

Book Reviews

Dragons of Expectation: Reality and Delusion in the Course of History, by Robert Conquest, 256 pp, hardcover, \$24.95, ISBN 0-393-05933-2, New York, N.Y., W.W. Norton, 2005.

Why have our sociopolitical ideologies become estranged from good sense and detached from reality, so that they have led to massive suffering, destruction, and death? What are the intellectual trends in the West that downgrade our culture and threaten our civilization?

These are the questions addressed by Robert Conquest, our greatest living historian of modern times. Conquest carefully documented one of the most horrendous crimes of the 20th century—Stalin’s murder of millions and his genocide of the Ukrainian people—with his books *The Great Terror* (1968) and *Harvest of Sorrow* (1986). He has spent a large part of his professional life documenting the failed economics and politics of communism and socialism.

In *Dragons of Expectation* he examines the failures of the ideologies produced by our Western political culture, and identifies otherworldly expectations about the future and unreal obsessions and delusions about the past that are surprisingly similar to the myths and manias of the Middle Ages. These have led to a tragic cycle of totalitarianism and war. The past century especially has been an era of disregard for reality, with the development of communism and socialism, both of which were inspired by fantasies.

Conquest describes history as a search for, and a depiction of, reality. The historian uses a philosophy of the mind, addressed to the problems facing humanity. Using this analytical method, he must have a principle of selectivity, or point of view, but it must not be an ideology. He then can give us an accurate depiction of the past that will allow a better view of present reality, and of future possibility. Though prediction of the future is impossible, we can avoid false expectations for the future, guard against devastating surprise, and prepare for the unexpected.

Even in ancient Greece Thucydides saw history as an “aid to the interpretation of the future,” since any understanding of the

future must include a reasonable understanding of the past. But today the past has been falsified on a large scale, and history has been distanced from reality.

As Conquest notes, it is a misuse of the human mind to allow counterfactual abstractions, distortions, and delusions to block off mental contact with reality. Verbal cleverness can blur reality so that nothing can be seen. Key words that are mind blockers or reality distorters are “liberty,” “fascism,” and “democracy.” He could have included “human rights” and “social justice.” Democracy is not the essence of Western political culture. It can lead to mob rule. It led to the ruin of Athens, and to the rise of Hitler. Mussolini once termed the fascist state “organized, central state democracy.”

Many of our political leaders and fellow citizens have been educated to support the economic fallacies of socialism, which in reality is democratic absolute monarchy. We have an “educated” class—including minds of high IQ—that misunderstands and misevaluates history. It is alienated not only from society’s values but also from reason and fact, where “nonsense is aesthetically preferable to sense,” and where ideas are more important and reliable than facts. This “educated class” displays an increasingly irrational conformism—a “Western anti-Western mindset”—a type of negative utopianism that is argument-proof and fact-proof. This ideology attacks the Anglo-American culture of law and liberty and labels capitalism as bad, but doesn’t specify what is good.

Conquest decries our leaders’ “deep emotional attachment” to bureaucracy and to state supremacy. The attitudes of both left and right are totalitarian, he states. This totalitarianism is best exemplified by the Soviet system, whose main negative characteristic, according to Conquest, was falsification. The Stalinist regime not only denied reality but also substituted an idealized world fantasy for it. He cites the public “trials” of 1936-38 and the cover-up of the disastrous failure of collectivization of the 1930s.

Western admiration of the USSR peaked in the 1930s, as Western academics accepted its “vast output of total false-

hood.” *New York Times* reporter Walter Duranty misreported the Ukrainian genocide for years and was given a Pulitzer Prize that has never been rescinded. Later, John Kenneth Galbraith decried the monopolists of capitalist countries, yet excused the centralized planners of the communist countries. Those planners became the greatest monopolists in history. Galbraith stated in 1985, just before the collapse of the USSR, “The Soviet system has made great economic progress in recent years.” At that time, workers in the USSR had a lower standard of living than their grandfathers had in 1914, before the Bolshevik revolution.

The trend to stronger etatism can be seen today in the European Union, which Conquest describes as an attempt to build a state from populations that have neither the historical nor ethnic qualifications for nationhood. The EU has the only legislative body in the democratic world that meets in secret. It is an “expensive bureaucratic nightmare” that proposes a vast over-regulation of human life, imposed from above and maintained by misrepresentation. It includes “nearly thirty thousand civil servants, spread over 200 buildings, with about seven hundred standing committees.” Each year up to several billion dollars are unaccounted for.

