

# Introduction

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## MAKING SENSE OF MASS REVOLT

Since at least the time of the First International, questions concerning the precise character of political spontaneity and the role of spontaneous action in revolutionary transformation have provoked heated debate. From the split between anarchist and communist factions in the First International to debates between Rosa Luxemburg and Vladimir Lenin during the lead-up to the first World War, the problem has returned with a frequency that has only underscored its importance. Although Luxemburg was convinced of the need for disciplined socialist organization, her analysis of the dynamics of mass strikes alerted her to the undeniable importance of spontaneity. Recalling the “general rising of the proletariat” that took place in Russia in January of 1905, Luxemburg summarized its outward manifestation as nothing short of a “declaration of war.” Still, it was the internal or psychological transformations that seemed most compelling to her, since the actions “for the first time awoke class feeling and class consciousness in millions upon millions as if by an electric shock.”

And this awakening of class feeling expressed itself forthwith in the circumstances that the proletarian mass, counted by millions, quite suddenly and sharply came to realize how intolerable was the social and economic existence which they had patiently endured for decades in the chains of capitalism. Thereupon there began a spontaneous general shaking of and tugging at these chains. All the innumerable sufferings of the modern proletariat reminded them of the old bleeding wounds.<sup>1</sup>

Along with consciousness and organization, then, spontaneity seemed to play a key role in pushing struggle to new heights. Frantz Fanon noted a similar dynamic in the colonial context. By his account, although the nationalist parties that arose in the towns of the colonized countries were objectively better prepared to navigate the political terrain on which they found themselves, it was the peasantry that “spontaneously gives form to the general insecurity.” Objectively reactionary but with far less contact with or investment in the conqueror’s reality, Fanon felt that it was this force that gave the anticolonial struggle its vitality and *élan*.<sup>2</sup>

The spontaneous shaking of chains that Luxemburg recounted more than a century ago continues today. In July 2013, George Zimmerman was acquitted of the murder of Trayvon Martin. In response, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi created the hashtag BlackLivesMatter. The following summer, the police murders of Black people including Eric Garner, Michael Brown, and John Crawford III captured national headlines. Similar incidents occurred over the next year—Tamir Rice, Akai Gurley, Walter Scott, Sandra Bland, and many others. Following the November 2014 exoneration of Darren Wilson, the officer who shot and killed Michael Brown, Ferguson became ground zero for a new Black freedom movement. In April 2015, Baltimore erupted in rebellion in response to the police killing of Freddie Gray. Beginning with actions at the University of Missouri, student protests swept across the country’s college campuses the following fall. After periods of demobilization, waves of protests can often seem to flare up out of nowhere. Given the speed and frequency of their emergence and the similarity of the events, one might say that Black Lives Matter has inaugurated a period of spontaneous mass revolt.

In late 2010, twenty-six-year old Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi immolated himself in response to ongoing police harassment. After local officials refused to hear his case, he attained a canister of gasoline, stood in the middle of traffic, and cried out, “How do you expect me to make a living?” He then lit a match. After surviving in the hospital for three weeks, Bouazizi passed away on January 4, 2011. Massive protests broke out after his death. By January 14, Tunisian dictator Ben Ali was ousted from power and forced to flee the country.<sup>3</sup> Mass revolts soon spread throughout the region, affecting Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Kuwait, Sudan, Omar, Morocco, and numerous other countries.

These uprisings were powerful, but their dynamics were not necessarily unique. Similar patterns of intense and rapid revolt occurred during Spain’s September 15 movement (spring 2011), Chile’s student protests (summer 2011), the Occupy movement (fall 2011), and the Quebec student strike

(spring and summer 2012). Other examples of spontaneous mass rebellion include Iran's 2009 Green Revolution; the Greek riots of 2008; the anti-Iraq War demonstrations of February 15, 2003 (in which an estimated thirty million people participated worldwide); the global justice movement and the flurry of Latin American anti-neoliberal movements throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s; the international fervor surrounding the Zapatistas in the mid-1990s; the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising; the mid-1980s People Power Revolution that ousted Ferdinand Marcos as president of the Philippines; the rebellions of Gwangju, South Korea, in 1980; Italy's confluence of student, worker, feminist, and countercultural revolts of the 1970s; the US-based anti-Vietnam War movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s; the 1969 Stonewall riots in Greenwich Village, New York; and the events of May 1968 in France. Considering such history, it is easy to conclude that rebellion is a natural response to oppressive conditions and that acts of revolt inspire others to follow suit.

