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*coucang?* Can it be that, in the latter half of the 20th century, we are still on Aristotle's *Scala Naturae*?

CHARLES A. REED

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I have noted that in the recent literature on immunology there is a tendency to replace the word antigenic by immunogenic. May I suggest that this is a mistake. Immunogenic surely implies that the substance referred to will make animals immune. But not all antigens produce immunity; in fact, some produce hypersensitivity, more or less the reverse of immunity. Would it not be better to retain the older and more general term, or if the word immunogenic is to be used at all, to restrict it to organisms or substances that actually produce immunity?

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## Early Vision of Public Education

Recent development of the State University Center in Albany ("News and Comment," 24 Mar., p. 1521) reminded me that Theodoric Romeyn Beck proposed such a center over 100 years ago. His remarks before the Literary Convention and the New York State Legislature on 30 March 1854 urged the state to establish the university center as an alternative to the proposed National University in Washington, which he believed would not be built. He was right. The following excerpts from his statement proved him to be over 100 years ahead of his time:

I beg to say the plan presented by our respected president is one which meets my hearty approbation. It includes many of the subjects required to be taught in the proposed University—all of them called for by the wants of the times and of the country. . . . What shall be the system of instruction? Are the Latin and Greek languages to be taught? Certainly not. . . . We have already in this state alone, some 160 academies, some 7 or 8 colleges, in which the study of these is pursued. And if the teachers are competent, we do not need a University for that purpose. But it is desirable to have professors who are perfect masters of these languages. . . . You cannot expect that they will be attended by large classes, and this renders it more imperative to endow professorships for them.

Beck went on to say that the future of transportation, building, and such depended upon knowledge of physical and chemical composition of materials. He suggested an independent professorship on *Iron*, its chemical characteristics, its manufacture and its application. He mentioned microscopy, which was "already successfully applied to the development of the intimate structure of man and of the inferior animals." He suggested a professor of physical geography and meteorology, justifying it by the needs of navigation. "It has been asserted of late years, that a ship can outride a storm. Certainly we know, that if the barometer was generally studied, many dangers might be avoided."

He also proposed professorships of public hygiene, medical jurisprudence, statistics, comparative law and legislation, and physical astronomy and pleaded for "a number of free seats" to be made available for students in order to meet the "wants of the masses" to study in such an institution, it being understood that "the necessity of increase in knowledge is recognized in every right minded man until the day of death."

Beck was a physician-educator in Albany during the first half of the 19th century. He was principal of the Albany Boys Academy for almost 50 years, professor of medical jurisprudence at the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Fairfield, New York, 1816-39 and professor of physics at the Albany Medical College 1840-54. The State of New York is now developing, hopefully, an outstanding graduate school. Although different chairs from those proposed by Beck might be more appropriate now, his principles are still sound.

WILLIAM A. BRUMFIELD

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## CB Weapons:

### Powder Keg or Deterrent?

It seems to me that the letters (9 June) on moral issues of chemical and biological warfare have missed the main point which is that the vast majority of the earth's population regards science and technology as an increasingly mortal threat to their lives; they feel powerless at the mercy of a few, as if they were on the operating table in the hands, not of healers, but of