Conquest offers two other interesting examples of our cultural degeneration. The 1973 meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches passed a resolution deploring oppression in various countries, including the U.S., but defeated by 91 to 3 (with 26 abstentions) a proposed amendment to add the communist countries. A more recent example is Ted Turner’s 1998 CNN production *Cold War* (with its companion book, *Cold War: An Illustrated History, 1945-1991*, by Jeremy Isaacs and Taylor Downing). Turner claimed that Lenin, who ordered mass shootings and hangings, had humanitarian motives; that Che Guevara meant well; and that Kent State and Tiananmen Square were comparable.

It does us little good to identify the problems we face without understanding their causes. Conquest identifies the philosophy of the historian as important,

and mentions in passing the German idealist philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel as befuddling minds, including those of the Marxists, for more than “six or seven generations.” Yet Conquest fails to identify the underlying problem that will doom our civilization—the subjective philosophy that pervades our culture.

Subjectivism is an irrational negation of reality. The philosophy of subjectivism comes to us courtesy of the 18th-century German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, who insisted that reason is the form that the mind imposes upon the world. It is the belief that feelings are the creators of facts, and that reality can be altered by our feelings or ideas. This leads those in power to believe they can make reality conform to their commands, because they think their desires supersede the facts of reality. Like Marxism and socialism, subjectivism is detached from reality because it is based on a misinterpretation of both human nature and the nature of the universe. It’s not much different from the myths of the Middle Ages.

Dragons of Expectation is a fascinating book that, while searching for the causes of the tragic disasters of the 20th century, identifies many examples of our failure to recognize and to conform to reality. Since reality exists independently of our consciousness, it can only be dealt with by objectively identifying and relying on facts, not on beliefs or ideals, and this can only be accomplished through use of our power to reason.

Conquest recognizes that the dragons must be cleared from our thinking. What we must do is change our failed subjective cultural philosophy or we are doomed to repeat future cycles of totalitarianism and war. This book arms all its readers with the information to begin this transformation.

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Psyched Out: How Psychiatry Sells Mental Illness and Pushes Pills That Kill, by Kelly Patricia O’Meara, 215 pp, softcover, \$15.95, ISBN 1-4259-2662-2, Bloomington, Ind., AuthorHouse, 2006.

Kelly Patricia O’Meara, an established investigative reporter in the nation’s capital, spent six years with the *Washington Times* and doing guest stints on network television. Her new book, *Psyched Out*, isn’t aimed solely at medical professionals. This book is for average folks.

O’Meara’s well-researched statistics show that Americans are awash in prescrip-

tion psychotropic drugs, especially antidepressants. She makes her case right up front. “The point of the book,” she says, is not *whether* people suffer emotionally, but rather “whether they actually suffer from...a known, objective, confirmable abnormality of the brain....” She sets out to prove that an out-of-control psychopharmaceutical industry is making a fortune turning common emotions like sadness and anger into diseases, while marketing well-hyped snake-oil to “cure” a panoply of phony illnesses. Citing a range of medical experts and clinical researchers—including dissident psychiatrists, psychologists, and pharmacologists—she shows how a hodgepodge of feelings, quirks, opinions, and hang-ups are being peddled as mental “disorders.”

The author comes down particularly hard on the well-publicized theory of a “chemical imbalance in the brain.” How much serotonin is too much, she wonders, and how much is not enough? She could find no expert from the American Psychiatric Association, the National Institute of Mental Health, or a related organization to answer that query, until she approached Dr. Joseph Glenmullen, clinical instructor in psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. Thus begins an extensive look at the way “clinical” determinations are made in psychiatry and psychology.

Dr. Glenmullen explains that it is impossible to measure serotonin levels in the brain of any patient or “at specific synapses” (p 56). “[W]here the hypothesis of serotonin imbalance comes from [is] extrapolating to humans from test tube studies on blenderized rat brains...,” he states.

Other eye-popping interviews with mental health experts include the claim from Dr. Jerrold Rosenbaum, chairman of the Department of Psychopharmacology at Massachusetts General Hospital, that nobody in the mental health industry knows why, or how, psychiatric drugs work—even in cases in which they are alleged to be effective. So, when individuals taking these drugs commit spectacular atrocities—a frequent occurrence if you believe the Food and Drug Administration, which is busy these days slapping black-box warnings on one psychotropic drug after another—it necessarily follows that they don’t know how or why either.