Such revolts also spark reflection. Why, at given historical moments, does resistance develop spontaneously at multiple geographical points? How can that resistance be understood, and how can it be furthered? *Spontaneous Combustion: The Eros Effect and Global Revolution* addresses the dynamics of such revolts to understand them and help to push them further. To do so, the contributors to this volume have endeavored to clarify, apply, and critically extend George Katsiaficas' notion of the "eros effect." First elaborated in the context of doctoral work carried out under the supervision of Herbert Marcuse and concerned with the dynamics of global insurrection in 1968, Katsiaficas' eros effect is an analytical tool for explaining mass political awakenings and spontaneous rebellions. This "effect" involves an eroticization of politics—and of everyday life—that motivates people to create an alternative world of solidarity, self-determination, and bottom-up social relations. Following Marcuse, Katsiaficas argues that the human species is hardwired for freedom and justice and that human nature is an aid to the revolutionary process. However, sociopolitical repression often inhibits people from enacting such life-affirming qualities. The contradiction between the impulse toward freedom and the conditions of oppression often leads to social rebellions.

In these moments, thousands and even millions of people sweep into the streets to demand an end to oppression and to advance visions of collective liberation. The basic impulse in each case is the same: the people themselves should rule. Putting this political ethos into practice is a life-affirming and erotic experience, which helps explain why millions of people become attracted to (and subsequently participate in) mass political

rebellions. As their impulses toward freedom and justice become activated, participants begin to see what form their realization might take. Paradoxically, it is only by way of immersion in the ecstatic experience of struggle that the universal *rationality* of rebellion is discovered.

Skeptics may argue that such a description is more hopeful than actual, that it succumbs to the Romanticism that found its way into political philosophy through figures like Hegel, who proclaimed that it was “solely by risking life that freedom is obtained.”<sup>4</sup> Two responses are in order. First, hope and the vision it inspires are part of human experience and necessary for social change. As Marx made clear in chapter 7 of *Capital*, the human labor process begins with imagination.<sup>5</sup> Without the ability to envision the desired goal prior to embarking on our labors, humans remain indistinguishable from other creatures. In that field of human labor known as “politics,” the imagination is directed toward questions with universal implications: How, for instance, can our reality be brought into accord with our desires? Second, skepticism concerning the power of the imagination to lead us toward more realized versions of ourselves through struggle ignores the historical and empirical fact that rebellions happen every day. Such rebellions often remain small and contained. Nevertheless, even seemingly ineffective rebellions—like the self-immolation of Bouazizi—can spark much broader insurgencies. Indeed, small revolts sometimes ignite national and even international uprisings.

Rebellions, however, do not inevitably lead to revolutions. Some are violently crushed while others disintegrate under the weight of their own contradictions. Some fade away while others carry on for years before achieving concrete change. Such events should not solely be conceived as “failed revolts.” Instead, they are flash points through which people’s political consciousness can be and often is transformed. Brief but intense moments of radical democratic practice challenge the self-evidence of power’s constituted form. Participants develop a deep desire for freedom and autonomy. When this happens, an important question arises: What would it mean to stand before an open horizon of infinite possibility?

Such dynamics highlight the nature of “spontaneous combustion” as simultaneously absolute and conditional. The *hope* is that revolt becomes absolute, that it becomes global and fundamentally alters human sociality. Mass rebellions sweep across nations and entire regions, so why not across the entire planet? Over seven hundred Black Lives Matter protests occurred in its first two years, and the movement has garnered support in Canada, France, Germany, Britain, Brazil, Palestine, Ghana, India, Japan, and Australia; Occupy involved more than eight hundred encampments

worldwide; the Arab Spring inspired movements across oceans; the global justice movement that emerged from the depths of the Laconda jungle reached numerous countries around the world; and the radicalism of the 1960s involved everything from young hippie kids smoking dope to anti-colonial struggles and Third World revolutions.

But examples such as these also highlight revolt's conditional dimension. Each locale is unique, and people must respond to the specific conditions of their own oppression. This involves challenging and overturning everything from white supremacy and heteropatriarchy to theocratic dictatorships, military regimes, corrupt two-party systems, top-down "socialist" governments, and the exploitative relations and institutions of capitalism. Meanwhile, capitalism's capacity to channel rebellious desires into commodified "resolutions" presents another series of unique challenges. Obstructions to rebellious aspirations include an obscene variety of banalities and brutalities, including: mass-marketed Che Guevara tee shirts and "punk fashion" in shopping malls; legal loopholes used to squash unionized labor; corporate propaganda that transforms nonviolent animal rights activists into "terrorists"; and the incorporation of flex time and "work from home" policies, which seem worker-friendly on the surface but in reality erase the boundaries between work and leisure. What is needed, then, is total liberation—a perpetual vigilance against *all* oppression, and a perpetual exploration of newer and deeper forms of freedom and justice. As Marcuse put it, "The individual liberation (refusal) must incorporate the *universal* in the particular protest . . ."<sup>6</sup>

This sensibility helps to build forms of solidarity that can overcome national borders and regional differences. People begin recognizing their own struggles in the struggles of others. As this happens, oppression—in whatever form it takes—becomes a catalyst for resistance. Complicated and contentious though it may be, a *universal* solidarity begins to emerge. On the surface, the struggles of Occupy and the Arab Spring have little in common. Indeed, economic inequality in the United States is both qualitatively and quantitatively different from the political repression that characterized Egypt prior to Tahrir Square. But in October of 2011, protestors in Cairo marched in solidarity with Occupy Oakland and in opposition to police repression and the brutalization of activist Scott Olsen. The signs of the Cairo protestors read, "From Egypt to Wall Street, Don't [Be] Afraid, Go Ahead, #OccupyOakland, #OWS" and "From #Tahrir to #OccupyOakland and #USA One Case, One Goal #SocialJusticeforAll, Fuck Police."<sup>7</sup> A similar example occurred when Palestinian activists took to Twitter expressing support for Black Lives Matter, posting, among others things,

