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Published in:
Journal of Contemporary History

DOI:
10.1177/00220094261422190

2026

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Article

JCH

Journal of Contemporary History
1–20

DOI: 10.1177/00220094261422190
journals.sagepub.com/home/jch


‘A Powerful and Essential Means of Action’: UNESCO and the Humanities as Science Diplomacy (1945–1949)

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Abstract

This article explores how the humanities were imagined by UNESCO to contribute to their quest for improved international relations and worldwide peace. It analyses the negotiations on what role the humanities could play in diplomatic work by looking at the process that led to the founding of the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (ICPHS/CIPSH) in 1949. Despite being ingrained in UNESCO’s mission statement, the diplomatic role of the humanities remained unarticulated and ambiguous during the organizations’ first formative years. The article argues that although the term was not in use at the time, what was in fact at stake during these negotiations was whether linguistics, classical studies, history, anthropology and philosophy could be seen as a form of – and be employed as – science diplomacy. Despite a global contemporary focus as well as a surge in historical studies, the humanities have largely been excluded from both political and scholarly efforts on science diplomacy. By introducing a framework for *humanities diplomacy* and by proposing a preliminary set of questions for its historical study, the article urges a renewed focus on the diplomatic role played by the humanities in the past, addressing what role they could play in the future.

Keywords

science diplomacy, UNESCO, International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies, history of the humanities, humanities diplomacy

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'Is a World Council of Philosophy Really Necessary?' The headline, printed in the *UNESCO Courier* of March 1949, belonged to an article announcing the newly founded International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (ICPHS/CIPSH).[1] Although clearly rhetorical, the question seemed to perfectly capture a lingering ambivalence about the role of the humanities in UNESCO's mission to create world peace and unity of mankind.[2] Even the fact that the headline failed to mention 'the humanities' or even 'humanistic studies' seems telling of the ambiguous outlook for the enterprise, by then several years in the making. In fact, as this article will demonstrate, although *the humanities* – then and now a fluid and elusive term for a nebulous field of knowledge – were envisioned early on as integral to UNESCO's ambitions, both the place of this cluster of disciplines within the organization and the use of the knowledge they produced as a diplomatic tool soon became a matter of vivid discussion. While some remained convinced that the humanities collectively had a large role to play in providing knowledge about cultures and improving international relations, others expressed doubt over how to articulate that role, if indeed such a role was imaginable. The writer of the article, historian Robert Fawtier, part of the inner circle leading the installed consultative body, addressed this doubt in an opening paragraph:

> Sceptics may smile on hearing of the creation of another organization and of the forming of a new international council and may ask themselves what good all this will do. They may even smile at the mention of humanistic sciences. For to many of them the human sciences, which study Man, his moral behaviour and the various manifestations of his mind, are not science at all.[3]

In the following, I will take the notion of the humanities as not only science but as *science diplomacy* seriously. While as discussed more in detail below, a simple definition of science diplomacy has proven hard to come by, it can broadly be seen as trying to capture the reciprocal relationship and resulting impact between the sphere of science and the realm of diplomacy. Using the ICPHS as prism, I will explore how the humanities, as a field of scientific knowledge, were imagined by UNESCO to contribute to their quest for worldwide peace and mutual understanding, analysing the negotiations that took place around the tension expressed by Fawtier's article. By doing so, the article uses a historical perspective to address the question of what the humanities can contribute to the growing focus on global efforts of science diplomacy today.[4] The urgency of that question is amplified by the fact that the humanities have mostly been left out of the recent surge in science diplomacy initiatives on the global stage, which has instead crystallized into a domain for the

1 Robert Fawtier, 'Is a World Council of Philosophy Really Necessary?', *UNESCO Courier* (March 1949), 2.
2 Glenda Sluga, 'UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley', *Journal of World History*, 21, 3 (September 2010), 393–418. The scholarship on UNESCO is vast. For an overview, see Poul Duedahl (ed.) *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts* (Basingstroke 2016); and Roger-Pol Droit, *Humanity in the Making: Overview of the Intellectual History of UNESCO, 1945–2005* (Paris 2005).
3 Fawtier, 'Is a World Council of Philosophy Really Necessary?', 2.
4 Olga Krasnyak, *National Styles in Science, Diplomacy, and Science Diplomacy: Case Study of the United Nations Security Council P5 countries* (Leiden 2018), 12.

so-called hard sciences.[5] While official reports and policy documents do indeed at times recognize the full spectrum of *science*, including the humanities (and the social sciences), the main focus and political interest, on closer inspection, frequently turns out to be placed on natural science and technology.[6] Indeed, recalling Fawtier's invoked sceptics in 1949, is it even possible to imagine a diplomatic utility for ancient and modern history, language studies and philology, the study of culture and religion, literature and philosophy? Have these diverse disciplines and epistemic cultures been proposed as tools for improving international relations in the past and made to serve political-diplomatic ends?[7]

