

# The Future of the Humanities

SUPRIYA CHAUDHURI

## *Studia humanitatis*

It is a rare privilege for me to stand before you today, though my subject, *the future of the humanities*, is one that may fill us with dismay rather than delight. Do the humanities, as we know them, have a future in a world increasingly dominated by technology and science? What, in fact, are the humanities? Are they a set of disciplines confined to the university and relegated there to the least valuable categories of intellectual enquiry? Or do they have a function both within and outside the university space, within the ambit of everyday life, especially cultural and social life? Let me begin by considering the humanities within the university and then move beyond it.

The university, its name suggesting that it pursues universal, or holistic knowledge, nevertheless organizes its fields of enquiry into separate disciplines, and sorts those disciplines into groups, which it calls faculties, from Latin *facultas*, meaning capacity, ability, skill, but related to *facilitas*, meaning ease, facility. The Faculties within the university, then, are intended to facilitate distinct forms of enquiry, such as the humanities, the sciences, technology, and so on. We take these distinctions for granted, but not only are they not self-evident, they have not remained the same over time. The question that I would like to ask today is one fundamental to the Faculty I represent. It is,

*what are the humanities?* I ask it because the humanities and the university—perhaps the disciplines of knowledge as a whole—are alike in crisis today, and at such moments of crisis, as Karl Marx said in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, we anxiously consult the ghosts of the past.

The term ‘humanities’ derives from ‘human’, and to ask what the *humanities* are is also to ask what that dangerous term, the ‘human’, is. For the Roman rhetorician Cicero, in his oration *Pro Archia*, the *studia humanitatis ac litterarum* (humane and literary studies) were those studies that formed one towards being human. In this classical phase of Latin culture, being human was not so much a given, as an aspirational, even exclusionary goal. About the exclusionary aspects of being human I will have something to say a little later: for having entered what we might call the post-human phase of our culture, as we contemplate planetary decay, global warming, plastic-filled oceans, extinction of species, and nuclear cataclysm, we may not be so confident of the privilege of being human, and more alive to our links to plants, other animals, and machines. I will come back to this point. But in another respect, Cicero was not exclusionary, in that he did not think of the humanities as distinct from the sciences, theoretical or applied. In fact, he seems to have viewed the whole of classical education as covered by this term. In *De re publica*, he cites a story told by ‘Plato, or someone else’, to the effect that

after a storm had thrown him up on a deserted shore, he glimpsed geometric patterns on the sand and called out to his companions to be of good cheer, for he had seen the signs of men.<sup>1</sup> Language and mathematics, the ability to communicate with others, and the ability to form and recognize patterns, figure equally in this classical view as being the property of human beings, and the universe of letters comprehends all those human arts by which, Cicero says, we come to know the infinity of things and of nature. In the 5th century the *studia humanitatis* was codified as the seven liberal arts, i.e., grammar, logic, rhetoric (the *trivium*) and arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy (*the quadrivium*) that formed the curriculum of the medieval European university.

### Restriction of meaning

Over several centuries, this inclusive term, the *studia humanitatis*, meaning the whole scope of knowledge available to human beings, was reduced to the disciplines relating mainly to the arts of language alone. This reduction took effect during the Renaissance. Not only did the profession of *umanista*, the teacher of the humanities disciplines of rhetoric and dialectic, emerge in late medieval universities, but the early Italian humanists—Coluccio Salutati, Pierpaolo Vergerio, and Leonardo Bruni—consciously re-defined the *studia humanitatis* in the interests of a new pedagogy, focusing on the study of poetry, history, moral philosophy, and the best models of Latin style. It was this that led to a split between the arts of language, and those based on mathematics or physical observation. I will not go into the long and complicated history of how, subsequently, the notion of the humanities comes to be still further reduced

with the self-definition of the ‘social sciences’ in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By the end of this process, after the sciences and the social sciences had been taken away, the humanities, which had originally contained all of these, was the remainder, if not the dangerous supplement.