Such observation places a weighty burden on the public, especially in cases of aggression or violence. If mind-altering prescription drugs do indeed spur uncontrollable conduct in some patients, then the larger society is at risk.

O’Meara zeros in on the qualifying language psychopharmacologists and mental health professionals use. Quoting from the website of pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, she writes: “Scientists *believe* people with depression *could* have an imbalance of serotonin in their brains [so that] the nerve cells can’t communicate or send messages to each other in the right way. This lack of contact between the cells *might* cause depression.” Pfizer’s literature then promotes its antidepressant Zoloft, which supposedly “helps the nerve cells send messages to each other the way they normally should.” A close examination of the words in italics should be a red flag, she says; there’s nothing but a collection of “maybes.”

Unfortunately, says O’Meara, such subtleties are lost on a gullible public. As the education system continues to decline and the media increasingly generates an instant-gratification mentality, more young adults are seduced into accepting the “disease” designation for moodiness and any drugs that go with it. Everyone wants a magic bullet, right now! That an “imbalance” is responsible for emotional distress and/or lack of self-control becomes palatable. It spares the individual responsibility for what we used to call “character issues.” That is, until the drug prescribed for it bites back.

O’Meara’s book comes at a time when cases such as those the author reports to support her thesis are beginning to appear in the mainstream media, too. Between the 1970s and 1990s, pronouncements from mental health professionals were held sacred. But with the plethora of violent, aggressive behaviors by children (many of them following ingestion of antidepressants) since the Columbine massacre in 1999, early warnings by credible leaders within the profession, such as Dr. David Healy (author and former secretary of the British Association for Psychopharmacology), concerning a possible causative link between prescription psychotropic drugs and out-of-character behaviors, could no longer be ignored. Even as I write this, a 19-year-old patient on psychotropic medication, Vitali A. Davydov, has been arrested for the murder of his own psychiatrist, Wayne Stuart Fenton, associate director of the National Institute of Mental Health and clinical doctor in Bethesda, Maryland.

Pressure to acquiesce to establishment ideology is enormous. In the spring of 2006 O’Meara’s old ally and boss, the *Washington Times*, suddenly debunked comments criticizing the legitimacy of depression as a clinical disease when actor Tom Cruise

berated his colleague, Brooke Shields, for going public with her ordeal involving postpartum depression. The *Times* further stated in a high-profile editorial that “[Tom] Cruise doesn’t know anything about psychiatry.” While Mr. Cruise certainly is no scientist, he hasn’t been alone in questioning the concept of “emotional diseases” and the drugs purported to cure them. (But one could argue, perhaps, that he knows a thing or two, inasmuch as psychiatric therapies seem to disproportionately affect wealthy entertainment icons.)

Then, on Aug 16, 2006, the *Washington Times* printed a seemingly contradictory Associated Press article on antidepressant withdrawal by Matt Crenson, entitled “When the cure is worse.” Crenson detailed “scary new symptoms” in people who try, and fail, to get off such antidepressants as Paxil. Like author-doctors David Healy, Peter Breggin, Charles Medawar, Mary Ann Block, and Fred Baughman, to name just a few dissidents, his piece tarnishes the class of psychiatric drugs known as *selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors* (SSRIs). This designation, says both O’Meara and Dr. Healy, deceptively implies an ability to target particular chemicals in the brain while leaving others alone.

Weight gain, sexual dysfunction, and even birth defects in newborns have long been linked to SSRIs, says O’Meara, but in the few months since her book was published, a whole new list of side-effects has emerged as more people take these drugs. Even the half-life of SSRIs in the body is being reexamined, as increasing numbers of patients complain that side-effects once thought to be temporary are lasting much longer, even after drug regimens are discontinued.

Crenson discovered a 1997 survey showing that 28 percent of psychiatrists and 70 percent of general practitioners (the largest category of prescribers, according to O’Meara’s findings) have “no idea that patients might have trouble discontinuing antidepressants.” This dovetails with O’Meara’s finding that mental health professionals have “no idea” how or why their drugs work.

Then there’s the matter, says O’Meara, of assigning different names and packaging to identical psychiatric drugs, thereby roping in additional population sectors. Take Eli Lilly’s antidepressant Prozac. It gets a new color (pink) and a new name (Sarafem) for treatment of premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) in women.

