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REVIEWS

PRIKAZI

TERRY PINKARD, *PRACTICE, POWER, AND FORMS OF LIFE; SARTRE'S APPROPRIATION OF HEGEL AND MARX*. CHICAGO AND LONDON: THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS, 2022

Novak Malešević, Institute for Literature and Art. Belgrade, Serbia

There is, at the same time, a certain curiosity and skepticism regarding titles (of monographs, scientific papers, and even newspaper articles) which promise a lot; on one hand, as a reader, the one-who-wants-to-know, you become interested and intrigued by the fullness of meaning of certain titles, while on the other hand, as a critic you know that the text which follows such titles, almost as a rule – defies expectations. The book by Terry Pinkard *Practice, Power, and Forms of Life; Sartre's Appropriation of Hegel and Marx* represents precisely one of such, rather intriguing and seemingly interesting books, which due to its ambitious title is doomed to a sort of epistemological and methodological ambiguity. Whereas the first part of the title (*Practice, Power, and Forms of Life*) suffers from ambiguity of *meaning* (where each of these concepts could probably stand as a separate research guideline, which as such is more suitable for *key words*, rather than for the topic of the text), which the author tries to tame working through Sartre's thought, the second part of the title (*Sartre's Appropriation of Hegel and Marx*), carries with it *methodological* uneasiness, reflected in the question "How to *actually*

read/interpret Hegel's and Marx's influence in Sartre's philosophy?" and more specifically than that: "How to recognize what Sartre *actually* took over from them?" Will the individual fragments from Hegel's and Marx's works be analyzed and compared to that passages from Sartre's works, and thus measure *what is exactly appropriated* from these philosophers? Or, will it be recognized, by moving through Sartre's texts, in them that which is Marxist and Hegelian, not referring much either to Marx or Hegel? The first methodological choice requires a serious comparative analysis (more befitting a doctoral dissertation), for which the book by Terry Pinkard, amounting to about a hundred pages (followed up by fifty pages of endnotes) – was (simply) not strong enough.¹ The author opted for meth-

1 The fact, however, that not a single text by Marx was stated in the literature, and implicitly, in the very analysis not a single quotation by Marx was cited, says enough about Pinkard's more liberal approach to this topic. The question is in principle: can you speak about Sartre's appropriation of Marx only on the basis of Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*? To interpret *Critique* and Marxism within it (that aspect relating to historical

odological compromise, where Marx is indirectly referred to (via Sartre and others), while Hegel's quotation found their place in the text itself. This conditioned methodological and epistemological disproportion in the approach to the authors referred to, which lead to each reference to Marx embodying two issues (of a bad faith): a) that we have to trust in the fact that Sartre adequately appropriated/interpreted Marx and b) that Pinkard adequately clarified Sartre's interpretation of Marx's texts.

However, methodological and epistemological difficulties that this book faces also lead to a very practical issue, which reflects in the question "Who is this book meant for?". It is not the "Introduction" to Sartre's philosophy (ethics, politics, epistemology), nor does it represent the clarification of individual aspects of Marx's or Hegel's thought. Moreover, in certain places, a sort of rhetorical coquetry emerges, which often blurs rather than clarifies the theses it analyzes. The consequences can be that it is easier to understand the text being analyzed than the text which analyzes (explains) it. Let us consider, for example, Pinkard's explanation of impossibility of "I" being the subject of its own consciousness and the Sartre's quotation which follows. "If self-consciousness consists in the subject being conscious of itself as an object, then the subject that is aware of the subject that is not itself an object is not itself self-conscious unless it has, as it were, another subject (another version of itself) conscious of it, ad infinitum. Or, as Sartre also put it, 'if the *I* is a part

materialism) without referring to Marx means at best to move, without more detailed insights and clarifications, through a well-known analytical palette of Marxist terms (class inequality, exploitation, etc.), in the absence of clear determination of quantity and quality of the "appropriation" of Marx, whereby, if it does not falsify, it at least – trivializes the very relation towards Marx.

