

What is the Mandate of NEHU? The Claim of Humanities

BINOD KUMAR AGARWALA

I

In reply to the question “What is Enlightenment?” Immanuel Kant said, “*Sapere aude* – Have the courage to make use of your own reason.”¹ What is the danger in making use of one’s own reason to overcome which one requires courage? Gadamer answered, “...making mistakes is certainly a universal danger for human mind, and this is related to the fact that standing alone in one’s opinion is oppressive – so much so that a person can come to feel as if he has been ostracized from the common faith, whereas on the other hand what he himself holds true seems so evident to him that he may clamor for it to be generally recognized.”² The danger that confronted the researcher at that time was from Christian religious orthodoxy and hierarchy. Today, the source of danger lies in absolutism of science, at least so at NEHU.

In 1973, the Indian Parliament established and incorporated NEHU as a research and teaching university. But, I argue in this article that in due course of time NEHU has turned out to be the foundation of the new *absolutism* of modern science in the region, and scientificity has acquired a value to which most in the university give priority over their own values, so much so that the orthodoxy of science has now become a danger. To use one’s own reason in the university one requires courage to face this orthodoxy. According to John Stuart Mill, “... in political and philosophical theories, as well as in persons, success discloses faults and infirmities which failure might have concealed from observation.”³ The success of science in the university has also disclosed its infirmities which might have been concealed in the beginning.

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science, management etc. These terms often characterize people's functions in the economy, the administration, the educational system, and other areas of social life. The scientist is no longer someone allowed by the indulgence of people in power to administer cultural goods; he has become the expert. The impact of absolutism of science in the university is hence felt not only due to the appeal to experts and especially to social experts and natural scientists for arriving at decisions, but also due to the adoption of a model of applying the natural and social sciences to the tasks faced by a modern university.

Academicians need to be concerned about the major role now taken by the scientific experts in our institutional life of university as the 'experts' and have become the most sought-after persons. The increasing importance of the role which experts play in our university is a symptom of the increasing ignorance of the decision makers.⁴ This ignorance is due to the increasing degree of complexities of a modern university where educational, administrative, legal, technological, commercial, and private interests are woven together. The traditional clarity which a reasonable man acquired through his life experiences is no more trusted. The new expert is expected to be competent in science as well as the complexities of an institution like a modern university.

No doubt science has tremendous explanatory power. The experts are expected to speak the final word. But academicians in the university know no such final word exists. Scientific experts merely extrapolate from an insufficient scientific basis in complex situations.⁵ They are aware of it and express this fact in their professional conduct as scientists. In a situation where decision is left to the expert it is as good as tossing a coin. When the expert finds himself in the midst of distortions caused by commercial, technological, administrative or political interests, he is really not in a position to express his conscience. Here we have to remember that in any scientific subject there exists a certain tension between knowing and acting in general, and the practicality and correctness of the application of this knowledge and ability. The knowledge and ability required for practical correctness is of another kind as it depends on and has a basis in choosing the correct application for good.⁶ This knowledge is not available to the expert as a scientist unless he has a thorough grounding in humanities, the linguistic repositories of centuries of wisdom of people. A correct totality of normative orientation to the world is a must for sound judgment.

It must be remembered that the rationality of practical reason rules our action as well as the adequacy of the means used in acting, for the simple reason that there is a final inseparability of practical prudence from moral reasonableness.⁷ Experts are mere embodiments of learnable technical knowledge, and having listened to the experts the choice of the practical means for a given end is a matter of individual or institutional responsibility, to be discharged through power to judge and deliberate, without there being any specialist to assist. As far as choice of ends is concerned – even though it is doubtful if ever we can speak of choice of ends – experts have nothing to do with it as it relates to question concerning the good. This surpasses the competence of every specialist. In this context the subordination of economic reason under social reason is incontestable, yet it is just as incontestable that this subordination is disputed in the university and there is an attempt to subvert the social reason in favour of economic reason. The role of expert in a modern university is conditioned by pressures and situations, which require that the voice of science assert itself in opposition to the interests and needs of society guaranteed by social reason.

Facts too play a role in this context. When facts are collected in the university, it is not concerning limitations of science as such, but it is for its social effectiveness. To be concerned with the facts is a well known legitimizing device of scientific research. It is accustomed to pride itself in this, avoiding the vague and uncertain claims of the humanities. Here one should not forget that fact is a hermeneutic concept that implies a context of arguments, which itself is not simply a fact, but depends upon expectations and interests. “It is well-known how persuasive and useful for propaganda the quantitative treatment of facts and their relationship can be. Statistics is one of the most powerful means of propaganda – not for instructing but for subtly suggesting particular reactions.”⁸ Statistics as a tool is not neutral.⁹ Therefore, there is a need of the critique of the concept of “fact.” Humanities are aware that not mere facts but facts in a particular meaningful relationship actually fulfill the claim to be facts. When Napoleon caught a cold in the battle of Wagram, this may have actual weight as a historical fact which explains his defeat. Clearly this cold was a fact, and yet not every cold which his men have caught at the same time is a meaningful fact.¹⁰ But universities are collecting more facts in statistical tables now than what they had done in the past. This quantitative treatment of facts enables universities to serve the economic reason subverting its social reason.

