

Interview with Prof. Terry Pinkard, PhD, University Professor at Georgetown University, Washington D.C.

Interviewer: Dr. Guido Seddone, PhD, Marie-Curie Research Fellow University of Parma and Georgetown University.

In this interview Prof. Pinkard tell us about his studies on Hegel, German classical philosophy, self-consciousness, and world human history.

Link of the Interview:

<http://www.filosofia.it/idee/terry-pinkard/>

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List of Questions:

1)

Nowadays Hegel studies in the United States are much more spread than 20-25 years ago. As European I would say that today what is said and written about Hegel in the States is much more influent than what is said and written in Europe. My first question concerns this point. How do you see the increased interest towards Hegel in America? Which is the relevance of its impact on the American academia and culture? And which is its impact on the European Hegelian Studies?

2)

Let's go now more specifically into the Hegelian texts. Your book *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* is a complete and exhaustive reading of this arduous and fascinating work. Can you tell us something about the Hegelian theory on Self-consciousness and recognition? Which is the peculiarity of self-conscious social behaviour? Why does it differ from other forms of social interaction like those we can observe among animals?

3)

Self-consciousness is at the basis of social interaction and establishes an objective world out from subjective and individual attitudes and drives. How is it possible that Self-consciousness which is based on self-relation and self-determination can promote and sustain the social world?

4)

What can you tell us about the theoretical connection between self-relatedness and negation or negativity in Hegel's theory on Self-consciousness? Can one conceive of it as an attempt to explain Self-consciousness as a circular system and to describe it in formal terms?

5)

In your book *Hegel's Naturalism* you have the merit and, I would say, also the courage to highlight that Hegel is fundamentally a naturalist. I have many reasons to agree with you, nonetheless the question spontaneously arises: Hegel theorizes that the spirit is the fundamental substance of the objective world. Therefore, many scholars would protest against the attempt to understand Hegel's as a naturalist, what can you tell us about this controversy?

6)

The naturalistic reading of Hegel is the outcome of the peculiar American reception of this thinker, which puts the focus on the deep affinity his thinking has with Aristotle's one, and in particular with Aristotle's practical philosophy. We have to thank Philippa Foot and more recently M. Thompson if we are now able to understand many aspects of these two great thinkers as a reflection about human practices and mind. Which do you think is the connection between Hegel's and Aristotle's practical philosophy and the contemporary naturalism in ethics and philosophy of mind?

7)

Hegel has tried to bring back in life the ancient Greek classical tradition of thinking about politics and society. This attitude was actually shared with other German thinkers and writers of that time as Goethe, Schiller and Herder. However, Hegel is also aware that it is impossible to reproduce that magnificent time of the human history in the modern society where individuals don't achieve freedom without facing the alienating power of the overwhelming 18th century's European institutions. Are modern citizens really like the Rameu's nephew described in the *Phenomenology* or do you think that Hegel also provides an explanation for understanding our role and position in the society?

8)

Let's speak now about your last effort: *Does History Make Sense?* about Hegel's philosophy of history. As you maintain, Hegel's philosophy of history has been often misunderstood and interpreted as a mere attempt to conceive of history as having a goal (like freedom for example). You claim instead that the final aspects of his philosophy of history have to be connected to his naturalism and general conception of self-consciousness. The result is that we can avoid a naive conception of philosophy of history. How do you explain the difference between individual purposiveness and general or historical purposiveness?

Suggested books:

Pinkard, Hegel's Naturalism, Oxford 2012

Pinkard, Does History Make Sense, Harvard 2017.