

The Tyranny of Dogma

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ABSTRACT: The resistance to the correction of error in scholarly publications is merely a symptom of a much larger systemic cancer corrupting professional and governmental institutions—indeed, all of institutional science. Research is driven not by a desire to determine objectively whether a hypothesis is valid, but rather by the will to make hypotheses appear true [Lushington GH, Chaguturu R. A systemic malady: the pervasive problem of misconduct in the biomedical sciences. Part I. Issues and causes. *Drug Discovery World*. 2015;16(spring):79-90]. The scale of the problem is such that any meaningful correction is impossible and retraction would wipeout well over half of the published scientific literature of the past half-century. While at Tufts University School of Medicine, John Ioannidis provided a statistical analysis demonstrating “Why most published research findings are false” [Ioannidis JPA. Why Most Published Research Findings Are False. *PLoS Med*. 2005;2(8):e124]. Others have confirmed this. In early April, 2015, Richard Horton, editor of *The Lancet*, attended a closed meeting in London that addressed “one of the most sensitive issues in science today: the idea that something has gone fundamentally wrong with one of our greatest human creations. The case against science is straightforward: much of the scientific literature, perhaps half, may simply be untrue” [Horton R. Offline: What is medicine’s 5 sigma? *The Lancet*. 2015;385(9976):1380]. Henry Bauer, emeritus professor of chemistry and science studies at Virginia Tech, has analyzed why supposedly authoritative information about the most salient science-related matters has become dangerously misleading or false. “Large institutional bureaucracies now dominate the public face of science. ... [T]here exist knowledge monopolies composed of international and national bureaucracies. Since those same organizations play a large role in the funding of research as well as in the promulgation of findings, these monopolies are at the same time research cartels” [Bauer HH. Science in the 21st Century: Knowledge Monopolies and Research Cartels. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*. 2004;18(4):643-60]. Nowadays, governments, big business, and large institutions collude to impose dogma to protect the status quo. AIDS dogma epitomizes the institutional despotism that punishes, persecutes, torments and silences anyone challenging scientific and especially medical dogma. Because of first hand knowledge, I use AIDS in South Africa as the quintessential example of the political use of dogma by the United States.

From Democratic to Zombie Science

Zombie science is science that is dead but will not lie down. It keeps twitching and lumbering around so that (from a distance, and with your eyes half-closed) zombie science looks much like the real thing. But in fact the zombie has no life of its own; it is animated and moved only by the incessant pumping of funds. If zombie science is not scientifically-useable—what is its function? In a nutshell, zombie science is supported because it is useful propaganda to be deployed in arenas such as political rhetoric, public administration, management, public relations, marketing and the mass media generally. It persuades, it constructs taboos, it buttresses some kind of rhetorical attempt to shape mass opinion. Indeed, zombie science often comes across in the mass media as being more plausible than real science; and it is precisely the superficial face-plausibility which is the sole and sufficient purpose of zombie science.

Bruce Charlton [1]

Science used to be one of the most democratic of human activities. Good science was found in every region of the world, irrespective of political, religious, or ideological beliefs. Creative scientists tend to work best alone. Consequently, creative, democratic science is the activity of independent individuals and small groups of collaborators. Regrettably, institutional science has replaced the individual search for enlightenment and understanding—the true domain of science—with the limited, special goals and interests of government and industry. The deluge of trillions of dollars of funding since 1990 has decimated democratic science in the United States. But there is a deeper problem. The very legitimacy of government is threatened by the dysfunctional, malignant bureaucracies created by those trillions of dollars.

At some point after the Second World War, science stopped being democratic [2]. One crucially important result is that many private citizens and bureaucrats—including a number of scientists themselves—confuse science with technology. The confusion is easy to understand. Due to the exigencies of war, many of the world's most famous scientists worked on the development of the atomic bomb, which was primarily an engineering effort. Most likely those scientists would never have worked on an engineering project before the war.

Using the Manhattan Project and the space program as his model, in 1971, Nixon declared a national “war on cancer,” confident massive amounts of money and sufficient scientific talent would swiftly conquer cancer. The reason the war on cancer, and numerous other essentially scientific efforts failed, is due directly to treating them as technologically solvable problems. The expansion of science as technology was fueled by wishful thinking, unreasonable expectations, and a lack of understanding of what science is [3]. The uncritical—often reverential—praise of institutional science by the *New York Times*, and virtually all American media, reinforces the prevailing misconception that science and technology are virtually interchangeable.

Engineers dazzle us with what they construct. The average person can easily judge when an engineer has failed—the bridge collapses, the plane falls out of the sky, the phones don't work. But there is almost no way to know for sure when a scientific claim is more right than wrong. This is true of scientists themselves. It is crucial to understand that lasting accomplishment in science is much rarer and slower than dazzling technological achievements [2]. Taking a quote from *Star Trek*, the purpose of science is “to boldly go where no one has gone before.”