But experts are not really to blame for this. Each academician who belongs to the university has to share this responsibility. When our university is examined, in the end of it all, we are all examined and must answer.¹¹ “The more an institutionalized form of competence is constructed, which proffers the expert, the specialist, as an escape from our not knowing, the more one covers up the limitations of such information and the necessity of making one’s own decisions.”¹² One’s self-responsibility cannot be replaced by science and its responsibility, i.e., the responsibility of the expert.

Our university is threatened not because experts are consulted and recognized for the superiority of their knowledge, but because decisions are determined by interests whereas the will to be rational is absent from decisions. But no morality of good intention can override the ethics of responsibility.¹³ In responsibility resides something which one can never discharge to the knowledge of another.¹⁴ One who could have known better or could have acquired a better understanding knows himself to be responsible for the results of his decisions. In acting responsibly there are certain unconditional limitations in the pursuit of one’s own goals and ends. The experts who advise the decision makers must not allow their responsibility for the anticipated results of a scientifically acceptable insight to override the responsibility to hold to what science has actually learned and asserted, uninfluenced by the pressures of interests and the expectations of decision makers. This requires a careful distinction between the responsibility that belongs to science and scientist, which is a specific ethos of responsibility required of anyone who speaks in the name of science and the responsibility of an expert, in his capacity as an expert conjoined to decision making process in institutions.¹⁵

The two words “technocracy” and “bureaucracy” betray how much we all feel the loss of freedom and impossibility of identifying with the universal social reason.¹⁶ Both the words are pejorative like “autocracy” on which they are modeled (and not like “aristocracy” or “democracy”). Just like the autocrat technocrat is a representative of alien power inaccessible to reason an autocrat makes identification with the universal impossible as he is not bound by universal law and justice. So is the case with a technocrat. He remains a challenge to both individual and social needs to be reasonable, even though his plans and intentions are backed by rationality of science and he is an expert in public opinion formation.¹⁷ “Bureaucracy” is also the oldest insult hurled by peasants and commoners at the governors and authorities, which questions their administrative irrationality.¹⁸ Does the scorn embodied

in language not exhibit our longing for common and universal social reason?

This longing for universal social reason is also expected from the scientific experts and the decision makers who rely on experts to arrive at judgment, if the judgment is to be sound judgment. Humanities embody this common social reason.

II

What is called humanities and/or 'moral sciences' in English speaking countries, is called *Geisteswissenschaften* in Germany and *letters* in France.¹⁹ These names of the subject indicate that it is a study of humanity and their moral and social corporate existence, which is based on some common spirit (*Geist*) achieved through language and communication of generations through writing (*letters*). Humanities are nothing but uncovering of the unity in the multiplicity of words, which is also the process of recovery of solidarity of people, which is a cultural historical community of language, which goes beyond mere political unity. The being uncovered which gathers us all together in its unity is such that it is beyond the comprehension of scientific knowledge whether social or otherwise. Rather science and technology get their place in this unity.²⁰

No doubt all cultural worlds or cultural spheres have administered and transmitted a science gained from experience, but there has never been created a cultural sphere among the variety of human cultures, which has been extensively dominated by science.²¹ Hence modern cultural thinking is shaped by differentiation of religion, philosophy, art and science. There is no such differentiation available in any other cultures be it living traditional Chinese or Indian culture or extinct high cultures of Babylon or Egypt.²² Modern culture begins in the seventeenth century with the emergence of natural science based on mathematics as a fact manifested in the new mechanics of Galileo and with the diffusion of the mathematical foundation of all empirical sciences. With the emergence of the methodological ideal of modern science the unity of the traditional, comprehensive knowledge, which carried the general name "philosophia," divided itself into an irreconcilable dualism of two worlds, a cosmos of empirical sciences and a cosmos of the world-orientation based upon linguistic traditions.²³ With this, a wedge was driven into the comprehensive knowledge of tradition which resulted in the duality of the natural sciences and humanities. Some studies in humanities in later period emulated the methodology of natural sciences and started calling themselves social sciences, narrowing the humanities further. With this humanities have more or less

consciously assumed the great inheritance of human questioning concerning final things like meaning of life, which give one orientation in the world. But in contrast, science through its methodology breaks down the resistance of its object to bring it under human control and manipulation through scientific knowledge. Science contributes to economic progress while humanities work for social-human reorientation to cope with this economic progress. The imbalance between the economic progress and social-human reorientation for progress has its own destabilizing effect on the society.