I argue that this very issue was at the heart of UNESCO's agenda to foster peace and mutual understanding after WWII, captured perhaps most eloquently in the often-repeated phrase 'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed'. Despite this maxim, however, and the opportunity it would seem to provide for carving out a prolific role for humanistic scholars, their part of the enterprise during the first years of UNESCO remained tenuous, leading up to the creation of the ICPHS in 1949.[8] Still, the humanities were believed by UNESCO to share the responsibility of building a better world and were expected to deliver valuable knowledge for the mission of peace. Once created, the council's ultimate aim was nothing less than 'achieving the moral and spiritual unity of mankind'.[9]

If the modern-day humanities are by and large absent from key discussions on science diplomacy, it makes sense to look for explanations for this absence in the early, formative years of UNESCO, the founding of which constitutes a crucial gravitational point for the development of the concept itself and the faith placed in its potential.[10] By way of comparison, to Joseph Needham, the man responsible for adding the S for Science to the name UNESCO, science was easily imagined to be a useful diplomatic tool.[11] While engaging natural and social science as diplomatic solutions to complex realities proved to come with its own challenges, the optimism was unmistakable. From the perspective of the more recently consolidated research field *history of the humanities*, that sets out to

5 Casper Andersen, Cristina Clopot and Jan Ifversen , 'Heritage and Interculturality in EU Science Diplomacy', *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 7, 175 (2020), 1–8, 6.

6 See for instance, Gjedssø Bertelsen et al (eds.), *A European Framework for Science Diplomacy*, European Commission 2025.

7 Karin Knorr-Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences Make Knowledge* (Cambridge, Mass. 1999).

8 Chloé Belloc, 'La création du Conseil international de la philosophie et des sciences humaines: idéal et réalité d'un engagement scientifique et intellectuel, 1947–1955', *Relations internationales*, 130 (2007), 47–63. See also Luiz Oosterbeek, 'CIPSH and its Relations with the UAI and UNESCO' in Jean-Luc De Paepe, Pierre Jodogne & Isabelle Algrain (eds.), *From a Republic of Scholars to a Community of Researchers:Perspectives on the History of the International Union of Academies (UAI), 1919-2019* (Turnhout 2019), 145–157.

9 UNESCO Archives, Paris/UNESDOC, *Draft formal agreements*, 22 November, 1949, UNESCO 18 EX/13, annex II, 1.

10 J. P. Singh, 'UNESCO: Scientific Humanism and its Impact on Multilateral Diplomacy', *Global Policy* 9 (2018), 53–59.

11 Lif Lund Jacobsen and Doubravka Olšáková, 'Diplomats in Science Diplomacy: Promoting Scientific and Technological Collaboration in International Relations', *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte,* 43 (2020), 465–72, 467–68.

study the history of 'this complex conglomerate' and especially its relation to natural science, this in itself prompts the question: *what about the humanities?*[12]

To provide an answer to this question, I will place my focus on the phase leading up to the creation of the ICPHS, in itself an interesting *boundary organization* in the history of the humanities.[13] As such, the council provides a useful prism with which to detect the otherwise elusive presence of the humanities in UNESCO's larger diplomatic sphere. After a brief overview of (the absence of) the humanities in science diplomacy and in recent efforts to study science diplomacy historically, I will proceed by first locating the humanities as embedded in UNESCO's vision after the war and leading up to the creation of the ICPHS. Second, I will analyse how the ICPHS handled the existing tension regarding the diplomatic role given to the humanities, paying specific attention to how they framed the utility of employing the humanities in diplomatic work and what practical value they proposed that their efforts could yield on the international stage. My sources consist mainly of official UNESCO documents in various degree related to the process of creating the council as well as documents produced by the council during its first year of existence.[14] Using a practically oriented definition of science diplomacy as a set of tools or instruments applicable in the diplomatic realm, I intend to demonstrate that what UNESCO and the ICPHS actually negotiated was, although the term was not in use at the time, whether or not the humanities could be used as a legitimate form of science diplomacy and in what way. Based on my findings, I conclude by sketching a framework and proposing a preliminary set of questions for the historical study of what I argue can be productively labelled *Humanities Diplomacy*, suggesting how this concept can enrich the existing scholarship on both the history of science and the history of diplomacy.

In recent years, scholars have taken aim at the role played by science, knowledge, culture, and education in international relations from a number of different perspectives. The surge has even led Jane Knight to speak of a 'terminology chaos' brought on by a myriad of competing concepts used in various fields, including *cultural*, *public*, *education*, *innovation*, *knowledge* and *academic diplomacy*.[15] To various degrees, these concepts have complemented the widespread notion of 'soft power' introduced by Joseph Nye more than three decades ago in an effort to explain 'positive attraction and persuasion' as an alternative

12 Herman Paul, 'Introduction: What is the History of the Humanities?' in Herman Paul (ed.) *Writing the History of the Humanities: Questions, Themes, and Approaches* (London 2023), 1–24, 6. For the history of the humanities, see Rens Bod, *A New History of the Humanities* (Oxford 2013); Rens Bod, Julia Kursell, Jaap Maat and Thijs Weststeijn, 'A New Field: History of Humanities', *History of Humanities*, 1, 1 (2016), 1–8; and Isak Hammar and Hampus Östh Gustafsson, 'Futures of the History of the Humanities: An Introduction', *History of Humanities* 8, 2 (2023), 177–187.