Scientists ask questions. The best scientists ask the most penetrating questions. At least they used to. Important questions go unasked these days. Are there really cancer-causing genes? Did the universe really begin with a Big Bang? Does HIV really cause AIDS? Does HCV really cause hepatitis? Does HPV really cause cervical cancer? Did Darwin really produce a theory of evolution? What about Global Warming?

Given the nature of science, the vast majority of the “breakthroughs” reported by the media are premature at best and usually wrong [4, 5]—yet how is the public to know? For decades, screening massive numbers of people for cancer and other serious diseases was not only considered beneficial and life-saving but even a duty. However, mounting evidence from around the world shows that most screening for cancer does more harm than good [6-13]. It is taking a great deal of effort and time to overcome ingrained habit and vested interests—and the job is far from finished.

The Greatest Threat to Freedom and Integrity Since the Inquisition

Yet, in holding scientific research and discovery in respect, as we should, we must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite.

Dwight Eisenhower [14].

Sparked by the Second World War, “science has been ‘industrialized’: it is characteristically done by teams using expensive apparatus. This requires substantial funding, which comes primarily from governments (including militaries) and large corporations.” Consequently, “The groups with the greatest stake in this contemporary system are governments and corporations, naturally enough, plus elite scientists whose influence depends on satisfying their patrons, maintaining the flow of funds and protecting their reputations. Anyone who challenges these interest groups is a potential target for censorship or reprisal” [15].

Institutions and governments have always sought to monopolize knowledge. Big government, big corporations, and big egos represent the greatest threat to science and society. Three strategies protect the political hegemony of knowledge from critics and innovators: 1) stop the message, 2) stop the messenger, 3) establish research priorities.

Stopping the message

Peer review can be valuable when it eliminates papers that suffer from poor craftsmanship or methodological shortcomings, especially in the experimental sciences. I

have been grateful to reviewers who caught errors and suggested changes. Beyond this useful role, peer review functions primarily as an ideological gatekeeper. Richard Smith, former editor of the *British Medical Journal*, said “Perhaps one of the most important problems with peer review is bias against the truly original. . . . My fear is that the real barrier to change is vested interest” [16].

Peer review is often incompatible with innovative science and has been described as “Something rotten at the core of science” [17]. Innovative ideas tend to be filtered or conventionalized by the peer review process and “despite public protestations to the contrary, many scientist-reviewers are against innovation unless it is their innovation. Innovation from others may be a threat because it diminishes the importance of the scientist’s own work” [18]. Rothwell and Martyn documented that objectivity in the process of peer review is overestimated and frequently non-existent [19]. In a scathing editorial on the failure of peer review, David Horrobin remarked that, “The core system by which the scientific community allots prestige (in terms of oral presentations at major meetings and publication in major journals) and funding is a non-validated charade whose processes generate results little better than does chance.” He went on to conclude that, “If science is to have any credibility—and also if it is to be successful—the peer-review process must be put on a much sounder and properly validated basis or scrapped altogether” [17].

Peer review is applied to other aspects of science, such as evaluation for grants, awards, and positions. Peer review in the grant-giving process is so restrictive that most innovative scientists know they would never receive funding if they actually said what they were going to do. Scientists therefore have to tell “white lies” in their grant applications [20]. Horrobin disclosed that a form of lying has become an accepted commonplace in science. “All of us believe that we know the difference between *real* lying, which is unforgivable and subverts science, and *acceptable* lying which we must do so that we can obtain the funds to discover the truth. We believe that we can repeatedly lie in our grant proposals and yet know when to stop when we write up the results. . . . If we cannot do better than collude in a system which requires us to tell lies in order to obtain money to seek the truth, we deserve neither the public’s trust nor its funding” [21].

A new wrinkle on stopping the message is the removal of papers after they have been published (not by editors but by publishers). Behind the scenes, special interests secretly pressure and intimidate publishers into withdrawing “dangerous” publications. The offending papers are not removed because they contain previously undiscovered scientific flaws but because they are politically unacceptable. Powerful academics, professions, institutions, and government use peer review and post publication retraction to suppress minority views. Two areas of personal interest to me that are prone to the political removal of published papers are AIDS [22, 23] and toxicity of vaccines [24, 25].

Stopping the messenger

A scientist who persists in speaking out against powerful interests is rare—and for good reason. The fear of being shunned by colleagues and institutionally ostracized are the

most potent means of keeping academic and industrial scientists cowed and quiet [26]. The result is a culture of pervasive self-censorship among professionals.