Social sciences have been rigorously disciplined by the methodological ideal of modern natural science. Technological progress induced by natural science has also influenced social sciences to aspire for social engineering. The methods and forms of expression, i.e., increasing use of the mathematical, statistical methods, testify to this. It appears in the eyes of social scientists as if modern society and social-scientific, organizational and economic problems it produces have come to resemble the true natural world and its problems. Probably because of this social sciences have tried to emulate with slight modification the methods of research in natural sciences. Applying the strict requirements of natural sciences, one may say of the social sciences that their experiential scope and their experiential basis are insufficient as a foundation at present. But this could change, just as extended weather forecasts are becoming increasingly more reliable. The new computer era permits tremendous increase in the quantitative- statistical collection and storage of information that one may ask oneself whether the life of society is not becoming more and more calculable by organizational ingenuity of an administered world, thus possibly meeting expectations derived from natural sciences in the authentic sense. Social sciences would then be a full partner with natural sciences, if they were to accomplish the investigation of the nature of society with the goal of controlling this nature. Will there be any scope left for humanities then? Has the humanities' special role for the social life of humanity in the visible future been exhausted?

The answer to all these questions is in the negative. The concept of "knowledge", which dominates the academia in the era of absolutism of science is more or less the concept of knowledge which emerged after renaissance on which both the social organization and industrial production and technology are based. The model of knowledge has already passed through three stages. The first model declared that knowledge is being. This was the model of knowledge when man had just learnt to think and distinguish himself from animals and reached the peak in Parmenides. The second model declared

that knowledge is virtue. This model emerged through the crisis of Greek enlightenment in fifth century B.C. It was developed and refined by Socrates and Plato and modified by Aristotle, which continued to dominate the intellectual scene up to the end of middle ages in the garb of religious knowledge. The third model declared that knowledge is power. This model of knowledge emerged through renaissance and still continues to dominate intellectual scene the world over. Thinkers from Bacon to Foucault have tried to develop and refine this understanding of knowledge. But the emerging new society can be characterized more appropriately not as knowledge society but by the slogan – information is wealth. In commensurate with this slogan we need a different model of knowledge. Information is not knowledge. It turns into knowledge only when its significance is realized. So we require knowledge of significance of information. The information does not bear its own significance. Knowledge of the significance of information is not the power to manipulate or control the object of information as the power theory of knowledge presupposes. The knowledge of significance of information is not the scientific knowledge of causality operating in nature or society. The society based on the knowledge of significance of information is in a position to orient itself easily as required by economic development and changes taking place due to modernization.

It is because we need this knowledge of significance of information, and this knowledge can be provided neither by social sciences nor by natural sciences, both are losing their charm in the new society. The students taught by the management schools are equipped with control and management skills and techniques based on knowledge as power. So their learning is as irrelevant in the new society as knowledge of natural and social sciences.²⁴ It is the humanities that have the capacity for this kind of knowledge and have to assume this responsibility in times to come.²⁵

One may recall that I began with the claim that humanities are nothing but uncovering of the unity in the multiplicity of words, which is also the process of recovery of solidarity of people, which is a cultural historical community of language, which goes beyond mere political unity, and now we are envisaging humanities as concerned with knowledge of significance of information. Significance of information, it must be emphasized, can be realized only in the totality of the context which spans the total history and geography together with linguistic communication. So the two roles are not distinct and different; rather they are the two sides of the same study, as one cannot have the unity of a totality without being aware of significance of each item

in this totality and vice versa.

Here it must be remembered that consumption culture of the modern globalised world has come rather quickly to the northeastern hill region, but there is no commensurate world-orientation among the people of the region to cope with this new culture. This imbalance needs to be addressed by the universities in the region. It is here that the insights of humanities achieve a new relevance. The region is in search of a form of culture which can accomplish the trick of uniting its own traditions and the deeply rooted values with ideas of economic prosperity. The whole of the region is facing this question. Have the universities of the region designed their teaching and research programmes to face this question? Or are our universities functioning as grafted gifts of alien power causing more disorientation rather than contributing to the coherent and harmonious future of the people of this region? Do the universities with absolutism of science have something to offer in this regard? One seriously doubts this even if a university brings economic growth, employment and technical know-how to the region. Sooner or later universities have to fall back on humanities, whose imperishable effective mark is the element of evolved being, which the humanities represent and can best express in the value concept of culture, which is different from its anthropological concept.

III

The knowledge embodied in humanities is also needed in the university due to another development, which is the interweaving of science and state. Due to the state's mounting dependency on science, it is obliged to take science more and more under its own protection and oversight.²⁶ There is also a mounting dependency of science on the modern state, especially due to high expenditure involved in scientific research.²⁷ This creates an anomalous situation. A thoroughly rationalized political system leaves no space free of political responsibility. And yet science insists on maintaining the freedom of theory and research. Science insists on maintaining research in the interest of economic system. But in recent decades the mounting costs of scientific research have given rise to mounting expectations on the part of the state. This has its own after-effect: worries about cultural standards, the civil society, and the state and public sphere. All the problems in the university that have recently developed have emerged precisely out of the state's interest in preparing us well for professional life. This has also led to the problems of universities that have reduced the free space of research by requiring

increased teaching. In this situation, the conflict between the claim of research and the claim of society played out in the universities becomes a pressing subject for reflection for academicians.

