

## What Thrilled Me in Fierens' Book

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I got to know Fierens' book through Jean-Pierre Lebrun who sent it to me and I immediately found that it was an amazing work and that even if I was not necessarily in agreement with the reading that he gave of this text, it was one of the most stimulating and successful works to be met in our domain.

I am saying this all the more because I have with this text of *L'Étourdit* – I told Christian Fierens about it yesterday – a rather particular relationship. Because, I will pass over this very quickly, Lacan had given me this text for me to publish in *Scilicet* 4. I had given it back to him telling him that it was an absolutely unreadable, impossible text; that no one would ever understand anything in it; and that the sense of such a publication seemed to me to be absolutely not obvious. Which he did not take very well.

I also told him that I would not fail to make some remarks to him about this text, which I was not very capable of doing either, but in return I devoted a whole year of the “Reading Lacan” that I was doing at the *Ecole Freudienne* to this text. We were only able to tackle the first part, but with much less talent and success – even if our reading was often different at the time, to that of Christian Fierens and I can only hope for my part that we will have a second turn of this reading, this time organised, now that we have done this first turn, around a certain number of precise points, of very precise difficulties in this text and that we discuss it amongst ourselves.

This text of *L'Étourdit* seemed to me to be all the more repugnant, because first of all it is written in *lalangue*, namely that it is not organised, as we have learned to read, by the signifier, with the meaning or meanings that can be taken from it, but is centred, it succeeds in this wager in being

organised by the letter, which solicits us in a completely unusual way. All the more so, as Lacan himself says, because it is a text which is not to be read.

So then if it is not to be read, it is to be what? Let us leave obscenities aside in order to simply grasp that if it is not to be read, it is a text to be followed. Now that cannot be said today. It is politically incorrect. Nevertheless, if structure is what is in question in this text, well then whether one likes it or not, whether one is correct or incorrect, the structure is what one is obliged to follow. One has no choice. And I right away make this remark: this immediately puts in place effectively the question of the subject, because if in the truth of what is said there is never anything but the saying, this saying seems indeed in this text to be isolated as being the empty place.

Ah, you think you are subjects! And you are content to be so! It is from there that I am going to displace you. This locus from which you maintain, from which you defend what is eventually your type of reading, that with which you hope to barricade your existence etc. This famous ONE, is that of the Other. So who do you think you are then? Are you paranoid or what? In other words, you should precisely let go of what remains in you as a tradition since Aristotle's "Treatise on the Soul" and stop believing in something that is supposed to ground your existence as a substance, which supports it. Because after all, in following this very text, it is never anything but the cut that is capable of supporting subjectivity.

In order very rapidly to make an attempt at a contribution to this remarkable work of Christian Fierens, I will take things up from the start and how from the start they lead me to reflect on what my reading is, stimulate it, and oblige me eventually to look at it again, to take it up again, to organise it differently. So then if you like, very quickly, some remarks on one, two, a, the phallus.

The signifier does not need the One to be the master signifier. We experience this in clinical practice and in particular with psychoses, but just as much with obsessional neurosis, all the time. It is even in so far as it has no relationship to the One, that it is not curbed by the exception, that its mastery is unleashed. I mean that what the psychotic is exposed to, is indeed the unrestricted character of the signifier and the effects of mastery that are

absolutely impossible to control that he may experience in its regard, to the panic that this engenders in him, to the impossibility in him of being divided with respect to this signifier, namely of having a shelter, a hiding-place in which precisely his subjectivity can hold up in face of the world. He has been pushed out. If we are not in the  $S_1$  we are in what is called the physiology of the signifier. That's how things are.

The  $S_1$  is of course when the signifier has as reference mastery, that which in the real is – because of the operation of repression or of whatever you wish, it doesn't matter – the support on at least one signifier that comes to function as the referent. We know that, it is customary, it is known since Freud with the libido, but without going through here the whole history, that this referent ONE is also indeed the representative agency of the phallus. What to my mind is intriguing is that what interests this ONE this master signifier – and in so far as henceforth it is in a way animated by a search, a desire – what interests it, is what happens in the Other. In this real. And that even if this real is found to be the shelter of this One. In any case, it is towards this locus of the real that his desire, if I may dare to express myself thus, finds itself oriented.

This ensures that, there is no problem. The signifier One, then we have the two, the whole business is solved, the whole business is in the bag. Except that, at that very moment, the two having been displaced into the space of the One has lost its hetero-character. Namely that what you were aiming at is found to be at the same time missed, failed.

You can approach this two, even if it is only by the sequence of numbers, which are precisely called real. You can approach it, but there will always be this *Epsilon* which will ensure that if you have this two, if you hold onto it, at the same time, what gave it its price, what gave it its brilliance, its attraction, ah, collapses! So then in return you can of course – which comes down here to create an obstacle to success – from this grasp, so then between the one and the two that you miss, which creates an obstacle you can call on three. And henceforth if this three is the one that allows you, which tells you that the union with two is good, from this moment on you have effectively the primary Trinitarian organisation which in reality was already at work. As Lacan remarks, to put the one in place, you have to count up to three in order to isolate the one.

