

Review of: "György Márkus 75% Mensch: On the occasion of the Publication of the English version of *How is a Critical Economic Theory Possible?*"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This very wide-ranging article might be called, paraphrasing Pirandello, 'Six Hungarians, an Icelandic and an Australian in search of an author'. The six include György Márkus's wife Maria, his close associates Ferenc Fehér and Ágnes Heller, and his collaborators on *How is a Critical Economic Theory Possible*, Janos Kis and György Bence; to make up the six we could include Márkus himself. The Icelandic and 'honorary Prager' (Dunaj 2023) is Johann Arnason, whose views Grumley compares with those of the Márkuses and Heller, and the Australian is Grumley himself, the co-editor of the book, along with Kis.

The book itself has a curious history, discussed at some length by Kis (2020) and by Grumley (2020) and in the present article. Márkus, like Heller, was remarkably versatile; there are few philosophers who could write with equal conviction, as he did, about Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and Marx's *Capital*. He was however, to put it mildly, not the sort of scholar who rushes to publish, and in Hungary in the 1970s there was the further disincentive that attempts to publish might be blocked by the censorship, as were several of Márkus's own, including this one. In the 1970s he invited Kis and Bence to collaborate on putting together a book with the working title *Überhaupt*, the title referring to Kant's question how metaphysics is possible *at all*. The question 'How is Marxism possible?' is one sardonically described, I think by Jean-Marie Benoist (1970)[1], as one which Engels would have called petty bourgeois, but it has undeniably shaped much Marxological reflection. For Márkus, the key theme was a broad praxiological conception of work or labour which put him in opposition to Habermas's stress on work as instrumental action and his critique of what he called praxis philosophy.[2] This is not the place to address this question in detail, but it is enough to point to the theme of human needs which also inspired Heller (1976) and the collective book by Heller, Fehér and Márkus (1983) after they had been driven out of Hungary.

The book draws on a number of earlier texts by Márkus. This is not the place to discuss it in detail, and Grumley, having co-edited it, could not review it himself, but it seems to me of very considerable value. [3] We can look forward to further posthumous texts by this enormously creative writer.

Benoist, Jean-Marie (1970) *Marx est mort*. Paris: Gallimard

Dunaj, L'ubomír (2023) 'Jóhann Páll Árnason: A Pražák', *International Journal of Social Imaginaries* 2: 141–160

Habermas, Jürgen (2014) 'Entgegnung auf Ágnes Heller', in Smail Rasic (ed.), *Habermas und der historische Materialismus* (Freiburg/München: Karl Alber)

[1] I have been unable to find the relevant page, & also the TLS issue with the reference to 75% Mensch (which raises the question what Lukács thought to be the other 25%).

[2] Habermas (2014: 84-5) revisited this theme in his friendly response to Heller. In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, '...in response to the essay by our common friend György Márkus, I contested a Marxist reading of praxis philosophy...This also contained an element of self-criticism of my own beginnings.' (my translation)

[3] I also share Grumley's admiration for the historical sociology of Johann Árnason and his account of European integration.