

## **In support of open peer review**, Text by Dr H. M. de Oliveira

*A manifesto in favor of transparency and disclosing the identity of the peer reviewers in scientific publications*

A matter to be considered by the scientific community

Recently I was invited by the *British Journal of Mathematics & Computer Science* to define my position on the matter. When migrating policy for the *open peer review*, those reviewers who prefer to remain anonymous are complied. I was pleased to see that open models have spread - what I consider a very positive development.

The standard peer review process deals with anonymous reviewers. The idea of maintaining this secrecy has some arguments in its defense. Firstly, it makes the process comfortable for the reviewer; some authors of articles could not have enough balance, and understand the criticisms as somewhat "personal".

Making an authoritative review implies hard work and relatively little recognition. And without being afraid of retaliation, the process in principle encourages the reviewer to accept the challenge. It is something similar to the idea of the secret ballot at a meeting: Give an opinion without accountability is comfortable and has lower "potential" of damage. In transposing to the boards model, a deputy is lightly when he is not accountable to those who elected him. It is about his expression behind a camouflage (said, to avoid consequences). However, the deputy and the street demonstrator should withdraw their masks and take charge of their respective positions.

Suppose a politician who argues: I will not be free to express my opinion and I can suffer from embarrassment! In a political party, there is no "close matters" on all topics. This argument is only applies at topics related to some basilar philosophy. In such cases the such a political would abstain but not vote against the matter. In most cases, he would vote freely and would report his positions for those that elected him. Now, the process of peer review, with anonymous style, has generated severe distortions, inconsistencies and even follies. Since the reviewer does not expose himself, he accepts judge a work - for curricular reasons - even when he has not the proper skills for this (just to show an alleged expertise to colleagues: I do reviews for the *International Journal Z!*).

And if he makes an inadequate review, there is no burden of its review. He engages in a game in which has to gain and little to lose. Many - perhaps most - of the current reviews are arranged last minute, *à la Legere*. Needless to think twice about: it is possible to reject a manuscript without elaborate arguments, just in order of please the editors\* who need to do a limiting selection, given the large number of submissions. This process also protects the editors, which can be spared under the shield of anonymity: "I'm basically transcribing the balance of the opinion of the reviewers."

***This is a safeguard to the reviewers and editors, but not science.***

By signing the review and be exposed, the reviewer calls it upon himself to. If the rejection is proper, it will be judged by the community and will not help the author's reactions. In contrast, If it is inadequate and inaccurate, he is exposed to the community. He needs to make a serious review, for it is "showing his face"; putting in evidence his competence and critical power. No doubt there may be retaliation on the part of colleagues who are not a scientist model. But ... Let us be bolder and less fearful. I prefer open vote, protesters unmasked. The science of dissemination models are evolving. The change of paradigms\*\* faces high resistance. Colleagues linked to the dissemination channels for technological advances, I invite you to reflect.

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\*and their ego: I am picky!

\*\*Open Access Journals, open encyclopaedia's, Open Library, etc.