13 For boundary organization in this context, see Per Wisselgren, 'From Utopian One-worldism to Geopolitical Intergovernmentalism: UNESCO's Department of Social Sciences as an International Boundary Organization, 1946–1955', *Serendipities: Journal for the Sociology and History of the Social Sciences*, 12, 2 (2017), 148–82.

14 This includes sources available from the digital collection (UNESDOC) regarding the early years of UNESCO as well as documents that are part of the ICPHS/CIPSH archive in the UNESCO archives in Paris.

15 Jane Knight, 'Analysing Knowledge Diplomacy and Differentiating It from Soft Power and Cultural Science, Education and Public Diplomacies', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 18 (2023), 654–86, 673.

to diplomatic coercion.[16] This is especially true for the study of *cultural diplomacy*, the definition of which, according to Charlotte Faucher, remains 'problematic' but which nevertheless has received substantial scholarly attention, often in the interest of balancing the heavy emphasis placed on natural science and technology.[17]

Despite the conceptual smorgasbord, *science diplomacy*, a concept rooted in the cultural turn in diplomatic studies, but particularly sparked by the conceptual framework proposed by the Royal Society and American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in 2009, has arguably garnered the most interest from not only scholars, but also politicians, diplomats and policymakers.[18] With this in mind, Adamson and Lalli call attention to the fact that initial efforts to subject science diplomacy to scholarly treatment came from practitioners of science diplomacy themselves, resulting in 'narratives that at times are as performative as they are analytical'.[19] Despite its popularity and wide reach, however, no commonly agreed upon definition of science diplomacy has emerged, if indeed one would be even possible or desirable.[20] The RS/AAAS triptych differentiated between diplomacy *for* science (i.e. diplomacy in the service of scientific goals), science *in* diplomacy (science informing diplomatic efforts) and finally science *for* diplomacy (science serving diplomatic ends). While influential, it has also been criticized for having blurry boundaries and for failing to account for the fact that science diplomacy often has more than one purpose.[21] To remedy this, Gluckman et al suggested a 'pragmatic reframing' which emphasized utility and favoured another tripartite categorization, focusing on actions designed to (1) directly advance a country's national needs, (2) address cross-border interests, or (3) meet global needs and challenges.[22] Commonly, science diplomacy is distinguished from international scientific co-operation in general, which has the advancement of knowledge as its main goal, although, as pointed out by Turekian et at, they are 'overlapping endeavours'.[23] This distinction will, however, be particularly relevant in the empirical section of the article, the aim of which is to showcase how the humanities were imagined as diplomatically useful beyond scholarly collaboration and coordination.

16 Joseph S. Nye, 'Soft power: The Evolution of a Concept', *Journal of Political Power*, 14, 1 (2021), 196–208, 202. See also Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York 2004).

17 Charlotte Faucher, 'Cultural Diplomacy and International Cultural Relations in Twentieth-Century Europe', *Contemporary European History*, 25, 2 (2016), 373–85, 375. See also J. C. E. Gienow-Hecht and M. C. Donfried (eds.) *Searching for Cultural Diplomacy* (Oxford, New York 2010).

18 For an historical overview, see Vaughan Turekian, 'The Evolution of Science Diplomacy', *Global Policy* 9 (2018), 5–7. See also AAAS, *Science and Diplomacy: A Conceptual Framework* (2009); and now also *Science Diplomacy in an Era of Disruption* (2025).

19 Matthew Adamson and Roberto Lalli, 'Global Perspectives on Science Diplomacy: Exploring the Diplomacy-knowledge Nexus in Contemporary Histories of Science', *Centaurus* 63, 1 (2021), 1–16, 3.

20 Knight, 'Analysing Knowledge Diplomacy', 663; Adamson and Lalli, 'Global Perspectives', 4.

21 See Adamson and Lalli, 'Global Perspectives', 3. In addition, Flink has criticized the concept of science diplomacy as being overly idealistic and sensationalist and the framework of the AAAS as having little analytical value. See Tim Flink, 'The Sensationalist Discourse of Science Diplomacy: A Critical Reflection', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 15 (2020), 359–70.

22 P. D. Gluckman, V. Turekian, R. W. Grimes, and T. Kishi, 'Science Diplomacy: A Pragmatic Perspective from the Inside', *Science & Diplomacy*, 6, 4 (2017).

23 Vaughn C. Turekian et al, 'The Emergence of Science Diplomacy' in Lloyd S. Davis and Robert G. Patman (eds.) *Science Diplomacy New Day or False Dawn?* (Singapore 2015), 6.

