

ASSAULT ON REASON

by Al Gore

A smooth analysis of how the politics of blind faith have created a hostile world
2007, The Penguin Press, 276 pages

In this fluidly written book, the former senator, presidential candidate, and world-traveling celebrity environmentalist builds a worldview from which to examine the host of issues attending the ascendancy and (painfully) slow decline of the Bush-Cheney "phenomenon."

That worldview, despite the fact Mr. Gore calls himself a man of faith, is astonishingly bright and rational... to the point one sees great thinkers of the Enlightenment—Locke, Jefferson, Paine—shining through the ages and the pages. (I always wonder how a man (Gore) who advocates reason can also believe in miracles and an all-virtuous, all powerful personal god who distributes suffering so willy nilly. Politics?)

One can even imagine Gore has read Ayn Rand with a gleam in his eye and respect in his heart. How bitter is that pill some Objectivists (Objectivism is the philosophy of Ayn Rand) must swallow to realize Al Gore may have come full circle, to a reasonable, often nonstatist way of thinking?

Has Al Gore given up the State power?

Well, no. But I'll bet you dollars to donuts he would yield radically less government than the Ann Coulters, Sean Hannitys, and Rush Limbaughs of the world. Gore quotes Ms. Coulter, the Queen of Demean: "She advocated executing an American citizen who joined the Taliban 'in order to physically intimidate liberals by making them realize that they could be killed, too.'"

I rest my case: That level of viciousness cries out for large government pogroms and Gulags; compared to Coulter, Marie Antoinette is my Cub Scout den mother. The others are just as psychotic, and fully comfortable with today's biggest-ever American government because it's "Christian." Remember Jerry (RIH)[1] Falwell's benediction following the attacks of 911?

"I really believe that the pagans and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians... the ACLU, People for the American Way—all of them who have tried to secularize America—I point the finger in their face and say, 'you helped this [terrorist attack] happen.'"

Al reminds us of that memorable quote, too, all in the context of showing how these false-flag conservatives have changed the entire epistemology of American governance. Their method seems to be "we do what divinely inspires us—of course, ExxonMobil and Lockheed sit on the right hand of The Almighty—and if you disagree you're evil and you should feel lucky we don't shoot you."

How we came to this condition is the real question, and I must say Mr. Gore leaves something to be desired in that area of the analysis.

He makes some telling points regarding the diminishment of reading and writing in the era of broadcast television. He notes "to read is to think"... and to discuss, to have a conversation in your mind, and occasionally in dialog with others, using conceptual language. On the other hand, the TV medium is a one-way system of delivering perceptual images in search of a desired immediate emotional response (often distilled as opinion polls).

All points well taken.

Our republican democracy was founded on the printed word, not the broadcast image. Gore makes a good case that TV is inherently less rational, but I believe we can be more specific in making the distinction: Reason requires a conceptual medium while unreason/unquestioned belief thrives the context of a perceptual medium.

Also, though Al gives several fantastic quotes and seems to understand what reason actually is, I never found a definition. That may be expecting too much from a man attuned to the standard public service arguments of nonclassical liberals. In the context of a political process where both sides concede health, education, and welfare to the State power, I do feel today that Al Gore and his corollaries are the far lesser of evils.

They believe in reason and science, as well as having a humanitarian sensibility to the horrors of the war machine. These days, compared to the Bushovik crowd, these neoliberals stand as intellectual giants for the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. And several of them seem to have gone over top to become full-fledged classical liberals/ libertarians in the mold of Jefferson and Jackson.

Reason is especially adept in chronicling the offenses against reason by the ruling clique: from its obsessive secrecy, to the torture of prisoners, to the worldwide kidnappings, to suppressing scientific arguments on global warming or stem-cell technology, or to the attacks on those who expose them.

I wish Mr. Gore would make the final step in the discovery process and accept the fact that deep, well-understood conspiracies of power have been afoot in the progress of this administration as in others. Only this admin threatens to upset the apple cart in its supreme level of irrationality.

Finally, I think a better case could be made against faith, such as Sam Harris's books *The End of Faith* or *Letter to a Christian Nation*. And Gore for all the relative improvement over the opposition is still stuck with the problem of faith. He doesn't see what any high school reader of *Atlas Shrugged* picks up intuitively: "The world is perishing from an orgy of faith and force"... and the two are inextricably related.

[1] Rot in hell; America's cuddly televangelist died in May 2007.