A-CATEGORICAL RELATIVISM: RECENT TRENDS IN CU:LINARY BIO-ETHICAL WRITING?

by

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Abstract: This paper identifies emerging trends in the corpus of literature generally considered Culinary Bio-ethical Foundation Studies and finds them wanting.

Pick up any scholarly journal these days and peruse the contents page. What is one's instinctive reaction; one's honest feeling? Excitement, challenge, interest? Or boredom ennui, dyspepsia?

Moving beyond the contents page to the exquisitely typeset but utterly vacuous "abstract" (useful only in that it saves one the trouble of reading the whole article - the waywardness of its methodological position, self-righteousness of its author and inevitability of its turgid conclusion being, at once, laid bare) does one's heart soar, one's intellectual horizons expand, one's bowels burst?

The plain if uncomfortable answer is: rarely if ever.

Over the years it has become ever clearer that our younger scholars and junior researchers are being encouraged by their irresponsible seniors to adopt philosophical positions and embrace styles of argument as tendencious as they are ill-considered and as ill-expressed as they are insincere. The foundations of these deplorable trends lie in the laziness of scholars, the timidity of peer-reviewers, the opportunism of publishers and the dishonesty of our universities and institutes. There is a cancer in the academic body-politic and I would have it out!

Whatever the benefits of the pre- pre- Drexit European Union-based Culinary Bio-ethical Standardisation of Terms Directive (see EU Directive 5673653555566776466666450 iHeidelberg) which has without question narrowed the dialogue, institutionalised the aims and reduced the value of our studies (who would have thought that a collaboration between the Osnabruck Institute for Advanced Motorbicycle with Sidecar Studies and out own Dorset Bluebell Creamery could have consumed so much grant whilst yielding such satisfyingly facile results), it remains the case that insidious trends in both sloppy conceptual thinking and over-regulated linguistic expression are having a damaging effect on the direction of our great discipline and, more importantly, the minds of young practitioners within it.

Chief amongst the culprits in the "agenderising" of our work (the term is not mine but rather that of Dalton Swift-Ego one of the architects of the new "fit for purpose" Culinary Bio-ethics) is the anti-reductionist urge to relativism coupled

with a complete rejection of the concepts of facts, proof, method and reason, all of which have been consigned to the scrap heap as mere remnants of a colonialist, patriarchal and anti-democratic mindset which has hampered development in the sciences for a millennium. "What did the scientific method ever do for us", appears to be the cry and answer came there: "Nothing worth having comrade!" I digress.

Do I exaggerate if I say that scholars must now say not what they think or mean, but articulate only that which is acceptable, non-judgemental, immaculately inoffensive, certifiably vacuous and properly shorn of all interest and meaning? Can we, for example, still say that the earth is NOT flat, that a square has four sides or that there is an exact and unchanging relationship between the radius and circumference of a circle without being accused of categoricalism, empirical imperialism or oligarchical culinary bio-ethical fascism? The answer plainly is a resounding No, unless of course we wish to remain unpublished or are willing to be branded enemies of the authorised discourse.

Take for example Irma Wright-On's recent "Culinary Bio-ethical paradigms: praxis, prospectives and paradoxes" in which we read "Properly understood it is impossible to maintain an intellectual sustainable, essential, meaningful, trans-substantial or even phenomenologically well-grounded difference between gorgonzola and a small ham hock" or (from Colin Onatrend's "Language, epistemology and the methodological lash") "decolonialising the language of culinary bio-ethics could begin by excising from our vocabulary the terms white, red brown and yellow when describing sauce types - toxic terms borrowed from a casual - or worse conscious - racist agenda which in its urge to categorise and control labels everything from skin tone to Dulux Decorator Centre colour-matching paintpots" .

To which I ask in turn: what kind of a conceptual world are we living in?

Though I doubt anyone now reads the "Elementary Glossary of Culinary Bio-ethical Terms" which I published more than 50 years ago ("A masterfully assembled synthesis of all that needs to be said" (IJCBE 1964)), might I venture to suggest that the younger scholar might begin with - at the very least - a critique of that work and its shortcomings before swallowing whole the latest dirigiste (though apparently ideologically-unburdened) directive from the Culinary Bio-ethical thought police now encamped in our Schools, Universities and state-funded think-tanks?. Mr Onatrend and his colleagues may have hit a rich seam of populist sentiment in their attack on such well chosen soft-targets as the liberal democracies and tax-payer supported academic institutions on which their own livelihoods so critically depend, but can they claim the moral high ground with the unblemished a-historical a-categoricalist conviction they so loudly trumpet?

Though I have long suspected the motives and intellectual integrity of many of the authors of papers now regularly appearing in even the most prestigious journals, it was my sustained reading of recent volumes of the AACBES, the Journal of the American Association for Culinary Bio-ethics, in preparation for a conference I will be attending in Geneva in a few week's time which properly alerted me to the real danger to scholarship which these charlatans, frauds and tricksters actually pose.

Perhaps the most interesting spect of the whole issue is

Finish this when you get back from the Hotel Comanvier

Packing:

Socks
Shirts
Pants
Casual Jacket

Nasal Clippers
Baby oil

Something for S-h
Something for the weekend