O’Meara asks, what exactly is PMDD? A list of symptoms includes depressed

mood, anxiety, affectivity, decreased interest in activities, irritability, anger, lethargy, changes in appetite, breast tenderness, and/or bloating. Had they left it with the last two *physical* indicators, Lilly might have had a confirmable, objective ailment, if not quite a disease, to tap into. But in the rush to legitimize more mental “illnesses” and administer mind-altering drugs to as many people as possible, Lilly opted for Sarafem, a dead-ringer, it turns out, for Prozac, with the same empirical formula (reprinted in O’Meara’s book). For PMDD, women take Sarafem during the two weeks before their menses—“a new concept, a mental illness that comes and goes every two weeks or so!” interjects O’Meara—whereas Prozac patients take their drug every day!

To underscore the farce, O’Meara reprints a sentence from Lilly’s letter to medical professionals: “Prozac [is] no longer authorized for treatment of Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD).”

Also like the author-doctors named earlier, O’Meara castigates the mental health industry over its ever-expanding, loose-criteria list of mental “illnesses” detailed in the bible of the profession, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Illnesses* (DSM-IV)—panic disorder, post-traumatic stress syndrome, social shyness, mathematics disorder, conduct disorder, etc. She also takes on the new mandatory universal screening diktat signed into law and funded by the U.S. House of Representatives last year under the Marxist-like moniker, “New Freedom Initiative.” This legislation is set to begin the 2006 year for schoolchildren (copypast legislation has already made it into in several states), before expanding to include every population bloc—parents, the elderly, teachers, and so on. As increasing numbers of people are referred for mandatory “counseling”—i.e., for “mental illness”—there is the danger that statements of opinion (including surveys and questionnaires) will be viewed through the lens of mental illness and politicized. Indeed, this is already occurring. A whole new tool—“political affinity software”—is emerging.¹

Given the controversy over the chemical-imbalance theory, I would have liked to learn more about ongoing scientific investigations into the effects of “brain glucose” and dopamine on brain-cell receptors (such as the D2, one of the five supposed subtypes of dopamine receptors), as determined via positron emission tomography (PET scans).² Just because no one has yet found definitive medical evidence for most mental phenomena does

not mean, after all, that new information won’t emerge from research. I also wish O’Meara had asked legislators why Congress hasn’t come down harder on psychopharmaceutical products, given the many lawsuits and mass murders.

Such omissions notwithstanding, it would appear from O’Meara’s work that medical science is not at the point where it can even remotely predict the individual consequences of a chemicalized brain. Depression, like other emotional states, can be caused by a number of factors, and for good reasons: burnout, overwork, disappointment, unfulfilling career, death in the family—or, as religious catechism puts it, “things done and left undone.” But none of these are physical defects, whereas a chemicalized brain strains any definition for “normalcy.”

As for depression, some experts describe it as a wakeup call, spurring sufferers to reconsider their priorities. Unfortunately, many will think no further than the bottle of pills on their nightstand, the one with the same black box warning pictured on the cover of O’Meara’s book. That one act could be the final one a stressed-out patient ever performs.

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¹ Teachout Z, Wu T. YouTube? It’s so yesterday. *Washington Post*, Nov 5, 2006.

² Boman L. New study links brain receptors, alcoholism. Scripps Howard News Service and *Washington Times*, Sept. 5, 2006.

Trapped: When Acting Ethically Is Against the Law, by John Hasnas, 80 pp, softcover, \$12.95, ISBN 1930865880, Washington, D.C., Cato Institute, 2006.

You can pick up this book at dinner and have it read by an early bedtime, but by all means, let it digest overnight with reason so your brain can incorporate its argument. Hasnas writes lucidly, without prolixity, so except for the troubling subject matter, it will be an enjoyable evening.

Hasnas notes an enormous asymmetry between the standards that apply to businesspeople and government prosecutors. We frequently hear the phrase “it’s not illegal,” or “there’s no controlling legal authority.” Indeed, many unethical acts are not illegal, and a drought of character allows people to commit them with no evident shame. Such acts by prosecutors are the subject matter of this book—and they are now explicitly legal. Thus, a companion volume to this book might be entitled

Unfettered: When Acting Unethically is Perfectly Legal. Another book, treating this subject in a more general way, is *The Tyranny of Good Intentions* by Paul Craig Roberts and Lawrence M. Stratton.

The author presents three cases for you to decide, and I recommend full engagement with them: Write your answers, give your reasons, and do not skip ahead. He is explicit about his goal in writing this book, which is “to examine how the federal standard for corporate criminal responsibility, the requirements of several of the federal statutes used to combat white-collar crime, and the incentives created by the U.S. Sentencing Commission’s Federal Sentencing Guidelines for Organizations, influence the decisions of business people confronted with difficult ethical dilemmas.”

