

Culinary Criteria Creation in an Open Society

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Fig. 1



Fig. 2

EXPOSITION: THE TWO PYRAMIDS

One could perhaps imagine the most important developmental phase in the culinary arts, a series of events from about the beginning of the 90s, with a single image: two pyramids. The first is a perfectly normal pyramid. It mostly stands for the long-dominant classical French cuisine. Participants of this system were in complete agreement about what was at the top and what was at the bottom, what quality meant and how one could reach the pyramid's tip. That is still more or less the case today, especially in this cuisine's country of origin and among chefs who for the most part are involved in the system. When a chef sets off to conquer the summit, he has got clear criteria to follow, quite obviously the same criteria that the *Guide Michelin* followed. These criteria developed within a close relationship between the chefs and their critics, whereby the critics' greater leverage was a mere illusion. In fact there has been and still is a kind of joint policy that should never be underestimated, one made by many (but not all) participants and that entails the influence of renown chefs and other professional opinions on the applicable criteria – for instance, the requirements for becoming a three-star chef. On top of that, for a long time in France this system was in no way as “lofty” and professionally self-contained as it might seem to us today. One must not forget that the basis of this system, the criteria for culinary quality were very widespread. The first three-star restaurants in the environs of Lyon (like the two chefs Eugénie Brazier – “La mère Brazier” – and Marie Bourgeois – “La mère Bourgeois”) were essential restaurants for refined yet traditional bourgeois cuisine. One used the finest products and embellished them regularly with delicacy ingredients, from truffles to foie gras, but never left the solid staples universally considered to be “good food”. Right up to today, one can observe that the best restaurants of the French provinces use regional dishes and corresponding images of taste and that they are part of a coherent system as a rule. What they do well is something almost everybody knows – even when they can only afford the rare visit to such a fine establishment. In any case, for big celebrations, one knows where to go and can be sure that the criteria in play will indeed be the kind which one understands. Seen thusly, there is hardly any pressure “from the outside” to be exerted in this system – such as a critique of a course that is too modern for a restaurant. The best venison, the best pikeperch with sauerkraut, the best foie gras and the best paté en courte d'Alsace is to be found in the ‘Auberge de l'Ill’ of the family Haeberlin in Illhäusern – and maybe at one of their high-ranking competitors.

The second pyramid stands today – inversed – with the tip on the top of the first, opening upward. This one symbolizes the opening of the culinary arts into a space without limitations, with an unknown goal and headed in all directions at once. We have been experiencing this opening for about twenty years – so not since Nouvelle cuisine, which was part of the old system, but rather since the beginnings of a creative cuisine, one that either overcame the rules of classical French cuisine peu à peu or extrapo-

lated them ad absurdum. This development has seen a particular thrust in the last years, and that from whom but none other than the *Guide Michelin*, long synonymous with the old system. What happened? The big break came with the international expansion of the restaurant guide business, driven by Michelin itself. The decisive change happened in 2008 with the publishing of the Tokyo guide. Even though Japanese haute cuisine already enjoyed a legendary reputation among top international chefs for its product fetishism and minimalistic presentation, the French were extremely surprised by the number of three-star restaurants that the testers in Tokyo featured (there were eight and then 25 two-star restaurants and in the current guide for 2015 there are already twelve with three stars and 53 with two). This was not just recognition of an equally highly sophisticated cuisine, it also went against what the rest of the world knew as a synonym for high cooking culture. Could one really rate sushi bars with the same grades as Parisian luxury restaurants? Can one chef and a couple of helping hands be as good as highly developed kitchen machineries? Will it really be possible to succeed in the future in a small restaurant serving uncomplicated cuisine and working with mostly raw products?

In these discussions, which are partially still ongoing, primarily culinary criteria as well as a kind of gastronomic criteria are blending together for the first time in a really striking way. When it was really about the culinary arts in a narrow sense (i.e. criteria like product quality, product-related preparation, aromatization, culinary construction) not much could be excluded from this extension of *Michelin's* definition of what is good. But how should one react and can such a development be without consequence for the classic French haute cuisine and all the values that come with it?

THE CHANGE AND EXPANSION OF INTERNAL CULINARY ARTS CRITERIA: STABILIZING OR DESTABILIZING?

