

Re-Imagining America: Finding Hope in Difficult Times by Christopher Schaefer, Ph.D. Hawthorn Press. 2019 ISBN: 9781907359965 Pb, 182pp, £15.00

It needs to be said at the beginning that this book is written out of a deep concern for the destiny and mission of the United States to provide a home for humanity's future. In this sense the book is written out of the spirit of the preamble of the United States Constitution:

We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

The spirit of this preamble is that the United States, in attempting to form a more perfect union, is in a process of bringing social ideals that belong to the whole of humanity to realization, a process leading over time from imperfection to realization or perfection.

Christopher Schaefer identifies three times that the United States has gone through a deep crisis in relation to this process: The initial Revolutionary War, the Civil War and World War II. Schaefer suggests that we have entered into a fourth crisis period and that leadership is profoundly needed to guide the country through this fourth crisis period. His book is directed towards this awareness of crisis, concern for leadership and identification of the essential issues at stake. He suggests that each individual has a responsibility to help create the leadership that is needed today.

Out of his concern for the future and the importance of the social process that the United States is engaged in, the author points the reader to *The Gettysburg Address* by Abraham Lincoln (November 19, 1863):

... that we here highly resolved that these dead shall not have died in vain ..., that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom ... and that a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

The author's intention in this book is to reach out to the widest possible audience. Consequently, he attempts to present the content of the book in the most accessible manner possible for readers coming from a wide range of backgrounds. The way he does this is by sharing with the reader how he came to know what he shares in the book. I use the word "sharing" because this book has an intimate mood. It is not primarily about methods, programs and policies. Rather, the book describes an

approach for the individual to the world situation today. This intimacy is created by the author's willingness to share his own biographical story throughout the book, his personal experience of proceeding on the path of self-transformation. He also speaks out of his feeling life, and not just his thought life. He offers a feeling cognition to the reader.

One of the ways this feeling-cognition is communicated is in the structure of the book itself. The book consists of a series of essays. These essays were written over the last fifteen years and cover events such as 9/11 (2001) and the 2008 economic crisis. In addition, there are essays that are written in the last two years and also essays written currently for the book that tie the pieces of the book together. There is an element of repetition in the content.

However, this repetition does not become a tiresome rambling, but rather it carries the essential intimacy of a person sharing the story of how he has come to think the way he does now about current events.

The book offers to the reader an in depth description of the author's cognitive path leading to the formulation of an inner path for the individual who wants to engage in creative social action and various concrete proposals for social action. Facing various challenging situations multiple times in different sections of the book, the "going over things several times," the looking at matters from "different points of view," is part of the feeling cognition approach of the author. He wants the reader to understand how he has come to think about the individual's responsibility and the issues we are facing.

In the book the author offers the reader not only incidents from his own biography and his thoughts about matters, but also is a wealth of references to current writers on the subjects that are addressed. The author willingly shares with the reader all the sources he has read and how they have influenced him.

There are four parts to the book and twelve chapters. The final part contains four chapters by which the author ties the book together, providing detailed suggestions for inner practices for self-transformation and a number of concrete proposals for social-political actions to address major issues facing people today.

The path or way that the author offers is oriented to the individual. This path includes the taking of responsibility by individuals for their inner development as being the essential act for addressing the problems of the day. Without developing the capacity for insightful thinking, compassionate/empathetic feeling and the practicing of healing will,

no policies or programs will be able to succeed. The author devotes a significant portion of the book to the subject of developing the capacity for this threefold practice of transformed thinking, feeling and willing, and in doing so, asks the reader to become an engaged 'witness' of their time.

In describing the path of the individual's inner transformation, the author shares his experience of being part of a global, new age, spiritual, holistic movement of such individuals. It is in this context, the author introduces the idea of evil, with the concept of the "shadow" of an individual or a nation. The shadow is an expression or a being that is independent from the true being of a person or a nation of people that is working for the good of humanity. The shadow works against the good. The coming to terms with the concept of 'the shadow' is a particularly challenging part of the book pointing to the individual's responsibility to take on the inner transformation of the shadow.

The process of transformation of evil is likened to health and illness. The author proposes the existence of social and anti-social forces. Progress consists of the individual's willingness to grapple with these forces and bring them into a balance that constitutes a state of social health. All of the author's specific proposals for action are related to bringing this transformative balance into the spheres of life relating to freedom, rights and economics.

The final chapter brings the whole discourse to a conclusion by setting forth specific actions that can be taken in regard to the important issues facing humanity today that have been explored in the book: economic inequality, the threat of an elite global economy, immigration, freedom of education, climate change and so on. It is all set forth in detail by the author. He also points to the importance of Rudolf Steiner's ideas about the threefold social order. In fact, the work of Steiner resounds throughout the entire book. All of these proposals are formulated in the context of the responsibility that the United States has to fulfill its mission for humanity "to form a more perfect union" where the social future has a home.

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