

**Silencing Scientists and Scholars in  
Other Fields: Power, Paradigm Controls,  
Peer Review, and Scholarly Communication**

**by  
Gordon Moran**



**Ablex Publishing Corporation  
Greenwich, Connecticut  
London, England**

## 2

---

# **Intellectual Freedom, Intellectual Suppression, the Big Lie, and the Freedom to Lie**

---

“Sticks and stones can break my bones, but names will never hurt me.” This widespread saying among generations of children might be regarded as something of a childhood preparation and orientation toward intellectual freedom and academic freedom. One implication is that physical violence is forbidden, but verbal violence (or at least verbal impropriety) can be tolerated. However, according to Franklin (1989) in the Foreword to *The Freedom to Lie* (Swan & Peattie, 1989), such a situation might not be valid in the future:

As humanity enters the cusp of a millennium ... the freedom to lie, to create or deny, to propound or reserve, will predictably ever more be feverishly tested. ... The “socially responsible” ... *will* win some far away day. ... I see the libertarian’s cause as a ... postponement ... of the inevitable chill. (pp. xv, xxi)

With these thoughts, Franklin seemed to envision an increasing tendency toward censorship. If he is correct, it can be imagined that scholars will be among the persons

against whom censorship (and therefore silence on certain subjects) is imposed.

Peattie (Swan & Peattie, 1989) added to Franklin's ideas:

I am suggesting that the librarian does have a responsibility ... to help the community ... to distinguish truth from falsehood, allowable opinion from bigoted manipulation ... a library association is not obliged, in the name of intellectual freedom, to offer space and time to a person who proposes to defend racist falsehoods. (pp. 53, 94-95)

It would seem that for both Franklin and Peattie the free speech movement developed at Berkeley some years ago is completely invalid.

In 1988, the activities of the American Library Association (ALA) included a debate entitled "Two Views of Intellectual Freedom." This debate became the basis for a book, with the title changed to *The Freedom to Lie: A Debate About Democracy* (Swan & Peattie, 1989), and the text of the ALA debate was expanded with the inclusion of more material.

This book seems very important for a discussion of silencing of scholars for more than one reason. First, although the ALA and other library associations have been regarded as among the strongest proponents of intellectual freedom within democracies, recently a specific section of the ALA, known by the name of Social Responsibilities, has been formally activated. As the 1988 debate—and the book it spawned—testify, the traditional concepts of intellectual freedom have been questioned and challenged. Furthermore, the scope of the Social Responsibilities' philosophy and activities within the ALA seems to go beyond the phenomenon, on many campuses, known as political correctness (which, as discussed in chapter 11, can be faddish, trendy, and inconsistent).

According to Peattie (and perhaps to many other social responsibilities advocates), evils such as racism and sexism are results of dangerous lies that, as they spread and become believed, become Big Lies. Along this line, Peattie described antisemitism and the Holocaust in terms of "activities of those who got a racist Big Lie in their teeth and ran with it" (Swan & Peattie, 1989, p. 68). In Peattie's view, such activities included conferences "with scholars brought in by train and plane from countries under German occupation," and he cited the "participation of anthropologists, psychologists, and other social scientists" (p. 71). Big Lies should be suppressed, and it would seem to follow that the dangerous lies that comprise the subject matter of the Big Lies should be suppressed before they increase to Big Lie status.

### LICENSE FOR A GENERAL SILENCE?

Swan, who debated Peattie at the 1988 ALA conference (and in *The Freedom to Lie*), takes a libertarian stance that would allow all voices, even those proposing Big Lies, to be heard. Swan stated that Peattie wanted "to cast words uttered in the service of the Big Lie out of the environs of free discourse" and observed that "to decide that silencing the offenders is proper recourse ... is to give license for a general silence" (Swan & Peattie, 1989, pp. 109, 111).

Both Swan and Peattie denounce the Big Lie and affirm the necessity of truth to overcome it. It seems that Peattie would ban the Big Lie, whereas Swan would allow it to be uttered, but would combat it, debate it, and expose it as a lie from the time it germinates. The ALA members present at the 1988 debate in New Orleans voted Swan the winner of the debate, but Franklin (1989) stated that "there can be no winner in this debate. ... What there must be is never-ending contention" (p. xx). Franklin's use of the word *contention* in this context might be interpreted to mean attempts to silence persons, including scholars.

From one point of view, it would seem that an important lesson of the Swan-Peattie debate (both at the ALA conference and in the book) is that social responsibilities depends on intellectual freedom. There were no social responsibilities forces to combat the Big Lie because there was no real intellectual freedom within which to operate. From the standpoint of academic freedom, social responsibilities advocates might do better to embrace and support a libertarian version of intellectual freedom, rather than try to place restrictions on it.

This last statement is based on the fact that the concepts of social responsibilities, intellectual freedom, intellectual suppression, academic freedom, political correctness, national security, and peer review are intertwined, to one degree or another, and, as concepts, they are elusive in nature because they can be broadly or narrowly defined. Varying definitions might depend on the mood, atmosphere, and political proclivities at different times in different countries. The elusive nature of these concepts and the elasticity of possible definitions for them can be the cause of disagreement, conflict, and confusion among scholars and academic administrators, and, as the 1988 debate showed, among academic librarians.