of consciousness, there would then be *two I's*: the I of the reflective consciousness and the I of the reflected consciousness', thus requiring yet another '*I*' to identify them." (1) Why did this, simple and relatively famous Sartre's formulation about the impossibility of "I" being, at the same time, both the object and the subject of reflection, have to be expressed in such a complicated manner? On the other hand, it would be incorrect - to say that Pinkard's text is obscure, incomprehensible and superficial. Pinkard gives a sound and precise insight into the various stages in the development of Sartre's thought, and explicitly warns of different or similar treatments of the same problem units in different works. In that way, the text gives the impression of wholeness and roundedness, while problem units of Sartre's philosophy, which Pinkard exposes, follow both chronological as well as logical development path of Sartre's thought. (For example, the relation of consciousness and its own Ego ("I") in *Transcendence of the Ego* and in the later texts *Being and Nothingness* and *Critique of Dialectical Reason, 1-4*). Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that Pinkard's book possesses a very interesting structure of exposition; between the *Preface* and *Denouement*, there are three chapters *Spontaneity and Inertia*, *Spontaneity's Limits and Ethics in Politics*, which are considerably devoid of quotations (of Sartre, Hegel and other authors). Namely, the quotations are transferred to a separate part of the text – the endnotes. According to the author: "This allows for a more narrative exposition of Sartre's thought in the main text while leaving the more scholarly tug and tussle with other scholars for the notes." (xvi) Certain epistemological and methodological uncertainty of this book we spoke about is hereby also explained. Pinkard's text becomes, as needed, both an essay and scientific article depending on the readers' affinity. However,

this is precisely the problem; it alternates between an essay, a scientific article, and hermetically (incomprehensible) material which probably Sartre himself could not, at times, delve into. And sometimes it becomes all of these things, not through the will of the readers, nor author, but by the capriciousness of textual structure of it is own. This is precisely why Pinkard's book on Sartre is intended for everyone and no one. So the scholars who enjoy detailed movements through quotations of various authors will not probably like methodological and epistemological uneven approach to Hegel's and Marx's texts; the students who want to thoroughly get involved in the complexities of Sartre's philosophy, but who will often stumbled on Pinkard's rhetorical hermeticism; the fans of Sartre's thought (to a wider public), especially those keen on ethics, racism and colonial critique, but who will remain disappointed by the book if they do not have a "deeper" background on Sartre's concepts, that is, certain "technical terms".

Finally, what did Sartre appropriate from Hegel? It is already in *Preface* where Pinkard presents us with the fact that the early Sartre was not so steeply acquainted with Hegel's work (this also applies to *Being and Nothingness*), and that it is only with *Critique*, through the translation and critical remarks of Hegel's *Phenomenology* by Jean Hyppolit, that the familiarization was more complete. (x-xi)

Appropriation or more exactly, Sartre's argument with Hegel, is continued in the first chapter *Spontaneity and Inertia*, in which the relationship between the subject ("I") and the first person plural ("We") is resolved, where in the development of spirit, as Hegel believes, "various self-consciousness" merge into themselves. Sartre arguments against it, emphasizing that if "I" really becomes "We" it will condition the impossibility of the existence of "I", which leads to

the problem: "Hot to reconcile the 'I' to the 'We' without absorbing the one into the other" (6). Value difference between "I" and "Other", at Hegel, is established through mutual awareness of the status of the other (master-servant dialectic), whereby the transitivity of the awareness of the existence of others is presumed ("...if I recognize A, and A recognize B, then I also Recognize B"), which Sartre rejects as empty "mirror game." Pinkard shows that for Sartre, it is already in "I" that "second person awareness" exists, which is able to create the value of "I". (10) The author further emphasizes how Hegel's syntagma "concrete universal", was convenient means for explaining the relationship between practice and action (of an actor). (12) The moment when the action is objectified, conditioned by ideological (socio-historical) pressures, and converted into "recurrent pattern of behavior" (27) it leads towards passivization "spontaneity" which enables the production of "practico-inert" (Sartre's term which signifies "the activity of others insofar as it is sustained and diverted by inorganic inertia."). Practico-inert is drawn into the materialism of the world, limited and conditioned by it; he changes that world, but he is also cheated by that world, by being passivized through everyday activities (imposed on him), without awareness of the totalitarian aspect of his actions. Thus, we arrive at "detached subject", which practically becomes alienated object, which is capable of observing his "machine-like" actions. (22-23) It is precisely "structure of plural human activities" which becomes the reason for antagonism between subjects, and not necessarily "psychology of people". (28) However, it implies that the instance which determines the structure of plurality is not binary (as Hegel thought), but tertiary. Therefore, Sartre rejects Hegel's master-servant dialectic, which establishes values between them (where one

of them creates an axiological whole, that is, speaks from the position of authority), and introduces the third agent (instead of Hegel's Geist) in order to determine and settle the fight between them. (29)

