

## Ignoring critique, attacking the critic

O. S. Miettinen

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I reviewed the most recent (5th) edition of *A Dictionary of Epidemiology* for the readers of this Journal, in response to its Editor's request [1]. Like any proper piece in this genre, the review was a judgmental—critical—one, and from the vantage of how I (*sic*), qua the critic, see the concepts of epidemiology and their proper definitions.

This review drew a response from that compendium's Editor, M. Porta [2]. He, however, did not present any response whatsoever to my criticisms; he merely attacked me, the critic.

The readers of the EJE scarcely need a homily on *ad hominem*s as responses to scholarly criticisms; and so, I won't get into one. I'll just comment, briefly, on the substance of Porta's attack, from my unique vantage qua the object of the attack.

I'll focus on the opening swipe of his, this: "in the past 25 years, approximately, papers by Dr. Miettinen have been substantially less methodologically innovative and influential ... than his often seminal, earlier works ... I am thus not sure that his [review of the Dictionary] deserves the comments that follow or, alternatively, silence in respect of the outstanding methodologist that he once was." In other words: Miettinen—that septuagenarian—evidently is fading into his scholarly senescence, and hence

his criticisms of the Dictionary scarcely are worthy of anyone's note.

I have two points to make about this, one minor, the other major. The minor point is that I have just recently (*sic*) made what I regard as my greatest contribution ever to the theory of epidemiological and clinical research [3]. My major point about the substance of that opening swipe in Porta's *ad hominem* is this (presumably unintended) implication of it: Insofar as methodologic—rather than conceptual—prowess indeed is a prerequisite for respectability of one's views about the concepts (*sic*) of epidemiology, the Dictionary's 6th edition is to be produced by S. Greenland in collaboration with J. Robins (rather than with M. Porta and J.M. Last).

### References

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O. S. Miettinen (✉)  
Department of Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Occupational  
Health, McGill University, Montreal, QC H3A 1A2, Canada  
e-mail: olli.miettinen@mcgill.ca