Useful definitions of what science diplomacy entails abound in the scholarly literature. The EU-funded S4D4C project (2018–2021) stipulated that science *for* diplomacy 'primarily draws on the "soft-power" of science to attract, persuade and influence both as a national asset, and as a universal activity that transcends national interests'.[24] Speaking to the broad grasp of the concept, but also providing a more practical-oriented perspective, Ruffini suggests that science diplomacy be seen as 'a set of tools' used in diplomacy; an 'instrument of choice' for handling tensions between national and common interests.[25] A similar focus on practice is favoured by Kartofen and Acuto, whereby science diplomacy can be approached as 'a practice that aims to maintain, cultivate, deepen and prolong (international) relations'.[26] For the purpose of distinguishing the role of the humanities in diplomatic endeavours, such an understanding, while certainly not exhaustive, provides a good point of departure, focusing the research question towards how the practical utility of the humanities in diplomatic work could be articulated.

Although the humanities' role in science diplomacy has certainly been underserved, there are several venues of research that touch upon the role of the humanities in various aspects of diplomatic work. To be sure, depending on the definition (of which there are as suggested above several), *cultural diplomacy* in general can be expected to embrace historical, anthropological, linguistic and religious knowledge, even if the main focus has commonly been placed on art and popular culture.[27] As Andersen et al notes, when humanities and social science have been included in science diplomacy, it has often been 'in the form of cultural diplomacy with the purpose of adding soft power to diplomatic engagements'.[28] Educational efforts in the diplomatic realm similarly include knowledge and skills usually located within the province of the humanities, whether as language training, literary works or historical knowledge. Finally, approaching UNESCO from the perspective of lifelong learning, Maren Elfert has even pointed to the 'humanist worldview' that ran through UNESCO, and which emphasized the value and uniqueness of every human being in a cosmopolitan and universalizing sprit.[29] From this perspective, the humanities are ubiquitous in diplomacy in general and in cultural diplomacy in particular.

Paradoxically, however, the humanities, arguably by virtue of possibly being everywhere, are also nowhere to be found in the realm of diplomacy. If culture and humanism are entrenched in both UNESCO and science diplomacy in general – which in itself can hardly be taken for granted – it is nevertheless crucial to point out that even if language,

24 https://www.s4d4c.eu/topic/2-3-2-the-royal-society-and-aaass-conceptual-framework/ (accessed 9 April 2025)

25 Pierre-Bruno Ruffini, 'Introduction to the Forum on Science Diplomacy', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 15 (2020), 355–58, 355.

26 Carolin Kaltofen and Michele Acuto, 'Science Diplomacy: Introduction to a Boundary Problem', *Global Policy* 9 (2018), 8–14, 11. See also Jacobsen and Olšáková, 'Diplomats in Science Diplomacy', 465–66.

27 A useful survey is provided by Faucher, 'Cultural Diplomacy and International Cultural Relations'. See also Gienow-Hecht and Donfried (eds.) *Searching for Cultural Diplomacy* .

28 Andersen et al, 'Heritage and Interculturality', 6.

29 Maren Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning* (Abingdon Oxon 2019).

history, and culture in a broader sense can very well be included in practices and forms of knowledge that play a major part in any diplomatic endeavour, these contributions of the humanities are often either simply assumed or rendered invisible compared to technical or economic gains. It is in this sense, for example, that Sarah Brouillette notes that literature has 'often served as equipment for cultural policy making'.[30] More to the point, such an understanding of the humanities in diplomatic efforts runs the risk of conflating language skills with linguistics or philology, historical knowledge with history as a scientific practice, or *Bildung* with scholarship. These complications are only furthered by the common reluctance to include the humanities in the English word science. Disentangling 'culture' and 'humanism' from the field of knowledge and academic domain of humanistic science requires a different framework, the sketching of which is the purpose of the final section of this article.

Although the terminology has emerged in more recent years, the practices covered by the term science diplomacy have a long history.[31] Given the priority of science diplomacy in the political realm, it is hardly surprising that the history of science diplomacy has experienced a boom in recent years in different strands of research. Even so, Sönke Kunkel, noting how the framework of science diplomacy has influenced research in several fields such as Political Science and International Relations, still speaks of 'a glaring absence of informed historical inquiries that put programs and practices into historical perspective'.[32] Adamson and Lalli similarly emphasize that historical investigation of science diplomacy, although growing, is 'still in its early stages'.[33] While there has been no concerted effort to study the humanities in the history of UNESCO, a number of historical studies suggest their embedded nature in various projects and activities. The famous example of the Aswan High Dam project and the prolific enterprise to save the Abu Simbel temple consolidates several of these thematic points, most notably archaeology, world heritage, and history.[34] Moreover, in a 2020 article, Poul Duedahl locates the vision of 'peace in the minds of men' in early scholarly debates that each engaged both humanist scholars and social scientists and were concerned with, at least in part, humanities knowledge.[35] Duedahl and other historians have also delved deeper into UNESCO's *History of mankind*-project, and Thomas Nygren has concluded that history as a school subject was seen as 'important for peace, cultural identity, and cultural