Pinkard starts the second chapter (*Spontaneity's Limits*) by explaining Sartre's term counter-finality, which occurs as a natural consequence of "form of life"; that is, "a way of 'being together'". (31) Counter-finality implies different result than the expected one, a different ending compared to the established goal. "However, counter-finalities are, after all, finalities, ends being pursued that turn out differently than they were conceived in the original project". (32) It is precisely in such "tragic conception of dialectic" that Pinkard perceives Sartre's connection with Hegel; after free action (which had been initiated with a certain goal in mind) led to the opposite effects, there is no other thing but to accept responsibility, whereby it is confirmed that "humans are not in harmony with their world". (33) The deconstruction of Hegel's dialectic in the context of master-servant relation becomes the basis for Sartre's understanding of freedom. Freedom can never be actualized in relation to materialism, which reduces it to seriality. It, according to Sartre, has to come from a direct connection between the subjects themselves, "not something that quasi-naturally develops out of something else" (40), as Hegel does by introducing *Geist*. In Pinkard's words: "Sartre's own transformation of the Hegelian proposal is to see the third element not as an independent, 'hyper-organism' *Geist*, but as another individual agent totalizing him..." (41) It is precisely that agent who serves as the third instance which is totalizing the other two, but who is also being devised through the duo it totalizes. Pinkard returns to Sartre's critique of Hegel's thought of the relationship between master and servant at the end

of the second chapter as well, when the relationship of violence and (un)conditional commitment "to his own independence" is spoken about (55). Sartre begrudges Hegel how it is impossible to talk about the master-servant relationship in general (where servant necessarily chooses life instead of "(un)conditional commitment to his own independence"), but that such relations have to be observed in a historical context.

In the third paragraph (*Ethics in Politics*), Pinkard emphasizes the difference between Hegel's and Sartre's understanding of ethics. To Hegel, "moral ethos" (*Sittlichkeit*) is derived from "Lockean rights to life, liberty and property" and Christian morality, which are "actualized" through bourgeois family and monarchy. (76-77) Such a system obtains "rational approval on the part of the participants in that moral ethos", whereby the social structure, despite its divisions, is maintained in harmonic coherence. (77) Pinkard points out that it is precisely that harmony of the system that is the issue to Sartre as it rests on value laws conditioned by historical changes. This means that these values are not and cannot be based on any rationality (that governs them), but on contingencies of social and historical movement, which (almost as a rule) imply some kind of disagreement and conflict.

What was appropriated from Marx? It is difficult to say bearing in mind the methodological foundation (which has been mentioned) on which this book is based. This led to Pinkard establishing a connection between Sartre and Marxism more often, instead of the relation between Sartre and Marx. It is understandably a slippery analytical terrain. *Critique* is a Marxist work (even if in some parts it deviates from Marx), but to analyze it (as Pinkard does it) is not the same as to analyze Marx (and implicitly draw conclusions about the influence of Marx on Sartre). Therefore, in Pinkard's

text, we can rather talk about the impact of *specters* of Marx, which emerge from various usage variations of Marx's name meaning very little ("Western Hegelian-Marxist sense..." (8), "criticism of dogmatic Marxism" (61), "existentialism fused together with Marxism" (63), "his *après*-Marxist point" (79) „orthodox Leninist Marxism" (84) etc.) However, in the third chapter, the section: *What Follows Marxism?* should not be overlooked, where Pinkard, referring to Sartre, states that *Critique* is not a Marxist work. This removal from Marx (Marxism), Pinkard sees in the impossibility of the construction of a classless society. A worker is not only deprived of "labor power", but a whole life, where-by spontaneity is extinguished. Thus, all the systems (and "Soviet-style socialism") suffocate the individual in their foundation - taking his/her freedom.

The book *Practice, Power, and Forms of Life; Sartre's Appropriation of Hegel and Marx*, by Terry Pinkard is one of those well-thought syntheses of large (or even better, diverse) philosophical systems. To link Sartre, Hegel and Marx (as we were promised in the title) is a considerable job and the decision to write

such a book stems from years of reading experience of those authors (or about those authors). However, the condition for a well-done synthesis process is implied by previously well-done analyses. It is only by thoroughly breaking the things into its components that we are capable of connecting those parts on the basis of certain qualities or similarities. Unfortunately, Pinkard's book does not fulfill that condition. (Almost) Nothing was spoken about Marx here, while little was said about Hegel. Hence, the synthesis remained based on the analysis of Sartre himself (whose works are already a synthesis of Marx's and Hegel's teachings). Instead of a synthesis based on an analysis, we get a synthesis, whose basis is - another synthesis. This does not mean, however, that Pinkard's book does not have any value. The author moves very steadily through Sartre's philosophy and has a good insight into the dynamics and developmental stages of his thought. The text is not scattered in (pointless) complementation and contextualization (this is a consequence of partially essayistic structure of this book). And such writing is a consequence of the (quality) reading experience.