“The Palestinian people know what [it] mean[s] to be shot while unarmed because of your ethnicity. #Ferguson. #Justice.”<sup>8</sup> Over eleven-hundred Black activists, scholars, students, artists, and organizations followed suit, issuing a “Black Solidarity Statement with Palestine.”<sup>9</sup> According to Katsiaficas, such transnational solidarity owes to the eros effect—the flourishing of a politicized sensuality capable of transcending immediate conditions and enabling disparate struggles to forge common bonds.

But how does this actually happen? What are the internal operations of this “effect”? Are particular social conditions necessary for it to emerge? Why, at certain moments, does the eros effect take hold while, at other times, it appears to be absent? What theoretical models might help us to understand, and thus to intensify, this revolutionary process?

Given these questions, it is not surprising that recent political upheavals have sparked wide-ranging conversations addressing numerous aspects of mass revolts: historical factors, sociopolitical conditions, use of social media and the role of more traditional forms, the psychology of mass revolt, the epistemology of resistance, and so on. These conversations emerge from a variety of sources, including popular and academic presses, special issues of scholarly journals, first- and secondhand narratives, journalistic accounts, and political manifestos.<sup>10</sup>

*Spontaneous Combustion* contributes to this conversation by combining social movement scholarship and critical theory to devise a kind of critical social movement theory. Like social movement scholarship more generally, this approach is interdisciplinary by its very nature and intersects with such fields as sociology; political science; communication; anthropology; media studies; legal studies; ethnic, gender, and sexuality studies; and critical pedagogy. Our approach to critical theory is similarly broad and incorporates elements from traditions including the Frankfurt School, French poststructuralism, feminism, and cultural studies. While traditional theory provides models of understanding, critical theory provides models for altering both understanding and action. For these reasons, critical social movement theory is an apt framework for *Spontaneous Combustion*.

## THE EROS EFFECT

Katsiaficas first developed the concept of the eros effect as a way to “explain the rapid spread of revolutionary aspirations and actions during the strikes of May 1968 in France and May 1970 in the United States . . .”<sup>11</sup>

In assembling his empirical studies, he was “stunned by the spontaneous spread of revolutionary aspirations in a chain reaction of uprisings and the massive occupation of public space—the sudden entry into history of millions of ordinary people who acted in a unified fashion, intuitively believing that they could change the direction of their society.”<sup>12</sup> From those case studies, Katsiaficas began “to understand how in moments of the *eros* effect, universal interests become generalized at the same time as the dominant values of society are negated (such as national chauvinism, hierarchy, and individualism).”<sup>13</sup>

Throughout his work, Katsiaficas emphasizes the similarity of mass rebellions. For example, rebellions in both industrial and preindustrial nations exhibit shared interests in antiauthoritarian self-governance, international solidarity, the transformation of everyday life, and the creation and promotion of alternative values and ethics. Such rebellions also involve high degrees of spontaneity, with thousands and even millions of people seeming to join movements overnight. The US-based student movement of the 1960s and '70s exemplifies this phenomenon. According to Katsiaficas, by mid-May of 1970, “more than 500 colleges and universities were on strike, and by the end of the month, at least one-third of the nation’s 2,827 institutions of higher education were on strike. More than 80 percent of all universities and colleges in the United States experienced protests, and about half of the country’s eight million students and 350,000 faculty actively participated in the strike.”<sup>14</sup>

When accounting for such phenomena, Katsiaficas acknowledges that global communications networks (of radio, television, newspaper, and—nowadays—social media) are contributing factors. Nevertheless, he contends that the diffusion of information concerning localized insurgencies cannot fully explain the unmistakable *allure* of spontaneous rebellions. Consequently, Katsiaficas argues that a deeper, innate human quality must tie such mobilizations to one another.

Such spontaneous leaps may be, in part, a product of long-term social processes in which organized groups and conscious individuals prepare the groundwork, but when political struggle comes to involve millions of people, it is possible to glimpse a rare historical occurrence: the emergence of the *eros* effect, the massive awakening of the instinctual human need for justice and freedom. When the *eros* effect occurs, it becomes clear that the fabric of the *status quo* has been torn, and the forms of social control have been ruptured.<sup>15</sup>

To understand the origins of this conceptualization, it is useful to recall that Katsiaficas was active in the New Left and experienced the radicalism of the 1960s firsthand. These experiences led him to emphasize the important role played by spontaneous rebellions when he turned to the scholarly study of social movements. Finally, Katsiaficas was a student of Herbert Marcuse's and was deeply influenced by his work.<sup>16</sup> Through *Eros and Civilization*, *One-Dimensional Man*, and other works, Marcuse helped to shape the practices and sensibilities of the New Left.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the central themes of free love, anticapitalism, communal living, existential fulfillment, and self-expression were all at least partly influenced by Marcuse's writings.<sup>18</sup>