Jeff Schmidt's excellent book *Disciplined Minds: a critical look at salaried professionals and the soul-battering system that shapes their lives* describes in detail how the political and intellectual timidity of today's most highly educated employees is no accident [27]. The system of higher education turns potentially independent thinkers into politically subordinate clones. People usually don't think of school and work in terms of such a high-stakes struggle. Nevertheless, professional education is a battle for the very identity of the individual, as is professional employment. Academic training and the workplace thus produce chronically nervous professionals with little tolerance for anyone who tries to provoke a debate about the politics that guide their own work. Schmidt warns that, "professionals are the role models of the society toward which we are heading, a society in which ideology trumps gender, race, and class origin as the biggest factor underlying the individual's success or failure".

But there is always the occasional maverick who refuses to kowtow to the dominant ideology and inevitably pays a price for independence. Academics quickly see their grants dry up. They may be denied promotion or jobs, threatened with legal action, banned from scientific meetings, prohibited from teaching undergraduate or graduate courses, vilified in both the scientific and popular media, and generally ostracized. Dissident scientists may be slandered or libeled in an attempt to devalue their arguments [28]. They may be criticized as being incompetent, difficult personalities, attention-seeking, even corrupt. Rumors may be spread about their mental state or private lives. The point of this is that if a scientist is seen as personally unworthy, then what is done to him or her doesn't seem so bad [29].

Petty forms of harassment are continually being devised. They include not being told when meetings are held, delays in approving equipment, inconvenient lab arrangements, extra administrative duties, heavy teaching loads, and letters demanding excessive details about research. The current fad is to label critics of mainstream positions as "denialists," implicitly equating them with those who deny the Holocaust. The ultimate threat to a physician is losing the license to practice medicine.

To sum up, the process of stopping the messenger has two main components: the attitudes in the scientific community that lead to self-censorship and the character assassination of those few who persist in going against the system. "The result is that certain areas are seriously under-researched, and the net effect is similar to formal censorship" [15].

Establishing research priorities

Science is hopelessly and utterly un-reformable while it continues to be so big, continues to grow-and-grow, and continues uselessly to churn out ever-more of its sub-standard and unwanted goods.

Bruce Charlton [2]

Leopold Kohr famously said, “Wherever something is wrong, something is too big” [30]. The single most important cause of the demise of science in the last 50-years is its massive size brought about by the trillions of dollars of government funding. In 1952, the total spending on scientific research in the United States was \$5 billion [31]. It took more than 3 decades to spend \$1 trillion of research funding. Today, that much is spent every two years.

This vast amount of money is distributed only in certain areas and, paradoxically, to fewer researchers. The benefactors and recipients are inevitably corrupted by the colossal amounts of money. When the scientific foundation of a massively funded project is unsound (totally absent in some cases), high-level careers, reputations and national prestige are in jeopardy. Competing areas and alternative theories that threaten massive projects are almost always denied funding by means of the de facto censorship of established research priorities.

The Rise of Scientific Dogma

For hundreds of years scientists recoiled from arguments based on authority. For example, in 1903, René Blondlot was a French physicist who claimed to have discovered a new type of radiation, shortly after Roentgen had discovered X-rays. Blondlot called it the N-ray, after Nancy, the name of the town and the university where he lived and worked. Numerous scientists attempted to confirm the existence of N-rays. On very weak evidence, some claimed success, others didn't. To resolve the discrepancy in experimental results, the *opinions* of a dozen leading French scientists were put forward as proof of the existence of N-rays. The reaction of celebrated inorganic chemist Henri Moissan to that approach was swift : “Do you think scientific questions can be resolved by plebiscite?” [32]. It turned out that N-rays do not exist. But in recent years, the answer to Moissan's question is increasingly yes.

In 1958, Francis Crick (co-discoverer of the structure of DNA) announced *The central dogma of molecular biology*: Biological information goes only in one direction, from DNA to RNA to protein. Crick soon came to regret the use of the word dogma, because it means a belief that cannot be doubted. He wished he had called it the “Central Hypothesis.” Nevertheless, Crick's *central dogma of molecular biology* is still preached in textbooks in spite of the fact it is refuted almost daily in the laboratory. Once entrenched, even an “innocent” dogma is very difficult to correct. However, the dogma I'm concerned with here is of an entirely different order. Something new and ominous appeared when the government of the United States involved itself in science in a very big way after World War II.

Two centuries ago, Alexis de Tocqueville warned that tyranny of conformity constitutes a major threat to democracy in America [33]. “I do not know any country,” he wrote, “where, in general, less independence of mind and genuine freedom of discussion reign than in America. ... In America the majority draws a formidable circle around thought. Inside those limits, the writer is free; but unhappiness awaits him if he dares to leave

them.” Prophetically, Tocqueville’s tyranny of conformity has taken over institutional America, in particular its institutions of science and medicine [27, 34].