It was this reduced version of the humanities that was introduced to the colonial university, and promoted at the cost of the sciences (even before the self-separation of the social sciences), in the interests of producing that clerical class necessary for a fully operative colonial bureaucracy. It has even been suggested that colonial liberal arts education, emphasizing subjects like English literature, was consciously promoted (to use Gauri Viswanathan’s phrase) as a ‘mask of conquest’.<sup>2</sup> We may recall Rammohun Roy’s letter to the Governor-General, Lord Amherst, on 11 December 1823, urging that the natives of India be instructed in ‘Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful Sciences’, in ‘a college furnished with the necessary books, instruments and other apparatus’.<sup>3</sup> So far as we know, the appeal went unheard. Theoretical and experimental sciences were not emphasized in the colonial curriculum (which also ignored the empirical and critical strands of pre-colonial culture), though reformers like Vidyasagar continued to press for their inclusion, and scientific textbooks were produced in Indian languages from the mid-19th century. As most historians have noted, despite the establishment of a few colonial technical colleges (Guindy, Roorkee, Pune, Shibpur, etc), general scientific and technological education was very much the product of a nationalist endeavour. In 1872, Mahendralal Sarkar proposed the foundation of an Indian

Association of Science, and a searing critique of colonial power infuses Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's endorsing of this venture in a *Bangadarshan* essay published soon after.<sup>4</sup> The Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science was ultimately founded by Mahendralal Sarkar and Father Eugene Lafont in 1876, and the National Council of Education, with its emphasis on technical training, in 1906. This is part of a larger history of nationalist investment in science, of which another signal instance was the foundation of the Indian Institute of Science in 1899 through the active efforts of Sir Jamsetji Tata and the Maharajah of Mysore; the Banaras Hindu University was founded in 1916, also with an emphasis on technology and science. Post-Independence, as we are all aware, there was a planned investment in scientific and technological education, and a degree of radical ferment in some of the social sciences, such as history and economics.

### **The eclipse of the 'humanities'**

Subsequent to India's independence, and its strenuous efforts to 'modernize' itself into a technologically developed nation, the 'humanities', an unexamined placeholder for other liberal arts disciplines, such as literature and philosophy, came to be neglected and ignored within university spaces. It is worth recalling that these disciplines (literature, philosophy, and so on) had already been undermined by the traumatic break with pre-colonial knowledge-systems instituted by the colonial university itself. What Lord Curzon described as 'the cold breath of Macaulay's rhetoric' had indeed laid its chill blight on literary studies in Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and other classical and modern languages in India, while philosophy, struggling to

reconcile contrary methodologies and persuasions, faced a real dilemma of practice. It is important to remind ourselves of this crisis, since its gravity is often obscured by the tremendous wealth of new literature in the modern Indian languages, by the energy of social and religious reform movements and by nationalist politics from the 19th century onwards. In some parts of India, notably Bengal, there was even talk of a Renaissance: yet there was little by way of a revival of classical learning (despite some important contributions from Orientalist philology) in the colonial universities, largely devoted to the study of British literature and the thought-systems of the European enlightenment.

Whether this was good or bad is not the issue: arguably, classical learning carried with it religious and social baggage that the project of 'modernity' needed to discard. It is impossible from our vantage-point today to wish away this history, or to dismiss its real achievements in social and political thought and new literary work (also, perhaps, insufficiently represented in university curricula). Nevertheless, a humanities education in India carried with it a sense of vacuum, a kind of disciplinary lack. There was also a real confusion about the status of the humanities: do they have a place, or are they simply a placeholder for the undefined other of science and technology, or of 'professional education' that prepares the ambitious towards careers in law and business? It is worth noting here that the 'two cultures' debate in the Indian academy (unlike the situation in England described by C.P. Snow in his 1959 Rede Lectures) does not contrast the urbanity and culture of humanists with the social awkwardness and obscurity of scientists: rather, science, medicine and technology, however little understood, have been granted extraordinary

social prestige, even a kind of glamour that casts humble humanists into the shadow. I have no desire to enter into the politics of this debate in the Indian academy, though that politics is one in which we are all involved, and cannot forget.

