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## REVIEWS AND NOTES

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### A GLOBAL LIFE AND GLOBAL SCHOLARLY REVIEW

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***A Global Life and Global Scholarly Publishing for Social Justice. Festschrift for Peter Herrmann. Edited by A. Tausch. Nowa Science, New York, 2025. DOI: 10.52305/TJAZ2787.***

Science is a demanding profession. The defense of a PhD thesis is a great accomplishment. In addition, true academics must constantly improve and evolve, keeping up with their respective scientific fields, knowing the latest methods and understanding long-term global trends. Scholars not only experience the so-called ‘publish or perish’ pressure of global knowledge capitalism, they also have to take into account many subtle nuances, including politics. It is challenging to stay in tune with the global political agenda while maintaining an objective, rigorous, and truthful academic stance. The reviewed monograph is about such a scholar.

The book *A Global Life and Global Scholarly Publishing for Social Justice. Festschrift for Peter Herrmann* is an unusual combination of many personal views on Peter Herrmann expressed through the eyes of his friends and colleagues. In addition, the book dwells on a variety of latest scientific trends and research findings. The introduction to the monograph (Chapter 1) was written by Arno Tausch. It is both praiseful and academically rigorous. Tausch has conducted a bibliometric analysis of Peter Herrmann's publications and work history, delivering a clear and logical picture of Peter's personality: ‘He reaches out with his knowledge and analysis in the service of the world's poor, written in the spirit of critical political economy’ (Tausch *et al.* 2025a: 1).

The second chapter was written by Leonid Grinin, Anton Grinin, and Andrey Korotayev, who analyze global population trends. They expect the Cybernetic Revolution to occur in the 2030s–2060s, leading to a boost in elderly care robots and support machines of various kinds, as well as requiring labor-saving technologies. The authors make some questionable points, such as the idea that population aging ‘will pose... *fundamentally new problems* (emphasis added) for society’ (Grinin *et al.* 2025: 35). However, their text is well written and is important for researchers studying global aging and its impact on global digital capitalism. In addition, the chapter provides a broader picture not only of the current situation with global aging and the historical reasons for it, but also provides a series of forecasts for the future. Unfortunately, it is not a bright fu-

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ture – the authors cannot be accused of technological determinism. They mention threats posed by the Cybernetic Revolution to individual freedom, dignity, and privacy, and postulate that ‘adaptation to aging requires the adaptation of technological innovations to the principles of a free society’ (Grinin *et al.* 2025: 35). The second section of the chapter provides some insights into what kind of society we can actually expect in future in terms of demography. It provides some predictions about the rise in the number of ‘aging countries’ where the elderly will consume more than the young people. By 2040, there will be 89 such countries and ‘compared to 1950, the number of 80-year-olds should increase by almost two orders of magnitude by 2100!’ (*Ibid.*: 29). Nevertheless, the authors remain optimistic and propose using global aging as a development driver.

The third chapter, written by the Austrian economist Kunibert Raffer, is entitled ‘*Human Rights and Present “Debt Management”*’. This is a very logical part of the festschrift for Herrmann, who is a social philosopher with a Marxist background. Raffer is quite emotional in his chapter, for example, when exclaiming that ‘no decent person can use the word law in relation to actual debt management’ (Raffer 2025: 42). He even refers to it as ‘global financial apartheid’ and furiously criticizes national and global debt management, pointing at the EU and the USA as places of lies and double standards, where the Rule of Law is praised and declared, but does not apply to everyone. Raffer points out that, before 1945, despite two World Wars, it was still a time when economic mechanisms continued to function properly, including risk. One could lose money or become rich and there was no modern debt management. The 1982 debt crisis was a turning point in Raffer’s research because, prior to this event, people’s needs were considered more important than creditors’ rights. After that year, famine and misery started to be considered as collateral damage and a tool to enforce policies and concessions on debtor countries. In his analysis, Raffer proves that helping them was never intended by creditors.

The fourth chapter (by Raimund Dietz) explains that Herrmann in his works analyzes the triangle of state, citizen, and economy not separately, but *in their function of forming society*. Dietz claims that he appreciates this approach, and this chapter entitled ‘*On the Political Economy of the Full Money Concept*’ is inspired by it. Dietz formulates ‘first principles of money’, using it to support the regulatory approach to the full money concept. The chapter delves deep into the scientific thoughts of many money theorists and concludes with the claim that accepting money as *an embodiment of exchange*, which was suggested by Simmel (1900), will ‘take the entire economic theory a great deal further’ (Dietz 2025: 76).

The fifth chapter was written by Arno Tausch and revisits Polanyi’s ‘Great Transformation’ in the context of Herrmann’s view of political economy (Tausch 2025b). The text discusses a global backlash against the excesses of global capitalism. The theoretical basis for the chapter is the connection between Polanyi’s and Herrmann’s understanding of social inequality. Both scholars see its roots in the economic and social systems that are based on what I would call *a toxic idea*. The essence of this approach is that, instead of the economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system. It is toxic, because it leads to luxury for a few and striving for the majority by the ideology and control of society via the neoliberal economic model. This hardly ever leads to a sustainable future for most people. Tausch

shows how Herrmann has criticized the neoliberal economic model from his early academic career to his latest publications within the framework of similar paradigms, including those created by Karl Polanyi (1886–1964), and Paul Boccara (1932–2017). The imbalances in capitalism rooted in the toxic idea mentioned above create obstacles on the way to sustainable development.

