

Call For Papers

The 5th Biennial Meeting of the International Herbert
Marcuse Society

The University of Kentucky November 7-9, 2013

Conference Theme:

***“Emancipation, New Sensibility, and the Challenge of a
New Era: Theory, Practice, and Pedagogy”***

“Social theory is supposed to analyze existing societies in the light of their own functions and capabilities and to identify demonstrable tendencies (if any) which might lead beyond the existing state of affairs. By logical inference from the prevailing conditions and institutions, critical theory may also be able to determine the basic institutional changes which are the prerequisites for the transition to a higher stage of development: “higher” in the sense of a more rational and equitable use of resources, minimization of destructive conflicts, and enlargement of the realm of freedom. But beyond these limits, critical theory did not venture for fear of losing its scientific character...I believe that this restrictive conception must be revised, and that the revision is suggested, and even necessitated, by the actual evolution of contemporary societies.”

Herbert Marcuse--*An Essay on Liberation* p. 3

The International Herbert Marcuse Society (IHMS) is an atypical gathering of the community of academics, scholars and activists who labor together in an attempt to help the specter of liberation that haunts our society materialize in the concrete lives of oppressed people. For this reason, we bring together not only Marcuse scholars, but scholars and activists from a wide range of disciplines. We are interested in connecting with all people who participate in the “Great Refusal” by trying to transform our society in theory and practice. The IHMS emerged as a

response to our current social, political, philosophical, and historical situation. In short, we have witnessed the apparent domination of one-dimensional thinking. However, the control of society by one-dimensional thinking has never been complete. One-dimensional thinking has always been *challenged* but not *overthrown* by an antagonistic specter. Marx spoke of the specter of communism. Arnold Farr has spoken of the specter of liberation. Mark Cobb has spoken of Marcuse's ghost. Derrida has spoken of the specter of Marx. Even as one-dimensional thinking takes its throne, no coronation is in the works.

"A Specter is haunting Europe—the specter of communism." Karl Marx—*Communist Manifesto* p. 55

"There is a specter haunting western philosophy—the specter of liberation." Arnold Farr—*Critical Theory and Democratic Vision: Marcuse and Recent Liberation Philosophies* p. 1

"The specters of Marx. Why this plural? Would there be more than one of them?" Jacques Derrida—*Specters of Marx* p. 1

Derrida was right to speak of multiple hauntings. Today we are confronted by the haunting of Marcuse, suggesting that his work is as relevant in 2013 as it was in the 1960s and 70s. Marcuse's work itself embodies a multiplicity of specters, specters of liberation. This is the point of the long opening quotation from Marcuse. On one level, (Marcusean) critical/social theory discloses the specters of liberation in terms of the possibilities that exist within the present mode of social organization. This is the function of critical/social theory in what Marcuse has called its restricted operation. At another level, critical/social theory transcends the present form of social organization to reveal the specter of utopian visions that haunt the present reality principle. However, he reminds us that the Utopian vision is not one with content insofar as our society has reached a level of technological development that makes liberation possible. We are beyond the threat of scarcity. However, what is at issue here is the blocking of liberation by the very forces that make it possible.

In 2011, the IHMS conference was entitled “Critical Refusals”. We chose this title because we wanted to bring together scholars and activists who were all engaged in some kind of “Great Refusal” through their work. We wanted to bring together people who were engaged in critical projects even though they may not be Marcuse scholars. Marcuse and his work are still at the core of the IHMS. However, Marcuse’s project is carried out best when it is put into conversation with other theorists and activist who are doing critical and transformative work. The 2013 conference will be organized according to this same principle. We welcome papers and projects from all who are seeking serious engagement and social transformation.

Please send papers and abstracts to Arnold L. Farr alfarr00@uky.edu.

Deadline for abstracts: No later than May 1, 2013

Abstracts: must be no more than 500 words and should include both a title and 3-5 keywords to assist with paneling in the event your abstract is chosen for presentation.

Notification: June 15, 2013

Papers: final versions should be no more than 3000 words written with standard formatting and 12 pt font.

Registration: \$30.00