### Immanuel Kant

The last book that Immanuel Kant published in his lifetime was *The Conflict of the Faculties* (*Der Streit der Fakultäten*, 1798), bringing together three essays he had written in the 1790s, responding to efforts by the government to control the university and its intellectual productions. Unlike many other philosophers, Kant spent most of his life teaching in a university, and he was twice Rektor of the Albertina University in Königsberg (modern Kaliningrad). *The Conflict of the Faculties* examines the relation between the ‘higher’ faculties (theology, law and medicine) and the ‘lower’ faculty (philosophy) in a university, and by extension, the relation of philosophy to the offices of government and bureaucracy. Philosophy, in the sense that Kant understands it, is what we would call the humanities (inclusive of some branches of science).<sup>5</sup> The distinction of higher and lower is not one that Kant creates; he adopts it from the academic hierarchies of the time:

Whoever it was that first hit on the notion of a university and proposed that a public institution of this kind be established, it was not a bad idea to handle the entire content of learning (really, the thinkers devoted to it) by *mass production*, so to speak—by a, division of labor, so that for every branch of the sciences there would be a public teacher or *professor* appointed as its trustee, and all of these together would form a kind of learned community called a *university* ...The university would

have a certain autonomy (since only scholars can pass judgment on scholars as such), and accordingly it would be authorized to perform certain functions through its *faculties* (smaller societies, each comprising the university specialists in one main branch of learning).

‘In addition to these *incorporated* scholars, there can also be scholars *at large*’, Kant suggests, as well as ‘members of the *intelligentsia* (university graduates) who are instruments of the government’, like civil servants, and under its control. Within the university itself, Kant says, ‘the government is interested primarily in means for securing the strongest and most lasting influence on the people, and the subjects which the higher faculties teach are just such means.’ Thus, the government can justly seek to regulate the well-being of its citizens by securing their physical health, their legal rights, and the salvation of their souls, by directly overseeing the faculties of medicine, law and theology. ‘Accordingly, the government reserves the right itself to *sanction* the teachings of the higher faculties, but those of the lower faculty it leaves up to the scholars’ reason. But even when the government sanctions teachings, it does not itself *teach*; it requires only that the respective faculties, *in expounding a subject publicly*, adopt certain teachings and exclude their contraries.’

However,

It is absolutely essential that the learned community at the university also contain a faculty that is independent of the government’s command with regard to its teachings; one that, having no commands to give, is free to evaluate everything, and concerns itself with the interests of the sciences, that is, with truth: one in which reason is authorized to speak out publicly.

Basically, then, what Kant is saying is that it is the task of philosophy—of the humanities—to pursue reason, to evaluate the nature and principles of knowledge, and to speak truth to power, publicly, like the *parrhesiastes*. There may, he says, be legitimate conflict between the faculties, in that there can be disagreement on rational grounds or disputes about specific truths. But the conflict is illegitimate if members of one faculty try to exclude others from rational debate and assert an authoritarian command over their own specialized fields, which they administer, not according to reason, but according to the written canon, which may become arbitrary or unjust.

