

## Editorial

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*Prometheus* is now an open access journal. On the face of it, this is excellent news: open access should give easier access to those who want to read the material published in *Prometheus* and so a larger readership to those who write it. Access to everything – including the complete backlist of *Prometheus* material from 1983 – is now free. Access to recent parts of the *Prometheus* backlist is available from JSTOR until the end of 2021, and access to other parts is available on the website of our previous publisher, Taylor & Francis. Access to absolutely everything *Prometheus* has ever published is now available free from our own website at [www.prometheusjournal.co.uk](http://www.prometheusjournal.co.uk).

By and large, *Prometheus* welcomes the change to open access. It replaces the traditional subscription model whereby libraries – usually large institutional libraries – paid publishers for annual access to an academic journal. The model had become threadbare, ill-suited to the expansion of higher education and academic publication. It was iniquitous that staff and students at richer universities in richer countries should have more access to academic literature than those at poorer institutions in poorer countries. And it was iniquitous that publishers sold libraries subscriptions not to individual journals but to big bundles of hundreds, regularly adjusted by algorithm to be those most critical to each institution's requirements – and priced accordingly.

Of course, the over-riding argument in favour of open access is an ethical one, that knowledge should be freely available to all. This argument is reinforced by the observation that all have often paid for the knowledge in the sense that the taxpayer funds much university research. It follows that government research councils are strongly in favour of open access. Indeed, UK research councils now insist that publicly funded research must be published as open access. When compulsion is reckoned necessary to force the public to do what is supposed to be in the public interest, it is time to inspect the situation a little more closely.

Who else benefits from open access? Well, academic publishers do. The industry publishing academic journals is huge, immensely profitable and has been the subject of a *Prometheus* debate not so long ago. The debate's proposition paper (Harvie *et al.*, 2013), highly critical of the large academic publishers, has received 11,393 'views', more than any other *Prometheus* paper and apparently more than any other paper published in any of the immense stable of Taylor & Francis journals. Sweet irony. The industry is dominated by an oligopoly of just five firms, *prima facie* evidence of a threat to public welfare. These firms have no particular objection to being paid in advance for each paper they publish by means of the article processing charge (APC) usually associated with open access. This can be serious money. Consequently, APCs are generally paid by institutions or research funders rather than by authors.

APCs are set by each publisher for each journal and have been rising rapidly, increasing the problem for institutions and funders of deciding just which research should be published (Jubb Consulting, 2017). The temptation must be to pay for the publication of papers which will score highly in terms of citation indexes and impact factors, and thus reflect well on academic performance. Thus it is that the APC for papers in journals with high impact factors is many times higher than that for lesser, niche journals (Ellingson *et al.*, 2021) – a result of what the market for academic performance indicators will bear rather than any reflection of the cost of processing an article. Another problem – one faced by *Prometheus* – is that open access makes it easier for inexperienced, or merely desperate, authors to confuse respectable journals, and especially niche journals, with predatory journals. Predatory journals offer little or no quality control and uncertain APCs in exchange for rapid publication and no questions asked. They are also open access. Unconditional enthusiasm for open access and the insistence of research councils that those they fund publish in

open access journals would seem to give an unintended fillip to a publishing model even more exploitative than that of the established industry.

The form of open access Pluto Journals, publishers of *Prometheus*, has adopted may provide more benefits than most. Our publisher has successfully flipped its complete portfolio of 21 titles to open access from 2021. The project was realised in partnership with Knowledge Unlatched, and supported by Libraria, the conceivers of the subscribe-to-open (S2O) model. Libraria is a group of anthropologists and other social scientists committed to open access. Pluto Journals has asked those libraries and institutions currently subscribing to any of its journals to renew for 2021 on the S2O basis, thus contributing to making these journals completely free to readers and authors all over the world.

But to the contents of this first open access issue. Felicity Wood's research looks at the similarities between Western institutions and African witchcraft. She has published in *Prometheus* before, comparing the activities of the business school with those of the witchdoctor. Here she casts an African eye over the Western fascination for numbers. Every aspect of academic performance has come to be measured by numbers, and academics are all too familiar with numbers as fashion and fetish. Through the magic of numbers, academic endeavour becomes both measurable and manageable. Numbers convey an impression of accuracy, transparency, objectivity and impartiality. Yet, the fetishism of numbers in higher education is neither rational nor practical, neither fair nor accurate. Instead, it stems from and fosters delusion, deception, inequity and irrationality, vanity and greed.

Johanna Lauri's paper analyses the Swedish government's discourse on social innovation, and how it intertwines with gender equality in government texts and media material. Earlier research on social innovation discourse has revealed a strong bias towards market solutions, that social innovation has become an essential trait in the neoliberal reforming of the state. Businesses, it would seem, have the desire and capacity for social change and altruistic agency. Thus, the responsibility for social change is left to private corporations, giving the impression that the public sector is lacking the required qualities.

Social change and gender equality are hence made intelligible within an economic logic, equating social change with doing business and gender equality with making profit.

While change management has received much attention in the literature, argues Jenny Tann, the same cannot be said for the change agent. She sets out to change this situation. Whether internal or external to the organisation, change agents play an important part in much innovation. They are awkward customers, easily bored but energised by the prospect of altering things. Tann reflects on her own experience as a change agent and concludes that, important as the change agent's influence in the organisation might be, it is even more important that the change agent get out of the organisation when there is no more to be done.

For decades, Australian governments of all political persuasions have sought to transform the country through education and knowledge. On the face of it, Australia would seem to have the human resources and the necessary infrastructure to convert an economy based on raw materials to one based on services. A knowledge-intensive, high-technology economy has long been the goal. And yet the Australian economy – and mindset – remain firmly based on natural resources and agriculture. Neal Ryan, Michael Charles and David Tuffley consider the significance of culture and national identity in Australian destiny. They examine art, poetry, song and film to conclude that, despite a multicultural and multiethnic modern Australia, the national ethos is as rooted as ever in hyper-masculine hard work. The lucky country is still not the clever country. Research and innovation have been directed not towards those sectors capable of creating greatest value, but towards the resource and agricultural sectors of the economy. Follow the testosterone.

Half a dozen book reviews wrap up the issue nicely. As ever, thanks to our referees and editors, our copyeditors (River Editorial) and our publisher (Pluto Journals) – and, of course, our authors. More in future issues on the conversion to open access.

## References

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