

illiterate, this would seem unrealistic. Frequent references to the use of remedial education may also be indicative of unwarranted optimism.

A striking feature of this collection of essays is their frankness over the problems, failures, and shortcomings of India's educational endeavours. In fact there seems an almost masochistic need to downplay achievements and emphasize deficiencies. The purpose of this may well have been to find a way of identifying and defining problems and then of formulating possible solutions. This is specially true with reference to the universities. These are exposed as being of poor quality with little evidence of scholarly publishable work, with widespread dishonesty by staff and students. References are made to plagiarism, to spurious data and inappropriate methods of research, to falsified mark-sheets, and fraudulent entry qualifications. The prodigious rate of expansion in higher education has outrun the available resources in high quality man-power and materials.

Among the many questions posed by these essays, the most immediate and probably the most important is: "What will happen as a result of the discussions, opinions, and hypotheses formulated here?" The stated purpose of the original conference was the very modest one of rekindling interest in the study of India among academics in the social sciences; but one would hope for much more. Academics in developed countries like Canada can do little except discuss and perhaps, from greater or less ignorance of the lives of Indians, offer tentative solutions to some of the problems outlined here. What is necessary is that ideas should be propagated in India where they may have an impact on those who have the knowledge and the power to change the social structure, including the educational system.

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Russell L. Hanson.

THE DEMOCRATIC IMAGINATION IN AMERICA.

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The author is critical of progressive and revisionist historians. To him both of these schools are essentially antihistorical and transhistorical. The basic weakness of these approaches is that they assume American democracy to be a developmental process, advancing in a positive direction under a pre-designed, utopian manifesto. Its designer is a mythological hero, or some trans-terrestrial divinity who sowed democratic seeds that would bring forth in time the American democracy in full bloom. The final product is seen as a result of progressive stages that follow a "preordained" format.

Hanson's operational use of democracy allows him to limit its meaning to an elastic, abstract concept that changes over time. Democracy is therefore an ephemeral, relative construct rather than a constant, absolute phenomenon. Within this limited construction, he sees American democracy as a loose entity being periodically defined in the context of democratic rhetoric. Its time-limited meaning comes from an array of historical arguments presented by significant contestants whose intent is to control its connotation by manipulating political symbols in order to augment their own ideological preferences. The fluidity of democracy is demonstrated by the displacement of one ideological conception with another. The circulatory conceptualizations are associated with economic changes, and are symbolized by new rhetoric seen in linguistic language (e.g., party platforms and party slogans).

In his interpretation he relies heavily upon the neo-Marxist theories of Marcuse and Habermas. The emerging definitions of democracy shift in the direction of the ruling class. This interplay between the dominant ideology and the economic reality is ever present. In this he agrees with the Marxist dictum that "the ruling class of every age are ideas of the ruling class" (p. 9). The major economic transitions in the American system are the movements from mercantilism to competitive capitalism, and finally to welfare capitalism. In clarifying the association between ideology and economic systems, Hanson assures his readers that "economic transformations are the occasions of significant ideological shifts, but not their causes" (p. 9).

Most of the book (chapters 2-11) is an interpretation of American history from the republican rhetoric of the founding fathers to the conservative Reagan era. Hanson attempts in this major section of the work to justify his theoretical model developed in chapter one, and then he prepares the readers for his closing arguments in chapter twelve. The nine in-between chapters are more concise and non-ideological than is his rather elusive and undisciplined discourse in the first and last chapters. These ten chapters, which are less innovative and argumentative, wear better than the two chapters which begin and end with abstract, ideological arguments. However, it must be added that if Hanson is to make any significant contribution to our understanding of American democracy, it must be from his theoretical paradigm. Yet it is this model that is rather murky and formless in its development.

In these ten relatively unprovocative chapters, he reviews the unfolding of American democracy. The debate in the liberal democracy begins with the founding fathers and continues until the New Deal, at which time the debating ends and the real crisis of the system begins. The Federalists and the Republicans carried on their lively, engaging debate until

the Civil War. Until the Progressive Era of Teddy Roosevelt, the bourgeois economy remained essentially intact. It survived the federalist, republican, and Jacksonian periods. Lincoln's conservative views confirmed the longstanding economic system, and it was to retain its vitality on into the twentieth century. Throughout this period there was an ongoing debate, so the rhetoric of democracy was still alive (e.g., Whigs and Populists). It was the Progressive Era and the New Deal that modified the plutocratic *laissez faire* doctrine. The New Deal subordinated the system to the extent that it was dominated by materialistic consumerism and bureaucratic experts (p. 291). Liberal discourse was displaced by technocratic consumerism. With a drugging of the popular mind, democratic discourse was sabotaged. Hanson's critique of the New Deal is simplistic and myopic; however, it does set the stage for his liberation theology in the final chapter.

Liberation theology challenges the status quo, or the quagmire into which the nation has stagnated. Almost with a magician's sleight of hand, Hanson rests his final argument on a time line, linearly bifurcated into the past and future, or if you will, the interlinking of traditionalism and eschatology. The oppressed people of the present can ensure a liberated future by wisely discarding the status quo with actions stimulated by remembrance of past traditions. "Remembrance restores the possibility of liberation as present action oriented toward the future" (p. 403). The future must be summoned by liberation rhetoric if it is to come with a meaningful repertoire.

To Hanson the telling and the making of the story is the primary role of history. Liberal democrats are obligated to act upon the hope of a better future; thereby, they can translate a stagnated present into a viable future. By so doing, they revise the rhetoric of democracy, and help secure the perpetuity of our political system.

Hanson's mystical future is illusionary at best. In essence he seems content to hand over our free society to an unclear, uncharted future. He opts for an imaginary future with a happy ending without addressing the real possibility of a *coup d'etat* staged by an oppressive party that capitalizes on the naivete of the confused masses who become captive to an orchestrated cohort of potentially evil tyrants. His moral, utopian society of the future is unrealistic and apolitical where political realities of the actual world are circumvented by a dream that could easily become a political nightmare.

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