

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

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## Saying What You Believe

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I wasn't about to rock the boat by broadcasting my thoughts ... which could have threatened my future in academic medicine. (Crenshaw, 1992, p. 17)

You realize I can't give you my *private* feelings on this matter. I'll just have to leave it at that. (Hentoff, 1986b, p. 29)

The first of these quotes was from Charles Crenshaw, at that time a young untenured academic in the field of medicine. The second was from Sidney Altman, who in 1986 was the Dean of Yale College and a member of the Executive Committee of Yale College. These quotes show that the silencing of scholars that takes place because scholars are afraid to say what they believe cuts a broad path through the academic hierarchy from its lowest positions to the highest pedestals of academic power. Problems associated with being afraid to say what you believe might involve, on the one hand, personal discretion, prudence, or fear based on intimidation or academic politics, and, on the other hand, institutional cover up and secrecy.

According to his own account, some of the "thoughts" Crenshaw did not broadcast for a long time related to his observations and conclusions about specific entry and exit gunshot wounds. Based on his medical training and work, he had previously had considerable experience distinguishing between entry and exit gunshot wounds. Specifically, he served on emergency duty shifts at a city hospital in Texas where, particularly on Saturday nights, he treated many gunshot wounds.

Having remained silent, Crenshaw advanced in his academic career, becoming

chairman of his department at his medical school. Who knows exactly how different his career might have been if he had spoken out and said what he believed at the beginning of his career? Who knows for sure how many other academics advanced their careers while remaining silent on certain subjects and issues? Likewise, the number of scholars whose academic careers were hampered or terminated because they decided to speak out in spite of attempts to silence them is unknown.

After being silenced for many years, and after much reflection, Crenshaw (1992) decided to tell what happened, in *JFK Conspiracy of Silence*. A few brief excerpts from the book give a good indication of why Crenshaw and his colleagues felt afraid to say what they believed:

Dr. Crenshaw tells us he kept silent to protect his medical career. Dr. Charles Baxter ... had issued an edict of secrecy. ... No one ... would be permitted to talk about what he or she did or saw. ... Thus did Dr. Crenshaw and the other physicians ... enter into ... a "conspiracy of silence" to hide their knowledge. (Crenshaw, 1992, pp. xv-xvi)

The subject matter of Crenshaw's book concerns his doubts about the reliability of the Warren Report and its conclusions relating to the the death of President John F. Kennedy. It also concerns the pressures put on Crenshaw to refrain from saying what he believed:

I believed the Warren Report to be a fable, a virtual insult to the intelligence of the American people ... a level of discretion we seldom discover, one that I have had to practice to protect my medical career. ... Southwestern Medical School ... and the U.S. Government have never been overly subtle about their desire for us doctors to keep quiet ... the doctors ... have always felt the necessity to continue what has evolved over the years as a conspiracy of silence. ... Just recently, a gag order was issued from Southwestern Medical School warning ... not to confer with Oliver Stone. (Crenshaw, 1992, pp. 3-5)

From the standpoint of silencing of scholars based on scholars not saying what they believe, it is difficult to imagine a more direct case than this one. There was no discussion, it seems, about openness and free exchange of ideas, or about academic freedom. Orders were given to remain silent, and the scholars did so in order to protect their academic careers. At the same time, historians and political scientists, among other scholars, have a keen interest in knowing the historical facts relating to the Kennedy assassination. Government secrecy on the subject and the long-term silence of scholars who feel intimidated to speak out deny scholars access to important material.

### WORSE THAN A PACT WITH THE DEVIL

In an interview with Hentoff, Altman stated that he could not give his private feelings about whether or not a student at Yale should have been punished by the Executive

Committee (a disciplinary body at Yale University). Hentoff (1986b) seemed rather taken back by Altman's confession, and he commented on it:

Later this year, I'll be spending several days with junior high and high school students. ... I shall tell them of my conversation with the Dean of Yale College, especially his final words. And I'll caution them that no job, no matter how important it appears to the outside world, is worth taking if you can't say what you think while holding that job. That's worse than a pact with the Devil because it's a deal you make with yourself to become less than yourself. (p. 29)

Despite Hentoff's caution about doing something worse than making a pact with the Devil, it seems that many scholars feel inclined to reject this caution in their pursuit of economic, academic, and career salvation. If some powerful professors can be silenced at Yale about the punishment given to an undergraduate, it can be imagined that there might be many other matters (administrative or intellectual) at Yale and throughout academia about which scholars feel they cannot afford to say what they believe.