He also suggests that his examination leads to the conclusion that, “in the context of federal criminal law [there are] many ways in which compliance is not ethical, and ethical behavior is not compliance” and that “the current federal campaign against white-collar crime frequently undermines...the efforts of businesspeople to behave ethically.”

He explains that the responsibilities of prosecutors, to prevent and punish violations of the law, are simpler than the responsibilities of business people. I would also argue that the law may provide incentives for prosecutors to violate an ethical duty of basic fairness to others, but that there are simply no sanctions that can be imposed on them when they do so. They may be seeking rewards in political advancement; they may see the law as overriding any ethical concerns; and they have no feedback showing them the harm they may be doing. The real obligation of a prosecutor should be justice.

In contrast, there are sanctions for business people who violate ethical duties, and feedback definitely occurs.

Part One of the book describes how we reached this point, including the definition of white-collar crime, the problems that traditional rules of criminal law pose for policing business activity, and the substantive and procedural innovations of federal criminal laws intended to obviate those difficulties. Part Two points out how the current laws put business people in a double bind in the areas of justice, privacy, confidentiality, trust, and self-assessment in the business environment.

There are obvious parallels for the ethical dilemmas posed by medical practice in an age of HIPAA, OSHA, CLIA, federal involvement in people’s medical care, cancer databanks, and so on—in fact, even

more so, because in medical practice, business dealings are a subset of the complex whole, and medicine is not a man-made construct, but a largely unknown portion of the scientific world, of which prosecutors, lawyers and legislators are almost totally ignorant, no matter how well-versed they may think they are. If they are not the ones making the medical decisions, then they are simply not capable of judging, any more than a physician would be capable of walking into a courtroom and overseeing the process there.

Although the author tells us on page seven that he will suggest that the solution to the problem of white-collar crime may not lie in using harsher measures to crack down on white-collar criminals, but in restraining the power of federal prosecutors to do so at all, I sense that the author started without preconceived notions. This book displays a bright intellect coolly analyzing a recent development in our nation.

An underlying text might be that the perfect is the enemy of the good. My diagnosis for the root causes of the problem is a national obsessive-compulsive tendency, showing its phenotype among the legislators and prosecutors, accompanied by a lack of decent restraint among those business people who really are unethical. There is an attitude that unethical acts are acceptable if they are not actually against the law, and a failure to raise children with the kind of integrity that characterized, for one of our best examples, General George Washington.

For his purposes, Hasnas defines “white-collar crime” as “behavior that is the object of federal efforts to ensure honest dealing and regulatory compliance in business.” He very clearly delineates the differences between traditional criminal law and the current interpretation and scope of mail fraud; wire, bank and securities fraud; money laundering; making false statements to federal investigators; obstruction of justice; and violations of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, which criminalize action even if no party can be shown to have suffered harm.

The author beautifully explicates the civil libertarian features of traditional criminal law, including the requirement for *mens rea*, the prohibition against vicarious criminal liability, and the doctrine of legality, under which there can be no crime or punishment unless there is a law. These features date from times when abuse of arbitrary power was more recognized than it is today. Along with the presumption of innocence, the requirement of proof beyond

a reasonable doubt, attorney-client privilege, and the Fifth Amendment right not to self-incriminate, these legal processes protected against government overreaching upon individuals—until recently.

Hasnas then presents the perspective of the prosecutor on the difficulties of prosecuting white-collar crime, as he defines it. Three chapters consider the means by which these difficulties have been swept away to make life easier for the prosecutors. In summary, he states that:

[T]o overcome the problem of limited police resources, the law evolved so as to conscript ... businesspeople into the role of deputy law enforcement agents. To overcome the difficulty of establishing *mens rea*, the law evolved to allow punishment in the absence of proof of intentional wrongdoing by specific individuals. To overcome the problem of statutory loopholes, the law evolved broader, inchoate versions of traditional offenses and entirely new “secondary” offenses. And to overcome the difficulty of obtaining necessary documentary evidence, the law evolved mechanisms for circumventing common law and constitutional privileges.

The vehicles by which these solutions were implemented are the (new) concept of corporate criminal responsibility, the legislative creation of new offenses, and the institution of the U.S. Sentencing Commission’s Sentencing Guidelines for Corporations.

