

## Book Review

# A critique of Dr. Miguel Faria's Book, Vandals at the Gates of Medicine

Russell L. Blaylock

Theoretical Neuroscience Research, LLC, Ridgeland, MS 39157, USA

E-mail: \*Russell L. Blaylock - [blay6307@comcast.net](mailto:blay6307@comcast.net)

\*Corresponding author

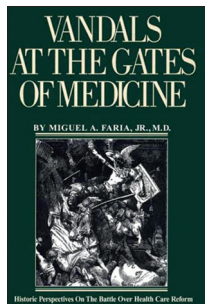
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Miguel Faria *Vandals at the Gates of Medicine*

Price: \$35.00,  
Hardcover: 403 pages,  
Publisher: Hacienda Publishing,  
Inc. (1<sup>st</sup> ed.; 1994) Macon, GA, USA

Language: English,  
ISBN-10: 0-9641077-0-8

Rating: \* \* \* \* \*

It is not often one comes across a book that contains so much useful and enlightening information and wisdom. In *Vandals at the Gates of Medicine*, Dr. Miguel Faria has captured the essence of our nation's problem—collectivism. As he so forcefully points out, we have, as a people, abandoned the principles that made this a great nation, a nation of free and virtuous people.

His writing style is lucid and makes a complex and often difficult topic enjoyable to read and easy to understand. I have learned a great deal reading this wonderful book. Unlike many pure historians, Dr. Faria brings together a multitude of disciplines — ethics, philosophy, mythology, religion, political science, and law — into a synthesis that is vital to understanding the pernicious nature of collectivism. Within these disciplines, he weaves his vast practical experience as a neurosurgeon.

I compare Dr. Faria's writing style to one of my favorite authors, Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, as one of a handful of people who is able to do what Dr. Faria has done, that

is, present history as it should be presented as a total and all-encompassing study of mankind, or as Ludwig von Mises puts it — human action.

In the section on Ancient Rome, Faria demonstrates to us the importance of having a thorough knowledge of law, history, and politics. He reminds us that our government is undergoing a “metamorphosis from a constitutional republic — based on a foundation of individual self-reliance and private philanthropy — to a socialist democracy of an ever increasing, omnipotent government authority and an amoral, amorphous, statist, and exuberant bureaucracy.”

Faria emphasizes the importance of the rule of law in a constitutional republic by giving us historical examples provided by the Roman republics and shows us the devastating results of ignoring these first principles.

One of the chief tools of collectivists of all types (socialists, communists, fascists, etc.) is to utilize class envy to attain the goals of authoritarian government. Frédéric Bastiat calls this “legal plunder.” Dr. Faria demonstrates for us that this was true in Ancient Rome as well. Likewise, he

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demonstrates the virtues that built the foundation of a free republic — the rule of law, family structure, justice, courage, and temperance.

*Vandals at the Gates of Medicine* is scattered with valuable quotes and aphorisms. For example, Faria provides us with this from John Philpot Curran — “the condition upon which God has given liberty to man is eternal vigilance; which condition if he breaks, servitude is at once the consequence of his crime and the punishment of his guilt.”

I was particularly pleased to read Dr. Faria’s emphasis on medical care as an individual contract between a patient and his or her doctor, and not a collective endeavor to be monitored and ruled upon by bureaucrats and government functionaries. Through historical analysis, Faria demonstrates for us the legacy of medical care from ancient Islam and Greek and Roman medicine, which emphasized this contract. It was a contract based on moral principles.

Again, Faria lets the ancients teach us the first principles. He says that Erasistratus, the renowned anatomist and physiologist, said, “it is better to be a good man devoid of learning than to be a perfect practitioner of bad moral conduct, and an untrustworthy man... good morals compensate for what is missing in art, while bad morals can corrupt and confound even perfect art.” This is, of course, also the message of Christ to man.

And I was especially intrigued by Faria’s ability to condense his thoughts into a sentence that would take others pages to express. For example, he captures the true essence of the government flunky when he says (that for), “the statist bureaucrats and technocrats... their prime motivation is simply camouflaged self-interest masquerading as altruism.”

Faria paints for us a true portrait of socialized medicine and not the modern art of the liberal-left that distorts and portrays a false image of bliss and magic. His realistic painting demonstrates shortages, substandard care, endless rationing, and the “ultimate outright denial of care and government-sanctioned euthanasia.” All of which have historical precedent.

In *Vandals at the Gates of Medicine*, Faria explains why physicians have been bludgeoned into a state of shock and submission, reminiscent of that experienced by POWs in Vietnam, who faced insurmountable odds against a ruthless enemy. Most physicians, as he points out, have given up. They just want to survive until they can retire. They see little hope in continuing the struggle. But history teaches us that it is only through persistence and vigilance that others have defeated a better-armed and more massive enemy.

There are less ominous sides to the book that I found particularly interesting. For example, Faria demonstrates the enormous contribution that Christianity has made to Western civilization. As the prime preserver of ancient knowledge and often the only source of medical charity during devastating epidemics, the Christian church played a major role in preserving the wisdom that brought about individual freedom.

I also enjoyed the section on the medical giants from antiquity to the Renaissance. By presenting to us these eloquent stories, Faria brings to life the importance of free inquiry that is, the milieu necessary for the creative spirit. Collectivism, such as managed care providers, is the antithesis of this creative free spirit and shall destroy medical progress by regimenting ideas. Faria reminds us that under such a system ideas are the property of the state. Regimented thought destroys progress.

Finally, in his epilogue, Faria informs us that at least half of all medical care costs can be contained by living healthier lifestyles. So what will it take to save us from a similar destruction that visited our ancestors under collectivism? Faria tells us, “it will take truly Renaissance physicians of the highest order and courage to surmount the titanic hurdles in their path and repel the Vandal hordes massing for the final onslaught, eager to breach the gates, to pillage and plunder the traditional practice of medicine, and sap its substance. Unless physicians act now, the gates will surely fall.”

Truly prophetic words!