The relativity brought to the values of the classical French system through the strengthening of a significantly different kind of cuisine limited to the Asian region might not have been a huge problem for the traditionalists. But there were other problems, coming in from the various “fronts” at the same time. For instance, there is the British list of ‘The World’s 50 Best Restaurants’ in which the best restaurants worldwide have been identified in a global scope since 2002. French restaurants play only a rather minor role – at least in view of their traditional self-image. They play such a minor role that the list makes certain people see red: this list – which came about under very questionable statistical conditions like all such lists – turned the culinary world upside down with names at the top of the list that would never have been allowed by traditional standards. It is very characteristic of the situation that the current number one, the ‘Noma’ by René Redzepi in Copenhagen, has already gotten first place four times in a row although it only has two *Michelin* stars. Besides the top 50, there has also been the problem of the long-standing dispute about Spanish modernism. Ferran

Adrià's Spanish avant-garde makes for particularly heated discussion. To some in France, the scene is very controversial and quite often receives openly aggressive reviews. Despite the fact that a few top French chefs have meanwhile praised Adrià, this cuisine mostly incites polemic even today. The issue is the use of "chemicals" (mainly texturing material), which is invariably called a health hazard. The fact that French star chefs like Yannick Alléno and others resort to Adrià's research for almost every dish is something that is studiously ignored.

Parallel to these developments, the *Michelin* people began to draw conclusions, especially from the Tokyo reviews. Up until now it has been considered gospel that a restaurant with a *Michelin* star had to look like a gourmet temple. Although the guide always maintained that their star ratings were given only in relation to the food, in practice a certain luxury, expensive glasses and all sorts of gold and silver had a lot to do with which restaurants were awarded stars. Recent *Michelin* reviews in various countries, however, have shown quite clearly that "boutique restaurants" – small to tiny establishments without ostentatious luxury but with a good kitchen – have gotten good ratings, as increasingly do restaurants whose cuisine is no longer so strongly influenced by French haute cuisine in the classic sense. Within a few years, all of the sudden there were molecular chefs, vegetable minimalists, tiny and austere equipped establishments and busy "in" bistros all receiving *Michelin* stars.

The decisive culinary factor was that these ratings, which are still accompanied by prestige and increases in revenue, are obviously no longer based on the classic sauces, the aroma spectrum or the constitution of a typical haute cuisine dish. Rather, they are awarded according to the sort of purified criteria for the culinary arts that is seen as being more precise. Product quality then is not about the luxury products of traditional gourmet restaurants any more. What it potentially comes down to are a few fine quality herbs or some heirloom vegetable varieties that had been considered totally marginal until now. The typical spice spectrum of classical cuisine, for example, has principally comprised of the spices that are allowed and the ones that are not allowed for as long as anyone can remember. On the one hand, no one minded much that any and all elements of a composition could be dusted with salt and pepper. On the other, however, a plate of bacon ice cream and tonka beans was quickly considered a deviation from the norm and thus given a bad review.

People in other countries – the Germans especially – started to reflect on a structural view of the culinary arts. Suddenly, the characteristics of classical French cuisine were critically divided into a sort of immutable principles (e.g., cooking times and product qualities) and more specifically regional, national, or in the broadest sense "fashionable" characteristics such as certain sauces (particularly those whose binding elements were cream and butter). This clarification, which of course also had something to do with the new global view of cuisine, led to considerations regarding what a universal canon of criteria for good cuisine might resemble. In 2007, I presented my "stage theory for culinary art" in which there are

five primary stages: product selection, product preparation, aromatization, varying the states of aggregation and the culinary construction. Every cuisine type in the whole world fits into this evaluation grid and hence can be described based on how pronounced it is for each stage. It shows for example that the Japanese “product fetishists” are more intensively engaged in product selection and product preparation than Europeans, the aromatization of classical French cuisine finds its limits but is much more broadly employed in the Middle East, India or China, and that the Spanish avant-garde has a lot to do with an extremely expanded form of variation in aggregate states. Even the classic grandmasters can suddenly be quantified in relation to others in the light of newer criteria that as of yet has not been observed to this degree – such as sensorily harmonious culinary structure that gives each product its place and can greatly improve the quality of the dishes. Something that one begins to notice quite often with the new criteria is, for instance, unhappy proportions of the elements render whole dishes incoherent when it comes to overlapping that makes no culinary sense.

