

## Response to Tom Dalzell

Christian Fierens

*Christian Fierens argues in this paper against understanding Lacan's exception as a transcendental reality and, preferring L'étourdit's topological approach to Lacan's geometric one in 1958, he contends that Schreber was right to foreclose the exception since "Schema I" is the truth of "Schema R".*

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First of all, we must consider how we think. It is always difficult to get rid of "transcendental realism": we too easily consider that when we say "there exists an  $x$  not  $\phi$  of  $x$ ", then there exists *in reality* "an  $x$  not  $\phi$  of  $x$ ". In a similar way, when we are speaking about a "psychotic", we consider that the psychosis exists as the reality of this person.

To consider that there exists an exception or that there exists a psychotic as a reality independently of our thinking (and that we afterwards come to think about it) is already to give to this reality a power which undermines all our thinking.

So you consider that for the psychotic, the exception, the Name-of-the-Father, does not exist in reality; therefore you consider that the enjoyment of the psychotic is without any limit and so on.

This transcendental realism begs the question. The exception and the Name-of-the-Father are much more rather a problem and we are very far from any answer on the side of a reality which wholly escapes us in this matter.

This would be my first remark or, better, the frame of my different remarks about your well-balanced paper. But well-balanced in what way?

I think it is really more or less a Freudian reading of Lacan. Of course it is still possible from the point of view of the "Preliminary Question" (1958),

namely with *Schema R* (of reality precisely!). But it is much more difficult to think in this way with a later text like *L'étourdit* (1973).

How can we stress strongly enough the difference between a Freudian reading and another reading which suits my point of view, which better suits to our question?

With Freud we have a certain number of fixed, stable points ... and in the same way we also have Lacan's *Schema R*. These points are "loci". But more important is the "beach" before any fixed point; the beach without points shows the importance of topology. We must always be aware that the points or loci we use are only a semblance, an approximation, a rough way of thinking.

But Lacan will emphasize the impossibility of these points, of these loci ... for example of the sexual relationship and later of the phallic function. This function is not stabilised by any points and so we have the roundabout of the discourses as well as the different formulae of sexuation.

It still seems that the term "phallus" emphasises the resemblance between Freud and Lacan rather than their difference: Freud overstressed the phallus, Lacan overstressed the phallic function.

Nevertheless Lacan points out a very big difference: for Schreber, Freud has to depend on the wreckage left by a dead man (Schreber). And Lacan? Is he not also dependent on this man Schreber who really existed with the same historical reference-points? The question for Lacan (*L'étourdit*, p. 494 in *Autres écrits*) is the analytic discourse alone; with Freud we had two different positions (Freud's and Schreber's), with Lacan we have one logic, the analytic discourse which can be supported by the psychosis.

On the condition that we have a logic, a topology, where the "loci" are always dependent on the beach which is "notall" determined.

Now I can go on to more specific problems. First the exception. You said that with Schreber there is no limit because there is no exception.

How do we understand the exception? And how do we question the exception, "there exists an  $x$  not phi of  $x$ "? It seems we can agree that the

exception is a pretension, a claim. We are “aiming” at an exception which would explain the world, the universe. Perhaps this aiming always exists. But how?

We can start with the grammatical persons. In the third grammatical person, we can say, claim, that there is a God: *He* explains the universe; *He* would explain and guarantee the payment and the reward of the virtuous man. In the second grammatical person, we are speaking to him: we pray to him, “You”, we cry out to him and he exists because we are speaking to him. You can read in “The Subversion of the Subject” how Lacan considers that God exists because we love him and pray to him); “You...”. So we are speaking also to the subject-supposed-to-know in the transference. In the first grammatical person, I go as far as possible in the construction of the structure.

So there are at least three ways of “saying” the exception. Perhaps these ways of saying the exception are still always half-said: “*Il midit*”, he half-says (God keeps silent); “*tu médites*”, you meditate (as you are praying or demanding); “*je médis*”, I speak ill of, you cannot follow the meandering of the logic without the rigour of a psychotic – see p. 454.

