



# **The Kingdom of Science: Literary Utopianism and British Education, 1612-1870**

*Paul A. Olson*

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*The Kingdom of Science* examines Baconian utopias as blueprints for a scientific sociology of knowledge that founded a new social and economic world in the seventeenth century. Looking backward, Paul A. Olson begins with More's *Utopia* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, static state utopias designed to woo us toward a moral as opposed to a scientific reform. To these, Olson then contrasts the primary subjects of his study—Bacon's *New Atlantis*, the Commonwealth educational utopias, and the utopianism of Adam Smith and his Utilitarian followers. These later utopias increasingly point to an ideal world to be dominated by a science linked to technology, compelled education, and competitive capitalism. They posit as their end the conquest of nature and use as their means the routinizing of research and education. Their visions, Olson argues, lie at the center of the educational models adopted by mainstream British and American policymakers in the last century and a half—despite the warnings of both conservative and radical critics concerning their potential consequences for the environment and for culture.

The challenge Olson presents for those responsible for forging our social future is creating visions sufficient to energize human groups while allowing both for the critical reflection necessary for constructive policy debate and for the action necessary to prevent environmental chaos and cultural disruption.

*The Kingdom of Science* is a companion to Olson's earlier book, *The Journey to Wisdom*, and carries the assumptions of that patristic-medieval study into the early-modern and modern periods.

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