In our era of the new psychic economy, the question of 'freedom' becomes more and more difficult to enunciate. Freedom from what? Freedom to do what? These are questions that invite, by nature, the appearance of a threshold, something mathematizable: I want to be able to do something, but it is prohibited, therefore I must look towards who authorizes this interdiction and dislodge them from the position of power which enables them to do so. Whether person, lawmaker, ideology, institution, or parent, our means to set parameters for that which is off limits relies on our ability to hold on, steadfast, to the S1. But this model is becoming difficult to identify, let alone transgress. The obvious finger is pointed at our individualistic, technologically defined society, whose organizer is connerie, this compulsion to substitute reality for the real as such. At the dimension of jouissance, however, we notice that this reading fails; while the failure of the Nom-du-pere has the facade of a new social pathology, its structural consistency is merely skin deep. The problem lies, instead, between two Autres.

Melman (1997) identifies the field of the Autre in two dimensions, which we can acknowledge as topological, "sometimes as the place where the Nom-du-pere is hidden, sometimes as the infinite big Autre, supporting the feminine position" (pg. 199). This bifacial organization is differentiated "between actual infinity and potential infinity," where the Autre "established by the Nom-du-pere is organized by the limit constituted by actual infinity" (Melman, 1997, pg. 199), and "that [Autre] which proves capable of supporting… the play of signifiers with no limits, no boundaries, no edges"--in other words, the location of Autre jouissance–is represented by "infinite potential" (pg. 200). But to call this order simply bifacial, Moebian, or duplicitous is a grievous fault; this interplay between two infinities in the field of the Autre remains not only foolishly underexamined, but also representative of a topology that defies our usual reconciliation between subject and Autre. There is a tremendous amount to discover about this strange topological configuration, which is traditionally thought to be an interlacing between two tori, that we will not have occasion to cover today. Suffice to say, we are dealing with a different kind of manifold structure, something which is vectored, like mirrors facing one another, out into the real of the infinite while containing the potential to be arrested somewhere along the chain. It is from this locus that, although ignorant of the topological design, we can come to understand the intercession between these two topological planes especially through Hilbert's ε operator.

The ε operator, grossly oversimplified, denotes a selection mechanism that Hilbert employed as an axiom generator for use in mathematical proofs. This ε functions also as an index for the infinite, resolving logical impossibilities as an ideal vector for an endless array of potential quantifiers; in other words, Hilbert's ε is an elected value, one that establishes a kind of ideal to which all other elements are compared for their symmetry. But what does this ε operator do that, in the case of our two Autres, the phallic vector cannot? Otherwise said, why is it that this ε value doesn't just work for one side of the equation–the side of actual infinity, where meaning is arrested, stopped, and deferred by the phallic index? Well, in a sense, we can see a metaphorical, logical overlap between the phallic operator and the ε operator. But this neglects the metaphysical condition that, according to Jean Petitot, "ε-terms are ideal individuals that involve in their very symbol the question of their existence" (n.d., pg. 19).

In this way, the ε operator is a useful mediator between potential and actual infinity, inasmuch as it circumscribes an index value at both the ideal and generally abstract level. In the case of two Autres, there is something representative of this ε operator to serve as a ledger between the potentially infinite, the register of limitless jouissance, and the actually infinite, that which the phallic value conditions by means of its own index: the object as such. At the pole of unrelenting jouissance, this Autre of infinite potential "cannot enter the field of phenomena, except because of the jouissance it is capable of supporting… [which] is definitively unattainable" (Melman, 1997, pg. 201). In the field of the actually infinite, the object inscribes a distance between desire and jouissance mitigated by its momentary emergence in the phenomenal field. It therefore stands to reason that, taking stock of the function of the object relative to Hilbert's ε, which would thus make its value rendered against the symmetry it demands from whichever field of the Autre by means of jouissance, can expose something in the logical order of the superposition, without the trappings of the asymptote.

There exist a profound number of Lacanians who would like to somehow draw this asymptote–a relic of its repression of ambiguities, the "quantum"--into topological psychoanalysis, and for good reason: it seems that these two infinities, these two Autres, although mostly ignored by name, erupt from the domain of the clinic today, and must be dealt with by theory somehow. For those of us who work with knots, so many of these testaments come by way of intelligences seeking a reasonable description for the so-called 'borderline' states, these in-between structures that tend to make the clinical role of the analyst quite tough. It is thus that, in the aporia where our logic differentiated cleanly–in many cases, by texture of a given subject's jouissance or choice of their object–we are consigned to find new mechanisms of delineation amidst a crowding of new ambivalences. Perhaps if we are going to take something from the field of mathematics, we should leave the quantum–a symptom of science–to the master discourse trying desperately to reconcile the entire world in it, choosing to see the relationship between these two Autre functions through something like Hilbert's ε operator.

Melman, C. (1997). Questions de clinique psychanalytique: seminaire de l'anee 1985-1986. L'association freudienne internationale.