The conflict between free search and state power cannot be resolved politically.²⁸ Political power is under obligation to justify all its decisions by appealing to purposes. By contrast, the postulate of research is that they are "free of purpose." It is in a certain sense a necessary pretense when someone explains to the public, with its expectations of purpose, that research sometimes involves asking basic questions from whose answers no results can be expected that would directly fulfill any purpose immediately. This is a lame pretence because, in truth, all research is basic research, and only through a secondary transformation can it address the problem of applying its findings to some practical purposes.²⁹ The problem of purpose becomes more acute if one is expected to justify research in humanities by satisfying some purpose. Humanities do not admit the question: What is its use? Not because it is useless but because its value is so apparent in itself. It embodies its value so self-evidently that for its value it need not refer to any thing other than itself.

Nowadays exercise of power and responsibility in the modern representative state is legitimized by ballot. This compels the politicians to make only short-term calculations. Since universities are beholden to political power for funds short tenured university authorities also cannot look beyond their short term of office. But research knows no such short periods of time. The first spark of a research idea is separated perhaps by decades from anything that might be of some concern to society. The first fifty years of twentieth century lived on the research achievements of the nineteenth century.³⁰ It was the realization of the productive ideas of the late nineteenth century that finally fructified into something of concern to society in the first half of twentieth century. In general the short-term and the long-term of research do not harmonize, and it necessarily leads to impatience on the part of the political authorities who control the purse string for research.

Huge funding of research in sciences leads necessarily to planning of research. But it is nearly impossible to do so. A researcher in humanities finds it difficult to fulfill administrative expectations about the legitimacy and reliability of his plan. Such a researcher carries out only routine research but the one who finds something different from what he expected really has done something extraordinary. The state depends on reliability in its planning and the fulfillment of its plans in order to justify its budget and distribute

public funds justly. But in reality it is full of compromises. Politicians can plan and also can make compromises.

It is almost impossible to control research.³¹ No doubt state needs balancing the need and duty to oversee those who receive its money. But this requirement does not make any sense when it comes to research in universities. The attempt to calculate how many hours a professor should spend in preparing and delivering his lectures and how many hours he has to be in laboratory or library, in other words, how many hours in the week he is on duty so that public money can be paid commensurately to him is palpably absurd. It is not possible to administer research in this bureaucratic way. That financial oversight is necessary over the ever greater sums being invested in many branches of research especially in sciences certainly does have something convincing about it. But it must be admitted that this oversight is only partial, for no one can really be in a position to judge whether the book purchases made by a particular library or faculty on a particular date were really necessary.

The purchases of the books in humanities are moderate and modest, but in the natural sciences we are talking about much higher sums. No doubt it is true that trusting the trustworthy is effective than any financial control, which, like every other kind of control, always stays *de facto* within determinate limits. But equally there is no doubt that trust can be abused. Wherever people show trust, the abuse of trust also occurs, although when trust is shown, that trust may also be rewarded.³² There is a reason for trust between research and society where small sums of fund are involved. But are not the sciences responsible for tipping the balance away from trusting the trustworthy, for the cost of betrayal of trust in the context of science research is too high even for once? Isn't there a possibility that huge sums of money are spent in purchasing expensive equipments which are at times not even taken out of the crates and are sold as scrap later? Where huge sum of money is involved are there no greater consequences of betrayal of trust? *Suppressio veri, suggestio falsi* used to be a fallacy in philosophy for suppression of the truth is the suggestion of falsehood. Are the university scientific experts not indulging in it under the euphemism of image building to attract higher funding from various agencies for science research?

It is a mistake to proclaim the virtues of making our practical reason absolutely dependent on science,³³ as we do these days in our university. It is a mistake to make decisions too scientific. First of all, the social sciences are still in their infancy compared to the natural sciences and do not have at

their disposal a rich store of experience. Secondly, they lack the kind of comparatively passive object amenable to experiment and measurement, which has enabled progress in the natural sciences.