Within the framework of the intertwining nature and elusive definition of these concepts, a social responsibilities scenario similar to the following can be envisioned: Racism is evil. Racism is based on a Big Lie. Racists are evil because they propose and perpetuate a Big Lie. It would seem that up to this point social responsibilities proponents would be in general agreement. However, suppose the scenario continues thusly: Racists should not be allowed to teach racist material. Racists should not be allowed to teach at all, because they cannot be trusted to refrain from teaching racist propaganda. Social responsibilities advocates might agree about these points also (although exceptions might be made for some very famous scholars who are suspected of harboring racist feelings).

Now suppose the scenario proceeds further: Scholars who advocate segregation (by race or sex) in education, or who propose the abolition of welfare payments, are racists or sexists. They should not be allowed to teach, and their ideas should neither be published nor discussed at scholarly conferences. If social responsibilities proponents held sway, if there were no intellectual freedom in place to allow debate on these issues, their ideas about segregation and welfare might become official policy. In the face of this scenario, the United Negro College Fund has given support to more than 40 segregated colleges and universities in the United States. Donors to this fund, and administrators and officers of the fund, believe that the colleges and universities that

they support have given, and continue to give, valuable educational opportunities. Likewise, there is also a school of thought that sees abolition of welfare not as a racial backlash or an act of injustice, but as a positive step toward greater economic opportunity and enhanced self-esteem, and regards the "culture" of welfare as demeaning to self-esteem and as economic entrapment at a near-poverty level. And so on.

As a concept, social responsibilities seems better equipped to develop and flourish if the concept itself is nourished and protected by intellectual freedom, rather than being in conflict with it. In the various Big Lie situations Peattie referred to, social responsibilities lacked intellectual freedom, the most effective weapon against the Big Lie.

## BIG LIES

The classic example (or definition) of the Big Lie is a lie that is repeated often enough, widely enough, and loud enough to drown out all opposing views; thus, it becomes accepted as true. No serious, prolonged, or persistent attempts to contest it are allowed. Some Big Lies are bigger and more dangerous than others. In some cases, the Big Lie is not a deliberate attempt to deceive, but something that is sincerely believed to be true, both by those who proposed it and those who repeat it. In such cases, the Big Lie might be more accurately described as a Big Falsehood. (The book *The Freedom to Lie*, in fact, uses the word *lie* to mean falsehood as well as deliberate lie.)

Big Lies exist and have existed for long periods of time in academia. It is not always possible to know if they originated and grew as a result of deliberate deception or of sincere belief that a falsehood or error was, in fact, true rather than false. In academia, Big Lies are often found in the form of false paradigms. Intellectual history, the history of medicine, and the history of science are filled with examples of false paradigms being accepted as true for long periods of time before being corrected.

The academic equivalent of the concept of "freedom to lie" in the Swan-Peattie debate and book is the freedom to make errors, to propose hypotheses that turn out to be false, and to err in the trial-and-error process, all in the pursuit of the truth. In fact, in the *Cell-Baltimore* case, in which a Congressional committee led by Representative John Dingell was involved in investigations, it was claimed that "politics was seeking to deprive science of the valuable right to make mistakes in seeking the truth" (Greenberg, 1989, p. 4). However, as seen in chapter 1, and as documented later in this book, Baltimore and others tried to silence and obstruct discussion relating to the correction of perceived error.

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Whether the freedom to lie is used in the context of the Swan-Peattie debate, with social responsibilities attempting to prevent, combat, and destroy Big Lies, or, in the

academic context of "right to make mistakes," in either case there is the implied freedom (if not the responsibility) to expose the lie (e.g., Big Lie, mistake, error, or false paradigm) and have it replaced with the truth. If social responsibilities librarians have a role in exposing and defeating Big Lies of a political and social nature, it might follow, in a logical manner, that academic librarians could, and should, have an academic responsibilities role in helping to expose lies (errors, mistakes, and false paradigms) in the scholarly literature, and have the truth overcome these lies.

Much of academic rhetoric affirms the importance of the scholarly search for the truth, and the importance of the correction of error. In fact, it would seem that phrases such as "science is self-correcting" would emphasize such importance.

In the case of social responsibilities and intellectual freedom activities within library associations, there is usually general agreement that Big Lies such as racism are bad. Librarians and other persons are usually aware of racist spoken language or written material when they come across them. Sometimes there might be hidden messages or subtle symbols, but, for the most part, because of its very nature, racist material (considered by Peattie and others to be dangerous lies) is often blatant and easily identifiable.

### AMBIGUITY AND INTERPRETATION

Problems might arise about whether or not some material is intentionally racist or, instead, subject to ambiguous interpretation. Problems begin, from the standpoint of social responsibilities and intellectual freedom, at the levels of ambiguous interpretation, or of spoken remarks or writings that were never intended to be racist, but were nevertheless considered to be so by other persons. At that point, the label of *racist* can be applied to a wide range of expression. Something similar occurred during phases of the Cold War with concepts such as Communist, subversive, or anti-American. In fact, the ALA has taken an official stand against the use of labeling in such cases.