It is obvious, to my mind, that this is the procedure which allows there to be made of them (*d'eux*) two (*deux*), the duo, the couple, even if from then on you have to pay as price the fact of having your desiring look looking elsewhere. Once you have succeeded with the two, at that very moment your look is going to find itself drawn again towards an Other locus.

Lacan started from mental automatism, and he says that it is from there that he came to psychoanalysis. In mental automatism, I am going at it broadly and crudely, everything happens as if the Other had taken its place on the other face of a two-faced strip. It is there, it is on the other side, and then you, you are there with your thoughts marching along. They are yours, the patient recognises them perfectly well, but they are in this locus which is then no longer for you another locus but, even though they are your own thoughts, a strange place. It is the other face. This is how in any case, that for a long time what I have tried to introduce in connection with something that I had called the party-wall: this happens on the other side and you are there looking at the unfolding of your own thoughts and articulating them in the measure that they are organised, they revolve, in this strange place.

It is from here that Lacan started in the field of psychoanalysis and for me, still very quickly and broadly, there is no reason not to situate the putting in place of the Moebian organisation, of the Moebius strip, as the attempt that he made to respond, starting from the fact of mental automatism, to the paradox that you receive your own message from an Other locus, but – with this discretion, this silence that habitually marks the sending of this message – in an inverted form. Why in an inverted form? The question immediately arises: do we have to take the step that allows us, precisely by bringing into play in this business of the Moebius strip, to understand in what way now it is from another face, but which is still the same, that your message comes to you, and effectively, were it only by the configuration of the strip, in an inverted form.

The question of the cross-cap and of this uncrossable hole. How indeed, with you, on my part I have questioned myself about this famous point that we cannot manage to cross and which does not belong to the register of topology, in the cross-cap in the way that topologists situate it. It is, in effect, it is from Lacan's arbitrariness that the hole comes to be inscribed. Must we see in the logical necessity of the hole, of this hole, which comes to organise the relationship of your speech to this message that you receive

from the Other, in so far as what they have in common is the community of this hole, of this lack? This is what enables you in a way to find an agreement with this other place, a successful collaboration, a successful participation around what then becomes a common and libidinally oriented lack. Hence the necessity that there should be a hole in this structure, which takes no less account of the Moebian organisation of the business and whose uncrossable character I would see in the fact that it was able to be crossed. Well then precisely this would destroy the Moebian in the cross-cap. In other words, we must introduce a hole into this figure of the cross-cap and at the same time pose it as uncrossable because its permeability would shatter, break, the Moebian structure of the figure of the *asphere*.

So then why is it that Lacan will not remain at the phallic reference at which Freud remained? In Freud, as you know, these famous objects that are able to organise the libido are never anything but pre-genital. Libido, sex, is what comes in a way to sweep away that which constituted the sexuality that is described as infantile. As if there were another, besides! As if the sexuality of the one called adult was not fixed for good and all precisely around object privileged in childhood! But no matter.... Nevertheless, why did Lacan not remain – faithful to Freud – at this phallic agency, if not – this is a hypothesis that I am putting forward – because the phallus after all, is it an effect of structure or is it already an interpretation? It is not at all the same thing.

The phallus is a way of interpreting the presence in the field of the real of this agency that will come to be isolated for my pleasure as “at-least-one”, but it is indeed an interpretation. In return, what is an effect of structure, and this is what Lacan tries to show, is indeed the fall of the letter, as this has been so well evoked throughout these study days. And which for its part, not alone is not an interpretation, but rejects any interpretation, even if in my childhood I may have given to one or other object of which this letter is in the last resort the support of one or other oral, anal, scopic, auditory, etc. form or localisation. And it is clear – this is a point that I tried to rapidly evoke during the recent study days of *Evolution Psychiatrique* – that this privilege accorded to the letter is the most intolerable, scandalous, subversive point of Lacan and this indeed is why, in the last resort, we do not want anything to do with it. What we want is the word (*verbe*)! That is ok, we are comfortable with it, we are at home with it. With the letter, where are you still at? You are nowhere. And this text, I say clearly, in its

*lalanguière* writing, is itself constructed like that. Each time that you are there, wanting to settle yourself a little bit, to rest yourself on a meaning that you think you have discovered, bang! You carry out a reading that is a little out of synch, like that, as Christian Fierens has done very well throughout his work, and then all of a sudden you fall. No, it was not that, it was something else, it is different. And this different, is precisely what is always in question. It is always otherwise.

A further word again: people have spoken here about the question of *n'espace*. The question of what would first be in it? These are always delicious questions to know what there is first of all. What began, huh? Is it the break? Or for a break is it all the same necessary to have a space? So then one says there is no space because there is the break. And if there is no space, how can you make a break, etc., etc.?