To get a sense of Marcuse's influence on the conceptual development of the eros effect, it's useful to quickly review his contributions to contemporary radical sensibilities. In brief, Marcuse argued both with and against Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxist criticism to formulate a critique of society and a philosophy of liberation. According to Freud, innate human drives were incompatible with modern civilization. Indeed, "[t]he liberty of the individual is no gift of civilization. . . . The development of civilization imposes restrictions on it, and justice demands that no one shall escape those restrictions."<sup>19</sup> Consequently, Freud believed that it was necessary to repress some of our individual wants, needs, and desires in order to live in relative peace. Marcuse agreed that psychological repression is part of the human condition. Such repression mediates between the pleasure principle ("I want to experience this, now!") and the more restrictive reality principle ("I must do this to avoid harm or death!").<sup>20</sup> However, according to Marcuse, while such repression may have been necessary at given stages of human development, the productive capacities of contemporary societies increasingly make it superfluous. That it should persevere, he argued, owed more to the demands of a system founded on profit maximization than on human needs per se.<sup>21</sup> In opposition to the prevailing conditions of "surplus repression," Marcuse encouraged his readers to begin envisioning human societies founded on the premise of an ongoing liberation that would enable people to reach greater depths of happiness, joy, and wonder. Human drives are not necessarily dark and evil, he maintained. Instead, they point to reservoirs of untapped potential and ingenuity.<sup>22</sup>

Along with his critical reevaluation of Freud, Marcuse also sought to unsettle the economic determinism that had come to define Marxist orthodoxy during the early part of the twentieth century. Repression was not simply an economic issue, he argued, but also a social, cultural, political, and existential one. Revolution must therefore involve more than a worker uprising against bosses or a "regime change" that replaces one hierarchy

with another; revolution must cut to the core of one's being and involve, for instance, the development of different languages, gestures, and impulses to safeguard against "cruelty, brutality, and ugliness."<sup>23</sup> As this occurs, the individual rejects the entire system and begins to develop a more life-affirming existence. For Marcuse, this liberation is rooted in eros, which is the innate human drive toward pleasure, joy, and happiness. Eros motivates us to live fully satisfying lives in conjunction with other people; however, under contemporary social conditions, eros is so severely distorted that we become accustomed to (and even come to desire) aggression, repression, and control. As Marcuse states, "the societal authority is absorbed into the 'conscience' and into the unconscious of the individual and works as his own desire, morality, and fulfillment. In the 'normal' development, the individual lives his repression 'freely' as his own life: he desires what he is supposed to desire; his gratifications are profitable to him and to others; he is reasonably and often even exuberantly happy."<sup>24</sup> This internalized repression is so encompassing that, for Marcuse, only a complete revolution will do.<sup>25</sup>

Such a revolution must begin with a "new sensibility" that fosters alternative ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, and understanding. In *An Essay on Liberation*, Marcuse finds evidence of such a sensibility in the occurrences of his time—the hippie subculture, the Black Power movement, the French uprising of May 1968—as well as in art movements like blues, jazz, surrealism, and stream-of-consciousness poetry. By his account, these movements provoke new sensoria—new modes of experiencing that constitute alternative environments capable of facilitating revolutionary action. The basic insight is this: experiencing the world through a new sensorium enables one to think and act differently, which in turn enables one to move beyond the current regime of repression and to manifest a world of sensuous connection, to act on erotic impulses that are common to the human organism.<sup>26</sup> Those erotic impulses are different for each individual and do not, in and of themselves, posit preestablished blueprints for a new society. Indeed, for Marcuse, the forthcoming institutions and relationships "cannot be determined *a priori*; they will develop, in trial and error, as the new society develops. If we could form a concrete concept of the alternative today, it would not be that of an alternative," but that of the society we are rebelling against.<sup>27</sup>

Katsiaficas extended Marcuse's philosophy of political eros by transposing it into the operational realm of social movement action. Using the concept of the "eros effect" to understand the connections among movements, he approaches the study of political uprisings by focusing on the intuitive ties that are forged between participants. From this vantage,

“episodes of the eros effect are regarded as the collective sublimation of the instinctual need for freedom.”

