

The Conspiracy of Left and Right to Discredit Science

by Lorna Salzman (July 2015)

Huffington Post is laughable. This pretension at publishing is a low-brow joke foisted onto liberals but it is by no means the worst. Democracy Now, truthdig, alternet, et al, are far worse because they eschew lurid trivia about sex over 70 and micro-penises in favor of “serious” political analysis. Huffington gets the clown prize when it complains that “..slave owning, Indian-killing Andrew Jackson” is still on the \$20 bill. Pretty soon a Huffington yellow journalist will publish heavy-breathing exposes of all the signers of the Declaration of Independence, leading to demands to remove all mention of them from our textbooks, not just our paper currency. “Benjamin Franklin was a philanderer in Paris” (we’ve already had a version of “Thomas Jefferson seduced and impregnated his favorite slave and then cut her out of his will”). Alexander Hamilton! Boy, is he going to get it from the leftist Vice Squad....even though Aaron Burr finished off that libertine and his capitalist economic views.

Right now, there is nothing laudable about any aspect of American politics and culture. The Thought Police are closing in on us. The media self-censors anything about Islamism. Our colleges are passing codes to protect the sensibilities of students who might be offended by strong opinions and demand a “safe space” (how about a prison cell?). Paleoliberals and blacks are beating the drum about our “racist society.” Our religious leaders, seeing the trend away from faith and church-going, bond together and declare secularism to be more dangerous than radical Islam. Transgender folks are smiled on for their personal choice of gender but a white woman who chooses her “race” as black is vilified (hey, wait a minute; don’t the liberals keep insisting that there is no such thing as race? Next there won’t be such a thing as gender. We’ll all be neutered and on our job application it will be illegal to have boxes marked Male or Female.)

Is there a bright spot? YES. One just appeared: Naomi Oreskes. Her book [*Reinventing Nature?*](#), conservation biologist Michael Soule did a scathing critique of post-modernist deconstructionist thought, stating that it does serious damage to science, twisting it in the interest of ideology. He stresses that the cultural and social siege of nature comes from schools of thought with quite different ideologies, ranging from “conservative free market capitalists, humanists concerned with the emancipation and empowerment of certain social and ethnic groups, and others, including animal rights organizations.” The deconstructionists

...“deny that nature is real..or if there is anything we cannot know it because we are shut up in the concentric prisons of cultural bias and sensory apparatus.” Soule says that “the social objective of this movement is to demystify and dethrone the ‘hegemonic dominance’ of science” and to place it on “a level field that does not privilege any single approach..”. He concludes that “the nihilism and relativism of radically constructionist critiques of science ...while popular in some academic circles, is sophomoric (and) harmful because...it undermines efforts to save wilderness and biodiversity.”

Finally, even in some progressive circles, it has become fashionable to blame everything on the Enlightenment, during which new technologies based on new science were eagerly deployed.

But the Enlightenment was more than technological progress and exploitation. It was the shedding of the shackles of the Catholic Church and the separation of religion and state as well as the explosion in freedom of inquiry that was showered upon human societies. To blame science and technology rather than the follies and failings of human beings and their imperfect institutions is patently absurd. In the end the protocols of science are (or should be) models for human endeavors: a realm of hypothesis, dissent, rebuttal and often proof, a product of our intellect and reason rather than a promotion of an a priori ideology. In contrast to moralizing Religion, Science cannot tell us what is right or wrong but it can tell us the consequences of the choices before us.

Lorna Salzman's career as an environmental activist and writer began when the late David Brower hired her to be the regional representative of Friends of the Earth in NYC. Later she worked as an editor on *National Audubon's American Birds* magazine and as director of Food & Water, an early opponent of food irradiation, and then spent three years as a natural resource specialist in the NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection. She co-founded the New York Green Party in 1984 and in 2004 she sought the U.S. Green Party's presidential nomination. She is the author of "[here](#)."

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