If the academic equivalent to what social responsibilities librarians consider to be "dangerous lies" (or a Big Lie) is falsehood or error in the scholarly literature, it becomes obvious that an academic librarian will not be able to identify these errors and falsehoods as readily as social responsibilities librarians identify material that is racist or sexist. If specialist scholars who are experts and authorities in the field are unable to spot and identify the errors, how can academic librarians be expected to do so?

It is generally agreed by both social responsibilities librarians and academic librarians that dangerous lies and Big Lies are bad and should be corrected. In the case of errors and falsehoods in the scholarly literature, academic freedom is invoked and exercised as a means of helping to detect and expose the errors, allowing them to be corrected. (At least that is how the situation is supposed to be according to the rhetoric.) It is generally regarded that the correction of such errors is the responsibility of the scholars who made them or the colleagues of these scholars. Likewise, cor-

rection of the errors made in the past would be the responsibility of the scholars who have succeeded their predecessors as authorities in a field of study.

At the same time, as discussed in chapter 13, some academic librarians are coming to the conclusion that they, too, have an important role and responsibility in the correction of error in the scholarly literature. The term *intellectual freedom* is a broad term that generally applies to the public at large. The term *academic freedom* might be considered a part of intellectual freedom that applies specifically to scholars. For academic librarians, the equivalent of social responsibilities might be called academic responsibilities.

In any case, in terms of silencing of scholars, terms such as intellectual freedom and academic freedom should be considered from the standpoint of rhetoric and reality. The rhetoric that is used when these and similar terms are invoked does not necessarily match the reality of what actually takes place. Rhetoric versus reality gaps can be a major factor in the silencing of scientists and other scholars.

## Rhetoric Versus Reality in Academia

---

The rhetoric relating to the nature of academia and science in the United States and other democracies is well known both in academia and throughout large segments of the general public. Colleges and universities often have their own renditions of the rhetoric in their regulations, handbooks, promotional material, and other publications. Academic professional societies can also have their own versions that apply specifically to their own specialized academic and scientific disciplines. Scholarly journals and specialized reference works (e.g., encyclopedias and lexicons) might also have passages explaining their editorial policies, which reflect and repeat some of the academic rhetoric.

The substance of this rhetoric goes along the following lines: Scholars are committed and devoted to seeking the truth; scholars enjoy academic freedom in their pursuit of truth; scholarly research and communication are characterized by openness, free exchange of ideas, and open debate that involves critical inquiry, analysis, and evaluation; science is self-correcting; peer review fosters quality control and integrity in research grants and publications; science and scholarly research and communication are based on trust; and so forth, with some variations.

An acknowledgment of one aspect of this rhetoric—openness—is found in Relyea's (1994) *Silencing Science*:



The advancement of knowledge ... is the basic function of the scientific community. This is accomplished ... through a high degree of open communication and free sharing of information. Indeed, the open character of science has proven to be essential for the advancement of knowledge and, concurrently, vital for the detection and elimination of error. (Relyea, 1994, p. 6)

In fact, one of Reylea's themes is that the silencing of science is contrary to "traditional" scientific communication.

A concise synthesis of the content of the rhetoric of academia can be found in a recent six-page Action Plan issued by Concordia University in Montreal, Canada (n.d.): "a climate of mutual trust and collegiality," and "openness, fairness, dialog, and integrity" (Concordia University, pp. 4, 6). This Action Plan was formulated in the wake of a series of turbulent events on campus that culminated in 1992 with a tragic act in which a professor of engineering shot several members of the department. Several specific investigations of this situation were conducted, followed up by written reports. Copies of these reports were requested from the university as research material for this book. The complete reports, and additional material as well, were sent by return mail. The specific subject matter of the reports is not flattering for the University. In such a case, the willingness on the part of university officials to send all this sensitive material promptly to someone not affiliated with the university and not Canadian represents an exemplary, if not extraordinary, act of "openness". If Concordia University can achieve similar standards for "fairness, dialog, and integrity," it should enjoy a front-rank position among institutions of higher learning of the highest quality.

## OPENNESS AND FREE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

For the purposes of the theme of silencing scholars, the question of "openness" is the most important aspect of the academic rhetoric described earlier. As long as there is a true sense of openness in debate, critical analysis, peer review, and so on, scholars will not be silenced. On the contrary, they will be active participants in the search for truth. To the extent that the rhetoric is not matched by reality, the rhetoric becomes a lie (falsehood). No individual or institution is perfect, so there are bound to be some violations of the academic rhetoric. After all, as it is often observed, scholars are human. Such violations might be regarded as occasional exceptions to the rule—a sort of "little white lie" in relation to the rhetoric—and it might be assumed, or expected, that these violations might occur among the lower ranks of academia, including insecure graduate students, untenured scholars, or junior researchers.

On the other hand, if there is a wide rhetoric versus reality gap in academia, if there are systematic violations within academia, or if there are, within specific disciplines, "knee-jerk" responses on a scale that amount to systematic violations, then the academic rhetoric or portions of it might be regarded as something of a Big Lie. The Big Lie concept is reinforced if systematic and blatant violations occur within the highest

echelons of academia that formulate, profess, and publish the rhetoric (e.g., university administrations, leaders of academic professional societies and learned societies, editors and editorial boards of scholarly publications, and peer-review authorities).

