

Preface

C. P. Snow's Rede Lecture at Cambridge in 1959, "The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution", is one of the most controversial talks ever given. He launched a new phrase "the two cultures" and initiated a durable discussion and even more heated debate about it. Snow's lecture has become an inescapable reference-point for all people who propose to reflect on the role of modern science in human civilization, and the relations between different areas of learning. Furthermore, it has addressed more practical questions in global contexts, such as how to design an education system and how to eliminate poverty. It has a focus on the distinctive nature of British society, yet also addresses general issues with universal implications. This September issue commemorates the 50th anniversary of Snow's lecture, aiming to reconsider the two cultures controversy and explore broader problems it presented.

Professor WU Guosheng from Peking University investigates the ethical problems present in contemporary Chinese science communication. The pluralism and equality he advocates in the communication of science represent a position beyond the limit of the two cultures.

As for medicine, which Snow identified as one variety of "a third culture" in 1963, Professor Hong Hai from Nanyang Technological University of Singapore, and Professor ZHANG Daqing and Associate Professor YANG Haiyan contribute their own arguments. Hong's paper compares the "paradigms" of the Chinese and Western medicines, effectively showing that Traditional Chinese Medicine uses many of the methods of science whilst maintaining consonance with its cultural and philosophical origins. The dialogue between ZHANG and YANG demonstrates the human side of medicine and advocates the necessity for medical humanities education among medical students.

In an interview with Guy Ortolano, Assistant Professor of history from New York University, he situates the "two cultures controversy" in the wider contexts of postwar Britain, by recasting this debate as an ideological conflict between competing visions of Britain's past, present and future. He also offers his own reflection on the "two cultures" events this year.

Discussions about "the two cultures" start with Snow, but always progress further. We hope the main topic of this issue can act as a platform for interdisciplinary and multidimensional debates.

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September 2009