Government and mega-business interests have always colluded to protect the status quo by crushing disruptive knowledge and innovation. In the early 1930s, the Radio Company of America (RCA), the nation’s most important manufacturer of AM radios and parent company of NBC, the preeminent AM broadcast network, colluded with the FCC to stop the development and introduction of FM radio by several decades [35]. RCA, NBC and later CBS successfully convinced the FCC “in the name of progress and a brighter future” to halt the development and introduction of television by two decades [35]. Similarly, collusion between the pharmaceutical industry and the FDA has exposed millions of people to dangerous drugs [36-39] and vaccines [40-44]. A particularly egregious and well-documented example of collusion with deadly consequences occurred in 2000.

In June of 2000, a group of high level government scientists and health officials from the pharmaceutical industry, FDA, CDC, and WHO gathered for a highly secret meeting in Norcross Georgia, USA, to discuss the safety of a host of common childhood vaccines administered to infants and young children [45]. From the CDC’s massive database, it was clear that the mercury-based thimerosal was responsible for a dramatic increase in autism and a host of other neurological disorders among vaccinated children. Instead of taking immediate steps to alert the public and rid the vaccine supply of thimerosal, the officials and executives spent most of two days discussing how to cover up the damaging data. According to transcripts of the meeting obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, many at the meeting were concerned about how the damaging revelations about thimerosal would affect the vaccine industry’s bottom line. The appalling story of the protracted criminal cover-up is told on pages 237-347 in *Virus Mania* [45].

In contrast to democratic science, institutional science preaches that the way to scientific truth is through consensus. But most disturbing of all, as Tocqueville warned, institutional science uses the weight of its authority to set the limits of permissible scientific discourse. The authoritarian, even totalitarian, nature of institutional science has led to colossal errors that grow like cancer in the absence of the self-correction inherent in democratic science. Indeed, the behemoth U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is responsible for the biggest scientific/medical blunder of the 20th Century—AIDS.

AIDS: A Case Study in the Political Use of Dogma

Mankind ought to have a rational assurance that all objections have been satisfactorily answered; and how are they to be answered if that which requires to be answered is not spoken? or how can the answer be known to be satisfactory, if the objectors have no opportunity of showing that it is unsatisfactory?

John Stuart Mill [46]

Of all tyrannies, a tyranny exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive.

C. S Lewis [47]

AIDS was my initial contact with the corrosive nature of dogma. In the mid 1980s, I witnessed the abrupt end to free and open scientific inquiry into AIDS at a crucial point when expansive, creative thinking was essential. In the spring of 1984, the government of the United States, through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), announced the viral cause of AIDS. In a matter of days, and without any scientific review, it became unimpeachable fact. AIDS dogma epitomizes the institutional despotism that punishes, persecutes, torments and silences anyone challenging scientific and especially medical dogma.

In 1988, Kary Mullis, winner of the Nobel Prize in chemistry for inventing the polymerase chain reaction (PCR), needed a reference to support the statement he had just written: “HIV is the probable cause of AIDS” [48]. He wanted to cite the person who had demonstrated that HIV was indeed “the probable cause of AIDS.” He soon learned, to his dismay, that the individual(s)—who would surely be Nobel material—had no name. In 1994, Mullis had the opportunity to ask Luc Montagnier, the discoverer of HIV, who to cite. But even Montagnier did not know. Years later Montagnier was awarded the Nobel Prize for discovering HIV—but *not for proving HIV causes AIDS*.

Professor Peter Duesberg, of the University of California at Berkeley, world famous expert on retroviruses and a member of the U. S. National Academy of Sciences, questioned the validity of the HIV hypothesis of AIDS in an invited article published in *Cancer Research* in 1987 [49]. His assault on HIV went completely unchallenged—a tacit admission among scientists that his arguments were at the very least compelling and most likely irrefutable. Faced with this embarrassing situation, HHS decided to contain Duesberg’s ideas so the public would not learn about them [50]. Shortly after Duesberg’s paper appeared, a memo was sent out from the office of the Secretary of HHS under the heading “MEDIA ALERT.” The memo noted that, “[t]he article apparently went through the normal pre-publication process and should have been flagged at the NIH” [50]. No one bothered to ask what business the government had flagging a scientific paper. Instead, the memo pointed out the threat Duesberg posed for the government [51]:

This obviously has the potential to raise a lot of controversy (If this isn’t the virus, how do we know the blood supply is safe? How do we know anything about transmission? How could you all be so stupid, and why should we ever believe you again?) and we need to be prepared to respond. I have already asked NIH public affairs to start digging into this.

Copies of the memo were addressed to the Secretary, Under Secretary, and Assistant Secretary of HHS, as well as the Assistant Secretary of Public Affairs, the Chief of Staff, the Surgeon General, and the White House [50].