30 Sarah Brouillette, *UNESCO and the Fate of the Literary* (Stanford 2019), 3.
31 Pierre-Bruno Ruffini, 'Conceptualizing Science Diplomacy in the Practitioner-driven Literature: a Critical Review', *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 7, 124 (2020), 1–9.
32 Sönke Kunkel, 'Science Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century: Introduction', *Journal of Contemporary History,* 56, 3 (2021), 473–84, 475.
33 Adamson and Lalli, 'Global Perspectives', 2.
34 See e.g. Adam C. Hill, '"The Battle for Abu Simbel"': Archaeology and Postcolonial Diplomacy in the UNESCO Campaign for Nubia', *Journal for Contemporary History* 56, 3 (2021), 502–21; Jes Wienberg, *Heritopia* (Lund 2021); Lynn Meskell, *A Future in Ruins: Unesco, World Heritage, and the Dream of Peace* (Oxford 2018). Meskell interestingly notes that 'archaeology effectively straddles the humanities and sciences, thus representing an administrative predicament for UNESCOs sectoral structure' (xx).
35 Poul Duedahl, 'Peace in the Minds: UNESCO, Mental Engineering and Education', *Foro de Educación*, 18, 2 (2020), 23–45.

exchange'.[36] Similarly, scholars such as Larissa Schulte Nordholt and Casper Andersen have analysed the agendas behind the *General History of Africa*-project that ran for three decades from 1963 and Agnés Borde Meyer has drawn attention to the significant role played by archaeology in UNESCO, beyond the Abu Simbel temples in Egypt.[37] While far from an exhaustive list, these scholarly perspectives collectively point to the salience of searching for the humanities in diplomatic work, as well as the potential usefulness of a framework for mapping their influence and the limits thereof.

When inaugurated after the end of World War II, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization was understood by contemporaries to take on and widen the responsibilities of the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC), founded in 1922 to assist the League of Nations and formally dissolved in 1946.[38] Similar to UNESCO's vision, the target of efforts made by the ICIC was the 'international mind' which meant for instance, according to Ken Osbourne, that reformed history teaching was seen as 'essential to the success of the League itself'.[39] With this legacy in mind, it should not be surprising that the humanities initially occupied a prominent part in the UNESCO mission, before even the S for Science was added. A conference of ministers of education in November of 1945 gave as the first purpose of the organization then referred to as the Educational and Cultural Organisation of the United Nations (UNECO), '[t]o develop and maintain mutual understanding and appreciation of the life and culture, the arts, the humanities and the sciences of the peoples of the world, as a basis for effective international organisation and world peace'.[40] It was further emphasized in the opening statement of the resulting document that 'co-operation in education and furtherance of cultural interchange in the arts, the humanities

36 Thomas Nygren, 'International Reformation of Swedish History Education 1927–1961: The Complexity of Implementing International Understanding', *Journal of World History* 22, 2 (2011), 329–54, 330; for the *History of mankind*, see also Paul Betts, 'Humanity's New Heritage: Unesco and the Rewriting of World History', *Past & Present*, 228, 1 (2015), 249–85; John White, '"The Peaceful and Constructive Battle": UNESCO and Education for International Understanding in History and Geography, 1947–1967', *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 20, 4 (2011), 303–21; Paul Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind: UNESCO and the Invention of Global History, 1945–1976', *Journal of World History*, 22, 1 (2011), 101–33; as well as Gilbert Allardyce, 'Toward World History: American Historians and the Coming of the World History Course', *Journal of World History* 1, 1 (1990), 23–76.

37 Larissa Schulte Nordholt, *Africanising African history: decolonisation of knowledge in UNESCO's general history of Africa (1964-1998)*, PhD thesis, Leiden University, 2021; Casper Andersen, 'A "Quest for Relevance": The Memory Politics of UNESCO's General History of Africa', in Cassandra Mark-Thiesen, Moritz Mihatsch and Michelle Sikes (eds.) *The Politics of Historical Memory and Commemoration in Africa* (Berlin 2022), 47–73; Agnés Borde Meyer, 'Safeguarding Iran and Afghanistan: On UNESCO's Efforts in the Field of Archaeology', in Poul Duedahl (ed.) *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts* (New York 2016), 300–12.

38 Jean-Jacques Renoliet, *L'UNESCO oubliée: La Société des Nations et la coopération intellectuelle (1919–1946)* (Paris 1981); Jo-Anne Pemberton, 'The Changing Shape of Intellectual Cooperation: From the League of Nations to UNESCO', *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, 58 (2012), 34–50. See also Corinne A. Pernet, 'Twists, Turns and Dead Alleys', *Journal of Modern European History*, 12, 3 (2014), 342–58.

39 Ken Osbourne, 'Creating the "International Mind": The League of Nations Attempts to Reform History Teaching, 1920–1939', *History of Education Quarterly*, 56 (2016), 213–40, 217.

40 UNESCO, *Conference for the Establishment of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, held at the Institute of Civil Engineers, London, from the 1st to the 16th November, 1945*, 1946, ECO/CONF/29, 1.

and the sciences will promote the freedom, the dignity, and the well-being of all and therefore assist in the attainment of understanding, confidence, security and peace among the peoples of the world'. At the outset, then, the humanities were firmly located within the diplomatic mission to attain the end result of security and peace.