Openness and trust (particularly mutual trust) are important components of the academic rhetoric. Secrecy and distrust are opposites. If secrecy and distrust are systematic in academia relating to research and publication, they would create a Big Lie situation, as far as academic rhetoric is concerned.

### REALITY IN PEER REVIEW

Academic research projects of various types often require financing that extends beyond the personal financial resources of the scholars conducting the research, and beyond the internal funds generated by the institutions where the research is conducted. Grants and subsidies for such research are provided by government agencies, foundations (and various other types of institutions or associations), and industry and commerce. Without such financing, much important research could not be conducted.

To a large degree, peer-review decisions determine which research will be financed and which research results will be published. Some requests for funding are accepted and other requests are rejected. Some manuscripts submitted for publication are accepted and some are rejected. The same is true for requests to present papers at scholarly conferences. In some cases, scholars might pay for their own research and publish in their own private publications, thus bypassing the peer-review process. For the most part, however, a very large percentage of academic research and publication depends on peer-review acceptance.

Do peer-review activities adhere to the principles of the academic rhetoric as far as openness and mutual trust are concerned, or do they reveal a rhetoric versus reality gap? For example, is there openness or secrecy, and is there mutual trust or distrust when editors decide which referees will be chosen, and when referees write their recommendations? Anyone who has made even a casual study of peer review, or who has submitted material to a variety of scholarly journals for publication, will soon realize that a dominant feature of peer review is secrecy instead of openness. This concept of secrecy is so engrained and imbedded in some parts of academia that Judith Serebnick, a specialist in the field of the ethics of scholarly publishing (Serebnick, 1991), is on record as stating that editors have no ethical obligation to tell authors what peer-review referees have recommended (Moran & Mallory, 1991b).

It should be noted that peer review does not have to be secret. In fact, some editors and peer-review referees operate in the open. Authors of manuscripts know who the referees are, referees know the identities of the authors, and editors send copies of the referees' reports to authors. However, as far as can be determined, only a small minority of editors and referees conduct peer review in this manner. It seems that in the vast majority of cases, peer review operates with the provision that the names of referees are kept secret from the authors. Moreover, sometimes the secrecy is doubled, in the

sense that not only do authors not know who the referees are, but the names of the authors are also kept secret from the referees. In the latter case, however, referees are often able to determine who the authors are based on the specific subject matter and based on the citations used (Fisher, Friedman, & Strauss, 1994).

To the extent that peer review is systematically marked by secrecy instead of openness, the academic rhetoric about openness and free exchange of ideas becomes something of an academic Big Lie. (The use of terms such as anonymity, masking, blinding, or double blind does not change the secrecy involved.)

### MOTIVATIONS FOR SECRECY

At this point, being aware that "openness" is an integral part of the academic rhetoric, and secrecy would amount to a violation of this rhetoric, the question arises: Why is secrecy involved at all in peer review? In fact, this question has been brought up and discussed in studies of peer review. The reasons given to justify secrecy vary in their wording, but the underlying reason, based on the various wording, is a rather surprising one. In fact, distrust among scholars pervades the peer-review process. In effect, referees are not trusted to give candid and honest opinions if their identities are known: "Anonymous review was viewed by editors as a means of obtaining an honest opinion" (Weller, 1990, p. 1345). Likewise, authors of manuscripts are not trusted to refrain from retaliation if they do not like what referees say or recommend: "Anonymous review was viewed by editors as a means of . . . protecting the reviewer from potentially unpleasant interactions with the author" (Weller, 1990, p. 1345).

If mutual trust were prevalent in academia on a large enough scale to give proof that the rhetoric about mutual trust is actually true, editors would trust referees to give honest opinions whether or not their identities were known to authors, and editors and referees would trust authors to refrain from retaliation whenever unfavorable opinions and recommendations were given. It would seem logical that in every specific case where secrecy is imposed in the peer-review process, it would represent an example of one scholar (or perhaps an administrative official, in the case of government agencies) not trusting another, or of scholars feeling that they cannot trust each other. Otherwise, if it is true that the purpose of peer review is to foster the advancement of knowledge, and if it is also true, as Relyea (1994) affirmed, that "open communication and free sharing of information" are "essential for the advancement of knowledge" (p. 6), then peer review would be characterized by openness and sharing of information rather than by secrecy.

### DISTRUST AND ITS EFFECT ON CRITICAL EVALUATIONS

The concept of distrust goes even further, and distrust is involved with the concept of silencing of scholars. According to the rhetoric of peer review relating to quality con-

tol, advancement of knowledge, pursuit of truth, and so on, scholars are chosen by editors to be peer-review referees based on their proven, alleged, or reputed expertise in a specific subject or field of study. Because of their reputations as experts, some scholars are called on to referee many manuscripts over a period of time. The subject matter of these manuscripts is, to one degree or another, the same as that in which the referees or experts have published in order to establish their reputations as experts in the first place. If editors cannot really trust these referees to give candid and honest opinions regarding the subject matter of the manuscripts if their identities are known, can editors, or any other scholars for that matter, really trust these referees or experts any more or less so in relation to their published works in the same field of study in which their identities are known? In other words, would the contents of these published works be different if they had been published anonymously?

