



Editorial

It is an awfully long time since the last issue of *Prometheus* appeared. Two more issues will follow this one in quick succession and then there will be no more – at least no more published by Taylor & Francis. *Prometheus* has been divested.

To our readers and authors an apology for this unconscionable delay, and an appreciation of their patience. They also deserve an explanation. Our relationship with Taylor & Francis used to work well and *Prometheus* owes much to decent individuals in Taylor & Francis who have helped the journal over the years. But academic publishing has changed. It has come to be dominated by a few large publishers and by metrics, the latter allowing the former to become very profitable indeed. As the interest of academic publishers in profits has grown, their concern for academic values has shrunk, and the academic publishing business has come to be managed much like any other. This first presented a major obstacle to *Prometheus* in 2014 when Taylor & Francis managers sought to censor a *Prometheus* debate on academic publishing on the grounds that they knew more about academic publishing than academics. In response, the editors refused to provide any *Prometheus* copy until Taylor & Francis gave way, which took almost a year. Taylor & Francis managers eventually conceded defeat not because they saw an ethical light, but simply because adverse publicity was damaging the company's bottom line.

The second battle with T&F started in 2017, again over a *Prometheus* debate, this one on the shaken baby syndrome hypothesis. This is that certain indications in the brain of a dead infant reveal that shaking has caused its death and also point towards the culprit. Our interest lay not in medical diagnosis, of course, but in the resolute defence of the hypothesis, unproven and unchanged over half a century. The academic literature on the subject, whether in Medicine or Law, looks to the courts for evidence. The courts look to expert witnesses for guidance, their expertise authenticated by peer review. Half a century's accumulation of papers based on court evidence is overwhelmingly supportive of the shaken baby syndrome hypothesis. This is almost inevitable in that professing an alternative view in court is difficult: those expert witnesses who favour the shaken baby syndrome hypothesis need only assert their compliance with a view endorsed by peer review: those who disagree have their work cut out. They must challenge established thinking without the support of peer review and must do so while showing deference to individuals and organisations supporting established views. They may not adopt the procedures the Social Sciences consider fundamental to assessing innovation. For instance, the court allows reference to only the conclusions sections of papers; expert witnesses may not query, say, a paper's logic, mis-use of references, or methodology. Nor may an expert witness present information beyond the single science central to the qualifications of the witness. Hardly surprising then that *Prometheus* seized the opportunity to organise a debate focusing on innovation and the shaken baby syndrome hypothesis. The author of the proposition paper is an expert

witness struck off not for presenting inaccurate information to the court, but for straying from the science of her qualifications and for failing to demonstrate due deference to the individuals and organisations supporting established views.

Initial enthusiasm for this debate in Taylor & Francis dissipated as first the proposition paper and then the ten response papers spent months with the company's lawyers. In late March 2018, after five months' deliberation, the lawyers pronounced themselves satisfied that none of the papers was libellous. Publication could proceed, a decision that was immediately rescinded. Suddenly, and without explanation, Taylor & Francis managers insisted that the papers be approved by external lawyers. In early June, these lawyers pronounced all the papers likely to be libellous. Changes needed to be made to the papers, but Taylor & Francis managers, no doubt wary of accusations of censorship, would not say what changes. They deferred absolutely to their lawyers, but the lawyers also refused to say what was offensive.

The external lawyers did, though, identify the general direction the debate papers should take. They pronounced that:

- (1) discussion must not go beyond the science of a subject
- (2) there should be no criticism of identified individuals or organisations unless approved by Taylor & Francis.

In other words, the rules of the court, peculiar though they are, were to be applied to an academic journal. Taylor & Francis managers did not seem to realise that assuming the power to authorise criticism meant an end to academic independence. Nor did they appreciate the irony in a debate on factors inhibiting innovation being inhibited by the imposition of the very same factors. Why Taylor & Francis managers took this stance we were never told, but academic debate cannot be conducted in these conditions and a critical journal cannot survive.

