

Retrieved from:

The European Journal of Psychoanalysis

Feb 9, 2023

<https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/articles/response-to-ed-pluths-review-of-discourse-ontology-body-and-the-construction-of-a-world-from-heidegger-2/>

Christos Tombras

Response to Ed Pluth's Review of "Discourse Ontology: Body and the Construction of a World from Heidegger"

Dear Sir,

I was honoured to see my *Discourse Ontology* (2019) reviewed in the pages of your Journal (Pluth, 2021).

As Pluth notes, Lacan was keen to avoid any kind of *idealinguisterie*, and I would find it very difficult to disagree on this. In fact, I also say so myself, for instance when I speak of Lacan's "increasingly intense polemic against traditional metaphysics and ontology ... [and his] forceful opposition against a tradition of thinking that fails to meet the challenges it is confronted with" (Tombras, 2019, p. 176).

I was surprised, then, to see the book described as an attempt to develop some sort of an updated analytic of *Dasein* that would be "able to cover psychoanalytic concepts". I am not so sure. Was it that? Was it an attempt to patch up Lacan's theory in order to secure its philosophical grounding? In agreement with Pluth, I would be rather sceptical of such attempts.

So, it seems to me that a clarification is on order.

In his many decades of teaching, Lacan proceeded with confidence, nerve, and clarity. Eventually, and unavoidably, time caught up with him. Lacan had to slow down. He wasn't too happy about that and said that much himself. "It would be nice", we hear him complaining in 1976, "if I could manage to get some response, some collaboration, some active interest. It seems to me that it's hard to take an interest in what is becoming a research project. I mean that I am starting to do what the word *research* implies, namely to go around in circles. ... These days, however, it's tougher for me to clear my path" (Lacan, 2005/2016, p. 74).

This was indeed a complaint. But it is also a challenge to those who still read him today. Lacan had heralded this challenge back then, as *Anti-philosophy*: "This is the name I'd like to give to the investigation of what university discourse owes to its 'educational' supposition", he wrote. "It is not the history of ideas, sad as it is, that will be able to face up to the challenge. A patient collection of all the idiocy that characterizes it will, I hope, allow to highlight it in its indestructible root, in its eternal dream. Of which there is no other awakening if not one's own" (Lacan, 1975/2001, pp. 314-315, my translation).

Please allow me to consider but one aspect of this challenge. Let us take the concept of *truth*.

Building on Heidegger's work, Lacan opened to us a way to think of truth as correlative to signifierness, as something that always involves a co-created field of discursive interactions between speaking beings, its scope reaching far beyond the veracity of statements, or veracity as such. Lacan showed that the very notion

of an extra-discursive validator, or guarantor, of truth qua veracity is untenable. All this is tantamount to saying that truth is never whole.

So, what now? Will we stop here? Are we going to leave the gates wide open for all those who take truth to be but a means to an end, and think of themselves as justified to requisition any kind of fact and “alternative” fact in order to accomplish whatever their heart desires to accomplish?

Such a prospect strikes me as particularly bleak. It would not be just a case of *tant pis* for philosophy, to play a bit with Pluth’s concluding point. It would be *tant pis* for each and every one of us, academics, psychoanalysts, philosophers, people. Crucially, it would be *tant pis* for all those who, faced with a suffering that will just not go away, still choose to do something about it and turn to psychoanalysis.

This, as I see it, is the challenge bestowed by Lacan’s work. It is a challenge to attempt a systematic response to the questions we are faced with while still avoiding the “idiocy” that characterises the “sad” history of ideas. This is exactly what I aimed to develop with *Discourse Ontology* –its overarching objective so to speak. It is but an attempt to make a few steps further down the path opened by Heidegger’s work and cleared up by Lacan. To put it differently, the book is my own attempt at awakening. Whether I have succeeded in that, its pages must show.

Sincerely,

Christos Tombras

London

Bibliography:

Lacan, J. (2001). Peut-être à Vincennes... [Perhaps at Vincennes]. In J.-A. Miller (Ed.). *Autres Écrits* [Other writings] (pp. 313-315). Éditions du Seuil. (Original work published 1975)

Lacan, J. (2016). *The seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXIII: The sinthome* (A.R. Price, Trans.). Polity Press. (Original work published 1975-76/2005)

Pluth, Ed (2021). [Book Review of “Discourse Ontology” by Christos Tombras](#). *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Number 16 – 2021/2

Tombras, C. (2019). *Discourse ontology: Body and the construction of a world, from Heidegger through Lacan*. Palgrave.

Bio:

Christos Tombras is a supervising psychoanalyst with a Lacanian orientation, practicing in London. He lectures, runs workshops and facilitates reading groups; his main research interest is in a dialogue between

continental philosophy and psychoanalysis. He has published in both English and Greek. He has a background in non-narrative, abstract cinema. [<https://www.ListeningToYou.co.uk>] Christos Tombras is a supervising psychoanalyst with a Lacanian orientation, practicing in London. He lectures, runs workshops and facilitates reading groups; his main research interest is in a dialogue between continental philosophy and psychoanalysis. He has published in both English and Greek. He has a background in non-narrative, abstract cinema. [<https://www.ListeningToYou.co.uk>]

Publication Date:

November 30, 2021