Hasnas says those chapters do not provide for the most scintillating reading, because of arcane detail. I found them riveting. You will, too.

We have “a new class of defendant,” he writes, “shorn of the right against self-incrimination.” These things actually did not just “evolve.” In Hasnas’s words, “Congress passed, and the federal courts endorsed” all these diminutions in our rights. The Second Circuit Court of Appeals is quoted as having stated that “the potential reach of [the mail fraud statute] is virtually limitless,” giving some cases in point. Jed S. Rakoff, the former chief of Business Frauds Prosecution for the Southern District of New York, is quoted as saying, to federal prosecutors of white-collar crime, “the mail fraud statute...is our Stradivarius, our Colt 45, our Louisville Slugger, our Cuisinart—and our true love.” One wishes these people were this dedicated to clearing up instances of government misfeasance and malfeasance.

The cost of these efforts to force businesses to comply with all the new laws and regulations is a weakening of everyone's protections against unfettered government power. Law has been transformed. It is no longer a shield against arbitrary power, but a weapon in the hands of police and prosecutors. An (unintended?) consequence of giving people good reasons to avoid engagement, involvement, and responsibility, in order to avoid inadvertently becoming enmeshed in the coils of the criminal law, is to discourage people from taking the risk of practicing medicine or starting new businesses. Hasnas explores such effects of the hunt for white-collar crime.

Hasnas concludes that "[t]he cost of this crusade to achieve perfect justice is the abandonment of the internal morality of the criminal law." In order to "use the criminal law to raise the ethical level of business behavior among those parties given to unscrupulous action, we must incentivize unethical behavior on the part of those who are conscientious...a Pyrrhic victory." Although more vigorous law-enforcement efforts "may well be justified with regard to crimes that directly harm or violate the rights of others," criminal law is "too blunt an instrument to be efficient in either raising the general level of honest dealing in business, or effectively increasing compliance with *malum prohibitum* regulations..."

Therefore, Hasnas writes that "with regard to this category of offense, the proper solution may lie in abstaining from any efforts at criminal enforcement at all."

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The Great Cholesterol Con: Why Everything You've Been Told About Cholesterol, Diet and Heart Disease Is Wrong!, by Anthony Colpo, 348 pp, softback, \$19.99, ISBN 978-1-4116-9475-0, www.Lulu.com, 2006.

The definitive recent book on the non-dangers of dietary cholesterol and saturated fat was *The Cholesterol Myths: Exposing the Fallacy that Saturated Fat and Cholesterol Cause Heart Disease* by Uffe Ravnskov, M.D., Ph.D., published in 2000. Anthony Colpo's book (GCC) has the advantage of being 6 years newer; thus more recent research has been included.

GCC also has the advantage of reviewing some other, more probable causes of heart disease. It includes constructive suggestions on lifestyle, and all topics are backed up by excellent refer-

ences—more than 1,400 of them (p xi), with numbered citations in academic style. The first foreword is written by Ravnskov, and the second by Duane Graveline, M.D., M.P.H., who wrote *Statin Drug Side-Effects*, published in 2004.

In most instances, Colpo presents actual evidence from studies in original peer-reviewed papers, with clearly designed tables when the results of multiple trials are given. Colpo wrote the most detailed descriptions of the questionable work of Ancel Keys, M.D., on the supposed toxicity of saturated fats in his Seven Countries Study. Author Barry Groves, Ph.D., also wrote about Keys's influential but erroneous work.¹ Colpo's description of the misguided claims of Dean Ornish, M.D., and Nathan Pritikin, a layman, on low-fat diets are also the most detailed that I have ever seen.

The unhealthy recommendations of several government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are discussed. The influence of "Big Pharma" is duly noted. Colpo, instead, recommends low-carbohydrate, high-fat diets and certain supplements—advice with which I and other members of the International Cholesterol Skeptics (www.THINCS.org) generally agree.

Of 368 pages, the first 102 discuss why eating cholesterol and saturated fat does not cause heart disease, despite billions of dollars in advertising claiming that it does, as well as the dogma of most government agencies and many NGOs, such as the American Heart Association. This leads to a discussion of the overpromotion of statin drugs such as Zocor and Lipitor. Although these drugs can lower cholesterol levels, a surrogate endpoint,² real benefits for mortality are very low in absolute terms for men, and nonexistent for women and elderly men.

