

Sleeping with one's beard  
above or below the sheet:  
psychological vs. ethical

Before the question: no deliberate choice.  
(Psychological: involuntary.)

After the question: a deliberate choice.  
(Ethical: voluntary.)

1

The point of this talk  
(and of the BRICS retreats)

To go from a psychological state  
to an ethical state  
by raising our awareness.

2

# An extreme example: Schipol

- See, buy, fly.
- The fly.
- JFK airport.

3

 BRICS

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How to write a review  
How to receive a review

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4

## The actors in presence

- The author(s).
- The editor / program chairman.
- The reviewers.

5

## The point of refereeing a paper

Quality control by peer review.

6

## The timeline for conferences

- A paper is submitted.
- It is allocated to PC members and often subcontracted to external reviewers.
- Reviews are collected.
- A decision is taken at the PC meeting.
- Reviews are sent to the author(s).

7

## The timeline for journals

- A paper is submitted.
- It is allocated to external reviewers.
- Reviews are collected.
- An editorial decision is taken:  
accept / reject / revise.
- Reviews are sent to the author(s).

8

## Conferences: one-way communication

- Would the paper help making the conference a success?
- If not accepted, try another conference.

9

## Journal: two-way communication

- Is the paper in archival form?
- If not, revise it and try again.

10

## The point of view of the author

The idea is to try to give all the information to help others to judge the value of your contribution; not just the information that leads to judgment in one particular direction or another.

– Richard Feynman

11

## The point of view of the reviewer

One never notices what has been done; one can only see what remains to be done.

– Marie Curie

12

## Writing a review

Canonical reference: Parberry.

- Is it correct, worthwhile, readable, etc.?
- Which kind of paper is this:  
groundbreaking, improving, fixing,  
surveying, etc.?

13

## The curse of novelty (flip side)

It's got to be new!

14

## The curse of novelty (flop side)

When a grown-up is surprised, he is annoyed.

As soon as something new happens,  
a grown-up tries extra hard to prove  
that this new thing resembles another one  
that he knows already.

– Maurice Druon

15

## Some elements for a review

1. Convey your understanding of the paper with a summary.
2. Double up with an analysis.
3. Sum up with an assessment and a recommendation.
4. Add a list of remarks, if any.

16

## Context of the review

- Be objective.
- Be fair.
- Don't delay.
- Be courteous.
- Remain confidential.

17

## The job of a program chairman

Assemble the best possible program  
(at the cost of rejecting good papers).

18

## The job of a journal editor

Make the journal as good as possible.

19

## The job of an author

To cooperate with the reviewing process.

20

## The job of a reviewer

To provide impulse in the reviewing process.

21

## Choosing reviewers

- Competence.
- Availability.
- Depth / breadth.

22

## You, reviewer

- One among several others.
- Your anonymity.

23

## Extracting reviews from reviewers

- It may take persistence.
- The more competent, the more busy.

24

## Synthesizing the reviews

- Accept / revise / reject.
- Editors sometime moderate the reviewers, by coming back at them.
- Get back to the author(s).

25

## Receiving reviews

From my close observation of writers, they fall into two groups:

1. those who bleed copiously and visibly at any bad review, and
2. those who bleed copiously and secretly at any bad review.

– Isaac Asimov

26

# Facts

Nobody likes a bad review.

Most reviews are critical.

Analogy: The Matrix Reloaded

27

## Take a holistic approach

- Distinguish between your work and your ego.
- Identify the cause of the criticisms and fix it.
- Rearrange the rest of the paper to fit.
- Persist: “If you don’t fight for your ideas, nobody will.” – John Reynolds

28

## Together with the revision

- Comment the reviews pointwise:  
The reviewers will appreciate to see each of their points addressed upfront.
- Thank the reviewers for their time:  
They are actually your best allies.

29

## Sending the revision

- Expect an acknowledgment.
- Be prepared to be moderated.
- Think of pinging the editor after 3 months.

30

## Choose your editor wisely

- Rare are papers that don't need any help.
- An indifferent editor is rarely of help.

31

## Reviews and the paranormal

Feynman's advice about the paranormal:  
keep track of pressentiments,  
for you only remember them selectively.

Here: keep track of both good and bad reviews,  
for you also only remember them selectively.

32

## Good reviewing experiments

- The submission is speedily reviewed.
- It is accepted (with minor changes).

33

## Good reviewing experiments

- The submission is speedily reviewed.
- It needs to be revised,  
but with very useful reviews.
- It is accepted.

34

## Not so good experiments

- The submission needs a lot of pinging.
- The reviews are lousy.
- You give up.

35

## Not so good experiments

- The submission needs a lot of pinging.
- The reviews are lousy.
- You persist.
- The revision needs a lot of pinging.
- etc.

36

Yet reviews can be useful

Some reviewers are amazingly good,  
and they lead you to a better paper.

37

Why you should review

You expect reviews on your own work,  
don't you?

38

# Conclusion

- Peer reviews: The means for quality control.
- We should all contribute to this quality control.
- We all try to survive it.