
Jane S. Richardson: Biophysical Society National Lecturer 1992

An Appreciation

Delivered by Stephen H. White on the Occasion of her Lecture, Tuesday Evening, 11 February 1992

Many years ago C. P. Snow lamented what he called "The Two Cultures." The two cultures were the Arts and Humanities on the one hand and Mathematics and Science on the other. (1) The lament was that these two cultures do not understand each other and are rarely able to find a common ground.

Jane Richardson has demonstrated, however, that one can exist successfully in the two cultures and use one to the advantage of the other. Jane is a philosopher, scientist, and (although she claims otherwise) an artist. Who can forget her now famous 1977 paper (2) in *Nature* in which β -sheet structural motifs were described in terms of patterns painted on Grecian urns? She could see a motif common to complex protein structures and to the Greek key design. In seeing such connections, she helps us recognize the great beauty inherent in science and establishes a common ground between science and hu-

man aesthetics. Jane's presentation tonight demonstrates the success of approaching complex scientific problems from the perspective of the Arts and Humanities. It also testifies to her accomplishments as scientist, teacher, and artist.

Jane, it gives me great pleasure to express to you on behalf of the Society our gratitude for making the structure of proteins accessible to so many people and for reminding us of the great beauty of these complex structures and their harmony with the human experience outside the realm of science.

REFERENCES

1. C. P. Snow. 1959. *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*. Cambridge University Press, New York. 58 pp.
2. J. S. Richardson. 1977. β -sheet topology and the relatedness of proteins. *Nature (Lond.)*. 268:495-500.