And thus in the culinary arts today we find ourselves internally carrying out a revisionary process, laying new foundations of culinary criteria. What shows that this process is still in full swing are the reactions of many restaurant guides, which obviously have difficulty with the newer developments. Until a few years ago it was considered among chefs that at best every dish that leaves the kitchen should represent the level of the restaurant. So if a chef sought a second *Michelin* star and in some way hinted that he had the potential to achieve that goal, he endeavored to make each dish – even the smallest appetizer – muster what it takes for the two stars. In the internal discussions, comments are often heard like “but that is not a three star dish” or “he has got a number of three star dishes but also a few that are not worth more than one.” This old obsession with the typical ‘*Michelin* image’ is in recent years increasingly butting up against its limits. The ones who deserve thanks for this development are the younger and more creative chefs who have a loyal following among the global gourmets. Namely, they are in the habit of offering menus with a whole series of small courses (sometimes far more than twenty), where the individual dishes often only consist of a few items and there is no such resemblance to one of the more luxuriously decorated dishes of classical provenance. The question of whether a tiny filet of mackerel with a little cube of some vegetable and a vinaigrette could attain “three star quality” is obviously still not resolved by many guides. Their catalog of criteria comes from bourgeois gourmet cuisine with all its various parameters that are largely merely reminiscent of traditional bourgeois cuisine and only apply to creative gourmet cuisine in the rarest of cases. That one would have to evaluate the talents of chefs like René Redzepi or Kobe Desramaults (‘In de Wulf’, Dranouter, Belgium) or Alexandre Gauthier (‘La Grenouillère’, Montreuil-sur-Mer, France) en bloc, so to say, because they use completely different forms of presentation and menus, just has not really prevailed. Thus, the expansion of criteria for a good cuisine has so far provided for

considerable destabilization within the culinary arts. This destabilization might be around for quite a while, however, because – at least for us in Europe – it is the result of the developments of two fundamentally different approaches, namely those of the bourgeois and the creative gourmet cuisine. If assurance and confirmation of the expectations of the public is up against an expansion of experiments and positive irritations, if the new is considered suspicious on the one hand, and on the other every creative idea is anticipated with excitement and interest, the distances between the two visions are often quite considerable.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CRITERIA: THE ART OF COOKING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

It could very well continue along this path, as has been the case for other art forms. The modernists could continue to evolve under the pressure to innovate that is typical of constant global communication, as has been the case in broad swaths of the contemporary art world, for example. Thus, one could increasingly invest in a subculture, “do one’s own thing”, worry only about the stability of one’s own community and forget about the rest of the world. Then, one would only be understood by a small few but would have a stable niche that sustains itself and makes further work possible. But for the culinary arts, this trend has its limits. Part of the reason for this is that culinary artists must largely fund themselves. In contrast to the other arts, there is a lack of public funding that makes things possible in music or the visual arts that are simply not capable of financing themselves.

Beyond that, culinary goods are not of the sort that – like a work of visual art – can be sold at horrendous prices. Hence, the culinary arts still have to tend to their audience directly and maintain a certain mercantilism day to day. They must stay principally open to society – whether out of necessity or not – in order to survive.

It is precisely within this somewhat tricky situation that impulses come directly from society, which might be considerably relevant to the culinary arts as a whole. On the one hand, the guy on the street, who knows nothing about or has only had fleeting contact with the art of cooking, can hardly understand its culinary criteria today. In the “old” closed system that was, however, also characterized by social feedback taking its cue from the French model, things were significantly different. On the other hand, “new” criteria are increasingly developing around nutrition; for a long time these criteria were not really situated at the center of the chef’s efforts from the point of view of the traditional system (or even from the general internal vantage point of the culinary arts). Above all, the discussion regarding consumption of meat was on the table and the related issue of vegetarianism, which in the meantime – along with incalculable allergies and other no-gos – have strongly influenced the work of many restaurants. Added to that there are the critical aspects of nutrition on the whole. These lie within the full bandwidth from ecology to the discussion of overeating

versus malnutrition. The reactions to these “external” pressures have not been exhausted merely by the fact that virtually all restaurants now have vegetarian dishes or even entire menus – not by a long shot. It is precisely those chefs within the creative scene who have adopted the ecological aspect as a fixed component of their thinking and they often even have tight connections to similarly oriented groups outside their narrow “culinary scene”. The changing views regarding regional resources in many creative kitchens, which have led to completely new evaluations of the usefulness of rare, never-before-used or as yet seen to be unsuitable products (‘Nova Regio’ cuisine), correspond remarkably well to the aims of the ecological movement, to many of the goals of vegetarianism and to a sort of food stuff that strives for all but the gluttonous bon-vivant characteristics of the traditional style.