For a quarter of a century, the government of the United States, through the various organs of HHS (principally National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC)), has employed every weapon available to silence and punish professor

Duesberg for his steadfast refusal to recant or at least remain silent [50, 52]. Prior to questioning HIV, Duesberg had been continuously funded by the NIH as a cancer researcher in high standing, and was even awarded the coveted “Outstanding Investigator” grant. With jaw-dropping swiftness, Duesberg lost all grants following the appearance of his 1987 paper in *Cancer Research* that questioned the AIDS dogma [53, 54]. He has not had a graduate student since the early 1990s. Premier science journals have stopped publishing his work [50]. Because of tenure, Duesberg can’t be fired. Instead, the University of California at Berkeley has marginalized, humiliated, and punished him continually, hoping he would leave voluntarily [52].

The NIH and CDC monitor television programs, scientific meetings, and major newspapers to preempt Duesberg from presenting his views to a large audience [50, 52]. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergies and Infections Diseases (NIAID), wrote a non-scientific article to deflect media interest in Duesberg’s views on AIDS. Fauci warned (perhaps threatened is a better word) that “Journalists who make too many mistakes, or who are too sloppy, are going to find that their access to [NIH-funded] scientists may diminish” [52]. Most journalists, editors and publishers kowtowed to the NIH. The media and documentary film makers who ignored Fauci were intimidated, excluded from scientific conferences, fired, had their career’s terminated by other means, and ostracized for presenting the views of those who question AIDS dogma [54-59].

U.S. taxpayers have spent over \$430 billion on AIDS since 1982. Government spending on AIDS has increased continually and is now over \$30 billion annually. What the government has bought with this money is a culture of conformity, whereby only HIV research is funded, creating the appearance that all researchers accept AIDS dogma. With over a hundred thousand careers and reputations dependent on those billions of dollars, it is politically impossible to permit an examination of AIDS dogma. It would require superhuman courage and integrity on the part of numerous government officials and the directors of the NIH, the CDC, the Medical Research Council, and countless physicians, scientists, health care workers, journalists, celebrities and average citizens, to even consider the possibility that there is something wrong with AIDS dogma. It is the tyranny of fear of such massive scale that keeps lips sealed, the money flowing and AIDS rhetoric spiraling to stratospheric heights of absurdity.

Three U.S. presidents (both Bushes and Clinton) tried to reduce the wildly excessive and non-productive government funding of AIDS. Almost immediately they were slapped down by activists, special interests, and politicians smelling political advantage. It didn’t take long for the three presidents to understand that trying to rein in the juggernaut of AIDS was not worth the political damage. Each president did an immediate about face and increased AIDS funding. With dissent apparently quashed and critics muzzled, the ship of AIDS was sailing merrily along as the new millennium approached. Then, out of the blue, the governmental-corporate-academic AIDS leviathan was blindsided by South African President Thabo Mbeki.

South Africa Questions AIDS Dogma

Whatever people believe, on subjects on which it is of the first importance to believe rightly, they ought to be able to defend against at least the common objections.

John Stuart Mill [46]

I have chosen to describe in depth the conflict between South African President Thabo Mbeki and the AIDS establishment for two reasons: First, it is the quintessential example of the destructive nature of scientific/medical dogma when promoted and protected directly by the might of the United States and indirectly through its influence on the world's leading international institutions. Second, as a member of The Presidential AIDS Advisory Panel of South Africa, I have first-hand knowledge.

International organizations such as UNAIDS had been reporting that Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for two-thirds of the world incidence of AIDS, and South Africa was among the worst affected. Responding to these reports, in 1998 the government of South Africa decided to radically step up its own efforts to combat AIDS. The Ministerial Task Force against AIDS was set up and chaired by Thabo Mbeki, who was Deputy President of the Republic at the time.

The government had established Partnerships Against AIDS with many major sectors of society including the youth, women, business, labor unions and the religious communities. The National AIDS Council, again chaired by Mbeki, was established, bringing together the government and civil society. The campaign encouraged safe sex and the use of condoms. An essential part of the government's campaign against AIDS was the proper and urgent elimination of massive poverty caused by the ravages of apartheid. The government committed to providing medications and care to deal with "opportunistic diseases" resulting from poverty-based acquired immune deficiency. Further, the government committed itself to working with the people to take care of the children affected and orphaned to AIDS. The government ensured no section of society, whether public or private, would discriminate against people suffering from AIDS.

When Thabo Mbeki became South Africa's second president in 1999, he took very seriously the claims and dire predictions about his country made by the international AIDS authorities, which followed the lead of the United States. On April 3, 2000, President Mbeki sent a letter to President Clinton, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and other heads of state seeking their support in the struggle against AIDS. Given the recent victory over apartheid, Mbeki made clear that the government and people of South Africa would exercise their freedom of thought and action regarding anything affecting them.