For example, if a referee, whose identity remains secret, recommends rejection of an article (but would not necessarily have recommended rejection without the protective cover of anonymity), would the same referee comment differently on the contents of the same article if the contents were subsequently published in another journal? In a similar hypothetical situation, suppose an expert is chosen as a referee for the manuscript of a book submitted to an academic publisher such as a university press. The expert, whose identity remains secret, recommends rejection (but would not have recommended rejection without the protection of anonymity). The book is subsequently published by another academic publisher. Then suppose that the same expert who had earlier rejected the work (but only because of the protection of anonymity) in manuscript form is commissioned to write a book review for the same work now that it is published. In this case, the expert's identity would be known. Would the published review be the same, or similar, to the earlier secret review, or would it be different? If it would be the same, or similar, why would there really be any need for secrecy in the first place? If it would be quite different, as a result of the lack of secrecy, would it represent candid and honest judgments? It would seem that a different review (different from the secret review) would be an example of a rhetoric versus reality gap in relation to mutual trust and scholarly research and publication, because it would seem that either one or the other of the reviews would not contain candid and honest judgments. To the extent that scholars fail to give honest and candid judgments, their judgments are silenced. Which judgment can be trusted to be the honest and candid one in the case of opposite judgment by the same scholar for the same work? If it is the secret judgment, it remains silenced as long as it remains secret.

Dalton (1995) commented that secrecy "protects the referee from endless arguments with disappointed authors" (p. 236), and she cited "a survey of referees" that shows "that referees feel strongly that all reasonable means should be taken to conceal their identity" (p. 236). This survey itself would tend to reveal a rhetoric versus reality gap regarding openness and free exchange of ideas. As Commoner observed, "The present, very limited, one-sided structure of the peer review process aborts the open dialogue that is so essential to the progress of science" (Dalton, 1995, p. 235).

To the extent that this one-sided situation actually “aborts the open dialogue,” those scholars who are consequently shut out of the dialogue are silenced.

### A STARTLING RHETORIC VERSUS REALITY GAP AT YALE

Sometimes the nature and the degree of the rhetoric versus reality gap can be rather startling. The rhetoric about academic freedom and the free exchange of ideas is intertwined with the concept of freedom of expression. Benno Schmidt built a reputation as an expert on the First Amendment before becoming president of Yale University. In his inaugural address, which received widespread media coverage, Schmidt gave a ringing endorsement of academic freedom and freedom of expression on campus:

To stifle expression because it is obnoxious, erroneous, embarrassing, not instrumental to some political or ideological end is—quite apart from the grotesque invasion of the rights of others—a disastrous reflection on ourselves. ... There is no speech so horrendous in content that it does not in principle serve our purposes. (Fiske, 1986, p. 40)

In this inaugural speech, Schmidt did not confine his criticism to the Reagan administration; he extended his criticism to political leaders of both major parties in the United States, who, in Schmidt's view, have little regard for academic freedom (Fiske, 1986).

Not very long before Schmidt was chosen to be Yale's president, the question of freedom of expression on campus at Yale had been the subject of much discussion. The conclusions of this discussion were drawn up in the *Report of the Committee on Freedom of Speech at Yale* (Woodward, 1975). C. Vann Woodward was chairman of this committee. Hentoff (1986b), a famous advocate of freedom of expression, wrote, “The ‘Woodward Report,’ incorporated in Yale's Undergraduate Regulations, is the most compelling argument for free speech on campus—even at the cost of civility and deeply wounded feelings—that I have ever seen” (p. 29). In fact, Woodward explained to Hentoff, “The ‘Woodward Report’ does not guarantee that the speech has to be acceptable or pleasant or even correct. It simply guarantees the right to all to exercise their speech. ... After all, it's the unpopular speakers that need protection” (Hentoff, 1986b, p. 29).

It seems clear that the main thrust of Schmidt's speech amounted to something of an echo and repetition of the Woodward Report, and of Yale's written regulations for undergraduates. Thus, the specific rhetoric about freedom of expression on campus in this case has at least three documented sources: the Woodward Report, Yale's printed regulations, and Schmidt's inaugural address. The reality is that, in the face of this rhetoric, a Yale student was punished by the Yale College Executive Committee, without opportunity for appeal, because the student created and displayed on campus a satire in the form of a poster that contained speech that powerful Yale authorities did not like. Furthermore, the student was suffering the punishment at the very time that

Schmidt was delivering the inaugural address (and also at the same time that university regulations allowed freedom of speech on campus).

A letter was written to Schmidt, asking if he thought that this student enjoyed the freedom of expression that the President advocated so fervently in his inaugural address. Schmidt replied that the situation was not a "pressing" matter, and that it had been "resolved" by A. Bartlett Giamatti (who preceded Schmidt as president). Giamatti "resolved" the case by telling the student that there was no appeal allowed, except to the very committee that punished him in the first place. Hentoff (1986a) commented on this situation in "How Yale Punishes Bad Thoughts":

Found guilty by Yale College's Court of the Star Chamber—also known as the Executive Committee ... And there is no appeal unless the Executive Committee itself decides to grant one. In the outside world ... these procedures would be scorned and scrapped as an outrageous violation of due process. (p. 27)

Hentoff also speculated that other students might have been likewise punished in secret for saying things that Yale authorities did not like, but that these students might have been too scared, too embarrassed, or too intimidated to protest.

