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Editorial

The first of this issue's papers has been much trailed by our publisher. Taylor & Francis is very ready to promote papers considered to be of wide public interest. The paper by Sotaro Shibayama and Yasunori Baba, from the University of Tokyo, qualifies in that it adds to understanding of a major problem in academic life. Shibayama and Baba look at how academic authors respond to the comments of journal referees. Their response is very likely to determine whether their papers are published. Publishing in top journals has become a key measure – often *the* key measure – of academic performance. On this single performance measure the reputation and funding of institutions, and the career prospects of individuals are in large part dependent.

Such dependence provides ample incentive for gaming and the participants in academic publishing (editors, authors, publishers, and the institutions that support them) have corrupted a vulnerable system to their advantage. Top journals must publish papers that boost their journal impact factors (which are what makes them top journals). Because the impact factors are calculated from the frequency with which a journal's papers are cited, top journals crave papers that are readily cited. The most citable papers (those that cite papers that everyone else cites, that agree with as much as possible and avoid the negative, the new and the contentious) are the most valued papers. Research can be hard to publish.

Complaints about the social costs of this system would be overwhelming were it not buttressed by that guarantee of academic quality, peer review. Those with a vested interest in academic publishing are particularly anxious to believe that referees ensure only the best papers are published in the best journals. Shibayama and Baba are less impressed by peer review. In fact, they find peer review to be part of the problem. Their surveys show Japanese scientists to be so desperate to publish that they will make any changes their referees require, no matter how wrong they know the changes to be. Shibayama and Baba are categorical in calling this behaviour 'dishonest': authors themselves may see their behaviour as simply pragmatic, convinced that failure to oblige a referee in every possible way is to court rejection.

The publish or perish predicament has had such an overwhelming influence on intellectual life that many academics have forgotten an older injunction to publish and be damned. Academics are now so anxious to avoid perishing in this life that they risk damnation in the next. A Faustian pact binds those who write papers to be counted rather than read, who have little to say, but need to say it in top journals. Shibayama and Baba find that, in their willingness to be dishonest in order to be published, academics have taken one more step along the road to perdition.

The race to publish is also an aspect of the paper by Kyriakos Drivas, Athanasios Balafoutis and Stelios Rozakis. They look at the research output from their own institution, the Agricultural University of Athens, and relate this output to a range of sources of research funding. They find that funding produces publications

and citations – hardly surprising when publications and citations are usually a condition of research funding. More intriguing is that patenting, once seen as an alternative to academic publication, has come to be associated with publication and citation. Industrial orientation, it seems, no longer exempts the academic from the requirement to publish.

The Tasmanian devil is not a common focus of academic attention, but the creature is central to the paper from Josephine Warren of Wollongong University. Tasmanian Devils are suffering from a curious cancer. Because this facial tumour disease is new and novel, it presented opportunities for innovative research. These have not been seized, and that is the nub of the paper's argument. Why, asks Warren, did the Tasmanian government not investigate the possibility that toxins in the devils' environment might be playing a part in the initiation or progression of the cancer? Her paper challenges the Tasmanian government specifically and the scientific establishment in Australia more generally. In consequence, Warren's observations have not been universally welcomed in Australia. Their publication in *Prometheus* offers the opportunity for their consideration by a wider scientific community.

Laia Miralles-Vazquez and Sara McGaughey, from Griffith University in Brisbane, are interested in how the multinational corporation transfers knowledge from one part of its global empire to other parts. On the success of this transfer much of the multinational's innovation depends. Face-to-face contact has long been accepted as a powerful mechanism in information exchange, and it would seem to follow that expatriate assignments play an important role in moving information around the multinational. Miralles-Vazquez and McGaughey dig deep into this assumption and explore the effectiveness of various sorts of corporate expatriates – flexpatriates, commuters, frequent flyers and self-initiated expatriates. They look exclusively at the role of women in this knowledge transfer. Five case studies of female employees based in Spain present a flavour of the hectic, stressful circumstances in which knowledge is supposed to be transferred. The authors discover that informal interaction is crucial, and that the formal efforts of the multinational's senior managers to encourage knowledge transfer are often counterproductive.

Omer Yezdani, Louis Sanzogni and Arthur Poropat, also from Griffith University in Brisbane, provide a theoretical piece. The theory of emergence is their target and model-centred approaches are their weapons. Their focus is on the relational process of leadership as an emergent event in complex human organisations. *Prometheus* rarely publishes theoretical papers and this exception to custom is welcome. So, too, would be more book reviews. This issue carries but five. A book review editor would help and the general editor, currently acting book review editor, would very much like to hear from anyone anxious to volunteer for the post.

Stuart Macdonald
General Editor