In the process, many interesting details, connections and perspectives have arisen that many interested parties are not yet even aware of and that may stand for a significant change in the role of culinary arts in society. Via seemingly universal sounding criteria such as ease, wholesomeness, ecological correctness or the demand that all parts of the plants and animals be used, i.e., to abolish waste, so to speak, entirely new developments in the details of culinary arts are on the rise. Moreover, this is happening partly with a pronounced change in the entire aesthetic of cuisine itself. Suddenly, minimalistic compositions are being presented that also make a show of the least expensive vegetables including the parts that were once thrown away. For a little bit of extra time, a forest floor extract can be distilled for sauces or whole dishes created from “inedibles” like mosses and lichens. The words “top product” are hardly spoken in this context, and even the cult of cooking times only plays a minor role.

Is it nowadays the case that the culinary arts – at least in their creative forms – have fallen under the influence of societal movements and placed their old values at society’s disposal too quickly? Not necessarily. Indeed, it is probably the case that at first the expansion of criteria within the culinary arts has played a role, which opened the possibility for work to be done in the creative scenes in turn, from molecular gastronomy to new Scandinavian cuisine. Only afterwards did many chefs discover the connections to ecological issues; meanwhile the ecologically interested parties are still not really united behind the contemporary cuisine based on ideas that stemmed from their own philosophies. Creative cuisine has always been a forge of sorts for all kinds of ideas – anything that has ever been presented as a novelty in gastronomy, right up to food services and the product ranges offered by the food industry. Banking on their current efforts, the creative cuisine could take on a role that it has rarely ever fulfilled before. It could assume a societally useful role of sorts, if not to say: a beneficial function. It could – inspired by societal currents but in no way indoctrinated by them – arrive at the forefront of a movement that has quite a bit to do with the future of nutrition on the whole. When it comes to preserving our resources to the greatest extent possible and finding uses for those that have hardly ever been used before, this cuisine could ensure that this

is done in a way that would please everyone – even the classic gourmets. It is not enough to simply throw in some organic products. One must also arrive at ways of preparing food that convince the senses and give people pleasure.

The art of cooking could then be on its way to bringing people closer together on the whole; it could leave its luxury enclave and work for the greatest and most sensible purpose. The really big question is, however, whether it may not even have to do that at all to gain a societally relevant *raison d'être* in the future. It is in the process of opening up. But, can it do that without giving up its substance? Is it possible for this kind of expert system to become part of an open society in which every supposed truth will continuously be put to the test?

A while ago, I introduced the concept of “holistic gourmandise” for this field: a gourmandise that sees itself committed to comprehensive and social benefits, while taking into account all of the problematic issues – from the individual, like healthy nutrition, to the ecological. In such a context, would the “eternal values” of the culinary arts become rather like theories that hold until they are proven wrong but are essentially forever put to the test? Would everything then, also the formerly professional criteria, be placed under the discretionary power of societal movements? With very uncertain consequences?

WHAT IS UP FOR DISPOSITION? CULINARY CRITERIA CREATION IN AN OPEN SOCIETY

Example 1: Product Quality

If one attempts to “play through” the usefulness of culinary criteria in a more or less holistic way, one very quickly runs up against how tremendously complex this field really is and how little we are accustomed to moving about within it. In the following, a few possible criteria are presented for discussion.

One of the most fiercely debated criteria is what a good quality product might be. This criterion already plays a central role in our society because it is universally used and abused and can be employed to serve all sorts of particular interests besides the obvious commercial ones. Determining what a good product is was for a long time essentially something for professionals, the chefs, the producers or the unions and organizations of professions relevant to the culinary industry – even if the latter groups are sometimes too generous in the positive evaluation of one another's products. With the rise of highly rated gourmet restaurants, an even more elite understanding of top quality began to grow among them. In the desire to reach absolute excellence, finding the rarest and most expensive products was not the central question anymore; rather, very quickly it was all about finding top products in all possible genres of product – from the best oysters to the best chickens to the best potatoes. Of course the quality of the preparation

has a lot to do with the quality of dish presentation, but ultimately certain comparisons started to establish themselves, like a good turbot prepared by a bad chef is better than a bad turbot prepared by a good chef.