The most obvious difference between the cases involving Crenshaw and Altman is that Crenshaw was a junior academic whereas Altman enjoyed a position of great power. It can readily be understood how Crenshaw could be intimidated under the circumstances, but the situation with Altman seems quite different. Crenshaw remained silent to protect his career, but Altman's career, by comparison, did not seem to be in similar danger. He had already attained some of the highest positions of power and prestige in academia (with his prestige to be enhanced further by an imminent Nobel prize). It would seem that his career would have survived intact if he had told Hentoff his private views about the punishment of a student at Yale.

If he was not protecting himself by refusing to say what he believed, who or what was being protected, and for what reasons? Perhaps only Altman knows for sure, and perhaps someday he, like Crenshaw, after much reflection, might reveal just what did take place at Yale and just why he felt he could not tell Hentoff his private views.

## SILENCE AMONG GRADUATE STUDENTS

A case can be made that many scholars are already conditioned as early as graduate school to have a strong reticence, based on fear brought about by academic insecurity (or based on other reasons), to say what they believe. Diamond wrote, "I know of one case in which a dean warned a graduate student that he would lose all chance of academic employment if he did not 'cooperate fully' with the authorities, but I have no idea how widespread the practice may have been" (Lang, 1981, p. 61). Diamond's description by itself demonstrates the subordinate position of graduate students and their vulnerability in relation to saying things that might upset academic authorities.

In *The Ph.D. Trap*, Cude (1987a) commented that "the average doctoral candidate quickly learns to defer any controversial ideas" (p. 52). It would likely be aca-

democratic suicide, as far as a career is concerned, for graduate students to insist that their dissertation advisors (and the members of the committee before whom they might have to defend their works) are very wrong about key aspects of their fields of study, no matter how much new evidence the graduate students accumulated during their studies.

Cude (1987a) described how student Lowell Holmes, who studied under Melville Herskovits (a colleague of Margaret Mead), discovered to his surprise that what he observed in Samoa was much different than that written in the famous work by Mead (1928), *Coming of Age in Samoa*. Herskovits had written in support of Mead's theories, and Cude wrote, "If Holmes had been foolhardy enough to press his own findings with logical rigor, in all probability he would never have won his degree, let alone a wider hearing in the professional literature. To say Mead had erred was simply out of the question" (p. 87). He received his degree after agreeing with Mead. The situation that Holmes faced is not very common, according to Cude, because to begin with, "topics requiring originality" are "avoided like the plague by doctoral candidates" (pp. 87-89).

Hillman (1996), who has been engaged in a long ongoing battle with the academic research establishment, commented on his experience:

I learned several lessons from my time at the Institute of Psychiatry. Firstly, doctoral students have no redress against their supervisors, since their careers would be ruined if they made determined criticisms. ... As I traveled around, there was hardly a single place at which I lectured where several people did not come up to me when I had finished and say that they agreed with us. I always asked them their names. Would they be prepared to say in public ...? ... One lecturer ... said he would. All the others had reasons why they could not: they were writing theses, seeking lectureships, applying for grants. (pp. 101, 119).

At the same time, Hillman (1996) emphasized that in his classroom teaching he teaches his students "the accepted wisdom" because, as he explained, he "wanted them to pass their examinations" (p. 119).

Hillman's account can be regarded as a blend of cynicism, realism, and understanding in relation to his students as he continues to carry on his battle with the establishment. Regarding the situation within the establishment, he wrote:

We must ask what has been discovered about the *genesis* of cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease, or schizophrenia. The answer is remarkably little. ... If we leave aside my hypothesis that basic medical, biological, and pharmaceutical research has not been successful because it has not addressed the fundamental problems and assumptions inherent in most of the techniques, the current situation is dangerous because it suppresses free thought, without which the advance of knowledge can only be slow. (Hillman, 1996, p. 125)

Hillman's experiences, and his teaching, can suggest how thoroughly the fear to say what one believed permeates academia. According to his account, he felt it nec-

essary to avoid telling his students what he believes on certain subjects so that the students could pass their exams. Then, in the course of his scholarly conferences in which he expresses controversial ideas, he comes across many scholars who say, in private, that they agree with him, but they are not willing to say so in public or the scholarly record.

