



Strange Ways to Address a Debate on the Scientific Ground

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My opinion

WebMed Central represents one of those world wide web platforms able to give a considerable amount of opportunities to expand the debate on a scientific ground. Some journals, for example, offer the possibility to rapid responses, so enhancing the forum discussion about a scientific concern or whatever an issue raised by suggested hypothesis, models and published evidence. This is the essence of democracy, we cannot do without even in scientific research. There are also some topics for which this debate is laid waste and some researcher may show strange ways to address any discussion forum. I know one of them who is used to play a chicken-hearted fashion to suppress the honorable opinion of colleagues of him, particularly if the argument deals with bias in homeopathy. When I submitted a paper of mine, about one year ago, this colleague wrote to the Editor-in-Chief that, according to his opinion, the paper was illicit: a sudden answer follows by two Editors and then the paper was published (Chirumbolo S et al., 2011). Unfortunately, this was not an isolate case. You can track clues down by yourselves, clicking at <http://www.paolobellavite.it>. In the .pdf file included in the News section "omeopatia nao es agua" the colleague introduced, in a first version, a comment by two researchers from Mario Negri Institute of Pharmacological Science, Milan (Italy) with the purpose to show, to the many attendants of the UFRJ Congress held in Brazil, that their comment was rejected by Psychopharmacology, thus highlighting and enhancing the scientific value of "only" his work, contrariwise to the Mario Negri's forwarded criticism. The slides were removed following an explicit order by those researchers. Other insights about this cockeyed method in presenting original results can be still found in the sub-heading News, point 5, where the Author posted his scientific masterpiece associated with his reply to a commentary of mine and stating that this reply was reviewed by the Italian Institute of Health, one way as another to assess the mighty and indisputable truth within his "only" worth of praise comment (Magnani P et al, 2010; Bellavite P, 2011). But, what about my Commentary (Chirumbolo S, 2011a)? A fair manner to expand the debate could be

to ask for other opinions by honestly publishing both the commentaries..anyway...I replied to his commentary, as the Author compelled a response of mine due to his criticism about the absence of a substantial issue (Chirumbolo S, 2011b). But, whether any colleague worldwide would like to read this Commentary, he will be disappointed, because the commented author obliges the Editor-in-Chief to immediately withdraw the comment. On cue (for him, I suppose). The Editor-in-Chief, although the previously forwarded congratulations to the Author of the manuscript, withdrew the paper because of an "oversight" of the editorial office. Hitchcock should not have done this so better.

No mind: readers have other opportunities to watch at the end of this whodunit, anyway.

What it is really awkward, concerns the fashion by which this creative colleague deals with freedom in addressing criticism to his experimental setting, when other colleagues of him are trying to open a debate about possible biases in his papers, if any. He believes that this "normal" occurrence in a worldwide scientific arena, is a frontal attack against his person. Nothing else. So, any reply from him is a real defensive outing. Probably he is trusting the hypothesis that colleagues throughout the globe are investigating magistrates able to summons his person. I found that this way to struggle on the fair playground of science with a self-pitying attitude, is a typical hallmark of some homeopaths, used to self-making science (see the video in his website: no team is shown, he is explaining by himself alone). In BMJ a strong objection suddenly appeared (by rallying main scientists and launching a signature-raising campaign), simply because of the existence of a single reply (Bewley S, 2011). This is becoming a typical behavior also in politics. Therefore, I am quite frightened: is there still a place for science, honestly and properly? "Minority" attacks, survivorship basic instinct, muzzles, personalisms: a strange way to address a debate on the scientific ground.

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