The eros effect reflects an understanding that inner nature is a source of rational action—of freedom—an insight which leads to the postulation of a liberatory dimension to certain types of popular outburst. In moments of the eros effect, there is simultaneously a negating of the systematic institutionalization of the ‘survival of the fittest’ as the organizing principles of society and a spontaneous cathexis [emotional attachment] between human beings at fundamental levels of social solidarity. Mobilization for action occurs through participants’ intuition as much as through their rational beliefs, and this intuitive species identity forms a basis for collective activity.<sup>28</sup>

Although they emerge spontaneously, such moments are not accidental; they derive from inherent desires for freedom. Such desire is a general human quality that transcends space and time. We are hardwired for freedom and thus respond in similar fashion when that freedom is threatened. In this way, the conditions for global solidarity come into being: recognizing the common dimension of our collective plight enables us to sympathize with—and motivates us to participate in—one another’s struggles. Katsiaficas thus argues:

thousands of people acting in social movements embody the concrete realization of freedom: outside established norms and institutions, thousands of people consciously act spontaneously in concert. In such moments . . . genuine individuality emerges as human beings situate themselves in collective contexts that negate their individualism. Vibrant democratic movements enhance the autonomy of the individual and simultaneously build groups that break free of the centralizing uniformity of the corporate-state behemoth.<sup>29</sup>

For Katsiaficas, genuine human liberation becomes possible only when we begin to think and act at the level of the species. Following Marcuse, he advocates a mode of being-in-the-world that stands in fundamental opposition to repression. This mode of being challenges alienating social systems (like capitalism, state-administered socialism, and theocratic dictatorships) and creates the conditions for life-affirming and collectively empowering

ones instead. Katsiaficas argues that the desire for this form of collectively coordinated existence is a driving force behind mass rebellions. However brief these might be, such moments provide glimpses of a future in which we are self-organized in accordance with our impulse toward freedom. From there, we can begin changing our current world of repression into an alternative world of liberation.

## RELATED TRADITIONS

To be sure, neither Katsiaficas nor the other contributors to this volume are alone in grappling with the nature of spontaneous mass rebellion. Three of the more well-known efforts to address such dynamics include the collaborative works of poststructuralists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Italian Autonomism, and the sociological study of diffusion within social movements.

Inspired by the French uprisings of 1968, Deleuze and Guattari approached spontaneous mass rebellion as an explosion of desire.<sup>30</sup> For them, desire is really *desiring*—a general, impersonal process that is ontological rather than psychological. Individual desires (for fame, fortune, sex, or romance) obviously exist; however, for Deleuze and Guattari, such individual wants and needs are secondary. Although we have desires, we are, first and foremost, *of* desire. In other words, human beings are an *effect of* the desiring process.<sup>31</sup> This desiring process is a constant, *prepersonal* assembling-disassembling-and-reassembling of connections and associations. Anything can link up and connect with anything else in the prepersonal realm of desire: this-and-that, blank-and-blank.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, however, this fluid process is copresent with stoppages, blockages, and mechanisms of control. Social institutions like the government, the nation-state, capitalism, and the family capture the flow of desire and route it toward particular ends—patriotism, consumerism, patriarchy, and so on. When this happens, desire begins desiring its own repression.<sup>33</sup> During spontaneous mass rebellion, however, desire breaks free from such constraints. Consequently, the “local and singular manifestation of the desire of small groups” begins to “resound with a multiplicity of repressed desires which had been isolated and crushed by the dominant forms of expression and of representation. In such a situation there is . . . a *univocal multiplicity* of desires whose process secretes its own systems of tracking and regulation.”<sup>34</sup> Conceived in this way, mass revolt is a release of desire from its capture—an enabling of desire to reroute itself without preestablished patterns or endpoints.

Although they share definite points of contact, Deleuze and Guattari's poststructuralist framework is very different from Katsiaficas' Marcusean-inspired philosophy, which attributes the desire for freedom to a universal quality inherent in human existence. Following Marcuse, Katsiaficas argues that the human species is characterized by a personal-yet-universal longing for freedom and self-determination. Whereas Deleuze and Guattari see the world as an ever-changing composite of impersonal forces void of either a stable origin or direction, Katsiaficas sees it as a dialectical relationship between subjects and objects, with the human being standing in but also against the objective world. The former system understands liberation as an act of accessing, intensifying, and holding points of resistance.<sup>35</sup> The latter understands it as an act of negating the objectification of one's own subjectivity to allow for the development of fully realized human beings.<sup>36</sup>

The relationship between Katsiaficas' work and the tradition of Autonomous Marxism is similarly complex. Throughout *The Subversion of Politics*, Katsiaficas makes his intellectual and political indebtedness to the *Autonomen* clear; at the same time, however, he also sets out to distinguish himself from some of the tradition's antihumanist and antidialectical sensibilities. These sensibilities are more prevalent in the Italian current of Autonomism, which has been more influenced by the insights of Deleuze and Guattari than has its German counterpart.<sup>37</sup> In both cases, Autonomous Marxism begins with the observation that resistance is primary to human experience. It is commonly assumed, for instance, that rebellion is a response to oppression (this is true in Katsiaficas' work, where the eros effect is an innate response to repressive conditions); however, Autonomism foregrounds the degree to which it is in fact *repression* that responds to humanity's unruly nature. For this reason, repressive dynamics are constantly rearranging themselves to overcome and subjugate resistance. This thesis can be traced to an essay entitled "The Strategy of Refusal," in which Mario Tronti argues that working-class subjectivity precedes and exceeds capitalism's capture and control.<sup>38</sup> In this view, working-class subjectivity is inherently subversive and resistant to capitalism. Although oppression and exploitation occur, they never become total. Working-class subjectivity is thus *ontologically autonomous*. Within this framework, spontaneous mass rebellions express humanity's inclination toward free and open-ended creation. Although his thought aligns with the insights of Italian Autonomism in many important respects, Katsiaficas nevertheless distinguishes himself through his ongoing emphasis on the importance of dialectics (which leads not so much to an emphasis on working-class auto-valorization as to the cultivation of new sensoria) and his identification with humanistic rather than machinic metaphors.<sup>39</sup>