A similar rhetoric versus reality gap also took place at Yale recently, this time involving another Yale president, Richard Levin. In a letter dated May 12, 1995, to members of the Class of 1960, Jim Taylor and Tim Ritchie wrote, "Our sense is that this new administration is eager to engage in an active two way exchange with its alumni. We urge you to express your concerns and ideas to the administration." A short time later, a publication for the Class of 1960 included the following:

The inaugural Class Leadership Workshop held this fall at the Yale Club of New York was designed to enhance communication between the highest levels of administration (i.e., President Rick Levin ... and Alvin Puryear) and you. ... They are open and encouraging about alumni feedback. ... Please let us know your thoughts and feelings regarding Yale. (Schaller & Schaller, 1995, p. 68)

(Alvin Puryear is a member of the Class of 1960, who in 1995 was also a Fellow of the Yale Corporation, the university's highest administrative body.)

Despite this rhetoric, two specific letters to Levin, directly related to his own speeches and to Yale activity, remained unanswered and unacknowledged. Taking the advice of Class of 1960 officials, Yale Corporation Fellow Puryear (a professor of Management at Baruch College of the City University of New York) was contacted, with an appeal to have a short open letter published in the Alumni Notes of the *Yale Alumni Magazine*. What followed is best described as a bureaucratic runaround, followed by stonewalling. At first, Puryear replied (a few months after the letter was written) with thanks for the material that was sent to him: "Thank you for the materials which show your interest in Yale and alumni affairs." However, when further inquiries were made to him regarding the runaround (or bureaucratic mix-up, as the case may be), for some reason Puryear retreated into silence. Thus, both the universi-

ty president and one of the members of its highest administrative body decided to be silent—by means of stonewalling—in the midst of a flurry of rhetoric that the new administration was keenly interested in maintaining openness in terms of communication with alumni. Whatever the reasons might be for such a lack of communication, this situation indicates that rhetoric versus reality gaps in universities can occur not only at the level of the office of the president, the executive committee, and of other university governing bodies, but also at levels of alumni class officers and Alumni Notes sections of alumni publications.

### SOME RHETORIC VERSUS REALITY AT NIH

Another aspect of academic rhetoric relates to the interrelated issues of pursuit of truth and the correction of error. If scholars pursue truth, they correct errors once errors are detected. If there is uncertainty about whether material is truthful or erroneous, investigations and discussions are carried out, based on critical analysis and evaluation of the material. The rhetoric states that science is self-correcting. Obviously, science can be self-correcting only if scholars have the volition and opportunity to correct errors, or at least have the opportunity to participate in critical discussions that might lead to eventual correction of errors.

As in the case of the Woodward Report and Benno Schmidt—with their rhetoric in favor of protection of obnoxious, embarrassing, and horrendous speech—and the student who was nevertheless punished for creating and displaying a satirical poster, problems associated with the correction of error can turn up some rather startling rhetoric versus reality gaps. In a very early phase of the *Cell*-Baltimore controversy in biomedical research, Stewart and Feder, scientists at the NIH, were trying to expose what they perceived to be serious errors in the disputed *Cell* article. Letters were sent (not by Stewart and Feder, in this instance) to the Director of NIH, James Wyngaarden, and to another NIH official, J. E. Rall, asking them if NIH would stifle or suppress material that contested and challenged the published results of research that was funded by NIH. Another official of NIH, Mary Miers, replied (after about 3 months) on behalf of Wyngaarden: "I cannot envision a situation in which NIH would seek to suppress a rebuttal article." Likewise, Rall answered as follows: "It is clearly not NIH policy to discourage or indeed otherwise suppress publication of discussions and corrections of errors" (Moran & Mallory, 1991b, p. 344). These replies were written on September 25, 1987, and December 15, 1986. Such replies would conform with the rhetoric about the correction of error and the self-correcting nature of science, to the extent that rebuttal articles are not suppressed.

If those replies are examples of NIH rhetoric, the reality in the specific case was quite different. Stewart and Feder had, in fact, written an extensive rebuttal article, exposing alleged serious errors in the *Cell* article that was co-authored by David Baltimore. Under NIH regulations, they had to have approval from an NIH authority (or more than one) before they could submit their article to a scholarly journal for pub-

lication. When they sought approval, it was denied. Rall signed a memorandum (of which Miers received a copy), sent to Stewart and Feder, in which he wrote, "I am withholding approval of your manuscript for publication." Rall then wrote to Baltimore, co-author of the article, which by then had already become controversial, "I have told Feder and Stewart that their manuscript cannot be submitted to a journal" (Moran & Mallory, 1991b, p. 344).

