

**The Scholar and the State:  
From the Third Reich to Today in Fool's Gold of Silence**

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ABSTRACT. A popular view whitewashes our fellow scholars who simply did their mathematical job and stayed away from the politics of the Third Reich (see my 2015 Springer Birkhäuser book “The Scholar and the State: In Search of Van der Waerden” <http://www.springer.com/us/book/9783034807111>). A folk wisdom confirms this choice: “Silence is golden.” It was then, and surely does not exist now, you would hope. Sadly, the Frankfurt Professor of the History of Mathematics Moritz Epple, shares with us a warning about fool’s gold of silence that continues still today: “I was born in 1960 into a country in which virtually everyone of the older generation was declared free of any serious guilt, except the few obvious villains whose involvement in atrocious and – for me as a young person – completely unfathomable crimes was so obvious that no one could get around it. But all the others, the van der Waerdens, own family members, older teachers and later even some professors: What about them?” Indeed, what about them, and aggressive attempts to cover up the truth and silence those who seek it? Come to this talk, listen and participate. These issues ought to matter to us all.

Keywords: Professional ethics of mathematician, Third Reich, Today’s opposition to glasnost, openness, historical truth.