The letter said the Minister of Health was looking into the various controversies surrounding HIV and AIDS, especially the toxicity of a particular anti-HIV drug. The Minister was in charge of putting together an international panel of scientists to discuss all these issues in as transparent a setting as possible.

Mbeki's letter pointed out the numerous disparities between AIDS in Africa and AIDS in developed Western countries [60]. To counter a decade and a half of character assassination in the media, I have chosen to quote Mbeki at length.

“Accordingly, as Africans, we have to deal with this uniquely African catastrophe that:

- contrary to the West, HIV/AIDS in Africa is heterosexually transmitted;
- contrary to the West, where relatively few people have died from AIDS, itself a matter of serious concern, millions are said to have died in Africa;
- and, contrary to the West, where AIDS deaths are declining, even greater numbers of Africans are destined to die.”

The bulk of the letter was a declaration of independence of thought and action that sent the AIDS establishment reeling:

“It is obvious that whatever lessons we have to and may draw from the West about the grave issue of HIV/AIDS, a simple superimposition of Western experience on African reality would be absurd and illogical. ... Such proceeding would constitute a criminal betrayal of our responsibility to our own people.

“I am convinced that our urgent task is to respond to the specific threat that faces us as Africans. We will not eschew this obligation in favor of the comfort of the recitation of a catechism that may very well be a correct response to the specific manifestation of AIDS in the West. We will not, ourselves, condemn our own people to death by giving up the search for specific and targeted responses to the specifically African incidence of HIV/AIDS.

“I make these comments because our search for these specific and targeted responses is being stridently condemned by some in our country and the rest of the world as constituting a criminal abandonment of the fight against HIV/AIDS.

“Some elements of this orchestrated campaign of condemnation worry me very deeply. It is suggested, for instance, that there are some scientists who are ‘dangerous and discredited’ with whom nobody, including ourselves, should communicate or interact. In an earlier period in human history, these would be heretics that would be burnt at the stake!

“Not long ago, in our own country, people were killed, tortured, imprisoned and prohibited from being quoted in private and in public because the established authority believed that their views were dangerous and discredited. We are now being asked to do precisely the same thing that the racist apartheid tyranny we opposed did, because, it is said, there exists a scientific view that is supported by the majority, against which dissent is prohibited. The scientists we are supposed to put into scientific quarantine include Nobel Prize Winners, Members of Academies of Science and Emeritus Professors of various disciplines of medicine!

“Scientists, in the name of science, are demanding that we should cooperate with them to freeze scientific discourse on HIV/AIDS at the specific point this discourse had reached in the West in 1984.

“People who otherwise would fight very hard to defend the critically important rights of freedom of thought and speech occupy, with regard to the HIV/AIDS issue, the frontline in the campaign of intellectual intimidation and terrorism which argues that the only freedom we have is to agree with what they decree to be established scientific truths.

“Some agitate for these extraordinary propositions with a religious fervor born by a degree of fanaticism, which is truly frightening. The day may not be far off when we will, once again, see books burnt and their authors immolated by fire by those who believe that they have a duty to conduct a holy crusade against the infidels. It is most strange that all of us seem ready to serve the cause of the fanatics by deciding to stand and wait.

“It may be that these comments are extravagant. If they are, it is because in the very recent past, we had to fix our own eyes on the very face of tyranny.

Infuriated, the AIDS empire struck back quickly and hard. On April 19, 2000, Maggie Fox, Health and Science correspondent for Reuters, wrote a short article on the avalanche of outrage and condemnation caused by Mbeki’s letter to world leaders. (<http://tmh.floonet.net/articles/maggiefox.shtml>)

“Frustrated scientists battling the HIV epidemic denounced South Africa’s AIDS policy as idiotic on Wednesday, saying thousands were dying while politicians argued about causes and cures of the disease.

“Some called for foreign governments, especially the United States, to intervene and give the administration of South African President Thabo Mbeki a talking-to.

“...[Mark Lurie] and John Moore, of the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center in New York, expressed doubts that diplomats would place enough pressure on Mbeki. ‘U.S. officials are not going to start berating a foreign head of state,’ Moore said.

“Moore said he hoped a planned visit by Mbeki in May to Washington would create an opportunity for quiet diplomacy.

“White House spokesman Joe Lockhart confirmed the White House had received Mbeki’s letter but indicated that a gentle approach was indeed being taken.”

In response to Mbeki’s letter, President Clinton used the carrot and stick approach in an attempt to bring him into the fold.

The Stick—On April 30, 2000, President Clinton’s reply to Mbeki was to declare AIDS a threat to the national security of the United States.

<http://www.commondreams.org/headlines/043000-02.htm>

The Carrot—On May 22, 2000, (two weeks after Mbeki convened his AIDS Advisory Panel in Pretoria South Africa) Clinton wined and dined Mbeki in one of the most lavish state visits to the White House ever with a who’s who list of 360 guests. The receiving line lasted more than an hour. Even Clinton clapped when it ended.