### ‘Critical literacy’

For Kant then, the function of the humanities is to provide a critical corrective to the operation of more rule-bound dispensations of knowledge: the philosophy faculty, despite its ‘lesser’ status, remains the source of free, rational and dispassionate enquiry in the most authoritarian of state regimes. There are, as most commentators have pointed out, many unanswered questions here: who is to judge of reason, and who is to protect philosophy? Kant’s own experience, after he published the *Critique of Practical Reason*, was not encouraging, and his essays in fact respond to official measures at censorship through King Wilhelm II’s *Edict on Religion* of 1788.<sup>6</sup> If we see an analogy between Kant’s situation and our own in the twenty-first century, it is a depressing one. In a brief essay—written in the form of a letter—prefaced to a book by his colleague John Higgins at the University of Cape Town, the novelist J. M. Coetzee offered a pessimistic coda to Higgins’s powerful appeal for a revival of the humanities as the only means for educating future citizens in the ‘critical

literacy’ required for a culture to renew itself. As Coetzee noted,

All over the world, as governments retreat from their traditional duty to foster the common good and reconceive of themselves as mere managers of national economies, universities have been coming under pressure to turn themselves into training schools equipping young people with the skills required by a modern economy.<sup>7</sup>

Rejecting the notion that ‘the transient needs of the economy’ should drive higher education—a motive with which we are increasingly familiar in India today—Higgins had called for the ‘critical literacy’ (his term) that a humanistic education provides. For him this was the capacity to argue, to interrogate, and to unsettle the structures of social and political life. Coetzee is sympathetic to this cause, but pessimistic about its outcome. His pessimism is founded on two linked perceptions. In the first place, he has no illusions about ‘the ideological force driving the assault on the independence of universities.’ To him this assault, commencing in the 1980s and directed by state power, appeared cynical and coherent: it sought to neutralize sites of agitation and dissent, and prevent the dissemination of ideas that might induce young people to question, rather than accept, the social, political and above all *economic* order. Secondly, he found that universities had proved reluctant or ill-equipped to protect themselves:

The fact is that the record of universities, over the past thirty years, in defending themselves against pressure from the state has not been a proud one. Few academics appreciated, from the beginning, the scale of the attack that was being launched on

their independence or the ideological passion that drove it. Resistance was weak and ill organised; routed, the professors beat a retreat to their dugouts, from where they have done little besides launching the intermittent satirical barb against the managerial newspeak they are perforce having to acquire.<sup>8</sup>

Coetzee's gloom has its origin in a genuine crisis, a global shrinkage, if we might call it that, in the philosophical and critical functions of the academy. As he sees it, the loss of academic autonomy cannot be repaired by reviving certain kinds of intellectual disciplines: it is far too closely linked to political and economic forces that have combined to render the modern university merely the slave of capital. For, he says, universities have programmed their own extinction by yielding to managerial newspeak, and (I quote) 'there are too few people left who really believe in the humanities and in the university built on humanistic grounds, with philosophical, historical and philological studies as its pillars.' Gloomily, he concludes that

The campaign to rid the academy of what was variously diagnosed as a leftist or anarchist or anti-rational or anti-civilisational malaise has continued without let-up for decades, and has succeeded to such an extent that to conceive of universities any more as seedbeds of agitation and dissent would be laughable.

As a (retired) professor, permanently confined to a metaphorical dugout, I cannot but share Coetzee's sense of the actual ineffectiveness of rearguard action on our part. Indeed, Coetzee concludes that universities themselves are doomed to extinction, and that the humanities

disciplines on which they had been founded will be the first to go. He suggests that the 'managerial' solution to the acquisition of 'critical literacy' will be a single-semester course in critical thinking, rather than entire sets of courses on Plato and Heidegger. For the threat to the academy is not just from the loss or attenuation of traditional knowledge disciplines, but from their substitution by 'skill sets' which are claimed as transferable even without disciplinary foundation—and among these he appears to place a version of 'critical literacy', or critical thinking. At the close of his letter, predicting a situation as bleak as that in Poland under totalitarian rule, he suggests that philosophy be taken out of the university, to 'keep humanistic studies alive in a world where universities have redefined themselves out of existence.'<sup>9</sup>