Touching upon similar themes to those addressed by Deleuze and Guattari and Autonomism, the sociological analysis of diffusion investigates the dispersion of ideas, values, practices, and rebellions across social landscapes. Theories of diffusion start from the presumption that changes within a milieu often occur as a result of factors that are introduced from outside of it. In the context of social movement dynamics, the analysis of diffusion can help to explain why certain tactics and sensibilities that were previously absent are adopted at particular moments. Social movement scholar and diffusion theorist Lesley Wood argues that “the successful diffusion of an innovation is dependent upon the transmitting context, the channels of communication, the context of the innovation’s reception, and the character of the innovation itself.”<sup>40</sup> By analyzing social movement dynamics in this way, scholars aim to understand how events in Tunisia, for instance, could spark similar uprisings throughout the region before finding reverberations in points as far away as Wisconsin and Wall Street. In contrast to Katsiaficas’ account of the eros effect, which emphasizes the role played by the innate desire for human freedom to explain the often-simultaneous eruptions of insurgent struggles, social movement theories of diffusion tend to emphasize the “structural conditions” that allow the diffusion of tactical innovations and movement sensibilities to occur.<sup>41</sup>

Along with Katsiaficas’ work on the eros effect, contributors to *Spontaneous Combustion* engage with and draw upon aspects of these (and other) important theoretical traditions. Until now, however, there has been no systematic attempt to clarify and extend the unique contribution that Katsiaficas’ concept might make to our understanding of the dynamics of global revolution. It is this gap that *Spontaneous Combustion* aims to fill.

Katsiaficas’ understanding of the eros effect is intellectually rich and politically provocative. Nevertheless, it deserves—and even needs—more rigorous attention and analysis. At present, Katsiaficas’ work is underscrutinized. Unlike the attention provided to the work of Deleuze and Guattari or to the related traditions of Italian Autonomism and the sociology of diffusion, literature concerning the eros effect remains rare. Meanwhile, despite his obvious indebtedness to Marcuse, it is clear that other thinkers, theories, and traditions might help to extend Katsiaficas’ concept.

In a similar fashion, Katsiaficas has thus far tended to focus his analysis of the eros effect on a particular type of case study (e.g., masses of people self-assembling into political forces over a relatively brief period). To gain new insights into the dynamics of the eros effect, it is necessary to consider how the concept might be used to explain other related but different phenomena (e.g., collective efforts that arise in response to natural disasters or the unspoken micro-coordination of black bloc participants).

Finally, since the goal is not merely to interpret the world but to change it as well, the strategic implications of the eros effect must be explored more fully. For instance, can the eros effect be consciously deployed or does it arise independent of conscious control? If it can be deployed, then how might this aim be accomplished? If it cannot, then how should movements orient to it when it arises? Since Katsiaficas' studies have tended to be historical in character, these questions and their strategic implications have thus far remained largely unexplored. By drawing Katsiaficas' work into conversation with related traditions, extending the scope of relevant case studies, and clarifying the eros effect's strategic implications, *Spontaneous Combustion* aims to spark dialogue, debate, and—hopefully—much more.

### STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

*Spontaneous Combustion* is organized into four main sections. “Section One: The Eros Effect” includes three pieces by Katsiaficas. The section begins with “Remembering May '68: An Interview with George Katsiaficas.” The interview was originally conducted in 2008 for the fortieth anniversary of the May 1968 uprisings; it covers a range of topics, including the dynamics of the eros effect, the contributions of Autonomous Marxism and social movement theory, and the strengths and weaknesses of political spontaneity. In “Eros and Revolution,” Katsiaficas takes up Marcuse's understanding of Nature—not only external nature but humanity's inner nature—as an “ally” in the rapid spread of revolutionary aspirations. In “From Marcuse's ‘Political Eros’ to the Eros Effect: A Current Statement,” Katsiaficas draws on Marcuse's later writings to reconsider the eros effect as the public embodiment of what Marcuse called “political eros.”

