A Radical and Elitist Imagination? Political Paternities and Alternatives in the History of Ideas

Abstract

This short essay responds to the question of whether there are affinities between a radical imagination and other ideas of social organization, including ideas associated with the radical right. The answer to this question involves understanding the history of political ideas as situated in specific contexts rather than as manifestations of dehistoricized doctrines of the left or right—an answer which is relevant to understanding discussions of a radical imagination today.
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Mills’ own sociological imagination was inspired by what he referred to as the classic sociological tradition the main feature of which is ‘the concern with historical social structures: and that its problems are of direct relevance to urgent public issues and insistent human troubles (S I: 28). Mills links personal troubles with public issues and threads biography into the historical structural dynamic. The achievement of the classic tradition lies in the creation of models of society that illuminate the impact of social change on people and on their potential for response. These models gener Although the idea probably always has been present in some form, elitism emerged as a recognizable and clearly defined part of Western political thought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century’s. The leading contributors to the theory were Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto, and Robert Michels. These writers attacked classical democratic thought and also Aristotle and Karl Marx. Majority rule, they insisted, is impossible. Every society is divided into those who rule and those who are ruled; and the rulers constitute only a small minority of any society. Aristotle’s classification, whic Radical centrism, radical center or radical centre and radical middle, are terms which arose in the late 20th century for ranges of political philosophy with a willingness to fundamentally reform institutions in the belief that genuine solutions to social problems require realism and pragmatism, as well as idealism and emotion. It has been described as “idealism without illusions.” Most radical centrists accept what they see as good ideas from both “left” and “right” ranges of ideology, and wherever