



C. P. Snow and the Struggle of Modernity

John de la Mothe

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The condition of modernity springs from that tension between science and the humanities that had its roots in the Enlightenment but reached its full flowering with the rise of twentieth-century technology. It manifests itself most notably in the crisis of individuality that is generated by the nexus of science, literature, and politics, one that challenges each of us to find a way of balancing our personal identities between our public and private selves in an otherwise estranging world. This challenge, which can only be expressed as "the struggle of modernity," perhaps finds no better expression than in C. P. Snow. In his career as novelist, scientist, and civil servant, C. P. Snow (1905-1980) attempted to bridge the disparate worlds of modern science and the humanities.

While Snow is often regarded as a late-Victorian liberal who has little to say about the modernist period in which he lived and wrote, de la Mothe challenges this judgment, reassessing Snow's place in twentieth-century thought. He argues that Snow's life and writings—most notably his *Strangers and Brothers* sequence of novels and his provocative thesis in *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*—reflect a persistent struggle with the nature of modernity. They manifest Snow's belief that science and technology were at the center of modern life.

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