

# Rebuttals to *The Alternative*

## Rebuttal to North

### In Defense of the Sawbone

Dr. John D. King, M.D.

THE ALTERNATIVE of January carries an article by Gary North entitled *Natural Foods vs. The Synthetic A Priori*, which is so replete with misstatements as to deserve a rebuttal. That such an article would be published by *The Alternative* puzzled me at first—and still does, in fact. My best theory is that defending the Individual (even though he has the earmarks of a charlatan) against Collective Power (e.g. the medical trust) strikes the editors as serving libertarian ends. No matter. Suffice it to say that the North article is as incongruously naive and obscurantist one to appear in a journal ordinarily devoted to sensible and honorable causes.

The article begins by crediting the mavericks and "invaders" for all the big breakthroughs in science. The intellectual-professional establishment, by contrast is accused of resisting progress at every turn. We learn that the major scientific advances of the past 350 years were "universally met with hysterical resistance from the organized intellectual guilds." This notion may have the makings of good theater, but it is bad history. Did hysterical resistance greet the laws of electromagnetism, or the cell doctrine in biology, or anesthetics, or the telephone, or the electric light, or the airplane, or radio, or moving pictures, or x-rays, or radioisotopes, or blood transfusions, or antibiotics, or any of a dozen other important things you can quickly add to the list?

Consider the galaxy of major scientists: Boyle, van Leeuwenhoek, Newton, Franklin, Cavendish, Priestley, Lavoisier, Volta, Faraday, Mendel, Maxwell, Mendeleev, Darwin, Roentgen, Michelson, Edison, Thomson, Einstein, Planck, Curie, Fleming, Bohr, Fermi, Burnet. Who among them was martyred by his fellow-intellectuals? Their ideas may have stirred controversy, but conspiracies against them in the scientific community are little better than imaginary. Galileo was severely suppressed by the Church, which, if an intellectual guild, has rarely been considered a scientific one.

But the chief villains of the piece are the AMA and its running dogs. Almost any stick will serve to beat the doctors. Even the ancient practice of bleeding is denounced, though its relevance to the present or to the conspiratorial version of medical history

is a bit obscure. Jenner and Pasteur are hauled out of the past dressed up as victims of medical cabals. In fact, there was little or only transient organized resistance to the ideas of either man, and both were generally acclaimed by scientists and laymen alike within a few years of their discoveries.

The absurdity of the charge that the medical profession is "thoroughly organized for resistance to new ideas" should be made obvious by a moment's reflection on the differences in the level of medical science now and that of a mere 30 years ago. The easy and rapid dissemination of new ideas has long been an attribute of the medical community. The very volume of medical literature now poses its own crisis, and doctors are hard put to keep up with the flood of new information made available to them. Admittedly intolerance exists in that the scientific method is still hotly defended. But it is that, and not some mythical barrier to original ideas, that actually incommodates the cultists who are rejected by organized medicine.

Then we are served up the Passion of Dr. Ivy and the Drs. Durovic. "Convincing proof" is said to have been repeatedly offered on behalf of krebiozen, which is simply not true. A careful study of patient records supplied by the Krebiozen Foundation to the FDA and the National Cancer Institute showed that krebiozen had not the slightest effect on cancers. The krebiozen story at every turn has been featured by false information and concealment of data by its advocates. Permit just one sample, to give you the flavor of the thing.

The original announcement of krebiozen by its promoters, via a news conference at the Drake Hotel in Chicago in 1951, concerned 22 patients treated with the drug. Eight of these patients were tabulated as dead, but not from cancer. It was later established that 10 patients were dead at the time and that all had either definitely or probably died of cancer. One of the two concealed decedents was the wife of Dr. Pick, a close associate of Dr. Ivy in the krebiozen venture; the brochure commented on this dead woman's condition: "much improvement." When confronted with the matter later, Dr. Ivy stated essentially he had felt no obligation to mention Mrs. Pick's death from cancer because nobody in the audience had asked him about it! (J.F. Holland, *The Krebiozen Story: Is Cancer Quackery Dead?* Proceedings of the Third Nation-



al Congress on Medical Quackery, Chicago, 1966.)

Quite a number of doctors did use krebiozen, the great majority of them on only one or two patients, which is significant in itself since these doctors were at liberty to have continued using the material on additional cancer patients for years had they so desired. Another interesting sidelight is the wealth amassed by Ivy and the Durovics during krebiozen's heyday. Dr. Stevan Durovic skipped the country, in fact, under indictment for income tax evasion to the tune of more than \$900,000. A revealing look at the krebiozen promotion is provided by G.D. Stoddard in "Krebiozen": *The Great Cancer Mystery*, Beacon Press, 1955.

North's gullability, which is a very Mariana Trench, leads him to tout the even more bizarre teachings of Dr. Max Gerson, whose claim was to cure tuberculosis and cancer by dietary and other means. Preparation of the curative vegetable and fruit juices was so exacting and difficult that Gerson helped out by offering for sale to his customers a special juicer for \$150. One of his other measures for treatment of cancer, for some reason omitted from North's medical expose, was copious enemas of coffee. Only the fresh-brewed article was considered effective, by the way, and instant coffee was found to lack cancer-controlling properties (W.S. Ross, *The Climate is Hope*, Prentice-Hall, 1965). In the Gerson case, the AMA's sinister power extended to the successful intimidation of the world's foremost book publishers, an awesome achievement without question.