As pointed out by Duedahl, from the start, UNESCO made concerted efforts to control 'all branches of science'.[41] This explicitly included the humanities and social sciences. The latter, which, unlike the humanities have received scholarly attention in recent years, found a more well-defined place in the organizational structure, first referred to as a section, then as the Department of Social Sciences between 1948 and 1965.[42] At first, however, this seemed to be a possible solution also for the humanities. In a paper called *Unesco, Its Purpose and Its Philosophy*, published in 1946, the first Director-General of UNESCO Julian Huxley rejected an understanding of science 'in the narrow sense in which it is sometimes employed in the English-speaking countries, as denoting the Mathematical and the Natural Sciences only'.[43] Instead, Huxley insisted on 'the whole range of knowledge and learning' which included the social sciences and the humanities, better understood, he argued, in the German terminology of Sozial- and Geisteswissenschaften.[44] In the service of the United Nations, UNESCO was to 'foster and promote all aspects of education, science, and culture, in the widest sense of those words'.[45] The undertaking included history, archaeology, and classical literature next to chemistry and bacteriology.[46] To Huxley, the 'chief task' of the present-day humanities was 'to help in constructing a history of the development of the human mind, notably in its highest cultural achievements'. This would not only require the support of historians but also the assistance of art historians, anthropologists, theologians, archaeologists and classical and literary scholars (as well as critics, artists, poets and what Huxley called 'creative men of letters'). Indeed, UNESCO needed to bring people together from these various humanistic fields in order to help 'in one or other facet of this huge work'.[47]

Initially, this idea of a unity of all branches of science seemed to hold fast. The Prepatory Commission, tasked with preparing a programme for UNESCO, expressed the need for balance and 'comprehensiveness' in the mission, stating that:

> the up-to-date industrial scientist or the zealot for ultramodern art finds the historian holding up to him the mirror of human history; and the statically-minded among classicists or philosophers are reminded by the biologists of the dynamic immensity of evolution. Thus, behind the multiplicity there is a single comprehensive aim – the search for some system of ideas and principles, some unifying general outlook and philosophy to help lead the modern

41 Duedahl, 'Peace in the Minds of Men', 25.
42 Per Wisselgren, 'Decentering Cold War Social Science: Alva Myrdal's Social Scientific Internationalism at UNESCO, 1950–1955', in Mark Solovey and Christian Dayé (eds.) *Cold War Social Science: Transnational Entanglements* (Cham 2021), 287–313; Peter Lengyel, *International Social Science: The UNESCO Experience* (New Brunswick, New Jersey 1986).
43 Julian Huxley, *Unesco, Its Purpose and Its Philosophy* (Paris 1946), 24.
44 Huxley, *Unesco*, 25.
45 Huxley, *Unesco*, 5.
46 Huxley, *Unesco*, 26.
47 Huxley, *Unesco*, 42.

> world out of its present patchwork of separatisms into a real unity, and, still more broadly, to help the human species to realise its potentialities and fulfil its destiny as speedily as possible.[48]

To the Prepatory Commission, UNESCO's general philosophy needed to be 'humanist in the broadest sense of the word, to include all the possibilities of human nature and its development, spiritual and aesthetic as well as practical and intellectual'. This was expressed as while other organizations of the UN were to 'combat hunger and poverty', the 'primary task' of UNESCO was to 'combat spiritual hunger and mental poverty throughout the world'. And if these statements seemed to have more to do with 'humanism' than the field of disciplines clustered under the humanities umbrella, the document also stated that UNESCO 'must […], encourage co-operation with the Humanities and with Philosophy, in the endeavour to work out a scale of values adapted to the modern world and to its continued and progressive development'.[49] In other words, the humanities, and perhaps more specifically philosophy, were to safeguard against materialistic tendencies.

One problem, however, was that UNESCO lacked the organization to undertake all the wide-ranging activities that could be the result of its grand vision. So how could the engagement of the humanities be operationalized? The question was posed to a committee of experts who proposed, after having convened for five days in Paris in September 1946, the creation of a council, similar to the Council of International Scientific Unions, in order to facilitate exchange and 'form a natural link' between the various organizations in the field and UNESCO. The council of experts reported that a survey had been conducted, resulting in 150 replies from humanities institutions in a dozen countries, which supported projects that 'can lead to international understanding and peace'.[50] Moreover, it had arrived at a number of recommendations 'which took into account possible activities contributing immediately or at long term to international peace and understanding', proposing projects that humanists and philosophers 'might assist Unesco in carrying out in regions of immediate and crucial importance to the problem of peace'.[51] Things seemed to be moving along and concrete measures seemed to take form. But despite the fact that the first session of UNESCO in 1946 adopted a resolution which set as a goal to investigate 'how Unesco's activity in humanistic studies can contribute to peace', the answer to this question remained elusive.[52] A council was not established until January 1949, and the enthusiasm over what the humanities could bring to the table was not shared by all.

48 UNESCO Archives, Paris/UNESDOC, *Report on the programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation*, 15 September 1946, UNESCO/C/2, 7.
49 UNESCO, *Report on the programme*, 8.
50 UNESCO Archives, Paris/UNESDOC, *Report on activities in philosophy and humanistic studies during 1947*, 5 October, 1947, UNESCO 2C/42, 1.
51 UNESCO, *Report on activities*, 2.
52 Quoted from UNESCO Archives, Paris/UNESDOC, *First General Assembly of the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies*, 7 March, 1949, UNESCO PHS/11, 1.