Here I want to refer you to a second marvellous book. There is first of all that of Christian Fierens, and the other I am going to give you the reference of. Those of you who are going to look for it will be surprised. It is not the work of psychoanalysts, it is the work of very honourable people, researchers in CNRS, this is a guarantee! I am talking about *Le métier de Zeus*, written by John Shade, a Latin scholar, and Jespers Feldgrau, a Greek scholar. They may well have names like that, they work at the CNRS, and it was republished in 1994 by a very appropriate publishing house because it is called *Errance*. Well then, take up this book and you will see how a Latin and Greek scholar who I am convinced never opened a book of Lacan's, show us the place of weaving and of clothing in Hellenic culture, and, listen carefully, the relationship of this with...the phallus! The CNRS, is something serious! We are not going to dispute anything that comes from the CNRS! I assure you that their arguments, the texts that they give, are absolutely gripping. All this to tell you what? That this *n'espace* is the very fabric of the signifying text. It is this fabric which ensures that there is a torus, which ensures that there are figures. It is from the fabric. And it is in this fabric that the property of the signifier, contrary to what interests the topologists, quite properly, is to make a cut.

And yet...and yet...since I have already told it a few times, I clearly remember Lacan already down on his knees, and in a little meeting where he had Soury and Thomé, saying to them "But is it true that a sphere", in a space of, I believe that it was five dimensions, "can be turned around

without cutting? Is it true that in a space of five dimensions a sphere can be turned around without cutting?”. Well then it is obvious that no one, neither the outstanding Soury and Thomé, nor anyone else understood. What is he still looking for, etc.? But we clearly see right away the question he was asking himself was, namely, whether precisely this passage to the other face necessarily required a cut, at least that of the *o*-object, or if it were possible to envisage otherwise, topologically, this passage from one face to the other without trauma, without cut.

The real bit. Still one more word: it is of course that there is nothing but logic. The real bit is nothing other than that. That in a logical writing, well then there are letters that you cannot put down: there is something of the real which is obviously inscribed there; there is something impossible. And it is then undoubtedly logic which comes there in the surest way possible, as he says, to bear witness in the final resort that it is a science of the real. Not of the truth, there must be someone who, from this place, comes to articulate a saying (*un dire*). And the real bit that we are dealing with is indeed this impossible of which logic thus reveals the true nature that Hilbert had encountered; not everything can be written, there is an impossible. There is a limit.

And to stop finally, I would recall in connection with interpretation something that I have already mentioned, and in which I had no merit, I let myself be guided, I followed a teaching, I did nothing else, I made no subjective intervention ... it was this patient who told me “*Je suis né un jour de neige* (I was born on a snowy day)”. And it is perfectly true that she had shown, throughout her whole existence, a coldness which was rather striking with respect to those nearest to her, including her own children: when one saw her one was struck by the coldness inscribed in her approach, in her manner. “I was born on a snowy day”. What else was required that would allow her to hear in her own remark not my interpretative word, but what was written there, namely this “*n'ai-je*” (*neige, s'no*) which she was definitively lacking there. “*Je suis né, je suis ne* (I was born, I was no)”. It was true she had this remarkable feature in her responses, it was only exceptionally affirmation, it was always negation that marked her participation in a verbal exchange. There is nothing exceptional in participating in a verbal exchange by introducing oneself into it in the form of a refusal and of negation. She was effectively this *ne*, not this explicative *ne*, but indeed this real *ne*, were it only because undoubtedly she identified

herself to this at-least-one which says “no” to the supposedly universal all. She identified herself to it. She was also from this aspect a solid and proud creature in her coldness and in her *ne*. So then finally, I will pass over what could be said about this dawning that came there, this ray of light which thus came into this story ... but there is something better in this story, not at all to make her hear, but to make her read what she was in the process of saying?

So then I believe that effectively starting from a certain number of examples like this we would have to take up again these very surprising topological interpretations that Lacan gives about interpretation and the effects of interpretation: how is it that this has as effect an interpretation? This seems to us to be self-evident because we still believe in the magical power of the word. But here it is not a matter of the word, it is not a matter of magic, it is something else. So then, if it is something else what topological support can we give to this affair? It is one of the elements that are to be found in this book.

You know that the outstanding workers, the companions of France and of Belgium, are recognised by the fact that at the end of their apprenticeship they have produced a master-work. That is what it is called. Well, for my part I find that this work of Christian Fierens is all the more a work of mastery in that it is not mastery that is at stake. But I would willingly have a tendency to see in it the model of what one could demand of our colleagues to show that effectively you have completed your journey.

Well then, you are going to take up *L'étourdit* again and off you go, give us what will be, not your reading, but the way in which you are going to follow it. I am convinced that this would be marvellous and if there were people, more daring than me, they would require it on the part of their colleagues in a group. They would say: “Listen, old boy, we can discuss this seriously when you have produced a work like that that has been so well inaugurated by Christian Fierens”. Thank you for your attention.



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