It would seem that such withholding of approval results in the silencing of scientists, impedes the free exchange of ideas, denies academic freedom, and stifles the self-correcting process of science. The rhetoric versus reality gap seems quite wide when one considers that an NIH official wrote "I cannot envision a situation in which NIH would seek to suppress a rebuttal article," when the official received a memorandum that specifically suppressed a rebuttal article (Moran & Mallory, 1991b).

Lang (1993) noted other instances of a rhetoric versus reality gap in the Cell-Baltimore case. Lang's article in *Ethics and Behavior* contains a subsection entitled "The rhetoric and the reality. Speaking out—when? Publishing—when?" (p. 33). Lang stated:

The reality has been the opposite of the rhetoric especially when questions have been raised about eminent figures in the establishment. The discrepancy between the rhetoric and the reality is partly documented by scientific journals refusing to publish an article critical of the Baltimore paper, and is further documented in the way *Nature's* editor John Maddox described first hand Baltimore's reaction. (p. 33)

Along a similar line, Lang (1993) wrote:

Baltimore and Lewin's position goes against the open discussion of claimed scientific results. ... The National Academy of Sciences' *Issues in Science and Technology* published only Baltimore's point of view. ... It did not publish an opposite point of view, for instance Margot O'Toole's testimony ... nowhere do the two *Nature* editorials consider the fundamental problem of scientists not answering scientific criticisms of their work, not allowing publication of criticisms. (pp. 19, 32, 38)

## REFERENCE WORKS AND RHETORIC VERSUS REALITY

Examples of rhetoric versus reality gaps can also be found in specialized and academic reference works. One factor that might tend to widen the gap is the self-flattering promotional material that is printed in order to augment sales of the work. A rather clamorous case recently occurred with the *Lexicon of the Middle Ages* (Avella-Whitman, Lutz, & Matteijet, 1977-1997).

This case involves the rhetoric of one of the lexicon's scholars and advisors, Walter Huegel (1986), who wrote (in an issue of *Minerva* dedicated to academic ethics), "the absolute commandment of respect for truth is fundamental to the exercise of scientific and scholarly professions" (p. 408). This rhetorical thrust is given some elaboration



in the lexicon's explanatory and promotional material, which refers to "absolutely reliable information ... all the available knowledge ... results of the latest research," all of which imply a "respect for truth." What is more, the material states, "In the case of controversial problems and theories the Lexicon also gives the protagonists of opposing positions a chance to express their views. ... What is disputed must be described as controversial or uncertain" (Moran, 1991, p. 163). This last item seems particularly significant, because not all reference works describe controversies. In fact, some describe Harvey's observations about the circulation of blood as a breakthrough discovery of a heroic nature, without describing or even mentioning the prolonged bitter controversy that his observations provoked (and that Harvey himself had predicted would take place).

Details of the *Lexicon Of The Middle Ages* case are documented in an article in *The Reference Librarian* (Moran, 1991, pp. 159-172). A brief summary can illustrate problems relating to rhetoric and reality. The lexicon sent a request to a scholar to write an entry for the lexicon in the field of art history. The scholar, not being a specialist for that particular entry, and having read the item about "controversial problems and theories," asked permission to write an entry on the Guido Riccio controversy in art history. There is much material describing the controversy, and some key items were cited, including

At the center of attention in a controversy that has shaken the art history world ... the "case of the century." ... The controversy has exploded ... one of the great art historical questions of the century ... one of the most intense and acrimonious battles in the annals of art history. (pp. 164-165)

It is difficult to imagine an academic controversy being described in a more direct manner to indicate that a major controversy has broken out.

Despite the evidence for the existence of a major controversy, and despite the rhetoric of the reference work, permission for "a chance" to express views was denied. An editorial board member cited essentially three reasons for the denial: (a) there was not enough room in the lexicon for the dissenting views; (b) the traditional view was the prevalent view in the mainstream art historical literature; and (c) the controversy specifically concerned art history, whereas the lexicon dealt with all aspects of the Middle Ages.

Permission was also requested to write an entry on the controversy involving Beato Ambrogio (of Siena) in the field of religious history of the Middle Ages. This request was met with silence and, thus, denial. Therefore, as things stand, references to at least two controversies have been silenced in the pages of the lexicon. Many other controversies have likely been dealt with in a similar manner, with the result that scholarly material pertinent to an academic controversy has been silenced.

If there is not room for dissenting views, or if only prevailing orthodox views are published, why does the lexicon rhetorically claim that in the case of controversies "the protagonists of opposing sides" are given "a chance to express their views"?

Furthermore, the scholar was originally asked to write an entry that was specifically in the field of art history, yet one of the specific reasons the request to write an entry on Guido Riccio was rejected was precisely because it was in the field of art history. (Perhaps the Beato Ambrogio item was also rejected because it dealt specifically with religious history of the Middle Ages.) Ruegg was asked if the "academic commandment" of respect for the truth applied to the editorial policy and contents of the lexicon (Moran, 1991). In his correspondence on the subject, he supported the reasons for rejection, thus adding to the rhetoric versus reality gap at the lexicon.

Obviously, scholarly points of view were silenced in the pages of the lexicon, despite the rhetoric that opposing views would be presented. How many other cases, presently unknown, of silencing of scholars have taken place in this lexicon, and possibly also in the many other specialized academic reference works that are on the shelves of academic libraries throughout the world?