All the interests endeavoring towards cheaper food for the whole population of course stood in contrast to this – at first, however, a long way off from the “bourgeois” circles, whose culinary behavior still had a lot to do with solid home cooking and the associated skills right up to the final decades of the 20th century. Today, the situation looks very different. With concepts like a price-performance ratio, there is a move in the direction of relativization of product quality, which is actually even a sort of antithesis to the “cult” of top quality and considers spending huge amounts of money for excellent products to be fundamentally absurd. A good example of the problematic nature of this concept is that of the oft-cited wine lover: He goes to his friend overjoyed with the news that at discount store X you can buy a wine for ten euros that is a really good value for the money and it was also given 90 points in the *This-n-That* guide, which is supposedly really good quality. A couple of days later comes another friend that counters with his own wine find from discount store Y. This wine is almost as good but it only costs six euros – and so on and so on. The notion of a price-performance ratio is at the center of culinary life today. It is employed in almost all social circles and has even found its way into the gourmet guides, which never get tired of finding new addressees to offer “good cuisine for moderate prices” (the central criteria of *Michelin’s Bib Gourmand*). In detail of course, the food quality in such establishments is considerably weaker than in the top restaurants with high ratings in almost every case. Even though one could easily guess what “good cuisine for moderate prices” might mean, there is nothing harder than taking impeccable products and preparing dishes with them that dispense with unnecessary (and expensive) extras. These dishes should actually create qualities that make culinary sense and lead to a pleasant experience for any and all – from the “normal eater” to the gourmet.

Take this real world example: In a town in the south of Germany, I once went to two restaurants that were widely praised, which served the typical bourgeois cuisine. These two breweries were listed as good addresses in every guidebook to the region. My project was to look very closely at the culinary performance of these places, concentrating thus on the relationship between textures, aromas and the proportions. The result was very disappointing and even alarming to some extent. All of the meat elements of my “brewery plate”, from the sausage to the roast, were poor in quality with an unbalanced, lightly stale taste lurking in the background. These were laid on a huge mountain of sauerkraut that was, in contrast, extremely heavily spiced – or more truthfully, it had a high proportion of salt. The texture of the meat was the only thing to notice about it, while the already weak or imbalanced aroma was overpowered by the devastating spiciness of the sauerkraut. In the text I wrote about it for the ‘Geschmackssache’ food section of the FAZ (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* newspaper), I mentioned that one could not really expect good quality meat for the price of

this dish, in my opinion. The angry reactions I got from this article were varied and their objections ultimately boiled down to this: This cuisine cannot be reviewed like a gourmet temple. Above all, one has to think about the functional aspects – the hard working folks or the students, for example, who are just thankful that they can get such delicious food for such little money. Unfortunately, the day I dined the hard working folks and penniless students were few and far between. Instead, the lunch period was already full of large groups of seriously overweight and elderly gentlemen, thus exactly the kind that frequent such establishments. Can you use any “normal” criteria to review such cuisine? Or are the criteria of haute cuisine not “normal” at all? Within this context, one only has to think about the widespread product tests and various institutes and magazines that are all involved in the phenomenon of price-performance ratios to be confronted by the question of whether it makes any sense at all to have criteria that are exclusively expert-related and to place the best of each category at the top of a linear scale. Parallel to these questions, there would also be those who ask whether there can be a sort of medium quality, whose criteria is based on societal feedback and aspects of linear quality evaluation that are connected to such a functional quality assessment. A cut of lamb that has a “clean” taste with no unpleasant side notes would therefore perhaps amount to the “point zero” (as any central reference point should necessarily be referred to) from which poorer but also higher qualities would vary in the evaluation.

As reasonable as such a “solution” may sound to many, a whole gambit of questions and problems arise – ones that are typical for criteria creation in an open society. Where exactly does the point zero/reference point lie and what forces are involved in its definition? Does this reference point come into being in a balance between maximum and minimum? If so, how does it change if the content of the maximum and the minimum change? Who is responsible for the relative stability of the system? Will obligations or consequences for all of the participants arise from the constant struggle in relation to the reference point? Sticking to the example of product quality, must or will whatever exceptional product quality be transparent so that medium quality can even be defined, as derived from top quality?