“Section Two: Extensions and Elaborations” includes four essays. Arnold L. Farr's “Eros in a One-Dimensional Society: Katsiaficas, Marcuse, and Me” connects Katsiaficas' eros effect to Marcuse's dialectical analysis of the relationship between one-dimensionality and liberation. Farr uses his own struggle with racism, sexism, and homophobia as a concrete example to reveal how eros can negate one-dimensionality. In “Rethinking the Eros Effect: Sentience, Reality, and Emanation,” Jason Del Gandio reconceptualizes the eros effect through a tripartite understanding of the body. Combining phenomenology, poststructuralism, and Italian Autonomism, he constructs an alternative ontology for understanding mass revolt. Richard Gilman-Opalsky's “Revolt as Reason, Reason as Revolt: On the Praxis of Philosophy from Below” moves beyond the intellectual analysis of revolt

to an understanding of revolt as a form of intellectual analysis in its own right. He argues that, since revolt is reason-in-action, it provides a unique domain of philosophical inquiry. Jack Hipp closes out the section with “The Eros Effect and the Embodied Mind,” which illustrates how the sense of collective reason associated with the eros effect is mirrored in the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, two thinkers who draw on cognitive science to show that reason is an emergent quality of the embodied mind. In particular, Hipp foregrounds how the eros effect might literally restructure the mind.

“Section Three: Case Studies” includes three essays. In “Kindling for the Spark: Eros and Emergent Consciousness in Occupy Oakland,” Emily Brissette and Mike King draw on their experiences as participants in Occupy Oakland to provide a temporal rather than merely spatial account of the eros effect’s resonance. In “Eros Effect as Emergency Politics: Empathy, Agency, and Network in South Korea’s Sewol Ferry Disaster,” Gooyong Kim and Anat Schwartz look at moments of tragedy and the relationship between social media and on-the-ground organizing. They focus on the 2014 Sewol tragedy, in which a sunken ferry led to three hundred deaths. The final essay of this section—Sabu Kohso’s “Climatology of the Eros Effect: Notes from the Japanese Archipelago”—develops a unique cartographic understanding of the eros effect to explain the intersection of natural disasters, migrations of people, and the formation of the Japanese nation-state.

“Section Four: Rejoinders” includes three essays. In “Feminism and the Eros Effect,” Nina Power argues that feminism’s concern for everyday care, social reproduction, and modes of relationality extend and enrich our understanding of the eros effect, and that such concerns coexist with, and are perhaps even the cause of, militant spontaneity. Lesley Wood’s “Waves of Protest, the Eros Effect, and the Social Relations of Diffusion” examines the 2012–2013 Idle No More protests that spread through online and offline social networks to challenge both the Canadian state and colonialism. Wood both complements and challenges Katsiaficas’ heuristic by emphasizing the social and relational microprocesses of theorization, identification, and deliberation that underpin the diffusion of new tactics. The section closes with AK Thompson’s “Eros Effect or Biological Hatred?” In contrast to Katsiaficas’ framework, Thompson argues that revolutionary impulses arise not from eros but from the universal experience of lack. Eros may lead to the circulation of revolutionary energies, says Thompson, but it should not be mistaken for their cause.

The book concludes with an Afterword by distinguished critical theorist and Marcusean scholar Douglas Kellner.

As readers of this volume will likely know firsthand, forging life-affirming erotic bonds can be difficult in a world of peril and destruction. Capitalist exploitation, imperialism, theocratic dictatorships, indiscriminate drone strikes, mass surveillance, whistleblower persecution, mass incarceration, police brutality, and ingrained racism, sexism, and heteronormativity (not to mention gross economic inequality, human trafficking, environmental degradation, famine, genocide, nuclear meltdowns, and oil spills) are everyday global occurrences. Nevertheless, and as the contributions in this volume make clear, rebellion and liberation are also central aspects of human experience. To be sure, the desire for meaningful connection can taunt us when the pathway to a more just society seems blocked. At the same time, however, this desire can also spur us to action. The myth of disengaged scholarship died long ago, and the present begs for intervention. Without such a spark, there would be no *Spontaneous Combustion*.

## NOTES

1. Rosa Luxemburg, "The Mass Strike, the Political Party, and the Trade Unions," in *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004), 168–199 (181).

2. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 116.

3. For brief overviews of these events, see: Bob Simon, "How a Slap Sparked Tunisia's Revolution," *CBS News*, February 22, 2011, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/how-a-slap-sparked-tunisia-revolution-22-02-2011>; and Rania Abouzeid, "Bouazizi: The Man Who Set Himself and Tunisia on Fire," *Time*, January 21, 2011, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2044723,00.html>.

4. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie (Mineola: Dover, 2003), 107.

5. Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage, 1977), chap. 7.

6. Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 49.

7. See, Ishaan Tharoor, "Hands Across the World," in *What Is Occupy? Inside the Global Movement*, ed. Time (New York: Time Home Entertainment, 2011), 25–33 (26); and Xenia Jardin, "Egyptians March from Tahrir Square to Support Occupy Oakland Protestors," *Boingboing*, October 28, 2011, n.p., <http://boingboing.net/2011/10/28/tahrir.html>.

8. Alexis Goldstein, "Palestinians and Ferguson Protesters Link Arms via Social Media," *Yes Magazine*, August 15, 2014, n.p., <http://www.yesmagazine.org/peace-justice/palestinians-and-ferguson-protesters-link-arms-via-social-media>.