Although, as shown above, a significant role for the humanities seemed embedded in the vision of UNESCO, there was lingering uncertainty as to what the role of the humanities could and should be. Poul Duedahl has pointed to two different 'schools' on UNESCO's utopian mission, one advocating 'peach in the present' and one which emphasized 'the indirect and long-term but indispensable contribution of education, science, and culture to the peaceful unified world of the future'.[53] For the humanities, the ambivalence resulted in a 'Sub-commission on the social sciences, philosophy and humanistic studies' which ended up recommending to the Programme Commission in December of 1946 that philosophy and humanistic studies be separated from the social sciences and placed with the creative arts.[54] Although the US delegation rejected the separation, claiming that the fields 'were closely linked and dealt with the various aspects of the same question', the separation was to be expedited.[55] Apparently, the role of the social sciences in diplomatic work was more easily envisioned at this stage. In a report published the same year, Julian Huxley tellingly placed social science with the natural sciences under the S for Science in the UNESCO acronym, with economics, anthropology and political science next to geology, anatomy, and biochemistry. The humanities were instead delegated by Huxley to the broad category of C for Culture, clustering history, classical studies, philosophy, and languages together with music, painting, theatre, and dance.[56] In accordance with this view, the 'Division of Philosophy and Humanities' was administratively combined with the divisions for Arts and Letters, for Museums, and for Libraries, all within the Department of Cultural Activities.[57] Arguably, this organizational move served to obscure the role of the humanities and has likely hid them from scholarly gaze. Wisselgren notes the explicit role of Huxley in this abrupt separation of the social sciences from the humanities, concluding that although the discussions were still ongoing and that he thus intervened directly, the act was 'in perfect harmony' with Huxley's categorization in *Unesco, Its purpose and its Philosophy* from 1946.[58]

Meanwhile, verbatim records show the existing tensions when it came to defining the role of the humanities in the realm of international relations. Discussing the report of the Sub-commission regarding the role of the humanities, the US delegate criticized it for being too vague and argued that the link with the aims of UNESCO needed to be

53 Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind', 103–4.
54 UNESCO Archives, Paris/UNESDOC, *Sub-commission on Social Sciences: Skeleton report of the Sub-commission on Social Sciences, Philosophy and Humanistic Studies*, 1 December, 1946, UNESCO/C/Prog.Com./S.C.Soc.Sci./3, 1.
55 UNESCO Archives, Paris/UNESDOC, *(Records of the) General Conference, first session, held at UNESCO House, Paris from 20 November to 10 December 1946*, 1 C/Resolutions, UNESCO/C/30, 174.
56 UNESCO Archives, Paris/UNESDOC, *Report of Dr. Julian Huxley, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, to the General Conference held in Paris, November 1946*, 18 November, 1 C/15, UNESCO/C/15, 3.
57 UNESCO Archives/UNESDOC, *Report of the Director-General on the activities of the Organization in 1948*, 1948, UNESCO/3/C/3, 12.
58 Wisselgren, 'Utopian One-worldism', 155.

investigated further.[59] Because, the US delegate persisted, the humanities 'are at a point of junction between the pure sciences and the social sciences' they offer 'a kind of third dimension to the world'. The humanities should in this capacity 'give depth and relief' to every study undertaken by UNESCO, but in its current form, the vision report lacked 'scope and breadth'.[60] In response, the South African delegate reminded the committee that the work needed to be guided by what the humanities could do to promote peace and how they contributed to the well-being and 'standards of living' of mankind.[61] At this, however, the Danish delegate objected that it was impossible to create a program for the humanities 'likely to establish peace' or which could offer solutions to international problems. Instead, the goal was to encourage and further the study of the humanities, which in itself required a broad program.[62] If this was the case, the South African delegate wondered dryly why they met 'under the aegis' of UNESCO at all. The desire to give the humanities a strong mandate then was mitigated by an uncertainty of what they could, in actuality, contribute.

Clearly, a solution to the problem eluded UNESCO. However, it seemed the lingering ambivalence was not one-sided. The committee of experts remarked in the opening sentence of their report to UNESCO's general conference in October of 1947, that 'The principles for collaboration between UNESCO and philosophers and humanists have been difficult to define'. Apparently, the 'absolute priority given to work for peace' in the face of the 'present world crisis' had not been fully understood in certain 'Intellectual circles'.[63] In the *UNESCO Monitor* of November of 1947, Huxley further addressed the problem, saying that some fields were 'more ripe than others for international treatment' and the natural sciences 'much more so' than the humanities.[64]

Despite the frustration, the relevance of the humanities in UNESCO's mission seemed obvious enough to the committee itself. If the founding proposition for UNESCO was that wars begin in the minds of men, then it 'must be clearly understood that conflicts of values [...], play as big a part in history as conflicts of interest' and that consequently a focus on values could 'do as much good and be as effective as' a focus on interest. This then placed the humanities in the foreground, since, as the committee pointed out, 'values are born and develop in the field of philosophy and humanism'. It follows, the report continued, 'that fuller knowledge of the relations between cultures is for Unesco a powerful and essential means of action'.[65]

