

## Editorial

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We're back! *Prometheus* has not been published since 2017, when Taylor & Francis dropped the title as a solution to the challenges posed by our debate on shaken baby syndrome. *Prometheus* editors wanted the debate published: Taylor & Francis managers did not and justified their stance in terms of the risk of defamation litigation. Taylor & Francis's lawyers beavered away for months, eventually declaring all eleven debate papers risk-free. Nothing daunted, the same managers immediately recruited new lawyers and these ultimately declared all eleven papers likely to be libellous. Dropping *Prometheus* avoided the risk. Taylor & Francis would not be alone among the large academic publishers in ensuring that huge profits should not be imperilled by free speech.

Precipitate action by Taylor & Francis managers left the eleven debate authors high and dry. Individual authors might have sought other outlets for their work, but all eleven chose to defy Taylor & Francis and be published together. *Researchers.One* was good enough to publish the shaken baby papers online as a *Prometheus* debate ([www.researchers.one/article/2019-03-3](http://www.researchers.one/article/2019-03-3)). We are grateful to *Researchers.One* for seeing value in this debate and accepting the risk that was too much for Taylor & Francis.

We are also grateful to authors in the *Prometheus* pipeline, stranded by its sudden blockage. These authors stuck with us even though they could not be sure if, when or by whom their papers would be published. Had they abandoned us, finding a new publisher for *Prometheus* would have been even more difficult. Being a critical journal – and a niche one at that – *Prometheus* is never going to make a fortune for its publisher. A belief in the academic value of a critical journal was required of our new publisher. This we found in Pluto Journals, a small publisher whose owner, Roger van Zwanenberg, has become a great supporter. Pluto will now publish *Prometheus* and JSTOR will distribute the journal. These new arrangements mean that the *Prometheus* website ([www.prometheusjournal.co.uk](http://www.prometheusjournal.co.uk)) has become much more substantial. Thanks to Simon Dunn, our computer expert, rather than your general editor, the website now carries copies of forthcoming papers, a complete list of *Prometheus* back issues since the journal's beginnings in 1983, and a fair bit else. Do explore.

We start this issue as we do not intend to continue, with a paper that has already been published. In 2018, Ryan Robinson and Sarah Gent were students at the University of Leicester, publishing their forensic examination of the punishment of Prometheus (by Zeus rather than Taylor & Francis) in the *Journal of Interdisciplinary Science Topics*. Would it really have been possible for our hero's liver to regenerate every night following its daily pecking by the eagle? The calculation is smashing tongue-in-cheek stuff because it does not matter. Much academic research is conducted more because it satisfies publication requirements than because any one cares. The Robinson and Gent paper is an apposite reminder that the *Prometheus* journal, like the Prometheus myth, is not important in itself. Neither journal nor myth is any more than a vehicle: it is the message the vehicle conveys that is important.

Yao-Su Hu looks at big data. He finds huge returns from the exploitation of mountains of data by digital platforms. But data, no matter how big and how clever the machine learning, are not knowledge. Knowledge is neither owned nor controlled: much big data is both owned and controlled by five big technology companies – Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google and Microsoft. Rivals to the Big Five are excluded from competition by the sheer cost of amassing information from scratch, and are deprived of access to the data of the market incumbents. Even the sources of all this information – you and I – are deprived of access to the data they have helped generate. Does this matter? Too right it does: unprecedented asymmetries “between the watchers and the watched, will continue to cast an oppressive darkness on the functioning of democracy and capitalism and on

human rights and human dignity.” And there’s the rub: surveillance of individual activity corrodes not only the individual’s privacy, but also her means of preventing the corrosion.

José Miguel Natera, Soledad Rojas, Gabriela Dutrénit and Alexandre O. Vera-Cruz explore the links between knowledge and better health. The strongest existing links are biased towards market mechanisms, focusing on access to health products and services. Studies of health innovation can help correct this distortion by adding non-market knowledge to the mix. Analysis in terms of actors, their interactions, processes and the institutional framework is recommended. Unsurprisingly, as many new questions are raised as old questions answered and further dialogue is advocated.

The new patent regime in the European Union is the concern of Dimitris Xenos. He argues that the national sovereignty of member states – particularly smaller member states – has been sacrificed to the ideal of European integration. Small and medium-sized firms have been especially disadvantaged by the unitary patent package. The basic assertion is that, as long as the European Union is neither single state nor federation, it must work through national systems of intellectual property rights. Efforts to supersede these national powers benefit only large firms, whether or not they are based in the European Union.

The issue concludes with Peter Swann’s review essay, stimulated by John Hudson’s *Robot Revolution*, and several shorter book reviews, the mark of an academic journal more concerned with thinking than with metrics.

So, *Prometheus* has survived – at least for the moment. I am profoundly grateful to all those who stuck by the journal during rough times. But the pressure on a critical academic journal is unrelenting and continuing support will be required. The general editor and the editors of *Prometheus* must ensure that this support is deserved.

Stuart Macdonald  
General editor