

Book Review and Presentation

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C. P. Snow
The Two Cultures

Introduction

- ***The Two Cultures*** is the title of the first part of an influential 1959 Rede Lecture by British scientist and novelist C. P. Snow.
- The talk was delivered on 7 May 1959 in the Senate House, Cambridge, and subsequently published as *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*.

From the Official Introduction

- Quote from the introduction of the book, done by *Stefan Collini*:-

*“The notion that our society, its education system and its intellectual life, is characterized by a split between two cultures – the **arts or humanities** on one hand, and the **sciences** on the other – has a long history.”*

Do we agree?

The 2 Subjects

- Arts/Literature and Science have always seemed to be working hand in hand, complementing and motivating progress in each other from the times of Leonardo Da Vinci and Aristotle.

The 2 Cultures

- In the book the writer, Charles Percy Snow, who was a writer-cum philosopher-cum scientific researcher, has not pointed out differences in the subjects, but in the cultures of communities practicing these 2 subjects.

The 2 Cultures

Quote from the book:-

“A good many times I have been present at gatherings of people who, by the standards of the traditional culture, are thought highly educated and who have with considerable gusto been expressing their incredulity at the illiteracy of scientists. Once or twice I have been provoked and have asked the company how many of them could describe the [Second Law of Thermodynamics](#). The response was cold: it was also negative. Yet I was asking something which is the scientific equivalent of: *Have you read a work of [Shakespeare](#)'s?*”

I now believe that if I had asked an even simpler question — such as, What do you mean by [mass](#), or [acceleration](#), which is the scientific equivalent of saying, *Can you read?* — not more than one in ten of the highly educated would have felt that I was speaking the same language. So the great edifice of modern [physics](#) goes up, and the majority of the cleverest people in the [western world](#) have about as much insight into it as their [neolithic](#) ancestors would have had.”

Aim of the Book

- The book is more of a journey in which one can learn from the writer's experiences.
- The book neither aims to teach a lesson, nor is it for leisure reading
- Through the book, the writer wants the intellectuals of great societies to resolve differences and work in harmony.

My Review

I liked reading this book even when I am not into reading much, mainly because it discussed about the cultures I myself am a part of.

If the reader has had common experiences, it is definitely a joy-ride.

For the young readers, it has a lot of things to learn, through the experiences of the writer.

Funny Fact:-

John Snow is the grand father of C.P. Snow.

And John Snow was actually illiterate all his life.

Hence making the saying true:-

“You know nothing, John Snow!”