‘A Job Security or Training Project’ is the name of the sixth chapter. At the beginning, Catherine Mills pays tribute to Peter Herrmann, in memory of the warm and fruitful exchanges he had with Paul Boccara. Since Herrmann works within the Marxist tradition throughout his academic career, a reader should not be surprised that ‘Job Security or Training Project’ (the project) is actually more about ‘modern communism in the conditions of the informational revolution’ (Mills 2025: 128). The main idea of the chapter is that the concept of full employment is ineffective in the current global digital capitalist reality and scientists should move beyond it. Mills characterizes the current situation in her chapter as ‘a crisis of civilization and meaning’ (*Ibid.*: 139), and I tend to agree with her. This chapter proposes a number of profound social shifts, including ‘transformation of institutions, with decentralized powers of direct intervention for social actors, including the development of economic and political self-management’ (*Ibid.*: 128). Many modern political systems tend to be centralized for security reasons. Some politicians and scientists advocate for it as the only way to remain strong, secure and effective in global competition in different fields. That is why this chapter may not be for everyone, but *the project* is a valuable scientific alternative to the old-fashioned idea of full employment at any cost.

The seventh chapter is about Liberation Theology. It is basically a long series of arguments about why leftism is better than liberalism and neo-liberalism. At the beginning, the author of the chapter, Stephen D. Morrison (2025), points out the biographical details of Peter Herrmann's active contacts with the Roman Catholic Church. By the end of the chapter, readers are supposed to understand why Herrmann chose leftism, and how Marxist principles in science are actually in tune with the church's view on the solidarity of all people being equal.

Jacob Kornbeck is the author of Chapter 8. He combined the results from Hardie's monograph (Hardie 2020) on doping repression with Herrmann's essay ‘Smart Development or Human Rights’ (Herrmann 2011). Again we observe the scientific criticism of the neo-liberal paradigm: it makes competition the regulatory principle of society, where inequalities are instituted, constantly nourished, and maintained. In this context, doping repression is an extreme example: those who actually perform in sports are mere proletarians, who suffer constant scrutiny and inequality based on nationality, and sometimes are even deprived of the presumption of innocence in doping matters.

Festschrift for a scientist is a special honorary gift, made according to strict rules of peer-review but allowing for artistic illustrations. That is why both the ninth and tenth chapters do not conform to what one would expect to see in an academic volume. The ninth chapter, written by Violeta Dinescu, is a work of art. It perfectly fits the Festschrift, because the genre of the book is not a traditional monograph. It is difficult for me to describe ‘*Resonance – for Peter Herrmann*’ (the title of the ninth chapter) in words. The best I can do for you is to say that it is an effective combination of three forms of art: music, writing, and painting.

Manfred Baierl's tenth chapter is called 'Even Just 0.1 % is Clearly Visible and Recognizable', and this is a photo and a short text. Many people have probably heard of the tiny percentage of the wealthiest people in the world, and yet they are not as visible as the majority of the population would like them to be. I see Baierl's input as a metaphor for this social contradiction, even if the author himself has commented more generally on his photo: 'I agree with Peter Herrmann that even small values say something and in memory of these discursive and enlightening conversations about this topic, I would like to congratulate him in this publication on his work with my photo'.

The eleventh chapter 'From 5 Giant Evils to 5 Giant Tensions – The Current Crisis of Capitalism as a Seedbed for Its Overturn – Or: How Many Gigabytes Has a Horse?' was written by Peter Herrmann. Yes, the best gifts are those we make for ourselves, and on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday (1.04.2025), Herrmann made an input into his own Festschrift. As a global scholar, he thinks big, and as a Marxist he tries to find the roots of the current international crisis in capitalism. The five giant evils from the title of the chapter are five core ills of society that John Maynard Keynes sought solutions for: 1) poverty, 2) disease, 3) ignorance, 4) squalor, and 5) idleness (Herrmann 2025: 181). As for the horse gigabytes, it is a reference to an article published in *The Economist* in 2015: 'a high-end car, for instance, has the digital horsepower of 20 personal computers and generates 25 gigabytes of data per hour of driving'.<sup>1</sup> Herrmann is well known for his unique metaphors, and this time, he uses the Puss in Boots fairy tale to talk about the deceitful nature of digital capitalism as a way to instill more global inequality and increase the hold on power for a few privileged ones. I do not want to spoil your reading experience by revealing all the wonders of Chapter 11, so I will not retell Herrmann's five Giant Tensions.

### **In a nutshell**

The book under review is a collection of research results on ways to achieve a more equal, fair, and sustainable future for all. Some might say that this is impossible. However, the team of authors have highlighted a huge amount of global social problems and provided many valuable suggestions for overcoming them. They have also shown ways to make an old utopian dream closer to reality through the contemporary digital transformation. The book is available for purchase on the publisher's website.<sup>2</sup> It is rather expensive. However, according to Marx, the value of a commodity can be objectively measured by the average number of labor hours required to produce that commodity. The Festschrift for Peter Herrmann was definitely the result of a great number of working hours by the best qualified. So, if you are a modern-day Marxist, you should definitely buy it.

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### **NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> *The Economist*. Does Deutschland do digital? Europe's biggest economy is rightly worried that digitisation is a threat to its industrial leadership (published: 21.11.2015). URL: <https://www.economist.com/business/2015/11/21/does-deutschland-do-digital>.

<sup>2</sup> A Global Life and Global Scholarly Publishing for Social Justice. Festschrift for Peter Herrmann. URL: <https://novapublishers.com/shop/a-global-life-and-global-scholarly-publishing-for-social-justice-festschrift-for-peter-herrmann/>

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