The Lunaris Caeruleus Caseus Journal: 1

February 25, 2013 By Jay Vithalani

This is the first of seven sections.

If I believe that the moon is literally made out of blue cheese -- it's rather a pleasant thought, actually -- then not only am I free to believe that, but also to talk about it and write about it. And wear a t-shirt that says "THE MOON IS MADE OUT OF BLUE CHEESE." As long as I am not a public nuisance or a danger to myself or others, I have the right, guaranteed by the First Amendment, to express freely my, erm, eccentric views. And that freedom extends to my publishing articles about my beliefs in learned periodicals such as *The Lunaris Caeruleus Caseus Journal*.

But you knew that already. Matters become iffier when personal beliefs impinge, or have a significant impact, upon the lives of others; and that's when lawyers and legislatures enter the picture. Creationists can build and have built a museum in which Adam and Eve are shown cavorting with dinosaurs. (In Petersburg, Kentucky; general admission tickets for adults priced at $29.95.) The Westboro Baptist Church can and does picket military funerals with signs saying "GOD HATES FAGS." (The Supreme Court reaffirmed this right in *Synder v. Phelps*, 2 March 2011, by a vote of 8-1.) And AIDS-denialists -- people who deny the existence of HIV and ergo AIDS altogether, or those who deny any causal connection between HIV and AIDS -- can and do promote their views in print, in visual media, and on the Internet.

But then I'm free, am I not, to fight for evolution to be taught as scientific truth in schools, and not as just one among many equally valid points of view? I am free, also, to agree with the Southern Poverty Law Center when it calls the Westboro Baptist Church a hate group, correct? Yes and yes. And, with the weight of overwhelming scientific evidence on my side which says that X is wrong, along with the exposure that X manipulated data, misquoted and misrepresented the words of others, and aired outright fabrications as the truth -- I have the right, surely, to call X, who is a liar, a "liar," yes? Apparently not -- X can then sue me for libel.

Celia Farber is a prominent AIDS-denialist. (There are several other "prominent" ones who could be named -- but why list them here? Or their websites? The recitation of their names and web-caverns would only serve to conjure up a stench of fecal fermentation. Cheap scatological insult? Yes.) The ethics of whether or not a highly-regarded magazine or peer-reviewed journal should publish the work of dangerous quacks is admittedly a difficult one. The journalistic duty not to censor unpopular views is at least an argument worthy of consideration; the ritual genuflection about providing "balance" is mere sophistry -- let the blue-cheese-moon believers have an Op-Ed platform in *The New York Times* then. At any rate: I was amazed to learn, while looking a few things up for this post, that the enormously prestigious journal, *Science*, had published a letter in 1995, signed by a dozen "We object" skeptics, including Farber, who represented the "Group for the Scientific Reappraisal of the HIV/AIDS Hypothesis." I knew about the long article Farber wrote

for *Harper's* in 2006 -- a piece so full of holes, so replete with factual errors and logical fallacies, that it could, and was, torn apart by a single tug.

Richard Jefferys works at the Treatment Action Group (TAG) as Coordinator for the "Basic Science, Vaccines, and Prevention Project." He's been involved in the HIV/AIDS research and activism field or fields since at least 1993. On 25 April 2008, Jefferys read an article in the *New York Post* about a certain Semmelweis Society -- a group which assists those in the healthcare professions who have had their licenses revoked or been otherwise censured or impugned because they have, putatively, been "falsely accused of misconduct... based upon false allegations." It claims to provide justice for those who are punished simply because they dissent from mainstream scientific opinion/propaganda. This Society planned to give Farber, and fellow denialist Peter Duesberg, their "Clean Hands Awards" at a series of events in D.C. called "Whistleblower Week in Washington." The Semmelweis Society was one of the three sponsors of this conference.

It's one thing for an obscure group to hand out sham certificates and tinfoil medals to liars, fools, blue-cheese-moon believers; it's entirely another for that group (and its honorees) to receive extensive press coverage, and to claim (falsely) that Farber and Duesberg were going to "address Congress." This, in his own words, is what ensued (so to speak) after Jefferys read the *Post* article: "I sent emails to a few people and the US-based listserv for discussing Federal AIDS Policy, highlighting this concern about Farber and Duesberg's involvement. I also sent a short comment via a feedback form on the Whistleblower Conference website, and it was this message -- which stated my belief that Farber and Duesberg are liars and frauds and also noted that they alter and misrepresent quotes from the scientific literature -- that Farber obtained and filed suit over."

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