### **LACK OF TENURE AND SILENCE, AND TENURE AND SILENCE**

Once scholars get their graduate degrees, they become so-called junior scholars, and they are usually at the lower levels of the academic hierarchy. At this time, they may feel a sense of loyalty and admiration toward their graduate school advisors, or may even attain the roles of "disciples" of them. Moreover, junior scholars are often still beset by problems of economic and career insecurity that they faced as graduate students. These problems can continue to act as restrictions and restraints on their willingness to say what they believe. In fact, at this stage the lack of tenure and quest for tenure might add to the sense of insecurity if more scholars seek tenure in a department, or in a discipline, than there are tenured positions available. The intense competition for a limited number of tenured positions increases pressures along the lines of academic and departmental politics, which might place further inhibitions on scholars saying what they believe.

Tenure is usually associated with security in an academic career. Once scholars attain tenure, so the rhetoric goes, they should feel free to say what they believe in regard to the subject matter of their specialized field of study. Hillman (1995), in fact, recognized the pressure on junior scholars to remain silent on certain topics, but urged them to speak out once they get tenure:

It is of crucial importance that the honorable research workers, who have to be quiet about intellectual doubts when in junior positions, should reassert their independence and honesty as soon as they are in a position to do so. This applies with particular force to thinkers and academics under former totalitarian regimes who are struggling to restore freedom of thought. (p. 58)

On the other hand, Altman was in a position to assert his independence, as far as tenure and power were concerned, but he still felt he could not say what he believed. For whatever reason, despite his tenure and power, Altman did not want to assert his independence in regard to the inquiries that Hentoff made.

Thus, even for scholars with tenure, their "position to do so" (as far as asserting their independence, and saying what they believe, are concerned) can still be far off. Once tenure is attained, there are still strong pressures that tend to promote orthodox thinking and to inhibit and silence dissenting ideas. By the time they have attained tenure, scholars have been teaching within the parameters of paradigms and tend to experience the paradigm dependency that this situation produces. Their expertise and

intellectual authority for the subject matter they are teaching become identified with these paradigms.

Besides, if after gaining tenure scholars wish to publish, gain further promotions, win honors and prizes, and obtain research grants and editorial positions, they still have to pass peer review. If at any stage of their career they become known as whistleblowers or trouble makers, scholars might face a halt or a slowdown to further career enhancement. Just ask Duesberg.

There is also the factor of so-called collegiality, which can inhibit scholars from saying what they believe. Scholars who say what they believe by adhering to new paradigm-busting ideas may be perceived as having betrayed their colleagues by placing their expertise and intellectual authority in doubt. It is also possible that such colleagues will let a colleague whistleblower know that they feel betrayed. In a sense, all these scholars are in the same boat (The Good Ship Collegiality, sailing along on the Paradigm Sea). In fact, it might be that one of the reasons that Altman told Hentoff he could not give his private views is that he felt he would be betraying his colleagues in the Yale administration and on the Executive Committee who agreed with the punishment of a student (even though the punishment was in direct contradiction of the contents of the Woodward Report, whose approval of freedom of expression on campus became part of university regulations). Although collegiality is often viewed in a positive sense in terms of courtesy and respect, it can also have a chilling effect that inhibits scholars from saying what they believe. Sometimes collegiality can take the form of closing ranks behind a scholar or group of scholars who have been accused of wrongdoing (plagiarism, unethical research practices, etc.) or who are under investigation. Such a form of collegiality might also have an inhibiting effect on the conduct of an investigation.

With a large portion of academic research being subsidized by government or industry (or a combination of both for the same research projects), pressure to conform is reinforced by the specific vested interests (political or commercial) toward which the research is directed. In addition, much research is also conducted by large academic research teams under a research director, or a small group of directors. It would seem that in order to become, and to remain, a participant on a research team, a large degree of conformity is required. This conformity might be viewed by the sponsors of the research and by the directors of the research in terms of loyalty. If researchers detect errors or other unwanted information during the research, feelings about seeming disloyal might prevent them from speaking out about the errors.

### SOME CASE STUDIES

The documentation for particular cases of scholars being afraid or otherwise unwilling to say what they believe is enormous. Some selective examples can serve to show that such cases have existed for a long time in academia, and they occur in various

academic disciplines. In addition to specific case studies, there has also been some general discussion of scholars being silenced from saying what they believe.