One thing seems certain: The task of determining a medium quality can no longer be divorced from an open society. Simultaneously, however, the existence of a top quality that defines the latter is and remains indispensable so as to work against the downward slippage of the reference point. Thus, if a discount store offers wine that is of supposedly high quality, it is necessary that such allegations be clearly relativized. If industrially produced food exhibits the tendency to be considerably over seasoned and thereby leads to a manipulation of taste perception itself, it is very urgent that this be utterly transparent. If there are poor quality categories, these should also be subject to constant monitoring evaluation, as is the case for top quality. The criteria for good quality are therefore not divisible, but it depends on which function they flow into in the societal balance. And, the unwavering transparency of criteria is also so very important because the

greatest enemy of a statistically unbalanced system forever in flux is that relativity becomes the absolute. No connoisseur of best quality would ever have something against a reputable medium quality. When the medium quality becomes absolute through various relativizations – as is often the case today (“reasonable cuisine for reasonable prices, whatever goes beyond that is decadent”) – the system is susceptible to disruption – the consequence usually being a downward spiraling of quality. Hence, it seems to be the case for the product quality criterion that it is simply better if the classic linear quality scale is preserved and can withstand any quality pressure from society.

The questions of how to keep the balance and who could be responsible for doing so are, nevertheless, very complicated and beyond the scope of this text. Of course, one could discuss regulations for anything and everything, although the intervention of policymakers into certain culinary qualities seems very far off because they already seem to be overwhelmed by monitoring rather technical qualities (i.e., those that relate to health). What would be interesting is an institution that monitors the input into the societal system. The German Federal Cartel Office intervenes if an excessive concentration occurs in a particular area and the possibility of market manipulation arises. There should be an analog institution for product quality, one that ensures that the declared reference point for good product quality not only – as usually is the case – just swing back and forth, but rather moves into negative because the poorer quality products are increasing beyond measure. This is something one could at least imagine. The next question would be what measures could be made available to work against the negative developments. Ultimately, it can only amount to increases in the input from opposing opinions, for example, by demanding more media coverage and reports from dissenters. First of all, because one cannot really create an ‘Institute for Societal Input’ that would force TV stations to drop this or that popular cooking show based on impending unbalanced assessments of quality or secondly force discount stores not to sell certain products, and because – thirdly – the situation in schools is not really moving forward and the only thing left to do is to send out clear signals via policy. Due to the lack of any such signals and – quite to the contrary – the balance being negatively influenced by campaigns like “Currywurst is the Social Democratic Party” (the 2012 election North Rhine-Westphalia campaign), the current situation for guaranteeing, stabilizing and promoting good overall quality criteria is pretty bleak. Perhaps first off one should give some thought to the difference between a completely free market economy and a liberal market economy. In the former, things are left completely up to the interplay of forces, and the food industry’s power would strengthen. The latter would be coupled to a liberal understanding of balanced interests and alignment to a picture of how positive societal development should look to everyone in the sense of holistic thinking.

Example 2: Throw Nothing Away!

The stipulation not to throw away as much food and use the food we have more efficiently has many sources, but for the publicly conscious part of society, it comes more or less from the societal middle. Wasting culinary resources can be seen as a typical flaw of a society that has forgotten to be aware of larger connections and has apparently subjected everything to the interests of the individual, rigorously and without regard for any consequences whatsoever. People who think and act that way prove that they have already become victims of industrial strategies with their behavior, and this fact has only recently come under discussion. Not throwing away food so readily is one thing. Using food in such a way that every bit is consumed is clearly different. It is also a waste – for lack of know-how – to only use the leaves one can pluck from a Savoy cabbage and tossing the excellent tasting rest (the trunk or the leaf spines) into the garbage. Another resource not adequately used is animal meat; tiny fillets play a role in top cuisine while the rest ends up in sausages, cat and dog food as well as glue. It is ultimately the respect for the animal that calls for a “high-quality” use for all of the animal parts for food. Within the same context one finds the old criticism of the long distances that products have to travel and everything being on offer all the time – even if it is simply not the season for certain vegetables at our latitude. There is criticism of the reduction of varietal diversity and the neglect of regional products associated with it, which all together builds into considerable pressure for change. Thus, the criticism is coming from multiple directions and is clearly aimed in this case against the advanced cuisine, which is otherwise considered – see above under product quality – to be a refuge for rigorous qualitative orientation. No, haute cuisine (better said: the more tradition-oriented haute cuisine) only seldom works with every part of the animal and picks out only – supposedly – the very best. It still has its products regularly flown in from all corners of the world regardless of the season and only rarely worries about ecological and regional contexts. In any case, the potentially new criteria for a responsible use of resources do not put this sort of cuisine in the best light.

