans l’autre*” the lack in the Other and a Freudian one, an index of reality.

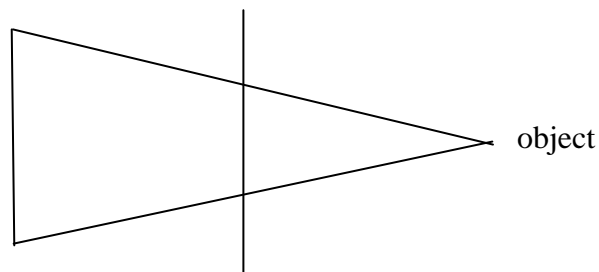
The first one, “in the other lack” is next the object as an aim; it shows that this object, even extremely variable, (as Freud says) is taken from the Other, from every thing told about the object-relationship. The object takes its function from the relationship with the Other. And first, the point is from the capacity of a human to be lacking, that is what gives a place for a new human, anyway it is happening. The texts about the object-relation do not fall out, they are just thought about from another point of view. The index of reality, the goal, concerns this great point of human satisfaction: the psychic apparatus does not make difference between a hallucination and real satisfaction. Freud develops this point in the *Entwurf* “The Project for a Scientific Psychology.” This index is a victory for the pleasure apparatus. It is also a memory



It puts two figures⁶ together. First we have the view from the subject: the eye functions as the start of a sight, (internal world) and the object is an aim in the external world.



This geometrical point is the basis of the optical mathematical—it is confused with the eye—as a point. Second, in our occidental culture, is perspective. What is this? It is because now based on the black box. The black box was the way the Italians painted Nature, in the XVIth century. They thought light was borne from the object to the box.⁷ Thus they discovered the perspective of laws. In fact, it is a conception of external world space rather than vision.



In the middle a surface resumes in a picture, which presents the object in space. Parallel to the presentation on the other side of the line, the light towards the world is stopped by a screen. Put together the figure of the eye (subjective) is the same as the figure of the word (objective). If one turns around upon this surface, it is similar! This construction of a vision object, as a picture well delimited, is the nearest one can come to a *pulsion* (drive) satisfaction. This picture fills the eye as a gaze of the world: So often psychotic children keep something near their eyes, their fingers always move to keep the eyes

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looking. It is how one constructs a knowledge satisfaction (as a sublimation of that *pulsion* satisfaction): the pleasure of knowing the world. Remember the memory-screen.

And so, this scopic satisfaction comes from the Other. In the “turn(ing) around upon the subject’s own self,” with vision, there is a radical sameness between the subject and the object. Rather, the object is closed on the middle surface, and at each side, there is subject, and on the other object, world, and the Other, “foreign” says Freud. Thus the object is closed in a picture, as a screen, between me and the Other, it makes a battlement against the world as a secure protection. My picture as “myself”. There is an obvious transparent evidence, between me and the world, the one Merleau Ponty calls “*foi perceptive*” and explains by the torus and this turning round upon itself.

It makes the topological of a sphere. As “*the sphere is the topology of those who don’t have one.*”⁸ we call it the evidence by the mirror function. It is the mirror which causes this evidence when I see, between I, as a subject, and myself as foreign, as Me. The picture there is a real satisfaction. Wallon says “*jubilation*”

3. The twisting

Now, I may introduce the topological point of view with the twisting this little girl shows.

When she draws points as the rain act, somewhere there is no picture representation of rain, no screen where she organizes this evidence of this world object I see, and where I (subject) count in the same way as Me, and share between Me and Her, the same sight. I hope you perceive what I mean. Of course it is so small, just a quarter of twisting makes the flattened representation on paper. But the paper space topology is not the same, as the world. On this middle screen the representation made from one side, or from the other side, even they are the same, are radically separated, as a figure and a mirror image.

In the space of a topological pertinent characteristic a right image is completely different from a left image. It is never possible to transform one into the other. Indeed, in the topology of knots this mirror-picture is a way of showing

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radical differences. The right knot never takes the place of the left knot. . . . When we return the right knot, we believe we will find the left. But it is not. The surprise continues, even many times repeated. The sameness is oddly different.

Thus there are two *trefle* knots, the right one and the left one, or two *nœuds du fantasme*: a Moebius strip in a left way and another one in a right way. This radical difference, from the presentation of the same object in the space is called littoral by Lacan.

When the drawing is down (with the quarter of twisting, as I say) it is not possible to go, on the surface, from one picture to the other. The difference is radical. Only, if the transparency of a paper is introduced, it is possible to confuse the right with the left one. Space would disappear! It seems that it is the language, as a different sort of space, which gives the point of an identity. To find this “turning around upon subject’s own self” which Freud shows in metapsychology, you have to do a complete twisting. The other is nearer the subject than (the) Me.

In the vision, the screen makes the collusion between subject and object place. But not for the other “*pulsion*”, and overall, (like a pre-requisite, for the acquisition to the language), not for the representation.

Conclusion:

Now I conclude with the borromean knot. There is a mirror image of a borromean knot, but it is possible to cross the right one through the left one just with a turning around upon one of the three ropes. This is the point: something is beginning with three (the Oedipal myth has already shown that). This allows a *pulsion* story. The capacity of the “turning around upon the subject’s own self” begins with the representation, the verbal world, as a third place. The whole of this transformation falls down in the unconscious, with the evidence between I (subject) and me (Myself). The representation of rain as long lines on the paper is a picture where the gaze is already ejected.

It is the point for capacity of knowledge. This little girl plays with me at rain, I speak about that and the school representation of rain, she laughs (*jubilation*) when she

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understands the long lines of rain, first on a blackboard, and on a paper. Three months later, the *Angst* of the teacher is over. I think she must have felt the lack of scopical satisfaction and so the impossibility of a real knowledge.

So I argue for a borromean conception of a “*pulsion*” figure. The figure of drive, like a drop out of a hole, is a detail of the borromean knot. So we have to add two instants “*manque dans l’Autre*” (lack in the Other), and “*l’indice de réalité*” (the index of reality).

Endnotes

¹ To translate the German « Triebe » as instant or as drive, is too conflictual, so I shall leave the French world in italics.

² Jacques Lacan, *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (1964), ed. by Jacques Alain Miller, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981).

³ Marie Christine Lasnik, “Les trois temps de la pulsion,” Prévault, Sur l’autisme. ERES.

⁴ Merleau Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*. Paris: Gallimard 1962.

⁵ cf. *Seminar XI*.

⁶ Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire XI: Les Quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychoanalyse*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 1973), p. 85.

⁷ Lacan explains this topology by the cross cap, that is to explain that the subject is quite “invisible” within sight. The point from where the world is looked at is rubbed, and so, as a metaphor, it is the unconscious’s subject. cf. the text of Guy Félix Duportail. *Le Chiasmers d’une amitié, “Lacan and Merleau Ponty in Chiasmi international*, no. 6, Vrin, Mimesis, University of Memphis, Clinomen Press.

⁸ David Hockney shows that astronomic lenses were added to the black box in a beautiful book, *Savoirs secrets*, Paris: Seuil, 2002.