Martin (1986a) wrote:

Samuel Epstein has documented the role of industry in promoting production practices in the face of evidence of their role in causing or promoting cancer. Scientists who have defended asbestos, certain pesticides, and other cancerous substances have received grants, consultancies, directorships and jobs. ... Those who have exposed the dangers have often been suppressed. (pp. 173-174)

In these cases, it does not seem that feelings about being disloyal are as great a factor as fear of being retaliated against, or suppressed, as far as remaining silent or speaking out is concerned.

In another publication, Martin (1992) continued on this theme:

The flip side of bias built into the structure of science is suppression of dissent. The few scientists who speak out against dominant interests—such as pesticides, nuclear power or automotive design—often come under severe attack. They may have their reputations smeared, be demoted, be transferred, have their publications blocked, be dismissed, or blacklisted. (p. 88)

He added that intellectual silence can extend to political matters or alleged matters of national security: "The response of US universities to the First World War. A great many scholars who held dissenting views remained silent throughout the war" (Martin, 1986a, p. 175).

The John Coulter case in Australia has been described as one in which

Dr. Coulter has been willing to speak out when others with the same knowledge have kept quiet. ... Coulter publicly pointed out that ethylene dichloride is highly toxic and a potential cause of cancer. Health Commission staff were aware of this hazard, but no one said anything publicly. ... It is now accepted by the US National Cancer Institute that ethylene dichloride does cause cancer ... in March 1980, Dr. Coulter was informed that ... he would be transferred and demoted ... instead ... Dr. Coulter was sacked outright. (Martin, 1986c, pp. 123-125)

It can be imagined that those "with the same knowledge" as Coulter had, and who remained silent, did not suffer the same fate that Coulter did.

## THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS AND DEAD SILENCE

One of the great controversies in the field of religious history in recent times involves access to, and interpretation of, the so-called Dead Sea Scrolls. In their discussion of the controversy surrounding the scrolls, Baigent and Leigh (1993) alluded to the problem of scholars not saying what they believe:



Many scholars were intimidated against saying what they actually believed. Academic reputations are fragile things, and only the most audacious or secure individuals could afford to incur the risk involved—the risk of being discredited, of being isolated by a concerted critical barrage from adherents of the consensus. ... No one dared risk the wrath of the ... solidly entrenched consensus. ... Roth and Driver had been driven to silence on the subject. ... Everyone else who might pose a threat had been intimidated into compliance. (pp. 80–81, 119)

The phenomenon of being “isolated by a concerted critical barrage from adherents of the consensus” has perhaps played a major role in silencing scholars during the controversies in which Velikovsky was involved and in which Duesberg is currently involved. In *The Velikovsky Affair* (de Grazia, 1978), it was reported that “Several scientists and intellectuals who attempted his defense were silenced or sanctioned severely” (p. 173) and it is mentioned that in the field of sociology scholars “knew well that, by dealing with the attitude of some scientists toward Velikovsky’s hypotheses, they were risking the wrath of well-entrenched academic power” (p. 156). It was also written that “as happens in most power situations the network of influence extends outward through former students, new appointments, and professional awards. ... The rank and file are likely to follow their leaders more than the dissidents” (pp. 190, 210). The leaders, in such cases, are able to help lead the rank and file to career enhancement. By contrast, a decision on the part of the rank and file to follow the dissidents would most likely lead to setbacks in terms of career enhancement.

AIDS research, for one reason or another, has become a source of case studies of scholars being afraid to say what they believe. In his aforementioned review article of Duesberg’s works, Horton (1996) specifically made reference to the problem of scholars not saying what they think: “He recounts how scientists who have flirted with dissident views ... have been dissuaded from pursuing their alternative theories. ... Apparently under pressure from the company, two co-authors of the study withdrew their support from the clear implications of the trial that AZT was ineffective” (pp. 14, 19). Because AIDS is a topic that achieves headlines in the news media on an international basis, there may well be some scholars who have been silenced, but who, following Crenshaw’s example, may say what they believe at some time in the future, when they feel it is the right moment. De Marchi and Franchi (1996) suggested that, for the time being, however, many specialists have resorted to a “terrible silence” (“terribile silenzio”) as a result of the harsh treatment given to Duesberg. Regarding such treatment, it is reported that a powerful Italian specialist, Fernando Aiuti, actually went so far as to claim that Duesberg has behaved like a criminal and should be banned from the scientific community.

