

Beyond two cultures

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ABSTRACT

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Over six decades ago, Charles Percy Snow published his influential book entitled *The two cultures*, in which he argues that natural sciences and the humanities and social sciences constitute two distinct worlds. Worlds that are reproduced separately and rarely affect each other.

The emergence of the humanities as a separate field of study at universities is often linked to the rise of Geisteswissenschaften in the German cultural milieu at the turn of the 20th century. Thus, while gaining independence, the humanities were simultaneously separating themselves from "real science" and reinforcing the separation between two cultures in Snow's terms. Two cultures that are reproduced within scientific disciplines rarely intersect. Despite the emphasis on interdisciplinarity research in science policy for many years, interdisciplinarity is understood to operate within one of two cultures and rarely between two cultures.

However, the world does not consist of disciplines. The surrounding social world and nature are not categorized according to top-down schemes of research areas accepted by science policy actors. The world we live in is one and, as such, requires a holistic approach. What we need is not so much to build bridges between two cultures as to tear down the walls that surround them.

The three texts in this section illustrate the scientific world's challenges in restoring the unity of perspective we need.