I will not detail my low opinion of the currently fashionable food fads and will be content to remark that they are very poorly documented. In our curiously superstitious age, a surprising number of people are willing to believe they are being covertly malnourished and poisoned by the supermarket, but there is very little, if any, evidence to support such ideas. By the way, the reader is invited to compare any orthodox medical journal with any "health food" publication, to see which presents detailed and specific evidence and which doesn't.

Regarding the socio-political aspects of organized medicine, the foolishness of the article is again full measure and running over. The AMA has never had the right to license doctors in any state. As to the AMA's monopoly power, how is it that the public has such a wide choice among the healing arts and that upon feeling poorly, one may take himself to an osteopath, a chiropractor, a naturopath, a Christian Science reader, or the closest Zen den or health food store? How is it that in 40 out of the 50 states, M.D.'s are not even compelled to belong to the AMA? It does seem like a hell of a way to run a monopoly. The AMA is losing members now, perhaps chiefly because of its penchant for appeasing those who make political hay out of

moaning about the health crisis in America.

Even the most elementary concepts of scientific thinking get squashed in North's anti-establishment tirade. "Scientists," he asserts, "need confidence in their theories, even in the face of recalcitrant facts," and that "faith in an intuition" is basic to scientific advances. These notions are an amalgam of nonsense and *non-sequitur*. Intuition is by definition devoid of conscious reasoning and has no valid application to science. Conjecture, hypothesis or speculation are what might have been intended. Furthermore, an investigator may pursue whatever lawful research his fancy may inspire and do unsuccessful experiments by the hundred, with no worse penalties than the wrath of his billpayers or the private derision of his friends. It is only if he openly declares his hypothesis to be a proven and established law in the face of "recalcitrant facts" that he earns the obloquy of his colleagues—especially so when human lives are

at stake. He who makes unsupported claims just because he is richly supplied with faith has abandoned the scientific method and fully deserves the professional ostracism that will be his lot.

Doctors and other scientists do, of course, make mistakes. The charge of excessive caution can sometimes be made to stick. Yet, such errors of conservatism in medicine are born of a valuable precept: *primum non nocere*. Above all, do no harm. The public may be thankful that doctors recall this maxim as often as they do. The irony of most of today's public health flaps is that they are so often concerned with far-fetched dangers to health, such as the supersonic transport, DDT and soda pop cyclamate. But that's another subject. Far worse than any of this is the enticement of people to false and disastrous hopes in an hour of real danger.

*The Alternative* has permitted itself to be used in a shabby cause indeed. □

## Rebuttal to Nelson

# You Won't Have Civilization to Kick Around Anymore

R. Fredrick Docksay

*There has been a lot of talk in recent years about the decadence of Europe. I would ask people not to be so simple-minded as to think of Spengler immediately after the decadence of Europe or the West is mentioned. Before his book, everyone was talking of this matter, and as is well known, the success of his book was due to the fact that the suspicion was already existing in people's minds, in ways and for reasons most heterogeneous.*

— Jose Ortega y Gasset  
(1932)

**P**ETROLEUM JELLY for chafed minds! This judgment by Ortega was reserved for Oswald Spengler and every other intellectual contemporary who, because of vanity and despair, chose Ultimate Theories and other exciting but inadequate formulas to explain the direction of history. Great men are not immune to great errors in judgment. Oswald Spengler, B.F. Skinner and Herbert Marcuse have many differences. But as for likenesses, they succeeded in misreading Hegel and using his historical method to do what Hegel would never do: draw an incontrovertible assumption (e.g., the West is on a steady road of decline) and use it to construct our incontrovertible conclusion. Hegel was not only (or should I say merely) a

social critic but a brilliant historian. He was too familiar with the complex and too often inexplicable landscape of history to draw teleological laws which contained neatly packaged directional signals and a foreseeable goal. In this way, as in a few others, Hegel was the conservative and not the radical Utopian. Yes, we can intuit a general direction of present history. We can approximate our 'paradigm of essences.' But to write as particularly as Spengler does and draw the conclusion that civilization is doomed; to point to such phenomena as the rise of democracy and the invention of hard whiskey as manifestations of our demise is intellectually sloppy. Using the state as an example for analysis, Hegel observes, "By listing attributes, etc., no progress can be made in assessing the nature of the state; it must be apprehended as an organism. One might as well try to understand the nature of God by listing his attributes."

The editor of *America's* most important magazine has asked me to comment of Brent Nelson's review of *Spengler's Selected Essays*. I am glad to oblige, because though I share Mr. Nelson's concern, I do not fashion his despair. First, there are some corrections to be made.

1) In his article, Frederick the Great (Friedrich der Grosse) is once again used unfairly. I say *used*, because King Frederick is to Germans what, proverbially, Thomas Jefferson is to Americans. They are both used to testify on behalf of every cause, exploited by