It seems that one of the causes of our present difficulties in the university is that we have forgotten our power of judgment. By "power of judgment," I mean sound understanding, which is based on the experiences of life. So those who exercise it in their considered and responsible judgment through lived experience (*Erfahrung*) can have no rule to guide it. Even to apply a rule to a particular case requires judgment.³⁴ "The difference between a fool and a sensible man is that the former lacks judgment, i.e., he is not able to subsume correctly and hence cannot apply correctly what he has learned and knows," writes Gadamer.³⁵ If we understand judgment as merely the faculty of guiding us in subsuming a particular under a universal, then it would seem less like a sense than a rule – a rule for the application of rules. Yet, as Kant argued, if judgment were itself a rule or requiring a rule, it would require yet another higher faculty of judgment to guide its own application.³⁶ If this regress is to be avoided, judgment cannot be conceived as a rule or concept belonging to conscious reflection. Rather it is appropriate to speak of the sense of judgment. Judgment grasps the sensible particular in agreement with the many factors. This agreement is the immanent internal agreement between discrete things. Judgment judges immanently. Gadamer writes, "common sense is seen primarily in the immanent judgments about right and wrong, proper and improper, that it makes. Whosoever has a sound judgment is not thereby enabled to judge particulars from universal viewpoints, but he knows what is important, i.e. he sees things from right and sound points of view... Judgment is not so much a faculty as a demand that has to be made of all."³⁷ This demand amounts to "a moral command to detach oneself from the subjective private conditions of one's own judgment and to shift one's ground to the standpoint of the other person. But this unconditionality also means that the moral consciousness cannot avoid reference to the judgment of others."³⁸ Hence, judgment to achieve its perfection needs immanent guidance from the wisdom of humanities, which embodies the common sense (*sensus communis*)³⁹ of all humanity. This was also the claim of Mahatma Gandhi when he questioned modern mechanical culture. If we follow Mahatma Gandhi we have to measure the greatness of a university in terms of its ability to produce men and women possessing such distinctly human powers as self-determination, autonomy, self-knowledge, self-discipline and co-operation. But our university does exactly the opposite. By making

its members to alienate their power of judgment to experts, it is rendering members passive, helpless and heteronomous.

It is true that we find antagonism between pragmatism and idealism and between practice of power and theories of humanities. And yet there is common anthropological ground beneath this antagonism.⁴⁰ We need to recover this common ground if judgment is to be a sound judgment. To find this common ground we have to overcome our desire for any false reconciliation of the two in a university. When we are talking of the conflict of theory and practice it is not to be confused with the distinction between scientific theory and its application to a specific situation, rather what we are referring to is the conflict between *theoria* and *praxis*, i.e., the theoretical attitude and the practical attitude as elaborated by Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Habermas, Arendt, Gadamer and other thinkers.

The anthropological foundation of the relation between theory and practice in human life is not really based on two irreconcilably different attitudes to human reason. The passion for theory and the passion for practice are simultaneously at work on those who make a profession of theory and those whose profession is the practice of social life.⁴¹ Practice does not amount to the blind application of theoretical findings of science about what is possible for us to do. Practice – responsible practice in particular – is required of man because he is not bound by the natural animal instincts but is endowed with freedom of choice that has diverted him from the contexts and paths of pure natural order. He is constantly confronted with choice. He sets ends for himself and looks for appropriate means. He uses what philosophers recognize as practical reason. He is familiar with organized work, which always involves the denial of desires and impulses. Hegel rightly said that work is desire held in check.⁴² The immediate satisfaction of desires is postponed to favour a commitment of energy that is recognized as necessary, which also involves a commitment to socio-legal institutional order. This order is necessary because man rationally shapes the conditions of his own life in this sense.

But this leads to conflict. This order is possible without people having power over people.⁴³ This is the problem of practice of corporate life. The organization of an institution is unthinkable without people exercising power over people. But the true dialectic of power is quite monstrous, for every attempt to control power gives birth to more power. No doubt the highly developed modern Montesquieuean⁴⁴ art of finding a balance of powers does to some extent bring about a certain equilibrium and control of power in the

universities. This is the basic idea of modern universities where we have such balancing bodies like executive council, academic council, board of research studies side by side with officers like Vice-chancellor and Deans. But we cannot forget that each controlling power is itself a possible new super-power within the organizational order. This is part of the law of power itself. No doubt powerful hierarchies are in favour of sciences as it generates knowledge which is power, including the power to control institutions.

Like practice of a corporate life theory, the theoretical attitude is also a fundamental form of human behaviour.⁴⁵ Theoretical attitude is in no way limited to the special case of research that asks to be exempted from social expectations. Theory involves distance from oneself.⁴⁶ This distance from oneself so characteristic of theoretical attitude is also expected in the context of practice of exercise of power. In his great utopia, Plato showed that the guardians, the people who exercise control over power and thus hold the real power, can resist the law of constantly extending and overweening power only if there is something else that they would rather be doing.⁴⁷ This something else is the Greeks' idea of the theoretical life, which is still valid but which is merely forgotten due to a certain over-emphasis on practice. In modern universities when it is generally accepted that there should be an academician as the executive head we are following the advice of Plato. Theory is a basic human possibility, and it is connected most closely with organizations of power in university. All men by nature strive after theoretical knowledge,⁴⁸ for it cultivates the mind. The curiosity of a growing child, the first attempts at criticism, accumulating experience, the growing sense of direction, man's slow process of settling into the organized life that surrounds him, his participation in the linguistic communication of all with all, lead him on the path of *Bildung* (cultivation).⁴⁹ So cultivation is not the privilege of some endowed with any especially distinguished talent. *Bildung* is the ability also to think from the other person's point of view. The cultivated person knows the particularity of his own experiences and so realizes the danger in generalizing which follows from that particularity. He listens to others and this listening can extend to the total wisdom of the humanity contained in humanities, which is always available in language. Hence, theory is just as primordial an anthropological datum as is practical power in organizations.⁵⁰ So, constant renewal of the balance between these two human forces is required of man. Organized life of human beings exists, whether in the university or in any other institution, only because and as long as there is a balance of theory and practice.