What, if anything, is the university today? In an article written around thirty years ago, the philosopher Jürgen Habermas offered a trenchant critique of what he saw as the idealism inherent in Karl Jaspers's 1923 text, *The Idea of the University*, revised in 1961. As Habermas pointed out, 'the idea of the university' suggests an ideal life-form that can no longer be realistically supposed to exist:

Even disregarding this extravagant claim to exemplary status, isn't the very premise that a vast and extraordinarily complex structure such as the modern university system be permeated and sustained by a mode of thought shared by all its members, unrealistic in the extreme? Couldn't Jaspers have learned years earlier from Max Weber that the organizational reality into which the functionally specified subsystems of a highly differentiated society imbed themselves rests on wholly different premises? The functional

capability of such institutions depends precisely on a detachment of their members' motivations from the goals and functions of the organization. Organizations no longer embody ideas.<sup>10</sup>

Can the modern university still claim to be animated by an idea, or ideal? Is there, within functions and specializations, a collective consciousness, a 'shared self-understanding of the university's members'? Habermas is not convinced. Ideas come and go, he says, and it is impossible—even undesirable—that all of the university's members should share a 'normative self-image'. What he hopes for, by contrast (and here we are on familiar Habermasian ground) is that they should share a belief in the communicative or discursive forms of scientific argument that hold learning processes together. 'The doors stand open,' he says, 'and at any moment a new face can suddenly appear, a new idea can unexpectedly arrive.' How can we associate these processes with the emergence of the modern university in India?

### **State funding and control**

That emergence, from the nineteenth century onwards, was driven by three factors: colonial educational policy, nationalist experimentation, and the patronage system of old and new philanthropy. In this it was perfectly representative of India's own uneasy transition to a 'modernity' whose nature is still in question. The process did in fact produce interventions in the public sphere, though with varying degrees of success. In some cases (as with Madan Mohan Malaviya or Sir Syed Ahmed Khan) they were led by charismatic figures whose presence in the university drew it into the urgency of the historical moment. In other cases—such as

that of Tagore's Visva Bharati—'modern' higher education was itself under attack. Subsequent to independence, however, access to state funding and the promulgation of various University Acts tended to erase what was distinctive about each institution, to increase its dependence upon the public exchequer (whether State or Central) and to encourage subservience to bureaucratic control by government. Universities were actively discouraged from raising funds from the public or from other sources (despite having been set up through public donations), forced to maintain fees at a level so low that state subsidy was imperative, and compelled to focus on degree-granting to the exclusion of infrastructure, libraries, research, and social commitments.

Many of these legitimate interests were absorbed by newly founded research institutes that appropriated to themselves the high ground of higher education, notably in science and later in the social sciences. In a phantom reminder of Kant's categorization of the higher faculties regulated by the state, technology and medicine, often restricted to specialized institutes, drew the greater part of state funding and control. The humanities survived almost by default, as a means of mopping up the social energies and interests of a vast, amorphous majority of university entrants, unsure about their own futures, never mind those of their academic disciplines. Yet despite the constraints imposed by an unimaginative bureaucracy, limited funding, decaying infrastructure, and an attenuated research climate, the public universities of India, in the decades after independence, emerged as the first free, democratic, and secular space where all classes of Indians could meet and interact.

The reaction of the state in India today to the emergence of this space has been

unequivocally hostile. Inevitably, its efforts have been directed towards forcibly annexing the humanities disciplines for a new market economy and in the ideological service of a homogenized type of state religion unrecognizable by large numbers of citizens accustomed to the loose unstructured variety of traditional Hinduism. On the one hand the state is suspicious of the unquantifiable excess, the flexibility and porousness of humanities disciplines and concerns: on the other, it regards them as susceptible to ideological penetration in the service of ‘national integration’, ironing out the differences in an intensely diverse, multi-religious, plurilingual society. In this latter enterprise, the future of the humanities is as a vehicle of ideology, and a slave to technological capital, through which the future of the nation can be assured.

