

The Alternative To Ignorance Is Reason

Ken Olson

“In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.” A more familiar proverb lowers the bar even farther: “In America, anyone can grow up to be President.” We never thought this would include someone who embodies both ignorance and a complete lack of ethical or humane principles, but that’s where we are.

A popular quiz show in the 1950s was *It Pays To Be Ignorant*. The payoff was in humorous answers to questions such as, “Do married women live longer? --No, it just seeems longer.” But in real life, including politics, ignorance does not pay and is not funny.

Consider Rep. Anna Paulina Luna (R-FL) who is heading up re-do investigations, including one into the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. With the Chair of the House Oversight Committee standing by, she said on camera: “...based on what we’re actually looking to do with the JFK investigation, I’m looking to actually bring in some of the attending physicians at the initial assassination, then also people that had been on the various commissions, looking into, like, the Warren Commission.”

This Oversight project should be implemented in a rubber room. The JFK assassination happened in 1963. Luna has no clue that, 62 years later, the doctors who attended JFK and did the autopsy have died. The Warren Commission members, whom she wants to subpoena, all died decades ago; Earl Warren, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, died in 1974. News Flash: none of these will be available to testify –unless seances and Ouija boards “actually” do work for grilling the spirits of the deceased, or unless there “actually” is an alien’s time-machine at Area 51 that could teleport Luna back to the days of Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby.

The great American universities, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, etc., were all founded in the 1600s by the churches to produce an educated clergy and, in the process, to battle widespread public ignorance. The curriculum included not only classical languages and great literature but also philosophy. (The word means “love of wisdom.”) Basic to that subject is Aristotle’s logic: reasoning from the general to the specific, as illustrated by his syllogism, “All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; therefore, Socrates is mortal.” This outlines the mind’s careful process of deductive reasoning, which is part of what is called “critical thinking.”

But many politicians on the right side of the aisle fear that very term. They also have long lists of other words not to be mentioned in classrooms or government agencies. This Soviet Union-type censorship of free speech still happens in Russia, China and North Korea, but how does it have a place in America?

Reason, like everything else, can be distorted and misused, as in scientific reductionism, whereby a few sometimes attempt to reduce biology to chemistry and chemistry to physics, in order to suggest that “everything is just matter in motion” and, therefore, meaningless. The poet E. E. Cummings responds, “Beware of heartless them / Given the scalpel, they dissect a kiss ...and undream dream.”

But overdosing on reason is hardly the problem, now. Rather, it's the very opposite: throwing truth and rationality to the winds in favor of fact-free gut feelings.

Thus, top economists are saying that Trump has no idea how tariffs work. Sometimes traveling with Trump aboard Air Force One is 31-year-old Laura Loomer, hyper-liar and promoter of bizarre conspiracy theories that know no bounds. It is she who said that "the deep state" used a weather office in Alaska to create a snowstorm in Des Moines, Iowa to depress turnout for the GOP caucus. That he takes her word on firing and hiring national security personnel should be terrifying.

Also, Trump started a White House Faith Office, appointing as its head his chief spiritual advisor, Paula White-Cain, who speaks in tongues and is an obvious five-star charlatan. How obvious? Her special Easter season offer states that anyone sending her \$1,000 will be guaranteed "a personal angel."

Trump himself is now severely irrational, making things up as he goes, answering questions with rambling nonsensical statements about shower heads and operating as the proverbial mad king surrounded by his court jesters. Comedian John Mulaney likens him to a horse loose in a hospital: "It's never happened before. No one knows what the horse is gonna do, least of all the horse." Funny, but the situation itself is not. Trump's thoughtless "shock and awe" orders are proving to be indeed shocking --and awful, to common sense.

Reason up, America.

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