The passion for practice involves an obsession with ends, the passion for theory involves a freedom from ends. This freedom from ends is virtually institutionalized in the humanities: they are *artes liberales* (liberal arts), not *artes mechanicae* (mechanical arts). These free arts can also be called *schöne Künste*, fine art, for “*schön*” (beautiful) has a much broader meaning than we might suppose from aesthetic taste. Here it must be realized that as distinguished from humanities, sciences are always interest-guided, especially guided by technically practical ends, as realized by philosophers from Kant to Habermas.⁵¹ Hence sciences are instruments at the service of power to achieve ends while humanities restrain and control that power.

Human life as such requires the balance between obsession with ends and freedom from ends. To be human we must have in our purposive action at the same time freedom from purpose. One, who is able to achieve distance from himself, who gains insight into the limitedness of his sphere of life, and so openness to others, experiences constant correction by reality.⁵² Humanities have made this their most noble duty. Humanities’ freedom from ends serves to liberate us from those narrow ends constantly created in us by our wishes and illusions. It is in this sense that the education for objectivity that makes a researcher is fostered by humanities.

Conscience of a researcher consists in yielding unconditionally to the answer given by reality. This sometimes requires giving up years that one has invested in his research because it leads to a blind alley.⁵³ Education for objectivity and humanity is a goal that has been accepted by society. This means that education to purpose-free research into truth is really not as odd as we have come to think in our university. Education to purpose-free research has nothing to do with the idolization of technically practical knowledge which merely gives power to manipulate. Theoretical attitude is an indispensable element of the process of human “socialization” in which the practitioner, and even the “administrator,” participates.

Conflicts between the researcher and the administration are inevitable. The institutionalization of free research in sciences is inevitable because the latter needs very high funding. Ultimately this means that whoever allocates this fund must answer for it, and so must justify applicability of science. This demand can scarcely be met without insoluble conflicts, bitterness, and exaggeration arising on both sides, i.e., the fund giver and the researcher. This gives rise to misconceptions of all kinds. It is possible to avoid bureaucratization and dominance of a bureaucratic apparatus so as to be

critical of the particularity even of one's own administrative and managerial competence following what Plato lays down for his guardian who would rather be doing something else than the task to which he is appointed as claimed before: "Someone who finds nothing more beautiful than power – and power must seem attractive if it is to be used effectively – will surely not be able to find that distance from himself and his power that would make a liberal use of his power possible."⁵⁴ This requires liberalization of the way we treat teaching and research institutions and their possibilities. This depends on the realization that what is beautiful, what is free from ends, i.e., humanities, is a self-fulfillment of humanity. It is legitimate and needs no justification beyond itself. It does not require administrative techniques. Wherever administration functions smoothly, this insight must exist. But our public consciousness in universities needs really to be informed of what, from its point of view, this really comes down to.

IV

This insight of existence and role of humanities is needed to be told urgently for the public consciousness of NEHU fraternity for when we reflect on this university we are not confronted with the issue of understanding the existing order of things; rather we find ourselves in the midst of difficulties of planning and creating an institutional order not yet fully in being.⁵⁵ There are various ideas about what constitutes the right order of things, ideas so incompatible with each other that the overall institutional solution is ultimately nothing but a resigned compromise. Does creating a new institutional order make sense if, from the start, we are faced with irreconcilable ideas about the constitution of a right order? Can one plan according to a standard of institutional order if one is ignorant of the end towards which all mediating and possible steps proceed? Does not all planning depend on the existence of a definitive concept of the goal? Are we aiming at quality of research as UGC is envisaging? Or are we merely increasing the number of PhDs? Or are we merely aiming at enrolling more PhD scholars for distributing scholarships to channel more funds in the region? Are we aiming at greater specialization so as to introduce five year integrated course? Or are we deconstructing the existing specialization by introducing Choice Based Credit System of certification?⁵⁶

We need to reflect more fundamentally on whether it is the overdependence on science in our business of education and research that has increased the uncertainty regarding the intended goals and the content of the university order. The question we pose goes completely against the grain of the unquestioned belief in science in this university. All reflection

about the potential ordering of our university must proceed from the deep tension that exists between the asserted authority of science and the ethics and customs of institutional forms of life transmitted by tradition. We need to evaluate the significance of the sciences in our university in terms of the cultural heritage from which the universities emerged and flourished as institutions of learning and research. If we look at the history we find no period in which science revolved only around itself, that it is concerned only with those methods and possibilities which are necessary for the scientific affairs as if the disparity between the realm of attainable means and possibilities and the norms and goals of life did not exist.⁵⁷ Onslaught of Max Weber upon Stefan George's romantic esotericism is a memorable evidence of this fact.⁵⁸