### The way ahead

It is therefore all the more important for us to ask what function the humanities can perform, and to ask whether they can be a site of critique and resistance. As we all know, the idea of the human and the ideology of humanism have been almost continuously under attack for a couple of centuries, long before Heidegger’s ‘Letter on Humanism.’ In Western thought, it is arguable that the overvaluation of the human that accompanied the Renaissance—and which propels the rediscovery of the classical *studia humanitatis*, or humanities—was accompanied by a painful sense of the limits and contradictions of the human condition. This is evident even in what might be regarded as the most signal achievement of the new philosophy, the ‘scientific revolution’ of the seventeenth century, separating mind from matter, human from animal, and animal from machine, but leading paradoxically to a real loss of

confidence in the human subject as such. In *The Open: Man and Animal*, Giorgio Agamben invokes Heidegger’s *Letter on Humanism* and its detaching of *humanitas* from *animalitas* in explicitly re-opening the question of the human. Agamben’s concern in that philosophical treatise is with the distinction between human and animal (a distinction as important to Descartes as it was to Heidegger).

In our post-human condition, we have, I will suggest, gone beyond that distinction as it was classically proposed, so that it makes little sense to speak of the study of the humanities as ‘forming us towards being human’. Rather, we are aware that our species-condition—such as it is—is a condition of profound dependence on the other constituents of our world, so that we are not human in and for ourselves, but by and for others. Two central questions for the humanities, I suggest, are: ‘*How can we be happy?*’ and ‘*How can we live so as not to harm others?*’ Science and technology also ask these questions, but the answers involve the co-operation of the two major humanities fields: *literature*, which uses the imagination to ask what happiness is for ourselves and others, and *philosophy*, which uses reason to ask how we can live well. We may recall that Bertrand Russell wrote a short book called *The Conquest of Happiness* in which he laid out a rationalist prospectus for living well.

So if there is a set of disciplines called the humanities, they should enable us to ask questions about the interdependence of humans, other animals, and machines, indeed of the connectedness of the entire natural world and our activity within it as agents and as receiving subjects. There was a certain *hubris* (certainly the ideology of humanism was in its time extremely hubristic) in believing that human beings



were therefore separate from the natural or animal world, of which they were in fact part, and that they could use it instrumentally and objectively. To ground the humanities in the notion of *humanitas* was a dangerous and ultimately untenable move, since it claimed for human beings not simply a distinct status, but a moral and intellectual privilege based on the self-love and prejudice of those making the claim. It was a stance characteristic of the Anthropocene, and its inevitable and devastating consequences were planetary decay, species death, and global catastrophe. If the humanities have a subject today, it is this prospect of the end, of ‘the time that remains’ (in a completely different sense), rather than an abstract ‘future’.

In J.M. Coetzee’s 2003 novel *Elizabeth Costello* (which overlaps with *The Lives of Animals*, published in 1999, and *Slow Man*, published in 2005) an aging woman writer travels around the world giving talks, not on literature, but on vegetarianism, philosophy, language, sexuality, and evil. Deliberately, Coetzee breaks open the format of the novel in order to put questions to society, law, custom and morals. It is as though he is trying to take the subjects that interest him out of the generic straitjacket of the novel and release them into the network of connexions, of actions and reactions, on which our existence depends. I would like to think of the new humanities—covering topics ranging from human ecology to statistical probability to censorship and to biological futures—as ways of receiving and processing knowledge, putting facts to question, understanding what things are. The new humanities are impossible without the co-operation of science and technology, but they are—in so far as such divisions can be made—a distinct field of study, in that they offer space for reflecting on the pursuit

of life itself and how we can live more attentively, paying more heed to the conditions by which our lives become possible at all. For life for us is not just our life, but the lives of others, of other species and kinds. It is also dependent, as it has never been to this extent, on technological supplements, on the *ubiquity of the prosthetic* (particularly in the electronic domain).