9. See, <http://www.blackforpalestine.com>.

10. Here is a brief sampling of such sources and topics: Dario Azzellini and Marina Sitrin, *They Can't Represent Us! How the New Global Movements Are Putting Forward a Radical Conception of Democracy* (London: Verso, 2014); Jack Bratich, ed., "Occupy Communication and Culture," Special Issue, *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (March 2014): 1–84; Christopher Malone, Meghana Nayak, Matthew Bolton, and Emily Welty, eds., *Occupy Political Science: The Occupy Wall Street Movement from New York to the World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Anna Feigenbaum, Fabian Frenzel, and Patrick McCurdy, *Protest Camps* (London: Zed Books, 2013); Kate Khatib, Margaret Killjoy, and Mike McGuire, eds., *We Are Many: Reflections on Movement Strategy from Occupation to Liberation* (Oakland: AK Press, 2012); Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (Malden: Polity Press, 2012); Anya Schiffrin and Eamon Kircher-Allen, eds., *From Cairo to Wall Street: Voices from the Global Spring* (New York: New Press, 2012); Graeme Hayes et al., eds., "Occupy!," Special Issue, *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest* 11, nos. 3–4 (August–November 2012): 279–485; The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009); Barbara Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2007); and Ives Fremion, *Orgasms of History: 3,000 Years of Spontaneous Insurrection* (Oakland: AK Press, 2002).

11. George Katsiaficas, *Asia's Unknown Uprisings, Volume 1: South Korean Social Movements in the 20th Century* (Oakland: AK Press, 2012), xxvii n1.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston: South End Press, 1978), 120.

15. Ibid., 10 (all emphases in original).

16. For a sense of their relationship, see George Katsiaficas, "Marcuse's Cognitive Interest," *New Political Science* 18, nos. 2–3 (1996): 159–170.

17. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992); *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of the Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991).

18. For more on this point, see Herbert Marcuse, *The New Left and the 1960s: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume 3*, ed. Douglas Kellner (New York: Routledge, 2005).

19. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), 49.

20. For more on these principles, see Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, especially chap. 1.

21. For further clarification on these issues, see Marcuse's treatment of two related concepts, "surplus-repression" and the "performance principle," *Eros and Civilization*, 35–54.

22. For further clarification on these related issues, see Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, chap. 11.

23. Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1969), 30.
24. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 46. Also note that we have decided to keep Marcuse's context-bound gender-exclusionary language to make for an easier read.
25. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, xlv.
26. Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, especially chap. 2.
27. *Ibid.*, 88 (original emphasis).
28. George Katsiaficas, "The Eros Effect," personal website, 1989, <http://www.eros-effect.com/articles/eros-effect-paper.PDF>, 8.
29. George Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Oakland: AK Press, 2006), 259.
30. Tracking the Deleuzoguattarian philosophy is difficult given the authors' idiosyncratic and ever-changing terminology. In *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (New York: Penguin, 2009), their terminology included "desiring-machines," "schizoanalysis," and "deterritorialization" and "reterritorialization." Later, in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), their terminology shifted to "rhizomes," "assemblages," "micropolitics," and "segmentarity." But their philosophical concerns remained relatively stable across these terminological changes. In brief, they were concerned with how "desire can come to desire its own repression"—particularly in relationship to the capitalist mode of sociality—and how repressive processes can be perpetually resisted and overcome.
31. This is a basic premise articulated throughout *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*.
32. For more on this, see the concept of "desiring-machines" in Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 1–50, and the related concepts of "assemblage" and "rhizome" in Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 22–23.
33. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 29 and 32.
34. Félix Guattari, "Everybody Wants to Be a Fascist," in *Chaosophy: Texts and Interviews 1972–1977*, ed. Sylvere Lotringer (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), 154–175 (159).
35. For more on this, see Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "micropolitics" in *A Thousand Plateaus*, chap. 9.
36. For more on this, see Katsiaficas' notion of "a rationality of the heart" in *The Subversion of Politics*, 228–233.
37. What we are here referring to as Italian Autonomism has a long and complicated history, involving Workerism, Post-Workerism, Autonomism, Post-Autonomism, Italian Feminism, and other offshoots. For more on this history, see Sylvere Lotringer and Christian Marazzi, eds., *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007); Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, eds., *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); and Franco Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), chap. 1.
38. Mario Tronti, "The Strategy of Refusal" (1965), available at Libcom.org, <http://libcom.org/library/strategy-refusal-mario-tronti>. Other thinkers have extended

and adapted Tronti's ideas. See, for instance, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), chap. 1.3 and chap. 2.1. Hardt and Negri's interpretation is influenced by Michel Foucault's notion that power and resistance are copresent. See Michel Foucault, "Afterword: The Subject and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 208–226.

39. For more on these Autonomist concepts, see select passages in Lotringer and Marazzi, *Autonomia*, and Virno and Hardt, *Radical Thought in Italy*.

40. Lesley Wood, *Direct Action, Deliberation, and Diffusion: Collective Action after the WTO Protests in Seattle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 17.

41. *Ibid.*, 3.