And now of course, the question is who will actually bring about changes to align to this new vision. In this area – seen through the aspects of criteria creation – one finds himself indeed in an extraordinary situation: A few new aspects, like those mentioned above, are already leading to some sort of changed qualifications but are still a long way from being completely prevalent. To be precise, it is a phase of criteria creation – not so much a phase of criteria change or criticism of existing criteria. And it is a phase in which – probably for the first time in history – a sort of holistic consideration of nutrition is looming; alongside the ecological and ethnic considerations this also takes up aspects of health and civilization. Mind you, “holistic” as understood truly by the definition of holistic and not just being related to certain more or less ideological connections in alternative scenarios.

The current situation is first of all influenced by the fact that those who criticize how things are cannot offer many concrete alternatives. Not even the organic scene can do more than offer a few vegetarian dishes with conventionally prepared ingredients. Even the various books on the subject are pretty tame and of course confirm the suspicion of ideology right off with this lack of convincing alternatives, and generally the “ordinary” guy on the street is still clinging to that suspicion.

Let's stay with the Savoy cabbage for a moment, or even a leek whose roots have an excellent taste but end up in the trash anyway, or the tomato whose most aromatic part (the core of seeds) is still often taken out or products like the turnip whose use often does not even come into consideration. The solutions to their optimized and convincing use arrive for now, in part, from creative cuisine, which is rather less aligned to traditional high cuisine and goes its own way, hence from chefs like previously mentioned René Redzepi, Kobe Desramaults and Alexandre Gauthier, from chef duo André Köthe/Yves Ollech in 'Essigbrätlein' in Nuremberg, Jean-Luc Rabanel in Arles or Heinz Reitbauer Jr. from the 'Steirerck' in Vienna. The list is growing longer and longer. A new regional cuisine with a completely new evaluation of regional resources and heavily modified cooking techniques, thus a combination of regional cuisine and avant-garde, has clearly been the world's dominant trend in creative cuisine for several years now ('Nova Regio' cuisine). It is in these kitchens that things are being created that will give these new ideas the shine and appeal that they need to even have a chance at competing against people's ingrained eating habits. Good 'Nova Regio' cuisine is already pretty clear to the connoisseurs. Many observers, however, would still be hard pressed to follow the new developments as quickly as they arise.

So, there are ideas from the middle of society and paths to solutions from the progressive sectors of quality-oriented cuisine. Is that enough to develop clear criteria for a holistic gourmandise? Well, in principle, it is – if the forces working in the same direction are able to merge together. There are already indications that the tradition-oriented sector of advanced cuisine simply cannot continue on its path up to now; the image of the obese gourmand who does not want anything other than lobster, Pauillac lamb and truffles has no future. There are indications that a new type of chef is out there. One who suddenly no longer belongs solely to the culinary avant-garde but also to the social because he promotes socially desired developments and thereby gains a multifaceted role-model function. There are even indications that the I-based, completely unthinking culinary behavior of large population circles is succumbing to pressure – one day it may even go as far as it did with smoking.

Criteria creation in an open society proves itself to be a very complex topic as exemplified here because it does not – as is the case for product quality – revolve around a field in which one can clearly determine between a certain input and its effects and insofar develop straightforward strategies. When it comes to a holistic view of nutrition, it is not only about eating good instead of bad meat, or changing one's eating habits, but also about

recognizing the goodness in interesting preparation methods and products that until now hardly ever played a role and in popular opinion simply do not taste as good as what we have been eating so far. Such changes in behavior are major. To aid in these changes, one effect may come into play that is already well known from the organic movement: Someone who generally has a holistic view of the world will be more capable of opening up to the culinary aspects. Getting used to new taste profiles, and this much is clear, does not take much else – I, myself, am an obvious example, having gone from fast-food eater to food critic. Like with product quality, developing the criteria for this example also, of course, involves adequate input from influential institutions. But even more important will be promoting concrete encounters between people and the “new” nutritional means and the changed cuisine. That happens above all via convincing culinary solutions and a concomitant aesthetic of the holistic – from schools out into public life, from private kitchens to restaurants throughout all of gastronomy. Development in this direction seems to be the inevitable path for the decades to come.