As it happens, we need not have worried about further alterations to the debate papers. Within days of receiving the external lawyers' opinion, Taylor & Francis managers announced they had found a solution to the debate problem: they would divest *Prometheus* with immediate effect. Taylor & Francis did, however, eventually agreed to publish in three issues the backlog of papers it had allowed to accumulate while its sole interest was in the papers on the shaken baby syndrome debate. This issue is the first of the three.

Malin Lindberg and Cecilia Nahnfeldt, from Luleå University of Technology and the Church of Sweden Research Department in Uppsala respectively, look at two national non-government organisations in Sweden, the Sensus Study Association and the Church of Sweden itself. They find that innovation in both these organisations is very much driven by idealism. This is rather different from the findings of most studies of innovation, which look at organisations in the private sector, competitive, commercial organisations in which innovation is driven by a profit imperative. The paper's focus on idealism contributes new knowledge not only of what the innovation of non-government organisations entails and how it is brought about, but also of why such processes are initiated and thus why individual, organisational and societal transformation is essential in these processes.

It is a measure of the growing power of academic publishers that open access is usually seen from their perspective. Will open access accommodate their business strategy? Not

surprisingly, they have generally welcomed the prospect of being paid in advance rather than after a paper is published. In a *magnum opus*, Dagmara Weckowska, Nadine Levin, Sabina Leonelli, John Dupré and David Castle, from a range of British and North American universities, look at open access from the point of view of the author. They explore what enables, encourages and inhibits the adoption of open access publishing among bio-scientists. Weckowska and her colleagues find one group strongly motivated to adopt open access mainly by moral convictions and beliefs that open access benefits its own members, other scientists and society, and by peer pressure favouring open access. Another group expresses fewer pro-open access beliefs, but feels the same pressure as the first group from research funders to agree to open access. The paper's overall conclusion is that only those authors with strong moral convictions are willing to tackle the obstacles to open access in their social and physical environments. It follows that a single policy and strategy approach to open access – and perhaps especially one intended primarily to accommodate the requirements of academic publishers – is not appropriate. One size does not fit all.

Michael Witty, from Florida SouthWestern State College, is struck by the similarity between the modern patent system and the protection the Ancient Greeks afforded their innovators. He does not suggest a direct link, but his paper provides an alternative to the customary view that intellectual property rights were first established in late 15th century Venice and are inextricably linked with European industrialisation. Here Witty translates the German of a 1922 paper of Cichorius on the dinnertime musings of Athenaeus. Should a particularly successful recipe of an Ancient Greek chef be private or public property? Must the Greek chef keep the recipe secret or can the state offer a better alternative? All familiar stuff in a very strange context.

Asked to review a report on innovation in UK wave energy by Matthew Hannon, Renée van Diemen and Jim Skea from Strathclyde University, Bill Kingston was carried away by his enthusiasm for the topic. This is less enthusiasm for wave energy than for studies of innovation failure, always rare but now that the UK government expects academics to trumpet every instance of successful innovation, almost unknown. Hannon, van Diemen and Skea calculate that between 2000 and 2017, the UK provided close to half a billion pounds of public sector funding to encourage the private sector to capture offshore wave energy. Firms themselves contributed at least as much. What did the hundreds of millions buy? Precious little, and largely because the government was so desperate to demonstrate success that it distorted the research and development process. Firms were forced to go too far too quickly, and to patent information when they should really have been sharing developments. In Scotland, efforts were much more modest, but much more successful than in the rest of the UK. Wave Energy Scotland offered 100% funding and insisted that research results were shared among developers.

Steven Umbrello of the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies in Boston has become our book review editor. His energy and determination have borne fruit and *Prometheus* now has a healthy supply of book reviews. An outlet for opinions on the work of others is a vital constituent of an academic journal, and perhaps the hardest part to arrange.

Stuart Macdonald
General Editor