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## HKWM and MEGA complement each other <sup>1</sup>

»Habent et sua fata libelli« (books also have their destinies); Marx used to say. The present volume is a case in point. Conceived by its editor, Wolfgang Fritz Haug, in 1983 as a supplement to the German translation of Georges Labica's *Dictionnaire critique du marxisme*, by 1986 this had been superseded by a project for a comprehensive Euro-Marxist, and later more widely international, conceptual dictionary standing in its own right. As the work was underway on this, the collapse of »Marxist« regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe prompted a critical re-examination by Marxists east and west of many of their previous ideas. This slowed down progress towards publication but provided the basis for drawing in a wider range of contributors of different nationalities and varying trends. This was very much in keeping with the conception of *Plural Marxism*, which Haug had developed from 1985 in 2 volumes under that title in opposition to the dogmatic official »Marxism-Leninism« serving as a state ideology then holding sway in the countries of »real existing socialism«. If in his foreword to the first volume of this Historical Critical Dictionary of Marxism (HKWM) Haug may be going a bit far in using Althusser's phrase »epistemological break« in relation to the present project, it is certainly clear that it is characterised by a greater diversity and a more critical attitude to many traditional Marxist propositions than would have been the case earlier. Indeed Haug now speaks of »relentless criticism« also in relation to its own past as a condition for the survival of Marxist thought.

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<sup>1</sup> *MEGA-Studien* (Amsterdam), 1995/2.

The HKWM is to encompass 12 volumes and will not be completed before the year 2000. Over 500 specialists from a wide range of countries, east and west, north and south, have been enlisted. In this first volume 68 of them contribute 99 entries, 4 of which each comprise 2 articles. Fundamental Marxian concepts like *Akkumulation* (accumulation), *Anarchie der Produktion* (anarchy of production - under capitalism) and *Ausbeutung* (exploitation) are treated along with present-day themes unknown to Marx. Haug himself writes 12 of the entries, mostly of substantial length and notable erudition. They range from the much debated dialectical concept of *Aufhebung* (sublation, transcendence or supersession), which Marx took from Hegel and modified, to an empirically based entry entitled *Apathie im befehlsadministrativen Sozialismus* (apathy under authoritarian-administrative socialism).

The influence on contemporary Marxist thought of new social movements concerned with ecological, feminist and third world questions is reflected in a number of contributions. Among the latter we find entries on *Antikolonialismus* (anti-colonialism) by Samir Amin, on *Afrikanische Produktionsweise* (African mode of production) by Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, and on *Arabischer Sozialismus* (Arab socialism) by Wolfgang Schwanitz. Psychological questions are discussed in entries on *Angst* (anxiety/fear) and on *Antipsychiatrie* (anti-psychiatry). There are three entries on different aspects of aesthetics along with one on *Architektur* (architecture) and one on *Autonomie der Kunst* (autonomy of art).

Two contributions are on working class culture. Reflecting the crucial position of labour (*Arbeit*) in Marxist thought, a quarter of the entries in this volume, devoted as it is to concepts beginning with the letter A, are on this and related themes. Frigga Haug leads in with a wide-ranging 11-column contribution tracing the concept of labour from Aristotle's influence on

Marx up to the housework debate in the women's movement. The entries that follow include a critical consideration of such important themes of Marxist debate as the labour aristocracy, the working class and its structure and revolutionary potential, and the labour process. *Arbeitszeitverkürzung* (reduction of working time) is discussed in two contributions, one dealing with the relevant background in Marx's writings, particularly the *Grundrisse* and *Theories of Surplus Value*, and the other with recent literature on this topical question.

The HKWM does not include entries on places, organisations or individuals. However the latter appear under entries for movements, trends or schools identified with them. Thus in the present volume we find the *Abendroth School* with its founder's biography and ideas sympathetically treated by Heinz Jung, and the *Althusser School*, of which Frieder Otto Wolf gives a useful account of the most important concepts, literature and controversies.

Judging by the cross-references appreciable overlap can be expected in the treatment of themes in the 12 volumes. This is already apparent to a degree in this one volume. However it may be a necessary price to pay if different approaches to controversial questions are to be adequately set out and the pluralist objectives of the enterprise attained. We find for instance under *Arbeiterkontrolle* (workers' control) that Theodor Bergmann sees for Lenin »democracy in the workplace as an integral part of democracy in society as a whole« (col. 466), whereas under *Arbeiterstaat* (workers' state) Werner Mackenbach insists on »the depriving of the factory committees of their power« as among the first measures of Lenin's Soviet state (col. 491). Acquaintance at first hand with such differing views can only be beneficial in stimulating the reader to probe the question further. The often quite

extensive bibliography provided at the end of each entry will undoubtedly prove very useful in this respect. Although all the entries are written in German, the bibliography includes works in English and French. A translation into Arabic, English, French, Russian, Spanish and Chinese of the title of every entry is provided.

The contributions in this volume are not all of equal quality, but in general the level of scholarship is high and often impressive. Obvious care has been taken by the strong editorial team to avoid factual errors, though a few have slipped through. Thus the entry on *Arbeiterbewegung* (labour movement) presents democratic centralism as the organisational principle adopted in Russia in 1903 by the Bolsheviks as against that of the Mensheviks (in fact the principle was proclaimed for the first time by both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks in 1905), and the date of Stalin's enunciation of the possibility of socialism in one country is given as 1923 instead of 1924 (col. 436). In the bibliography to *Aktionseinheit* (unity of action) the date of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International is given as 1931 instead of 1922 (col. 126).

Unfortunately this volume does not contain an index, but I understand that Volume 2 will carry a consolidated name index for the first two HKWM volumes. Subsequent volumes, unlike the present one, will also list the countries and institutions of the contributors including specifying the west or east backgrounds of those from Germany.

At a time when one so often hears a wholesale dismissal of Marxist ideas, the launching of this ambitious enterprise represents a bold challenge. Like the decision to continue with the publication of the MEGA, it is founded on a recognition that the ideas of Marx and Engels – »warts and all«, if you will – represent a precious part of our intellectual heritage. The two projects

complement each other. The material appearing in the MEGA volumes is an important source drawn and referred to in the HKWM. The latter, with its strong conceptual, historical and philological characteristics, offers a quarry of knowledge and references of unique value to all making use of the MEGA for their researches. The birth of this first HKWM volume after a gestation period of ten years is warmly to be welcomed and the speediest practicable appearance of its 11 companion volumes is much to be hoped for.