

Critical Theory in Dark Times: The Prospects for Liberation in the Shadow of the Radical Right

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A populism of the radical right is on the rise across the globe. What are the counter-strategies of the left? What role does critical theory play in the current context? Embedded in the critical theory of Herbert Marcuse is the promise that reason, with a proper critical orientation, can provide an emancipatory alternative to the deforming oppressions of a given order. But critical reason is occluded in a one-dimensional society, resulting in a society without meaningful alternatives.

Marcuse reminds us that a one-dimensional society with a "smooth, democratic unfreedom" is a society in which there is no fundamental opposition, or where opposition is absorbed and reified into the logic of the system itself. From openly nationalist/fascist/racist parties gaining power in governments across the globe, to institutions manipulated by elites to widen inequalities of wealth and power, to ecological degradation and climate change, to debt traps as a result of uneven development, to mass incarceration and refugee detention policies, freedom becomes an increasingly abstract illusion under the guise of the "normally" functioning global economic system.

We seek papers that address the concerns, challenges, commonalities, and spaces for opposition in the current political context of one-dimensional neoliberal authoritarianism, as well as papers that engage the continued relevance of Herbert Marcuse's analyses/theoretical insights to critical theory. This includes, but is not limited to addressing questions such as:

- What is Marcuse's influence today toward a Critical Theory from the Americas? How might we draw on his theoretical perspectives to interpret structural violence, as well as relations among race, class, and gender and the rise of right-wing populism on both American continents?
- As the crises and contradictions of neoliberalism expand, how does a Marcusean analysis sharpen the criticism or explain the rise of the radical right? What networks and/or apparatuses are sustaining authoritarianism(s)?
- Since one-dimensional societies absorb oppositional movements, what steps can we take to move towards a more multi-dimensional consciousness? In what ways are the Black radical tradition, youth, LGBTQ, labor, workers, and indigenous peoples at the forefront of fundamental resistance?
- What are the pathways for revolutionary and systemic change? What are the dialectics of resistance today?
- What role can or should forms of education, including higher education, play as and in forms of resistance?
- Can violence play a role as a means of support and resistance? For precipitating system change?
- How might we theorize an alternative to the "democratic" unfreedom of today that engages human rights?
- What are the implications for radical class or group consciousness in a time of rising right-wing populism? What role might it play? Is there potential for a populism of/on the left?
- How might Marcuse's vision of radical socialism, a new social order committed to economic, racial and gender equality, sexual liberation, liberation of labor, preservation and restoration of nature, leisure, abundance and peace, inspire organizing today? What is the role of Marcusean aesthetic theory/praxis today?
- How do the culture industry and digital culture create new forms of propaganda and/or sites of resistance?
- What is the relationship between movements or organizing ideas such as #BlackLivesMatter, #MariellePresente, #MeToo, #EnoughisEnough, #EleNão and Refugees Welcome, and the "new left"? What implications do these movements have for progressive politics?
- As basic liberal-democratic values and institutions break down or suffer crises of legitimacy, in what ways does a Marcusean critical theory reveal alternatives to the xenophobic nationalism of the radical right?

Submit abstracts of no more than 300 words to ihms2019@gmail.com by May 1, 2019. Panel proposals and student abstracts are welcomed and encouraged. For more information visit <https://sites.google.com/site/marcusesociety/Home>.