Sandy Thurman, co-chair of the president’s national AIDS policy, justified Clinton’s action on CNN.

<http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0004/30/sun.02.html>

“What this helps us do is encourage leaders around the world to make this a priority by showing leadership. The U.S. has been the leader in the fight against AIDS internationally in the last two decades, but this allows us to really put the pressure on others to respond in kind.”

The South African Presidential AIDS Advisory Panel

In order to gain a full knowledge of AIDS, a decision was taken to invite an international panel of experts to South Africa and provide a platform for them to deliberate on the issues pertaining to the subject. The report of such deliberations will be used to inform and advise the government as to the most appropriate course of action to follow in dealing with AIDS. This decision was endorsed by the Cabinet of the South African government in April 2000. A world-wide search took place to identify eminent specialists in the fields of AIDS and HIV, ranging in scope from basic scientists, physicians, historians, economists, public health professionals as well as policy makers. It was also decided that persons living with AIDS, as well as lay persons would be invited to serve on the panel.

Report of the Presidential AIDS Advisory Panel, March 2001 [61]

Thabo Mbeki is the only head of state to bring together scientists on both sides of the question “Does HIV cause AIDS?” to make their cases and defend their conclusions in an open forum. The goal was to come up with the best evidence available to help the government decide what AIDS policy it should pursue. Mbeki invited internationally recognized mainstream AIDS authorities (two-thirds of the panel) and a Who’s Who of international critics (one-third of the panel) to discuss the central issues of AIDS in Africa and address the government’s specific questions.

Since the idea that AIDS is contagious and caused by HIV was a creation of the U.S. government’s Department of Health and Human Services, the Clinton administration had to discredit Mbeki’s probing of AIDS dogma and prevent a public debate about the causes of AIDS. But to simply reject Mbeki’s invitation was just too politically untenable for the United States and the other governments that follow its lead on AIDS. After all,

world leaders were committed to supporting the new democracy of South Africa that had recently emerged from the oppression of apartheid. To keep from embarrassing the government of South Africa, the United States reluctantly sent a contingent of AIDS authorities. However, trying to reconcile the irreconcilable doomed Mbeki's effort. It was clear from the start that the mainstream panelists had agreed among themselves, or were instructed beforehand, not to participate in good faith. A firestorm soon ignited.

The day prior to the first meeting of the panel in Pretoria, an attractive African-American named Elliot Small ingratiated himself with the dissident members. My friend and colleague Professor Sam Mhlongo told me in 2005 that the government of South Africa was fairly certain Small was an agent of the CIA. This explains why none of us had ever heard of Small before or since.

An overt provocation happened at the first meeting soon after the invited panelists had been seated. Three African-American physicians—carrying themselves like FBI agents, wearing dark suits and grim expressions—were added to the panel at the last minute. That they were all black escaped no one. In contrast to the invited panelists, there were no name-plates to identify the newcomers. A few of the African delegates were irate with the sudden appearance of the strangers. The meeting was about to come unhinged before it started.

A rumor quickly spread that President Clinton had asked Mbeki to include the unnamed panelists. Professor Mhlongo asked the panel and the moderator if the rumor was true but got no answer. Just as I was about to suggest we put it on the record that the latecomers refused to confirm or deny they were there at the behest of Clinton, a woman from Mbeki's office appeared. She said Clinton had indeed talked with Mbeki and asked that these people join. Other than maintaining a menacing presence as Clinton's eyes and ears, I don't recall the strangers contributing anything to the meeting.

When the meeting finally got underway, the mainstream panelists flat-out refused to participate and did everything they could to derail the meeting. The not so neutral moderator (Stephen Owen, a Canadian law professor) acquiesced to the mainstream's demand that no data be presented, demolishing even the pretense of a scientific exchange. This was noted in the official report of the Panel proceedings: "The nature and format of the deliberations of the panel could not allow the in-depth scientific argumentation that is necessary to resolve many of the differences over scientific issues of a fundamental nature" [61].

At the convening of the second meeting that took place in Johannesburg, high-level South African officials expressed the government's anger and frustration with the mainstream's stonewalling during the first meeting and especially for boycotting the internet discussions designed to come up with the agenda for the second meeting. The government discovered that the mainstreamers had set up their own internet discussions, urging other members of Mbeki's panel not to participate. Furthermore, the mainstreamers secretly engaged in an international email campaign, which led to the Durbin Declaration designed to discredit and neutralize Mbeki's AIDS Advisory Panel.

