

**Subject:** Are We Going Back Into The Dark Ages?

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Subject: Are We Going Back Into The Dark Ages? June 24, 2012.

Here are some people who think so. Let's hope they can change our thinking so we don't go back into the dark ages.

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Dark Ages Redux: American P-litics and the End of the Enlightenment!

<http://www.commondreams.org/john-atcheson>

John A-cheson

We are witnessing an epochal shift in our socio-po-itical world. We are de-evolving, hurtling headlong into a past that was defined by serfs and lords; by necromancy and superstition; by poli-ies based on fiat, not facts.

[http://www.commondreams.org/sites/commondreams.org/files/imce-images/dark\\_forest\\_wallpaper\\_0.jpg](http://www.commondreams.org/sites/commondreams.org/files/imce-images/dark_forest_wallpaper_0.jpg)

Much of what has made the modern world in general, and the Un-ted States in particular, a free and prosperous society comes directly from insights that arose during the Enlightenment.

Too bad we're chucking it all out and returning to the Dark Ages. Literally.

Two main things distinguished the post Enlightenment world from the pre Enlightenment Dark Ages.

First, Francis Bacon's (JW Now that's one of my people who helped to make this World a better place. Some say he was influenced by St. Germain or was actually St. Germain. ) Novo Organum Scientiarum (The New Instrument of Science) introduced a new way of understanding the world, in which empiricism, facts and as well reality defined what was real. It essentially outlined the scientific method: observation and data collection, formulation of hypotheses, experiments designed to test hypotheses and elevation of these hypotheses to theories when data consistently supported them. It was and is a system based on skepticism, and a relentless and methodical search for truth.

It brought us advances and untold wealth and health. From one-horse carts to automobiles to airplanes. From leaches and phrenology to penicillin and monoclonal antibodies. Until recently.

Now, we seek to operate by revealed truths, not reality. Decrees from on high often issued by an unholy alliance of re-igious fundamentalists, self-interested corporations, and greedy fat cats are offered up as reality by rightwing polit-cians. For example, North Carolina law-makers recently passed legislation

[http://www.truthdig.com/eartotheearth/item/north\\_carolina\\_lawmakers\\_legislate\\_sea\\_level\\_rise\\_20120613](http://www.truthdig.com/eartotheearth/item/north_carolina_lawmakers_legislate_sea_level_rise_20120613)

against sea level rise. A day later, the Virginia legislature required that references to global warming, climate change and sea level rise

<http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2012/06/13/global-warming-text-was-removed-from-virginia-bill-on-rising-sea-levels->

be excised from a proposed study on sea level rise. Last year, the Texas Department of Environmental Quality, which had commissioned a study on Galveston Bay, cut all references to sea level rise the main point of the study.

We are, indeed, at an epochal threshold.

As Stephen C-ibert so aptly put it:

<http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/414796/june-04-2012/the-word---sink-or-swim>

if your science gives you results you don't like, pass a law saying that the result is illegal. Problem solved.

Except it isn't. Wishing reality away, doesn't make it go away. Pretending that the unreal is real doesn't make it real. And the descent into the Dark Ages is marked by more than global warming.

Take austerity budgets. There is [http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our\\_journals/comeco/cjeissueonausterity.html](http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/comeco/cjeissueonausterity.html)

an extensive historical record showing that implementing austerity measures in an economic slowdown is counter productive. And this data is backed up by current experience in Europe,

<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2012/05/08>

where austerity measures have been disastrous.

So the data is telling us austerity during a jobs crisis hasn't worked in the past and isn't working now. What to do?

<http://crooksandliars.com/blue-texan/paul-ryan-we-must-pass-my-austerity-bud>

Pass an austerity budget, of course.

Welcome to the Dark Ages.

The litany of ignorance goes on and on. Teach Creationism.

Teach the controversy on climate science and intelligent design.

Declare deregulation which was a primary cause of the 2008 economic collapse to be the solution to it. Preach trickle down economics, even after it has failed every time it's been adopted; even as we watch wealth rocket up the income brackets. What's next? Give the flat-earthers a say. Oh h-ll, why stop there. Let's put Earth back in the center of the solar system where it belongs.

We don't need no stinkin science.

We don't need no pesky reality. We just gotta pass a few laws and declare things to be the way we want them to be, facts be da-ned. You know, keep your gov-rnment hands off my Medicare.

Second, the Enlightenment laid the groundwork for our form of gov-rnment.

The Social Contract is the intellectual basis of all modern d0mocratic r0publics, including ours. John Lo-ke and others argued that gov-rnments derived their authority from the governed, not from div-ne right. Govern-ents could be legitimate, then, only with the consent of the governed.

Jefferson acknowledged Loc-e's influence on the Declaration of Independence and his ideas are evident in the Constitution.

Here again, our founders used reason, empiricism and academic scholarship to cobble together one of the most enduring and influential documents in human history.

For all its flaws, it has steered us steadily toward a more perfect union.

Until recently.

Now, reason, empiricism and scholarship are the punch line to right wing jokes and jihads. S-ntorum captured the Tea Party's ho-tility to these Enlightenment virtues when he

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/election-2012/post/santorum-stands-by-snob-comment-says-conservatives-singled-out-and-ridiculed-at-colleges/2012/02/26/gIQA7InobR\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/election-2012/post/santorum-stands-by-snob-comment-says-conservatives-singled-out-and-ridiculed-at-colleges/2012/02/26/gIQA7InobR_blog.html)

likened a college education to an indoctrination.

Thankfully, Sa-torum is gone, but the embrace of ign-rance he advocated lives on.

And so corporations are now accorded the rights of citizenship.

Power, once again, is meted out by birthright, not inalienable right.

By possession of wealth, not by justice or equity or merit.

So what?

Well, the US now has the same income inequality as

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/09/map-us-ranks-near-bottom-on-income-inequality/245315/>

Cameroon, Uganda and Rwanda, and we're trapped in this pathetic state

<http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2012/01/05/398469/us-economic-mobility-lags/>

income mobility in the US lags behind most other developed nations.

In short, Horatio A-ger is de-d, long live Exxon. We are, indeed, at an epochal threshold. We can continue to discard the Enlightenment values which enabled both an untold increase in material wealth and a system of government which turned serfs into citizens. A system which for all its flaws often managed to protect the rights of the many, against the predatory power of the few.

Or we can continue our abject surrender to myths, magical thinking, and self-delusion and the Medieval nation-state those forces are resurrecting. Re-ublicans and Tea Partiers may be leading this retreat from reason, but they are unopposed by Dem-crats or the Press. And in the end, there is a special place in H-ll for those who allow ev-l to prosper by doing nothing.

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John Atcheson is author of the novel,

<http://www.amazon.com/A-Being-Darkly-Wise-ebook/dp/B006ZGOE8U>

A Being Darkly Wise, an eco-thriller and Book One of a Trilogy centered on global warming. His writing has appeared in The New York Times, the Washington Post, the Baltimore Sun, the San Jose Mercury News and other major newspapers.

Atc-eson's book reviews are featured on Climateprogress.org.

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