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Volume 4 of the Journal for the Public University arose from the APU's annual forum. Held at the University of Melbourne in April 2007, the topic was 'The Politicisation of Research'.

The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake has long represented the central *idea* of the university according to traditional theorists, such as John Henry Newman. This meant that the knowledge ought not to be constrained by external forces, the market, the state or church. All this has now changed. Whilst the secularisation of society has led to a scientisation of knowledge, it has also encouraged timidity on the part of academics. The kind of objectivity that stems from a commitment to universalism in criticism and analysis is radically directed to very narrow ends that are defined by state and corporate imperatives rather than the academy. This can be seen in the yearly formulation of key research priorities in nationally competitive grant schemes and the pre-occupation with publishing metrics as an end-in-itself.

Research is expected to be functional to the point that it satisfies the 'end users' who fund the research. This paradigm shift has been effected by neoliberal governments and represents one prong of the international trend to privatise and commodify knowledge. The functionality of research, together with the direct intervention by government has the potential to exert a profoundly deleterious impact on academic freedom. As Polanyi recognised, research that is not free produces only subordinated knowledge.

In his famous paper 'What is Enlightenment?', Immanuel Kant defined enlightenment as being release from 'self-incurred tutelage'. Such tutelage, for Kant, was religious, but it need not be. 'Tutelage is people's inability to make use of their understanding without direction from another... "Have courage to use your own reason!" —that is the motto of the Enlightenment'. The politicisation of research has produced a new kind of tutelage, concerned as it is with outputs and inputs, with the latest buzzwords from the education ministry and with key performance indicators.

It is this kind of tutelage that the interdisciplinary papers in this volume critically explore.

Rob Watts, in *The Politicisation of Academic Research?*, argues that thinking hard about the conventional evaluative frameworks applied to the idea of the politicisation of research is a problem. He suggests that there are more than a few conundrums about what precisely the problem is thought to be, since research has never in fact been 'pure'. All too often, we allow 'sham inquiry' or 'fake inquiry' to pass as research. Any recent survey of the research done by social science and humanities academics in Australia suggests that we need a more sophisticated account of the politics of academic research than is on offer currently. Watts sets out to distinguish between the ways that academic research may be said to be political in a valuable way, and a number of things that may be said to constitute an anti-politics.

Robert Manne, in *Threats to University Independence: The Case of the Humanities*, examines the different kinds of threat to the research independence of the humanities at the university in Australia in recent years. He poses these questions: how serious are these threats? And why have they arisen now? In responding, he focuses on two scenarios: the refusal by former Minister for Higher Education, Dr Brendan Nelson, to ratify three ARC grants in the 2005 round and seven in the 2006 round, and the failure of the University of Sydney to defend academic freedom when accepting funding for a US studies centre despite the clear political objectives of the centre.

Barrie Pittock, in *Global Warming: The Climate Science Perspective*, takes a critical look at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) review of climate change science in 2007. He draws attention to the risks and uncertainties in the data that are not apparent to the undiscerning eye. Pittock's interpretation suggests that the effects of climate change might be higher or more extreme than originally thought to be the case.

Margaret Thornton, in *Contemporary Research and the Ambiguity of Critique*, takes up the theme that research is now valued less for its contribution to scholarship than for its income-generating capacity and value to endusers. She suggests that a receptiveness to functional new knowledge is being created not only through official research policies but also more insidiously through the commodification of education itself. Thus, while extreme forms of government intervention, such as terror censorship, clearly constrain academic freedom, the everyday practices of commodification and competition policy pose an even greater threat because of the way they are woven into the woof and weft of the contemporary university.

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