# Occam?s Razor or I am Just a Simple Man

June 2, 2008 By Paul Dalton

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I am irresponsible? A hate monger? A censor? No, no and no.

Irresponsible? I am called irresponsible for ?comparisons to the holocaust.? No such comparison was made. I drew a connection between my reasons for protesting HIV denialists- they can call themselves whatever they want, and so can I- and protesting David Irving, a holocaust denier. My argument is made in the context of protesting someone?s ideas- ideas so wrongheaded and odious they shouldn?t sit there unchallenged. I was not comparing the holocaust to anything. I was, and am comparing Maggiori, Duesberg and their ilk with Irving and his- people who espouse an unfounded, unsound and dangerous lie.

Hate mongering? Not sure I understand this one. I didn?t advocate for anything harmful to happen to denialists. I didn?t suggest that Christine didn?t love her daughter. She made a choice, based on her beliefs. Not surprisingly making health decisions based on unsound science leads to problems. Ask Ronnie Burke. Oh, never mind.

Calling somebody out for their public statements is no more hate mongering than this critique of me and my writing. Christine has made a career out of her belief that HIV does not cause AIDS. I have made my career at least partially on my belief that HIV does cause AIDS. Her opinions are fair game, as are mine.

Did I go for the jugular? Probably. I do that.

Am I a censor? Uh, no. Number one there is the definition of censor:
cen?sor -[sen-ser]?noun: an official who examines books, plays, news reports, motion pictures, radio and television programs, letters, cablegrams, etc., for the purpose of suppressing parts deemed objectionable on moral, political, military, or other grounds.

So, I am not an official, and I do not suppress anything on any grounds. I am a blogger and write my opinion about things. I am well aware that one of Maggiore?s ?Alive and Well? board members concluded that Eliza died of an allergic reaction to amoxacillin. This man, Mohammed Al-Bayati, the author of ?Get All The Facts: HIV Does Not Cause AIDS? reviewed the autopsy report and came to his own conclusions- one consistent with his denialist views, and inconsistent with the autopsy itself- which found that Eliza died of AIDS.

As a parent and a person who came very close to dying of AIDS, this pisses me off. If folks like Christine want to risk their own health based on their beliefs, then so be it. [For a list of folks who paid the ultimate price for their denial see: http://www.aidstruth.org/new/denialism/dead_denialists]

But Eliza had no say. She wasn?t able to look at the science, examine the relative merits of the HIV does or doesn?t cause AIDS camps- and she never will. That is a shame.

Do I know with absolute certainty that Eliza died of AIDS? Pretty much yes, but technically, no. Is there room for doubt? Maybe. Is there room for reasonable doubt? Nope. The coroner diagnosed her with HIV encephalopathy, and PCP. You don?t get either of those for an allergic reaction to amoxicillin.

The point is that there is little absolute certainty in the real world. When there are multiple, competing explanations for something, I tend to invoke occam?s razor- the simplest explanation is most likely the correct one. HIV denialist are required to do an amazing amount of mental gymnastics and Karl Rovian target moving to make their points. Science favors the simple and so do I.

The scientific evidence for HIV causing AIDS is overwhelming. Check out http://www.aidstruth.org/new/ .

So is my personal experience. In late 1992, I was diagnosed with HIV. By 1994 I was pretty sick. I had a low and declining CD4 count. I was covered in KS lesions. I had never taken HIV drugs. I had never been diagnosed with an STD (until HIV). I was not a hard drug user.

I started taking HIV drugs in late 1995- dual NRTIs. Things didn?t get better but they got worse more slowly. In 1996, I went on Invirase. Since then I have taken over a dozen different HIV drugs- including some of the harshest like Zerit, full dose Norvir (in liquid form!) and unboosted Crixivan. The meds have been harsh at times, but never has harsh as untreated HIV. Denialists would have me believe that I would have been better off not taking HIV drugs. Uh, no. I have no doubt whatsoever that I would be dead if it weren?t for these drugs.

Perhaps my real mistake was calling Christine to the mat, rather than Thabo Mbeki. It is always a bit of a minefield to go after a grieving mother. Heads of state are cleaner targets.

Mbeki was once a hero of mine. I was very active in the anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s, even raising money for Umkhonto we Sizwe- the armed wing of the African National Congress that Mbeki led. No single person has done more harm to people with HIV than Mbeki. His embrace of denialism has hamstrung the efforts to combat HIV/AIDS in South Africa, leading to untold death and suffering. Mbeki?s crimes against his people eclipse anything Christine or other denialists have done.

Ideas on their own are rarely a problem- ideas combined with power can very much be. Christine had the power to make medical decisions for Eliza. Mbeki had the power to make policy decisions impacting the health and wellbeing of millions of South Africans. Denialism alone is bad, coupled with power it can be tragic (Eliza) or criminal (Mbeki).

Denialist fear the truth. Here in SF, they became famous for physically attacking speakers at public HIV education meetings, and harassing and threatening public health officials in the middle of the night among other things. They were thugs- plain and simple. They attacked and tried to silence people who didn?t agree with them.

I don?t fear the truth. I do not want HIV to be the cause of AIDS. I do not want to take medicine for the rest of my life. I don?t want to practice safe sex for the rest of my life. I would love it to be true that HIV was harmless and the meds I take were the real problem.

But as attractive as that story is, it just isn?t true. I am not trying to silence anyone. Read the debate yourself, but read it thoroughly and strive to understand the science. Make up your own mind. That is what I did. That is why I fight denialism, and oppose denialists.

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