various fora, in particular by the Society for Scientific Values (SSV). The consensus was that an oath is repugnant to an honest and real scientist, but it provides respectability to the one who is not. It was thus agreed that a code of conduct be circulated to academic and research institutions, to enhance the awareness level. SSV did take up a few cases of malpractice seriously. Though it did not succeed in bringing the guilty to book, its actions did stir up awareness on the subject. Since then, the SSV has adopted a low profile and is following the standard route that our societies follow, namely organize national seminars on the subject and have our prominent scientists and administrators address the participants with the usual doses of theoretical values. If one had dared to ask these dignitaries as to what they have contributed to their own organization in terms of transparency in management and a value–merit–trust-based governance, there would have been fireworks, to say the least.

N. Vittal is one of the most honest, efficient, eloquent and scientifically-oriented IAS officers. And, yet, despite such a reputation, Vittal bemoans his failure to achieve anything significant in his position as the CVC. Will Vittal be able to investigate the veracity of doctored achievements publicized by our ministries in full-page national newspapers on numerous occasions? Being also very practical, Vittal has rightly decided that there is no need to create an ORI in CVC. A similar set-up in USA has been dismantled. As Lerch of the International Relations of the American Physical Society has pointed out, the solution to curbing deviations from scientific ethics lies with the responsibility, shared among individuals, academies, professional societies and institutions while maintaining high standards with very strict peer review. True, the high financial and recognition stakes in the new IPR regime have created a new dimension to this problem, particularly in the area of life sciences in USA. The setting up of a National Science and Technology Council Implementation Group (NSTCIG) by the Clinton administration may suit USA. But our problem is with our fundamentals. Do we have the spirit and practice of an American-style bloodletting peer review in any of our organizations? If anybody has tried it even mildly in any national committee, the result will be his/her banishment from such committees. Let us, therefore, clean up our own stables and support non-government organizations such as SSV to keep us all on the track. No ORI, please.

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Emergence of the third culture

The editorial in *Current Science* (2001, **80,** 1361–1362) about the emergence of the third culture made interesting reading. Both sciences and humanities existed side by side as academic disciplines in our education system. Study of the classics and languages was compulsory in the universities of Europe till the end of the eighteenth century. There was no rift between the sciences and humanities before the Industrial Revolution in Europe. The dramatic growth of science, particularly physics, during the last century created a wedge between science and humanities, thus giving rise to the 'two-culture' hypothesis.

In India, we followed a lop-sided educational policy. After independence, general science was first introduced as an optional subject in high schools. During the sixties, it was introduced as a compulsory subject, with stress on physics and chemistry. Science was further classified into medical and non-medical streams at the 10 + 2 level in schools, with little chance to change over from one stream after that stage. Such rigidity has proved harmful to the development of modern biology, specially biophysics, in India.

The emergence of a third culture based on management, commerce and computer courses has already swept both the sciences and humanities in our educational institutions. Information technology (IT) is the buzzword and everyone wants to ride the bandwagon of IT. Since the universities cannot cope with the big rush for admissions, informatics courses have sprung up in the private sector, tempting students with career prospects in India and abroad after minimal computer training. Students are charged hefty fees even for capsule courses of a few weeks duration. IT shops in small towns are making a fast buck. A variety of computer courses from 'Medical Transcription Certificate' to 'Masters in Computer Applications (MCA)' are being offered by these IT shops, without proper infrastructure or qualified faculty to teach.

I fully agree with the observations in the editorial: 'The emergence of this third culture is dominated by the technologies of communications and driven solely by the mindless consumerism of the market place. Nowhere is the emergence of this third culture more manifest than in India, where the headlong rush of students to management, commerce and informatics courses, threatens to completely impoverish the academic life of our colleges and universities'. Our educational policy planners must take steps to save the other two cultures (sciences and humanities) from being throttled by the onslaught of the third culture in India.

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