Editorial

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C.P. Snow (1905–1970) had a remarkable career as a scientist, a science administrator, and a novelist in Great Britain. His contributions achieved wide recognition, especially for his 1959 lecture at Cambridge entitled *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*. It later became a book that has been studied and argued over in the decades since its publication. Many college students have had to deal with its contents and implications as have others who may have missed it earlier on in their educational experience. In it Snow described a growing split between the humanities and the sciences constituting a crisis for what it meant to be an educated person. Snow was thus able to identify what we now call scientific illiteracy among those expected to assume power and responsibility in the professions and the body politic. Snow later postulated a third culture of the social sciences which he viewed as lying somewhere between the humanities and the “hard” sciences as a place where human nature and the natural world might be discovered and explored. It is important to note that Snow’s slim volume is regularly counted among one of the most important books of the last century.

Snow’s identification of scientific illiteracy in *The Two Cultures* is more relevant than ever; most prominently, it seems among certain elected officials in the USA. To go along with scientific illiteracy, we now can identify and trace the boundaries of growing evidence for historical illiteracy as well. In both of these cases, it is not necessary to quote surveys or statistics about these trends as the evidence is readily available on the Internet or in the media.

What is to be done about this yawning gulf between the humanities and the sciences that Snow identified in the 1950s? And what about the glaring lack of basic historical knowledge along with the capacity to think critically about what has gone on before our time? Before throwing our hands up in despair, it is best to acknowledge the problem and not avoid its complexity. We can begin by thinking about what might be a better or new way for the humanities and the sciences to both be effectively taught, thus establishing groundwork for a genuine dialogue based on respect and a willingness on each side to

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admit what is not known about the other. There is nothing more disheartening for me to remember than hearing some (only some!) of my fellow humanities majors in college almost take pride in not knowing anything much about science and seemingly to want it to remain that way. I felt at the time and believe now that while ignorance may be bliss, it is also downright dangerous. Likewise, it is equally disheartening as well as disconcerting to hear those among the “new atheists” (who are really quite similar to atheists of any earlier era) proclaim the victory of science over outmoded forms of human knowing in the humanities, particularly as this has to do with religion in general and religious institutions in particular. Rarely do I find that many of these individuals have knowledge of religion that proceeds beyond the most simplistic and unsophisticated storybook level.

One of the most stimulating and encouraging things about being associated with this *Journal* is how in our own way we have done and continue to seek to do something about the split C.P. Snow prophetically called attention to. We recognize the error of proclaiming the superiority of science or the humanities and religion over against one another. The experience-based, data-driven, and open-minded approaches to issues our authors employ help us to move past the false dichotomy of scientism on the one hand and unexamined religious ideas and assumptions on the other. We intend to hold up the ideal of the centrality of the life of the mind and to follow our intuitions and research where they take us.

I often share with medical students I teach what has become a source of guiding truth for me. It is a well-known sentence from F. Scott Fitzgerald who late in his all too brief literary career said

The test of the first rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time and retain the ability to function.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack-Up*, 1936

Cultivating the capacity for “holding two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time” is a lifelong process requiring knowledge of and engagement with both the humanities and the sciences. If all of us remain true to Fitzgerald’s expression of realism and hope, then we here at the *Journal* and elsewhere will certainly be far better off.