Traditionally the humanities have been focused on questions proper to the conduct of life, and these are questions of ethics, of sympathy, of communication, of *how we know what we know*, and *why we believe what we believe*. These are universal questions, and the last two belong to the hard sciences as well. In fact it is from the hard sciences that we learn a certain technique of asking questions and proving answers, which is crucial to the humanities *per se*. On the other hand, the humanities enable us to ask the hard questions about justice and freedom, and to ask them in a way that recognizes the brevity and uncertainty of life. Indeed we cannot ask these questions in isolation from—say—a mathematical conception of equality, or an economist’s notion of freedom. I would like to suggest that our lives today, as individuals, as political beings, as users of technology, as role-players, make it impossible to consider literature, philosophy, the arts, history, sociology (the ‘humanities’ disciplines) as sealed off into their linguistic or discursive compartments. Rather, to study one is to be touched by all.

This is not to suggest that we can achieve full interdisciplinarity: life is short and memory is inadequate. What I am suggesting, rather, is that older humanities disciplines allow themselves to be transformed from within—as they are already doing to a considerable extent—to

acknowledge the relation, say, of philosophy with biology, literature with ethics, politics with technology, culture with informatics, and so on, becoming what have been called the ‘new humanities’. To do so, in however limited a way, is *to think the future* of the humanities. That future brings us back to the past, to a time when, as Cicero saw it, the humanities included all the fields of human knowledge. That future must be debated in the public university, which has always served as a default testing ground for

the function of intellectual labour in a democratic society. In our fractured, unequal and impoverished social reality, the open space of the public university is our only safeguard against ‘managerial newspeak’ on the one hand, and political slavery on the other. It is a space that does not allow us to think of the life of the mind separately from other life-worlds: it compels us, instead, to understand that the humanities *are* a means of thinking futures, thinking about the future. ■

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 M. Tulli Ciceronis, *De re publica*, I.29
- 2 Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Studies and British Rule in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- 3 Rammohan Roy, ‘To Lord Amherst on English Education’ (1823) in *Rammohan Rachanabali* [Works] ed. Ajit K. Ghosh (Kolkata: Haraf Prakashani, 1973), pp. 433-36.
- 4 Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, ‘Bharatbarshiya Bijnan Sabha’ (1872), in *Bankim Rachanabali* [Works] ed. J. C. Bagal, vol. 2 (Kolkata: Sahitya Samsad, 2004), pp. 951-56.
- 5 ‘Now the philosophy faculty consists of two departments: a department of *historical knowledge* (including history, geography, philology and the humanities, along with all the empirical knowledge contained in the natural sciences), and a department of *pure rational knowledge* (pure mathematics and pure philosophy, the metaphysics of nature and of morals).’
- 6 Kant’s book is a response to King Wilhelm II of Prussia (successor of Frederic II, d. August 17, 1786). The new king, influenced by his minister Jean-Christophe Woellner, tried to suppress critical attacks on religion, resulting in the Edict on Religion of December 19, 1788, forbidding any propaganda against the state religion, namely Christianity. In the same year, Kant published *The Critique of Practical Reason*, attracting royal disfavour, and censorship prevented the publication of the second part of the *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. This was the main focus of the dispute leading to the appearance of *The Conflict of the Faculties*.
- 7 J. M. Coetzee, ‘Preface’, in John Higgins, *Academic Freedom in a Democratic South Africa: Essays and Interviews on Higher Education and the Humanities* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2014), p. xi.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. xiii.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. xv.
- 10 Jürgen Habermas, ‘The Idea of the University: Learning Processes,’ trans. John R. Blazek, *New German Critique*, Special Issue on the Critiques of the Enlightenment, 41 (Spring - Summer, 1987), 4 (3-22).

\* The paper is based on the Surrendra Paul Memorial Lecture delivered at the Institute on 28 December 2023. Professor Supriya Chaudhuri is Professor Emerita in the Department of English, Jadavpur University, Kolkata.