Colpo shows by actual trial data that the lowering of cholesterol is not beneficial. Colpo believes that the antiinflammatory, aspirin-like effect of the statin drugs is worthwhile, quoting the PRISM trial (p 67) as showing "...[statistically?] significant..." results in patients with diagnosed coronary artery disease and angina pectoris. Mortality and nonfatal myocardial infarction (MI) were reduced. Against this, in the MIRACL trial, only angina was somewhat reduced in a similar patient group.²

A meta-analysis of 12 trials of this sort (three of atorvastatin including MIRACL, two of fluvastatin, six of pravastatin, and one of simvastatin) showed no beneficial effect on mortality, MI, or stroke for up to four months.³ Colpo also points to the

lowering of C-reactive protein (CRP) as a benefit of statins, but this was recently shown to be of limited predictive value in the elderly who are most likely to be taking statins.⁴ To his credit, Colpo includes a long section on the many statin side-effects.

About 73 pages discuss possible actual causes of heart disease (pp 106ff). Stress, high free-radical activity, high serum glucose levels, poor nutrient intake, lack of physical activity, and impaired nitric oxide release are detailed. Another section addresses overblown claims about other drugs to fight heart disease. Appendices cover other interesting topics, such as homocysteine levels and the false health claims of vegetarians and of those who perform coronary angioplasty and bypass operations.

Colpo elaborated on the gross overpromotion of the "Polypill" in the *British Medical Journal*. This pill is a concoction of a statin drug, three antihypertensives, folic acid, and aspirin (p 214). Then, as a comparison, GCC discusses a number of safe and effective supplements.

Most of Colpo's book is extremely well researched, and worthwhile for physicians as well as laymen. Some possible and rare exceptions: His recommendation for the supplement selenium (p 195) did not mention that the study he quotes found a tripling of breast cancer.⁵ Granted, the result did not reach the arbitrary threshold of statistical significance ($P = .09$), but the small numbers (nine cases with Se and three with placebo) mean that a tripling cannot be ignored. GCC noted that the SU.VI.MAX study showed no such effect after 7.5 years, but it made use of four supplements besides selenium in the intervention group. There are several different forms of selenium in the various trials; it is never used in the toxic elemental form. This could be important, though rarely addressed by anyone. Colpo's frequent use of relative risks (RRs) instead of absolute risks, despite showing how misleading RRs can be, is disappointing, but can be accepted when the direction of an intervention is shown to be the opposite of the conventional expectation.

There are some problems with descriptions of the chemistry of fatty acids. When one of the two hydrogen atoms on a carbon atom is lost as a hydrogen radical, the remaining fatty acid fragment is a free radical, and does not contain a double bond (p 145). Colpo's description of the relationship between blood alcohol levels and the risk of collisions while driving (pp 234ff) did not mention that people unused to alcohol will drive poorly with much lower concentrations than the U.S.A.'s vaunted

legal threshold of 0.08%, while long-term alcoholics will only perform their best driving with higher concentrations than 0.08%, according to an article in a nonscientific publication that nonetheless presents sound experimental work.⁶ Colpo is more sanguine about exercise than I am,⁵ but is careful not to recommend extreme exercise. These points do not detract seriously from a generally accurate work. There are 78 pages of references, but no index and no biographical data about the author, who is a medical writer and physical fitness trainer, residing in Australia.

Colpo's conclusion is very directly stated (p 254): "There is every reason in the world to encourage people to exercise frequently, stop smoking, eat minimally processed foods, and find ways to get a handle on the stresses of modern life. The evidence for low-fat diets, on the other hand, is based on a mixture of erroneous assumptions, half-truths and downright lies."

Highly recommended!

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¹ Groves B. *Eat Fat Get Thin*. London, England: Vermilion; 1999:60.

² Kauffman JM. Bias in recent papers on diets and drugs in peer-reviewed medical journals. *J Am Phys Surg* 2004;9:11-14.

³ Briel M, Schwartz GG, Thompson PL, et al. Effects of early treatment with statins on short-term clinical outcomes in acute coronary syndromes. *JAMA* 2006;295:2046-2056.

⁴ Störk S, Feelders RA, van den Beld AW, et al. Prediction of mortality risk in the elderly. *Am J Med* 2006;119:519-525.

⁵ Kauffman JM. *Malignant Medical Myths*. West Conshohocken, PA: Infinity Publishing; 2006:144-162,239.

⁶ Dinkel J, Clendenin D. Sobering thoughts. *Road & Track* 1973 (March):127-128.