The question concerning the forms of ordering our university can, however, be posed in scientific terms. What can we accomplish scientifically in our university? What must be changed scientifically? What scientific knowledge must we take into consideration so that the management of our university becomes frictionless and better? The idea of a perfectly administered university appears to be the ideal to which the educational administrators are committed. This ideal of administration is a conception of institutional order which does not specify its content. The idea of the object to be manufactured scientifically constitutes the perspective to which the whole process conforms.⁵⁹ But what pertains to the nature and appearance of the perfectible object is wholly dependent on its intended use. The knowledge of science is no guarantee that the object will be used according to its requirements, or, it will be used for something which is right. An additional expertise is required to determine its correct utilization, that is, the application of the means to the right ends. Here we need the practical reason of humanities. Practical reason and knowledge, which recognizes the feasible in concrete situations in institutional life, do not allow for perfection in the same way as does skill with respect to making its object. Skill is teachable and learnable, and its performance is manifestly independent of the moral and political qualities of human beings.⁶⁰ But, the practical reason and knowledge, which man employs to guide and illuminate institutional life situations, are not thus independent.

We do not need a social physicist to *make* or *remodel* our university as a perfectly administered educational and research institution, instead what we need is a humanist, steeped in the traditions of humanities to *pilot* and *steer* university to *maintain* its equilibrium, which oscillates in precisely set

amplitudes and to *guide* the selection of a direction which is possible within the oscillating equilibrium.⁶¹ It must be remembered that all our planning and execution transpire within an unstable equilibrium, which constitutes the determination of our institutional life, for only where the forces of equilibrium are maintained can the factors of human volition and desire be of any consequence.

No doubt a creation of a uniform pattern of examinations, questions, teaching hours, laboratory or library hours, synopsis for thesis, thesis writing, method of research, neat tabular statistical presentation for outside agencies etc. for all schools and departments is conducive for easy administration. But the relevant question is precisely whether such uniformity is desirable in universities. Every department, teaching and conducting research in a subject, must be allowed to speak for its subject and in the process establish its subject within the overall equilibrium of the university. Only then will we be able to achieve the cultural renewal of our university to provide for academic freedom to fulfill its mandate as a teaching and research university. Only in such a condition can our university hope to be characterized as *Universitas Scholarum*⁶² (a guild of scholars), *Universitas Literarum*⁶³ (a corporation of scholarship) and allow for a dream of *res publica literaria*⁶⁴ (a republic of intellectuals).

References

1. Immanuel Kant, *What Is Enlightenment?*, translated by Lewis White Beck (University of Chicago Press, 1950), VIII, 35-41: "Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. *Sapere aude!* 'Have the courage to use your own reason!' – that is the motto of enlightenment." The phrase "*sapere aude*" itself is from Horace, *Ars poetica*.
2. Hans-Georg Gadamer, Science as an Instrument of Enlightenment, in his *In Praise of Theory: Speeches and Essays*, translated by Chris Dawson, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1998, p. 71.
3. John Stuart Mill, On Liberty, in *the Six Great Humanistic Essays of John Stuart Mill*, Ed. Albert William Levi, Washington Square Press, New York, 1963, p. 129.
4. Hans-Georg Gadamer, The Limitations of the Expert, in *Hans-Georg Gadamer On*

Education, Poetry, and History: Applied Hermeneutics, edited by Dieter Misgeld and Graeme Nicholson, translated by Lawrence Schmidt and Monica Reuss, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1992, p.182.

5. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Limitations of the Expert*, p.183.
6. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Limitations of the Expert*, p.184.
7. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Limitations of the Expert*, p.185.
8. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Limitations of the Expert*, p.186.
9. Consider the statistical table on the number of persons enrolled in absolute terms in the universities in India in 2007-8 and the statistical table on the percentage of population in respective jurisdictions enrolled in universities in India in 2007-8. If grants are to be given to universities on the basis of this kind of tables which one would be preferred by NEHU and which one would be preferred by Delhi University? For Delhi University obviously it is better to represent its student intake in terms of absolute number of students admitted as it will be more in comparison to many other universities like NEHU while it will be disadvantageous to represent student intake in terms of percentage of population in its jurisdiction as this percentage will be very small compared to other universities like NEHU. While for NEHU it will be exactly reverse. This example may be a caricature but it holds good with respect to most sophisticated statistical presentation of data.
10. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Limitations of the Expert*, p.186.
11. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Limitations of the Expert*, p.187. "It is the responsibility which we have always known to be addressed by the Socratic question: that in the end we ourselves are examined and must answer."
12. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Limitations of the Expert*, p.188.
13. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Limitations of the Expert*, p.189.
14. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Limitations of the Expert*, p.189.
15. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Limitations of the Expert*, p.191.
16. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Power of Reason*, in his *In Praise of Theory: Speeches and Essays*, translated by Chris Dawson, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1998, pp. 46f.
17. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Power of Reason*, p.47.
18. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Power of Reason*, pp.47f.
19. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Future of the European Humanities*, in *Hans-Georg Gadamer On Education, Poetry, and History: Applied Hermeneutics*, Edited by Dieter Misgeld and Graeme Nicholson, translated by Lawrence Schmidt

