Organic Synthesis as Culture

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When I was a child, I used to play by climbing big trees. Whenever I jumped from a small branch to another, I had the scary experience of nearly falling, because it was difficult to move firmly from one branch to the next. Science can be thought of as being one of those big trees in which organic synthesis is the sap containing the many nutrients that circulate through the vascular system of the tree creating new disciplines as branches.

An active synthetic organic chemist working with ideas in a cutting-edge field needs to consider “interdisciplinarity” as being one of the most important tools for advancing science. It is like jumping from one branch to another, and sometimes to acquire sufficient knowledge in our information-oriented society one has to be adept with brilliant acrobatics. This is one direction of organic synthesis.

There is, however, another direction that is also important. We should view the entire tree of science as a beautiful dendritic structure. Why don't we look where we step on the limbs of the tree and reacknowledge that a tree never grows without a big trunk that supports its many branches? A vital point to realize is that such a big trunk can form only when a sufficient amount of sap circulates. Organic synthesis not only provides the nutrients to the extremities of the tree but also is used for maintaining its support. It is just like an element of culture.

Culture is defined as being a spiritual activity of individuals, groups and societies of intelligent beings including among other things food, clothing, shelter, beliefs, customs, and ethics. It is my hope that the readers of the present issue will imagine modern organic synthesis from a bird's-eye view with human spirit.

Where there is human spirit,
there is culture,
where there is culture,
there is true science.