Now why does Lacan speaking about a “forcing” and of the “hyperbolic function”? What is the meaning of the exception? We have said it: it is a mere claim. So we must add: you said “there is an  $x$  not phi of  $x$ ”; but the *truth* of this saying is clearly “there does not exist an  $x$  not phi of  $x$ ” and that you only “claimed” the exception. So Schreber is completely right when he answers God or Flechsig: it is not true that *he* is a real exception, that *you* are a real exception. Rather, he was claiming; you were claiming; but it was not true.

And so *Schema I* is the truth of *Schema R* because it shows the hole in the Other. Of course *Schema R* is claiming that reality depends on the Name-of-the-Father, but it is not true and afterwards you must reconstruct the question (i.e. *Schema I*). So it is quite legitimate to say no to the exception. And Schreber is absolutely right.

But what then is the structural difference between a psychotic and a woman? Can we say that the foreclosure of the exception must go further with the psychotic? If you think so, you must consider that the third

formula, “there does not exist an  $x$  not phi of  $x$ ”, is only a denial, something less serious than for the psychotic for whom you can easily say that the third formula is more real than for the woman. Then you will be saying that in fact, in reality (transcendental realism) there does not exist an exception and that you have in reality a genuine lack. But that begs the question. Who has ever seen the Name-of-the-Father, or the phallus, or the phallic function? Name-of-the-Father, phallus, phallic function are always ways of thinking, no more, no less.

If we refer to the psychoanalytic act (Seminar XV), we must agree “*ou bien je ne pense pas, ou bien je ne suis pas*” (either I do not think, or I am not). We cannot give to the Name-of-the-Father the quality of a reality or of a being without losing its meaning or the way of thinking about it, i.e. questioning.

Still, what is the difference between a woman and a psychotic?

It seems to me that the foreclosure of the exception by the psychotic is always the exception in the form of the *third* or the *second* grammatical person. It is never the negation of the exception in the form “I”, of Schreber himself. Were it to foreclose his own exception, he would cease to be paranoiac; on the contrary, the paranoiac continues reinforce the exception in the first person: “*je médis*”, which we can translate as, “I speak ill of!”. And the woman on the contrary forecloses the first person much more than the two others. Were she to foreclose only the third and the second person and take the exception of the “I” further, she would surely become a paranoiac.

To be sure we can speak with the loci of *Schema R*. And so we can read the “without reason” as the fundamental lack of consistency which must be given by the reality of the exception. Nevertheless we can read that the “without reason” overstresses meaning in the sense of possibility; so that “the law is alleviated by being formulated from nowhere” confirms where its saying comes from – early in *L’étourdit*. In fact the law does not come from anywhere, does not come from the exception. That means: the law does not come from the field of possibility, from a possible real. We should clearly note that the Lacanian real is never a possible, but an impossible. So the law does not come from reality, from necessity, from the possible of the

exception, but essentially from the impossible of the exception: “there does not exist an  $x$  not phi of  $x$ ”.

At least, the notall can be found in the hole at the locus of the phallus.

We can, to be sure, think in a neurotic schema, which considers that the Name-of-the-Father is at the beginning of everything – but this is a mere claim, a mere pretention – and then the notall as absence will be the lack of meaning *caused* by the lack of phallic signifier; the notall is then a mystical locus.

But if we are thinking out of the reality of the exception, then the law comes from the third formula and it entails that you never can encompass the law in a schema, you can never think only with loci. Each locus must be thought out again in a general and undetermined beach where it loses its pretention. And always begins again.

Anyway, I appreciated very much the quality of your reading and of your work. And I thank you very much for this re-launching of my questions. I hope you will find in my response much more than a conclusive answer; maybe an opportunity for thinking and questioning again.

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