- and Monica Reuss, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1992, p.193.
20. Cf. Binod Kumar Agarwala, Humanities and Social Sciences in the New Millennium: Theorization in / for Society as Play, *Creative Social Research: Rethinking Theories and Methods*, edited by Ananta Kumar Giri, Lexington Books, Lanham, Maryland, 2004, pp. 261 – 62.
 21. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Future of the European Humanities*, p.194.
 22. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Future of the European Humanities*, pp.194f.
 23. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Future of the European Humanities*, p.198.
 24. Sciences and technology consolidate “*homofaber*” which is the model of man governing academia the world over. But humanities cater to “*non-homofaber*” which is the need of the new emerging global knowledge society. I discussed the issues in my essay, *Globalization: A Theoria in Increasing Disparity and Terrorism*, *Tribe, Culture, Art: Essays in Honour of Professor Sujata Miri*, edited by Vanlalnghak and Siby K. George, DVS Publishers, Guwahati, 2005, pp. 244-73.
 25. I have discussed these issues in my essay *Humanities and Social Sciences in the New Millennium: Theorization in/for Society as Play*, *Creative Social Research: Rethinking Theories and Methods*, edited by Ananta Kumar Giri, Lexington Books, Lanham, Maryland, 2004.
 26. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, in his *In Praise of Theory: Speeches and Essays*, translated by Chris Dawson, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1998, p. 62.
 27. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, pp. 62f.
 28. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, p.63.
 29. The distinction between basic and applied is deconstructed in my essay, *Applied Ethics: A Deformation of Practice*, in *Applied Ethics*, edited by A. P. Dubey, Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, 2004.
 30. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, pp. 63f.
 31. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, p.64.
 32. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, p.65.
 33. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, p.65.
 34. See Hans-Georg Gadamer’s discussion of “judgment,” in his *Truth and Method*, translated by William Glen-Doepel and edited by John Cumming and Garrett Barden, Sheed and Ward Ltd., London, 1975, pp. 29-33.
 35. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 29.

36. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, translated by James Creed Meredith, The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1952, p.5.
37. *Truth and Method*, p.31.
38. *Truth and Method*, p.32.
39. See Hans-Georg Gadamer's discussion of "common sense (*sensus communis*)," in his *Truth and Method*, pp. 19-29.
40. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, p.65.
41. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, p.66.
42. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), translated by A. V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon, 1977, 118, "Work, on the other hand, is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off."
43. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, p.66.
44. Charles Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), translated by Thomas Nugent New York: Hafner, 1949, 9.6, 151. "When the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person, or in the same body of magistrates, there can be no liberty."
45. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, p.67.
46. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, p.67.
47. Plato, *Republic*, 7.520e-521b.
48. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I.I.980aI.
49. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, pp.67f.
50. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, p.68.
51. Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Beacon Press, 1971. See also Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas*, Polity Press, Cambridge, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1984, pp. 53-125.
52. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, p.68.
53. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, pp.68f.
54. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Science and the Public Sphere*, p.69.
55. This pertains to all planning for the future. Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Notes on Planning for the Future*, in *Hans-Georg Gadamer On Education, Poetry, and History: Applied Hermeneutics*, edited by Dieter Misgeld and Graeme Nicholson, translated by Lawrence Schmidt and Monica Reuss, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1992, p.165

56. In raising these questions I am not focussing on integrated course and CBCS as such, rather my aim is to highlight the mutually opposed aims in reformation of the university by taking these as examples.
57. Hans-Georg Gadaer, Notes on Planning for the Future, p.169.
58. Hans-Georg Gadamer, Notes on Planning for the Future, p.169.
59. Hans-Georg Gadamer, Notes on Planning for the Future p.170.
60. Hans-Georg Gadamer, Notes on Planning for the Future, p.171.
61. The idea of “model of piloting” was advocated by Hans-Georg Gadamer, Notes on Planning for the Future, p.174.
62. Hans-Georg Gadamer, The Idea of the University – Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, *Hans-Georg Gadamer On Education, Poetry, and History: Applied Hermeneutics*, edited by Dieter Misgeld and Graeme Nicholson, translated by Lawrence Schmidt and Monica Reuss, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1992, p.52.
63. Hans-Georg Gadamer, The Idea of the University – Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, p. 53.
64. Hans-Georg Gadamer, The Idea of the University – Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, p. 54.