

Procrustomachia

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Editor's note

Two years ago, my paper intended for the volume honouring the 70-th birthday of Dr. Svatopluk BÍLÝ was rejected by the Editor of *Acta Ent. MNPragae* as not complying exactly with his preferences. Wishing nevertheless to contribute to the celebration of my eminent Colleague's and (as I then interpreted our relations...) kind Friend's anniversary, and well aware of the negligible chance of finding another conventional possibility to make my contribution (in the form acceptable *to me*) published before this will become pointless, I decided to try an experimental solution: to launch a private journal. Initially it was conceived as an extraordinary *ad hoc* way out from the stalemate, to be used in this particular case and perhaps occasionally in future if all the attempts to publish a paper otherwise proves futile, but soon came the cogitation: why not make *Procrustomachia* the "default option"? what is the sense to waste time and effort on idle nerve-racking quarrels with editors and reviewers, painstaking trimming between the Scylla of hopeless beggary and Charybdis of what FREY & OSTERLOH (2010. Motivate people with prizes. *Nature* 465, 7300: 871) fittingly evaluate as "*a kind of 'academic prostitution', in which work is done to please editors and referees rather than to further knowledge*", only to wait – if at last some "decision maker" condescends to do you the favour of publishing the results of your work – for months for its actual appearance and see at the end that you have no right to use its content according to your needs (you must have transferred copyright to the publisher) and even the "publication" itself is rather a pleasant euphemism than reality, because the publisher is not interested in making the scientific results known to scientists but only in transformation of *your* work into *his* maximum profit, and wishes *your* paper to be accessible only for some people sufficiently rich (or employed in sufficiently rich institution) to pay *him* US\$40 or 60 for the privilege of reading it [see the current "war" waged by Elsevier and some others against ResearchGate or German universities (SCHIERMEIER Q. 2017. German row with Elsevier threatens journal access. *Nature* 552, 7683: 17-18)...]? The conclusion was quite evident: I continue to publish my papers in *Procrustomachia*!

These were the beginnings. Of course I was aware that not everybody will kindly look on my endeavour, and expected attempts (although even in nightmares not so hostile as they eventually were, and certainly not from the side of just those Colleagues who undertook them...) to trammel or overthrow it, but *Procrustomachia* has successfully survived all the assaults and I am now happy to present you the sixth issue of the second volume! Well, hitherto – not unexpectedly – I have been the only author sufficiently impudent to venture publication in what some kind colleagues feel their "duty" to "propagate" as "*private pseudojournal*" allegedly "*existing only on the private PC of the author*": "professionals" employed in universities, museums, &c. cannot afford to resign from various "impact factors" and other fashionable "metrics" which *Procrustomachia* does not provide, while those (pensioners, "amateurs") not dependent upon formal institutional evaluation apparently do not wish to expose themselves to epithets like "*poorly professional or just crazy authors*", or simply have not yet realized the advantages of uncensored publication.

As to me – despite severe (in relation to my financial and technical possibilities) troubles with being the author, editor, publisher, printer, bookbinder &c. rolled into one – my satisfaction with the last two years' experience exceeded my initial expectations: while at the end of 2015, tired and discouraged by fruitless "windmill fights" (see the "*Open letter*" of 25 IV 2015) I seriously considered the idea of withdrawal from scientific activity, now I again cannot imagine the life without it: having got rid of the depressingly importune afterthought "*well, well, but where could I publish it?*"; of the fettering need to comply with the whims of arrogant editors who will tell me where I "must" and where I "must not" use italics or smallcaps; "peer"-reviewers knowing "by definition" better than me which taxonomic rank is appropriate for the particular group of species or whether the reassessment of supraspecific classification of jewel-beetles based on non-genitalic

characters is or is not acceptable; publishers requiring that manuscript must be submitted obligatorily “online” using their own, impenetrably cumbersome and notoriously defective programs; &c., &c., &c., at last I feel the work on interesting projects again as exciting and enjoyable as I did at the beginning of my “career” 60 years ago, and can honestly consider myself a genuinely responsible scientist rather than an “academic version of a prostitute”!

Procrustomachia has no official “Impact Factor” (or any other *formal* score – don’t mistake for *real* contribution to knowledge: already the two years’ experience shows that papers from my “private journal” are being read, and the presented results considered, no less frequently than those published elsewhere!), is not likely to have ever been included in the ISI (or any other “Mutual Adoration Society”) list, &c., this however is a drawback certainly serious for the employees of public institutions but perfectly irrelevant to me and other “freelance” researchers; besides, I am obviously not able to assure the technical perfection comparable to that offered by Brill or Taylor & Francis, but this is also but an esthetical aspect of little or no relevance to the merits. On the other hand, as I wrote in the “essay” of 31 XII 2016 [*What is and what is not Procrustomachia?* – downloadable from ResearchGate], *Procrustomachia* offers several very important advantages:

- *real* freedom of scientific expression: unrestricted (except for requirement of scientific soundness) possibility to publish *the author’s* views in the form *the author* considers adequate (and, for readers, certainty of those being *indeed* the author’s – *not an anonymous editor’s or reviewer’s* – opinions and preferences!);
- no fruitless (but time-consuming and nerve-racking) quarrels with editors and (usually indirectly) “peer”-reviewers;
- immediate (as soon as the paper is ready, rather than after months or even years “spent on various desks”) publication;
- exactly stated, *unambiguous* date of publication (no “electronic preprints”, no time-lag between “online” and printed versions, or any other confusing practices);
- electronic pdf *really* identical to the official printed version (unlike the practice of many journals *claiming* the identity although e.g. colour figures – often of key importance in not only taxonomic works! – are printed as black-and-white);
- *real* [not only for rich people, able to pay tens of dollars for a needed paper] “open access” (each issue freely downloadable from ResearchGate or available on request from me), with no cost to either the author or readers;
- no restrictive copyright: the content may be copied, re-published, quoted, or used in any other way under the only obligation to honestly cite the source.

whilst I cannot think of any drawback which would make *Procrustomachia* inferior to other periodicals I am aware of: in my opinion, *from the truly scientific point of view it is almost ideal journal!*

Of course, this is my opinion, not binding to anybody else... But anyway *Procrustomachia* is open to everybody, and whoever considers the above-mentioned advantages important and the formal or technical drawbacks not prohibitive, can feel free to immediately submit his/her manuscript (fully edited according to the Author’s preferences or allowing me to edit it according to my customs), or (in case of papers more than ca. 50 pages long or some special requirements, expected – e.g. technical – problems, &c.) to contact me in order to discuss the details. “Peer”-reviewing is not obligatory, but both parts – the Author and me (as the Editor) – have the right to ask for a review if needed. I certainly do not wish to censor the methods, results, opinions or formulations of the Authors, freedom of scientific opinion does not, however, mean that any “rubbish” must be published, so I reserve for myself the decision to reject papers containing evident nonsenses, “knocking open doors” or unsubstantiated questioning of established facts.

Having said the above, it remains for me to wish you – both, without discrimination, the enthusiasts and opponents of *Procrustomachia* – best wishes for the New Year, many valuable and exciting results of your work published without trouble in the preferred journal in the form you consider optimal!

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