The Durbin Declaration was released just before the second meeting of the Panel. A few days later, it was published in the journal *Nature* [62]. The purpose of the 18 paragraphs of text was to stop any criticism of AIDS dogma once and for all. A number of the mainstreamers on the AIDS Panel were signatories. Infuriated, the government lifted the prohibition on presenting data and tried to shame the mainstreamers into engaging in a real scientific debate the second time around. However, it was too little, too late. Mbeki's AIDS Advisory Panel had been successfully torpedoed by the United States.

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) had received permission from the government to provide live coverage of the AIDS Panel. However, the mainstream members refused to participate if that was allowed. So, the government relented and SABC was excluded. Nevertheless, the entire proceedings of the Panel were video-recorded by the government. The Panel was told the video and transcripts would be made available to the world at some point. The videos have not been released. The people of South Africa have the right to know what happened to those videos. Releasing the video record of the mainstream's stonewalling and behavior would be at least as explosive, embarrassing, and damaging to the United States as the Nixon Watergate tapes.

Advocates of AIDS dogma invariably resort to the historically effective practice of verbal abuse. Unmeasured vituperation really does deter people from expressing contrary opinions and from listening to those who profess them [46]. Among other things, dissidents are accused of being flat-earthers, denialists, unethical, immoral, murderers, and psychopaths with African blood dripping from their fingers. If any of that were true, the mainstreamers had been morally and professionally obligated to use the forum Mbeki provided to discredit the position of the dissidents by simply demonstrating to the world the irrefutable evidence supporting AIDS-dogma. Instead, they authored the Durban Declaration [63]. I can't recall a single article anywhere chiding the mainstreamers for failing to use the AIDS Panel to publicly demolish the dissidents with solid scientific evidence.

That the advocates of AIDS dogma refused to present a shred of evidence or in any way make the case for their position is clear proof of one thing, however—they have no confidence in their position. Indeed, some mainstreamers are aware AIDS dogma is in big trouble, even completely wrong. The refusal to participate in good faith was beyond disrespectful—it was unconscionable.

Dogma Undermines Liberty

Great power and democracy are mutually exclusive in the long run, since bigness in its ultimate form cannot be maintained except by totalitarian organization.

Leopold Kohr [30]

The freedom to discuss, question, and criticize is more fundamental and crucial to liberty and democracy than who is right or wrong. In fact, the only way to approach truth is through collision of opinion. Historically, dogma has been used to maintain political, economic, and social control over the governed. The old trump card *patriotism* was

employed to forestall probing the justification for invading Iraq and Afghanistan. However, suppressing dissent is not restricted to military adventurism. Because it spends trillions of dollars on science and healthcare, the United States systematically suppresses critical examination completely (e.g., AIDS, The Big Bang theory of the cosmos, global warming, tests and drugs for hepatitis C) or partially (e.g., tests and vaccines for papilloma virus, screening for breast, prostate and colon cancer) to protect its hegemony of knowledge, prestige and colossal expenditures.

I have experienced the enormously destructive thirty-years of AIDS dogma. In the spring of 1984, the government of the United States created out of thin air the belief that AIDS was: 1) contagious, 2) caused by a virus called HIV, 3) sexually transmitted, and 4) decimating Africa. These four beliefs are the axioms of AIDS dogma that cannot be questioned without risk to one's good name, career or livelihood.

The mainstay of science is the reproducibility of results. Incredibly, there was no evidence in 1984—nor proof now—that even one of the axioms of AIDS dogma is true. Yet, virtually every citizen of the United States believes AIDS dogma is God-honest fact. The reason is simple: through its power of coercion, government suppresses any public questioning of the tenets of AIDS dogma by scientists, physicians, journalists, even heads of state.

Anthony Fauci, Director of NIAID and the government's principal AIDS authority, admits that a knowledge of how HIV causes AIDS “has been an enigma for practically 30 years” [64]. Nevertheless, no journalist or scientist (or head of state, as we have seen above) is permitted to ask Fauci to provide the evidence that HIV *causes* AIDS. Peter Duesberg once quipped, the government “could spend billions to study HIV on the moon if they wanted, but they can't afford \$50,000 to prove themselves wrong.”

In comparing AIDS dogma and the former Soviet Union, both were built on rotten foundations. In both instances, massive amounts of money were necessary to maintain the illusion of substance and durability. Analogous to the Soviet Union, the United States will face its biggest embarrassment of all time when AIDS dogma eventually implodes. Until then, no individual, no matter how exalted, is immune from attack and character assassination for questioning AIDS dogma.

Had government not used its powers of funding and coercion (rewards and punishment) to shut down free and open discourse and debate among professionals, the three-decade-long disaster of AIDS dogma could have been avoided. In 1993, physicist, historian and philosopher Paul Feyerabend said that “[T]he time is overdue for adding the separation of state and science to the by now quite customary separation of state and church. Science is only one of the many instruments people invented to cope with their surroundings. It is not the only one, it is not infallible and it has become too powerful, too pushy, and too dangerous to be left on its own” [65].

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