Duesberg (1996b) himself made several pertinent references, based on his personal experiences and observations:

Few scientists are any longer willing to question, even privately, the consensus views in any field whatsoever. ... Two health care workers ... told Duesberg under the condition

of anonymity that they were directed not to report HIV-free AIDS cases as AIDS. ... The chilling effects of silencing tactics extend even onto the campus itself. ... Graduate students are discouraged from entering Duesberg's lab during their decision-making first year, advice that can be psychologically intimidating to such inexperienced students. Under the condition of anonymity, several students have confessed to such pressures more than once. (pp. 66, 274, 404-405)

Manwell and Baker (1986b) discussed the problem of scholars not speaking out in terms of *paralysis of conscience*. They asked, "Why do scientists, academics or other professionals fail to protect intellectual freedom and fail to protest injustice?" (p. 130). They also referred to "the need to encourage and to protect the tiny minority of scientists who are willing to speak out" (p. 130). The concept of paralysis of conscience can extend from fear of consequences to ambiguity or ambivalence about the specific definitions or interpretations of ethical problems, and further, to the practice known as cover up. A form of paralysis of conscience might be seen in the confession to Hentoff by the Dean of Yale College that he could not tell him what he really believed.

Fox and Braxton (1994) believed that "ambivalence over values" might cause scientists "to be reluctant to speak out about misconduct" (p. 380). This ambivalence is compounded by the fact that what may seem to be an obvious case of academic fraud in the opinion of a scholar might not be the same as the definition of fraud in a court of law. An accusation of fraud might end up with a lawsuit. The threat of a lawsuit, and the bigger threat of losing it because of differences in definitions of fraud, can be a very powerful silencing factor.

When paralysis of conscience moves into the realm of academic cover up, the scholars who are involved in not saying what they believe are found, for the most part, in the upper ranks of the academic hierarchy, rather than the lower ranks (where reasons for not speaking out are more likely to involve fear rather than an actual desire to hide the truth). Fox and Braxton (1994) observed that even though "scientists holding high rank, seniority, and administrative appointments as chairpersons enjoy a security that permits them to report or take action," they too might remain silent and be "pulled toward inaction" as the result of "institutional pressures for professional solidarity within their units" (p. 377). Horrobin (1990) described a case in which a "senior scientist's ... willingness to be ruthlessly unfair in the pursuit of his own ends is known to many members of the scientific community, yet no one has had the courage to try to put a stop to it" (p. 1440). Such a lack of courage might amount to cover up itself, or it might create the atmosphere or circumstances that might lead to cover up at some later time.

Some examples of scholars refusing to say what they believe took place in the Cell-Baltimore case. Sarasohn (1993) related that investigators discovered "serious problems" regarding the authenticity of data in one of Thereza Imanishi-Kari's notebooks. In this regard, Lang (1993) cited the Dingell investigations, which reported that a number of "prominent scientists, under a promise of confidentiality, examined the suspect notebook and agreed that it was obviously bogus. But the same scientists were unwilling to advance their professional opinions in public for fear of the disap-

proval of their colleagues" (p. 30). (These scientists must have been regarded as experts and authorities in their specialized fields, otherwise they would not have been asked to examine the notebooks. Nevertheless, for whatever reason, they too decided not to say what they believed in public.) Lang also concluded that panels of scholars "have actually contributed to intimidation or to covering up" (p. 44), and based on the developments in the case, Lang included panels at Tufts and MIT in this group.

Sometimes scholars refuse to say what they believe because they do not want to get deeply involved (even if their opinions might have considerable significance in a specific situation). They may not necessarily have any real fears of retaliation against them, and they may not be involved in a cover-up operation. Rather, they simply prefer to stay on the sidelines during a controversy in their field and let other scholars battle it out. This attitude might be motivated by prudence if scholars feel they do not have sufficient command of the facts of the case to commit themselves to one side or another. Or, perhaps their silence is based on a form of protective collegiality, in which they believe that some of their colleagues might be wrong but they prefer not to let their beliefs be known.

### SILENCE AS A MEANS OF STAYING "OUT OF THE FIGHT"

A specific case of evasive silence took place in the Guido Riccio controversy. In 1986, Lang (personal communication, June 26, 1986) wrote, "I did give the documents on Guido Riccio to a person named Weil at the Humboldt dinner last Monday. ... She said she was 'trying to stay out of the fight', and was curious why I was involved." It would not be surprising if similar responses or attitudes were common in controversial issues in many other academic disciplines outside art history. Scholars may well have definite beliefs, ideas, and hypotheses on a subject, but they do not want them to become part of the scholarly record.

