



# Galileo's Gout: Science in an Age of Endarkenment

*Gerald Weissmann*

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“Oliver Sacks, Richard Selzer, Lewis Thomas . . . Weissmann is in this noble tradition.” —*Los Angeles Times*

“Weissmann introduces us to a new way of thinking about the connections between art and medicine.”  
—*New York Times Book Review*

Embryonic stem cell research. Evolution vs. intelligent design. The transformation of medicine into “health care.” Climate change. Never before has science been so intertwined with politics, never have we been more dependent on scientific solutions for the preservation of the species.

Transporting us across more than four hundred years of pivotal moments in science and medicine, Weissmann distills history’s lessons for today’s new age of sect and violence: “The Endarkenment.” Among others, he lingers with Galileo and his daughter in seventeenth-century Florence, Diderot and d’Alembert in Enlightenment Paris, William and Alice James in fin de siècle Boston, James Watson as the John McEnroe of DNA, and Craig Venter decoding the genome at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Weissmann’s message is clear: “Experimental science is our defense—perhaps our best defense—against humbug and the Endarkenment.”

A rare amalgam of incisive polemic and rich, anecdotal narrative, this is humanistic science writing at its best. Weissmann’s reflections on the historical roots of the current culture wars in science and medicine again reveal him to be, as Nobel Prize-winner Eric Kandel says “by any standard, one of the major essayists of our time.”

**Gerald Weissmann** is a physician, scientist, editor, and essayist whose collections include *Epigenetics in the Age of Twitter: Pop Culture and Modern Science*; *Mortal and Immortal DNA: Science and the Lure of Myth*; and *Galileo’s Gout: Science in an Age of Endarkenment*. He is professor emeritus and research professor of medicine at New York University School of Medicine. His essays and reviews have appeared in numerous publications worldwide, including the *London Review of Books* and *New York Times Book Review*. The former editor-in-chief of the *FASEB Journal*, he is now its book reviews editor. He lives in Manhattan and Woods Hole, Massachusetts.

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