Hormones, Health, and Happiness, by Steven F. Hotze, M.D., with Kelly Griffin, 351 pp, hardback, \$24.95, ISBN 0-9765751-0-8, Houston, Tex., Forrest Publishing, 2005.

Dr. Steven Hotze has a very successful practice in Houston, Texas. In the AAPS tradition, Dr. Hotze does not accept any third-party payments. He structures his practice to diagnose and treat his patients with intelligence, kindness, and concern.

This book is mainly created as a patient manual, and as such does not include clinical diagnostic methods or detailed treatment protocols. It does, however, address the fact that modern medicine often overlooks many time-proven diagnoses and treatments. Mainstream medicine is not very successful

in finding the etiology of many chronic disorders or symptom complexes.

Although the book is patient-oriented, many modern physicians can learn a great deal from exploring Dr. Hotze's philosophies as explained in the book. He reviews his own history of learning in medicine and his odyssey from a conventional family practice, subservient to insurance companies and HMOs, to an independent practice totally devoted to the individual patient, free of any third-party payment or interference.

Dr. Hotze first addresses chronic allergies. This is a controversial field, and the internist or conventional allergist often fails to acknowledge the fact that food sensitivity may play an important role. Many mainstream practitioners also believe that chemical sensitivity is a psychiatric disease. Dr. Hotze challenges this mainstream dogma and demonstrates how patients can greatly improve with proper diagnosis and treatment of inhalant, food, and chemical sensitivities.

Dr. Hotze then considers chronic fungal infections, and how their treatment can eliminate mycotoxins and alleviate many secondary symptoms.

The third major area is that of intelligent hormone replacement. There is a detailed discussion of how to recognize autoimmune thyroid disease and treat it effectively. An entire chapter is devoted to natural female hormone replacement, with avoidance of the sometimes disastrous side effects of synthetic hormones such as Premarin and Provera. Hotze also notes how the lack of testosterone affects both men and women as they age. Hydrocortisone deficiency is described in depth, along with its correction through natural hormone supplementation.

The final chapters concern diet. Hotze shows how an ideal diet can greatly improve health, and discusses nutritional supplements and their specific indications.

I would highly recommend this book for patients as well as physicians.

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Godless: The Church of Liberalism, by Ann Coulter, 304 pp, hardback, \$27.95, ISBN 1400054206, New York, N.Y., Crown Forum, 2006.

When I began reading this book, I anticipated that I would thoroughly enjoy it. I think very highly of Ann Coulter and her views, and I also appreciate her quick wit and tongue-in-cheek humor. I was not disappointed.

Coulter quickly points out that liberalism is a godless religion that "has its own

cosmology, its own miracles, its own beliefs in the supernatural, its own churches, its own high priests, its own saints, its own total worldview, and its own explanation of the existence of the universe." She develops this theme extremely well throughout the book, and in doing so presents excellent discussions about stem cell research, Darwin's theory of evolution, the abortion issue, and education.

She exposes with multiple examples the inconsistencies and seeming lunacy of liberals. The vast majority of liberals, however, are not lunatics. If they were, they would not have been able to move, over a very short period, a basically religious, free-enterprise country to the brink of becoming a totally godless, socialist state.

Liberals have taken over the public schools. They have infiltrated many churches, the arts, the media, and the legal profession. And they are now about to take over the medical profession. Their thinking permeates the highest courts in the country and our government at virtually every level. They are not lunatics! They are misguided, but are a formidable and dedicated adversary!

Coulter has apparently hit her target dead center. A hot controversy surrounds this book. The extreme reaction by liberals is reason enough to read it. Of course she can now expect to be marginalized and denigrated—both are favorite techniques of liberals.

I do not think that Coulter is concerned about what liberals think of her. She appreciates the fact that our country is rapidly becoming officially godless, and that wrong has become right, and right has become wrong. I think she sees the decline and impending fall of our great nation, and believes liberalism to be the cause. She sees a life-and-death struggle between conservative and liberal values in this country. She intends to do something about it. Ann Coulter is not on the sidelines like most of us.

We need leaders like Coulter who will stand on principle, and who will not be moved by fear or greed. Unfortunately there are too few Ann Coulters. Most of us will just complain and do nothing. But for those Americans who want to join the struggle to save our country, this book provides plenty of ammunition. Liberals, as well as those who sit on the fence on virtually every controversial issue, will probably hate it.

The book is excellent, and the audio (compact disk) version, presented by the author herself, is even better.

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