### A WIDESPREAD PROBLEM

The examples described so far in this chapter indicate that the rhetoric of academia does not always coincide with reality. Many other documented examples exist, and some are brought up in other chapters. In fact, much of the content of some of the other chapters of this book might be described as variations on the theme of an academic gap between rhetoric and reality that results in the silencing of scholars by one means or another.

A justification for a rhetoric versus reality gap might be that academics are "human" and the rhetoric is too idealistic. In fact, this type of thinking was discussed by Hillman (1997), who described reactions to his studies of "parafrad": "An extremely common reaction was that ... research workers are no more or less honest than salesmen, politicians and spies. They seek to advance themselves by whatever mechanism society allows them ... one should expect no more of scientists than of the population at large" (p. 133). Certainly this argument has some validity, but at the same time it might be that this human element itself is part of the cause of the problem. In fact, the human element in academia consists of social and professional relationships in various institutions and organizations. If these relationships remain within the halls of academia, they are often marked by so-called collegiality. However, if they extend to government agencies and private industry (as is becoming increasingly the case, based on current practices involving funding of research), these relationships can lead to conflicts of interest and vested interests, thus, creating divided loyalties. Conflicts of interest and vested interests can, in turn, lead to the perceived need for cover up and suppression of the truth. It might be that in many cases scholars do not deliberately create rhetoric versus reality gaps as much as they are caught up within them.

Specific problems of this nature have been studied recently by Fox and Braxton (1994). They observed that "the majority of research universities have policies and

procedures for investigating allegations ... but their surveillance and investigation are open to question ... universities are subject to. ... conflicts of interest. ... Whether universities can manage such conflicting interests has been questioned in meetings, reports, and publications" (p. 375).

There have been comments and observations by various scholars regarding rhetoric and reality in academia. In *Intellectual Suppression*, Martin (1986b) wrote:

Rhetoric and reality of professional freedom do not always match. During the cold-war period, university officials at Harvard and Yale collaborated with the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] in vetting applicants for positions. But the officials, perhaps aware of the discrepancy between this complicity and the professional norms publicly espoused by the university, opposed revealing this connection both at the time and indeed ever since. (p. 193)

Diamond (1992) described this type of rhetoric versus reality activity by use of the term "Public Masks, Private Faces" (p. 111). Because of the unwillingness of universities to reveal such material, it is impossible to determine the extent of rhetoric versus reality gaps in academia.

In "On Influential Books and Journal Articles Initially Rejected Because of Negative Referees Evaluations," Campanario (1995) documented many cases of peer-review rejection of works that later turned out to be accepted as cases of important discoveries, including rejections of studies that later won Nobel prizes. At one point he observed, "This type of incident shows how the stereotype of scientists as open-minded people clashes frequently with reality" (p. 318). Along a similar line, Hillman (1996) considered the rhetoric about science being self-correcting to be "just wishful thinking" (p. 102). In fact, the situation involving the rhetoric about self-correction in the face of reluctance to admit error and to allow error to be corrected constitutes one of the major problems in academia and science involving rhetoric versus reality, and one of the major problems involving silencing of scholars.

At the same time, even though there is ample documentation to show discrepancies between academic rhetoric and reality, the rhetoric still has much influence. Nissani (1995) wrote, "We have all been raised with the stereotype of the scientist as 'the open-minded man' ... we tend to view any allegation or evidence to the contrary with incredulity" (p. 177).

## RHETORIC VERSUS REALITY AND SOCIODYNAMICS

In any case, if the rhetoric does not always match the reality in academia, what is the reality? It is perhaps sometimes a combination of power and the pursuit of truth. Perhaps it is sometimes a situation in which truth is pitted against power. If this is true, maybe one of the best descriptions of academic reality is found in a page written by Lang (1992), entitled "The Three Laws of Sociodynamics." Lang, a mathematics professor at Yale, as well as a member of the NAS, has waged several battles (some still

ongoing)—using a very effective methodology that he calls “file” studies—relating to issues of scientific and peer-review responsibilities. These battles have been taking place within the highest echelons of academia, including the NAS, NIH, American Association of University Professors (AAUP), and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), and give valuable insights into many aspects of academic reality as practiced by those in power. (His file studies would seem to be of greatest interest and importance to scholars of peer review, scholarly communication, information ethics, higher education, and academic librarianship. A complete publication of them would be very useful.)

It seems that these three laws of sociodynamics were formulated after—and as a result of—encounters with many of the high authorities in academia and related government agencies. At any rate, the first law has two parts: the first is (a) “the power structure does what they want, when they want; then they try to find reasons to justify it.” The second part is (b) “if this does not work, they do what they want, when they want, and then stonewall.” The second law is as follows: “An establishment will close ranks behind a member until a point is reached when closing ranks is about to bring down the entire establishment; then the establishment will jettison that member with the least action it deems necessary to preserve the establishment.” (Lang distributed these laws in unpublished form to a group of scholars as part of his “file” studies relating to scientific responsibility.) These “laws” should be kept in mind throughout the following chapters, which, to a large extent, show that it is ultimately power that is a primary force in the silencing of scholars.