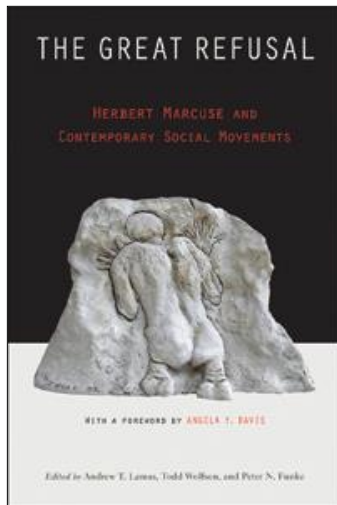


Andrew T. Lamas, Todd Wolfson, and Peter N. Funke (Eds.), **The Great Refusal: Herbert Marcuse and Contemporary Social Movements**, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2017, 410 pp., \$44.95 (paperback).

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Since 2011, waves of activism have swept the Middle East, Western Europe, and North America. Prodigious scholarly works have focused on the newness of these social movements' use of new digital technologies. Andrew T. Lamas, Todd Wolfson, and Peter N. Funke's edited work, *The Great Refusal: Herbert Marcuse and Contemporary Social Movements*, delves into the historical roots and social theoretical foundations of the recent resistance through a Marcusean lens. As long as Herbert Marcuse guides the theory and praxis of the cycle of protests in the 1960s, the apparent parallels between the recent activism and the 1960s movements offer insights to understand contemporary social movements. Building on and extending Marcuse's concept of the "Great Refusal—the protest against that which is," (p. 6), this book addresses three main themes—revolutionary subject/subjectivity, movement strategy, and theoretical developments—in 21 chapters.

Overview of the Book

The contributors first give an overview to understand how Marcuse's analyses of the 1960s social movements can inform contemporary movements. In chapter 2, Michael Forman detects striking similarities between the two waves of movements in the 1960s and 2010s. Specifically, both of them occur in totally administered societies in which people's consciousness and subjectivity are reified. Both waves of movements have been initiated not by the working class, but by the marginalized people (e.g., students, women, and minorities) through decentralized, leaderless organizing processes. Both strive to negate the status quo, yet fail to offer systematic theory and praxis to bring about structural change. A crucial difference is that while Marcuse's theory developed in the "golden age" of capitalism that is marked by affluence and stable employment, contemporary neoliberal capitalism is characterized by deepening poverty and precarity of labor. These similarities and differences call for a reconstruction of Marcuse's theory on revolution and resistance in the new era. In chapter 4, Peter Marcuse agrees with Forman that the revolutionary subject should be the underprivileged in the global capitalist order. Partly responding to the call for reconstruction, he considers the Great Refusal as a long march that comprises continuous and varied struggles against domination in thinking and practices in the *longue durée*. Therefore, contemporary movements are instances of such a long march in search of liberation.

Revolutionary Subject and Subjectivity

Proceeding from this framework, the empirical chapters of Parts II, III, and IV deal with two overarching questions: the revolutionary subject/subjectivity and resistance strategies. Delving into different forms of struggles, different authors try to find a revolutionary body against neoliberal capitalism. In chapter 6, Jenny Chan locates the revolutionary body in the Chinese rural migrant workers, as they are the most aggrieved population and occupy the linchpin of global capitalist productive processes. Using both legal and extralegal means, they have been fighting against state-capitalist collusion. While Chan's revolutionary body is directly involved in capital production, Heather Love looks into the LGBTQ community and argues that queer negativity should be seen as a form of Great Refusal that resists capitalist sexual reproduction and development. Borrowing from Angela Davis's call for complex unity, Love urges that the alliance of queer struggles with other forms of fights should acknowledge differences and conflicts inside the revolutionary movement. Shifting focus from the revolutionary subject to subjectivity, chapter 8 discusses how "Mic Check!," using a human microphone of protesters to repeat what the speaker says, exemplifies a new sensibility. Whereas Marcuse deplors that people's consciousness for liberation has been blunted by the cultural industry and consumption, he observes that fantasies, imagination, and their externalization in art pieces can cultivate critical consciousness and autonomy. Mic Check! in the Occupy movement should be thought of as fostering such a new subjectivity via performing and envisioning freedom.

