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Articles. This article describes a reification of academic activities in a world where there may be many kings. This reification is often employed as a vehicle to support human and civil rights initiatives. Unfortunately, this vehicle may mitigate against such rights.

According to The New York Times, a Chinese citizen and scholar, Yongyi Song, who has been a researcher and librarian at Dickinson College in the United States, was arrested in the People's Republic of China (PRC) for "'illegal provision of intelligence to foreigners.'" The arrest may have been precipitated by Mr. Song's collecting historical documents on Mao's Cultural Revolution.

Dickinson College's academic dean--among others--has strongly protested that Mr. Song was "'simply...meeting his professional responsibilities as a librarian, bibliographer, and scholar.'" These responsibilities--it is insisted--are inexorably congruent with human and civil rights. Curtailing these responsibilities is inexorably incongruent with these rights. It is as if academic activities are sacrosanct from proscription and sanction regardless of all intrinsic aspects and all other consequences of these activities. Or as if academics are imbued with some sort of beneficent and very Kantian deontological essence that functions as a talisman against moral and ethical challenge.

Unfortunately, such a stance is not always helpful to the advancement of the Good--as exemplified by human and civil rights. Methods and contents of academic research certainly can have noxious consequences for these rights. Information can be discovered, interpreted, and advanced that violate rights. Moreover, the sweet fruits of academic benefits to the individual--viz., the researcher--may also be accompanied by bitter fruits for other individuals and larger groups of people. Social and cultural sensitivities can be provocatively violated.

Opponents of attempts to nonreify academics may argue that such attempts are but exemplifications of the boilerplate and hypocrisy of spiritually bereft tyrants and political monsters and their fellow travelers. Yet the advent of various truth commissions and public policies to manage historical information by governments progressing from totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and civil war belie the argument of these opponents. These governments avow the primacy of human and civil rights but also approach the excavation of the past very carefully. Full disclosure is authorized only contingent on a calculus of consequence. Or full disclosure is not authorized based on concerns for the veracity and authenticity of information that bear on a calculus of consequences.

Other supporters of Mr. Song have argued that he was involved only with so-called "open source" information not with secret, classified, or sensitive material. However--as many of us know from our personal and professional lives--the non-secret and unclassified can be quite sensitive indeed for various individuals, groups, and organizations--including governments. Here, supporters of Mr. Song might argue that the PRC regime is bereft of legitimacy and, thus, possesses no formally constituted authority for arrest of an academic engaged in academic pursuits. And now we have arrived at the crux of the matter. For too many protesters of Mr. Song's fate, the question is less the Issue of human and civil rights than the opportunity to attack the PRC--much as recent events concerning the 6-year-old Elian

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Gonzalez have surfaced a number of people who care less about a child's welfare than scoring points against Cuba as the demonized other.

All the above is not intended to excuse or explain away or legitimize in any way the atrocious human and civil rights violations committed by the PRC and Cuba. However, neither should these violations be pretexts for the violation of careful thought and analysis that would minimize the reification of academics. (See Davenport, C. (1999). Human rights and the democratic proposition. *Journal of Conflict resolution*, 43, 92-116; Doise, W., Spini, D., & Clemence, A. (1999). Human rights studied as social representations in a cross-national context. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 29, 1-29; Eckholm, E. (December 31, 1999). China's arrest of historian based in U.S. stirs protests. *The New York Times*, p. A5; Handwerker, W.P. (1997). Universal human rights and the problem of unbounded cultural meanings. *American Anthropologist*, 99, 799-809; Huguet, P., Latane, B., & Bourgeois, M. (1998). The emergence of a social representation of human rights via interpersonal communication: Empirical evidence for the convergence of two theories. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 28, 831-846; Spini, D., & Doise, W. (1998). Organizing principles of involvement in human rights and their social anchoring in value priorities. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 28, 603-622.)(Keywords: Academics, Civil Rights, Human Rights, People's Republic of China, Yongyi Song.)