In his dealings with sociological surveys and the education establishment, which led to the creation of his book *The File*, Lang (1981) came to the conclusion that "there is a very large group which gives collegiality priority over the issues of validity ... an overriding concern of this group is not to get involved" (p. 693). Sometimes a decision to not get involved might be made because scholars do not feel they have enough time to devote to the subject. Sometimes, however, such decisions might be based on a fear that powerful academics might become upset by hearing scholars saying what they believe about certain issues. Sometimes there might not be actual fear, but a sense of prudence would be sufficient to cause silence.

### STUDIED SILENCE IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES

In contrast to the scholars who do not want to get involved, there are scholars who are directly and deeply involved in scholarly controversies who use silence as a tactic

One such tactical use is what Rosand (1979) called *studied silence*, a refusal to reply in the face of specific challenges from other scholars. This might also be called hit-and-run scholarship (Moran & Mallory, 1991a, p. 59).

It seems that the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and Robert Gallo were involved in a type of studied silence situation recently, according to a published interview (Zimmerman, 1995). Gallo was asked, "What are the issues that NCI officials, and others, higher up, told you to remain silent on?" Gallo replied, "Basically, not to ever talk about ... Dingell ... or the patent for the HIV blood test. Basically, in the last few years ... not to talk to the press, period" (p. 1).

Studied silence on the part of scholars often takes the form of refusing to reply to letters of inquiry that seek information, opinions, or clarifications. Scholars might refuse to acknowledge receipt of letters, or they might acknowledge receipt but remain silent about the inquiries. Lang (1981) described examples throughout *The File*. Another example was cited in Chapter 6, in which the head of the ACLS, Stanley Katz, retreated into silence when asked if he approved of the decision of the CAA that falsification, destruction of evidence, misrepresentation, and so on, were "subjective" matters that the CAA "cannot" include in its ethics code as unethical practices.

More recently, Edmund Pellegrino and Michael Merson were asked, concerning AIDS research, what they thought of Lang's article on the subject published in *Yale Scientific*. Pellegrino is Director of the Center for the Advanced Studies of Ethics (Georgetown University), and a member of the editorial board of *Accountability in Research* and *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Merson is Dean for Public Health and Chair of the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health at the School of Medicine of Yale University. Previously, he was Executive Director of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Program on AIDS. Neither replied. It does not seem possible, given his activity with the WHO, and given his position in the field of public health, that Merson does not want to get involved, or wants to stay out of the fight. It would appear that there must be some other reason for his silence in this case.

Ruesch (1992) commented further about scholars not speaking out in the medical field:

The many honest and courageous doctors who have tried to voice their opinions in contrast with the "accepted" doctrines imparted by the Faculties ... have all been quickly discouraged from continuing or silenced. ... And it is because of such systematic censorship, running parallel with a constant flow of bombastic medical propaganda, that occasional outbursts of candor ... have quickly fallen into the trough of oblivion, never again to be resurrected by their chastened authors. (p. 11)

A recent newspaper article (Hanchette & Brewer, 1996) seems to illustrate a situation similar to what Ruesch (1992) described. So-called Gulf War syndrome is a topic that has become a mystery for doctors and medical researchers, and also something of an embarrassment for the military and the government. According to the article, as many as 80,000 persons might be affected. Now, according to the article, some

doctors and researchers are being fired after “describing research results to colleagues” (p. 3A), or after coming up with theories such as those that “Iraqi nerve gas may have combined with oil fire residues and chemicals to suppress immune systems and trigger genetic alteration” (p. 3A). The article states that government officials claim the firings are part of general budget and bureaucratic cutbacks. On the other hand, it seems strange that a series of cutbacks would be directed against medical researchers involved in research that appears to be so crucial. Could it be that these researchers are being considered to be whistleblowers? In this case, it is interesting to observe that a hypothesis is made that various chemicals have suppressed the immune system. The hypothesis that HIV is the cause of AIDS would be based on the idea that HIV suppresses the immune system. In this case, findings and hypotheses that various chemicals also suppress the immune system might cause some doubts about the official HIV–AIDS hypothesis.

The various issues involved in scholars not saying what they believe, for whatever reasons, lead to discussion of what academic leaders can be expected to do in cases of controversial issues, vested interests, and conflicts of interest. Such discussion involves the various meanings of trust, the relation of trust to skepticism, and the role of whistleblowers in the scholarly pursuit of truth.