Movement Strategies

Organization

To effect fundamental social transformation, change agents need strategies to organize collective actions and respond to the state's and capital's suppression of liberation struggles. Using the example of the Asian People Power uprisings that toppled eight authoritarian regimes from 1986 to 1992, Katsiaficas detects a new organizing form, namely, the "conscious spontaneous" organization "in which grassroots activists . . . synchronize protests with common aspirations" (p. 84). In other words, the movements were driven by the common desire for autonomy, solidarity, and direct democracy, yet they did not issue from a centralized organization by any one specific entity or actor. This form of organization has also been seen in movements from the 1960s to 2011, suggesting the continuity of struggles for a liberating future. In addition to social movements and revolutions, Marcelo Vieta identifies three working examples of the Great Refusal under capitalism: alternative community economies, radical education initiatives, and worker-recuperated enterprises. They signify resistance to neoliberalism and exploitation and aim to develop noncapitalist, collective ownership and modes of living and working.

Violence

To effectively organize social movements, collective actors usually confront the question of whether to use and how to respond to violence. Chapter 9 points out the productive potential of violence. While social movements' use of violence has been largely discredited, A. K. Thompson posits that such dismissal may indicate identification with the repressive reality. Thompson argues that violence, as

exemplified in the black bloc of the Toronto G20 protest, can expose the repressive nature of the preexisting one-dimensional society and mobilize dissatisfied people to prefigure an alternative future. In contrast, Christian Garland notes a nonviolent form of resistance that "negates that which negates us" (p. 55) by just *being* and *doing* in and against capitalism. Changing the perspective from collective actors to the state, chapter 11 examines how the police use the 3M strategy (management, militarization, and meditation) to contain movements. Despite the claim to tolerate dissents, the police violently evicted Occupy Philadelphia through preplanned management of protests via soft and hard means, militarized tactics of suppressing protests, and forced meditation by imprisoning protesters. Using Marcuse's "discriminate tolerance," the author urges readers to distinguish tolerance of repression from tolerance of a progressive force's challenge of such repression. The usefulness of this distinction leads the author of chapter 10 to discredit the former type of tolerance: Sarah Lynn Kleeb warns that unqualified praise of tolerance of state violence can mean passivity or even complicity with the status quo and thus does violence to liberation struggles.

Media and Communication Technologies

Although Marcuse offers ample critique of mass media, the changing landscape requires more attention to nuanced analysis of an expanded concept of media, such as new ICTs. In chapter 12, Douglas Kellner conceives the 2011 uprisings from the Arab Spring to the Occupy movement as incidences of media spectacle that exemplify Marcuse's notion of the Great Refusal because they offer a new set of political discourse and practice that aims at emancipation. Shifting focus to new ICTs, Christian Fuchs points out the dialectics of social media. Social media can serve as tools of both capitalist commodification and individualization and have liberating potential in realms of "the social, the commons, labor, the gift, and the community" (p. 256). Consistent with this argument, Andrew Feenberg argues that science and technology's embedding in capitalism reduces everything to instrumental/functionalist rationality. Yet the utopian dimension of technology can be recovered by restoring value rationality.

Theoretical Development

In Part V, the contributors analyze Marcusean theory's affinities and divergences with other theoreticians. Chapter 16 compares the prophetic messianism of Fromm and the catastrophic messianism of Marcuse. Issuing from the latter, Marcuse's Great Refusal seems to cast a view of passivity and despair. Similarly, Russell Rockwell and Kevin B. Anderson find that the correspondence between Dunayevskaya and Marcuse seems to show the latter's doubt of the possibility of finding freedom in the necessity of labor and the working class's role in revolutionary struggles. Chapter 18 infuses Frantz Fanon and Jürgen Habermas's thoughts in Marcuse, leading to an expanded theory of liberation that attends to anticolonialism and the compatibility between individualization and socialization. In chapter 19, drawing on Bolívar Echeverría and Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, Stefan Gandler uses the Zapatista movement to illustrate an alternative form of struggle that goes beyond the dichotomy of reform and revolution, tradition and modernity, and combines critical and political economic dimensions. Chapter 20, by Stanley Aronowitz, locates the relative absence of contemporary struggle in the repressiveness of the state and the reification of subjectivity. He calls to attend to psychoanalysis to revive radical consciousness. In the last chapter, Lauren Langman follows Forman's suggestion to analyze neoliberal capitalism. Through a Habermasian

analysis, he points out the multiple crises in the economic, political, social, and subjective realms. Responding to these crises, he calls for organic intellectuals' intervention to engage in the critique and praxis of continued, systemic struggles.

The book offers a timely addition to the study of contemporary social movements. It gleans insights from Marcuse and past collective actions to inform contemporary and future fights for social justice and autonomy. The book may interest scholars from political philosophy, social theory, social movements, media studies, and science and technology studies. Readers from the empirical disciplines and activists may also benefit from it, yet demand more specification of the middle-range mechanisms and on-the-ground tactics. Regardless of one's taste, the book will be a valuable guide to inform both theory and praxis of social justice struggles.