From this, the committee went on to propose a 'two-fold method' that was both empirical and theoretical. It provided a road map for how to incorporate the humanities in diplomatic work. The empirical side of the strategy was based on the belief that the increase of 'the flow of inter-cultural exchanges' would lessen the 'isolation of cultures' and so

59 UNESCO Archives, Paris/UNESDOC, *Sub-commission on Social Sciences, Philosophy and Humanistic Studies: Provisional verbatim record of the Fifth meeting*, 2 December, 1946, UNESCO/C/Prog.Com./S.C.Soc.Sci./V.R.5, 5.
60 UNESCO, *Sub-commission, Provisional verbatim record*, 7.
61 UNESCO, *Sub-commission, Provisional verbatim record*, 11.
62 UNESCO, *Sub-commission, Provisional verbatim record*, 14.
63 UNESCO Archives, Paris/UNESDOC, *Role of philosophy and the humanities in UNESCO's work; programme of action suggested for 1948*, 13 October 1947, 2 C/36, 1.
64 [Unsigned], 'Director-General's report', *UNESCO Monitor*, Nov, 1947, 3.
65 UNESCO, *Role of philosophy and the humanities*, 1.

reduce 'the danger of opposition between them'. The theoretical aspect meant that in those instances where 'antagonism' between cultures did arise – due for instance to the lack of such intercultural exchanges – UNESCO's 'weapon must be a deeper knowledge of the impulses and principles governing those relationships'. To the committee, this basic understanding provided the basis for UNESCO's engagement with the humanities. Practically, they envisioned that the humanities would contribute by filling the 'gap of mutual ignorance' that had developed during the preceding years of conflict, setting up an organization tasked with facilitating 'contacts and exchanges of persons, information, knowledge and ideas throughout the world' as well as 'a number of regional relay centres' in order to increase communication and the 'circulation of ideas'.[66] Furthermore, they proposed a number of projects, including 'Philosophic analysis of current ideological conflicts' and the study of tensions between cultures and their effects on international relationships. Somewhat differently, they summed up in five points the fields in which the humanities would contribute to UNESCO's program, listing cultural reconstruction, raising the level of education and culture, the free flow of ideas and the dissemination of knowledge, exchanges between cultures, and the study of tensions.[67] In the *UNESCO Monitor*, under the heading 'Philosophy and Humanities Examined in World Crisis', it was remarked that the projects proposed by the committee were 'designed to apply the resources of philosophy and the humanities to the present moral and intellectual crisis of the world'.[68]

In a separate report delivered on 5 October 1947, the committee of experts proceeded to recommend a number of what they referred to as 'concrete activities' contributing to peace and understanding, re-accentuating that philosophy and humanistic studies needed to play a 'fundamental role' in order for UNESCO to achieve the goals the organization had set for itself.[69] Furthermore, the committee formulated their vision as a mutual and reciprocal relationship:

> The understanding of values, the pursuit of truth, and the exchange of ideas, which are the concern of philosophy and humanistic studies, are therefore prominent among the means which Unesco must employ, and the ends of Unesco are in this sense the ends sought by all true philosophers and humanists.[70]

In practice, the committee of experts imagined three types of activities, under the separate heading of *Service activities*, *Stimulating activities* and *Projects*. While the latter crystalized into two distinct projects, one on the conflict of ideologies and one on cultures, the first kind was those that UNESCO had proposed to undertake themselves, the exchange of persons, knowledge, learned institutions and books, and to which the humanities could

66 UNESCO, *Role of philosophy and the humanities*, 2.
67 UNESCO, *Role of philosophy and the humanities*, 6.
68 [Unsigned], 'Philosophy and Humanities Examined in World Crisis', *UNESCO Monitor*, Nov, 1947, 3.
69 UNESCO Archives, Paris/UNESDOC, *Role of philosophy and the humanities in UNESCO's work; programme of action suggested for 1948*: *Report on the committee of experts on Philosophy and Humanistic Studies*, 5 October, 1947, 2C/36-Annex A, 1.
70 UNESCO, *Report on the committee of experts*, 1.

contribute. The second type proposed by the committee was broader and regarded, somewhat vaguely, the need to stimulate research in philosophy and humanistic studies. The first reason for this was the 'close affinity' between the aims of UNESCO and the aims of the humanities, the second that such research tended to be neglected due to the fact that it had little bearing on technological advances or material resources. Among the stimulating activities were listed those meant to 'encourage philosophic and humanistic studies' across the world, chief among which was to aid in the circulation of scholarly publications in different ways but also included the setting up of stations for collecting and diffusing knowledge in the Near East, 'Black Africa', India, China, Latin America and 'devastated' parts of Europe.[71] However, among the suggestions that followed was also a renewed suggestion that UNESCO propose the creation of an international council for philosophy and humanistic studies. During its second session in Mexico City in 1947, the Director-General was instructed to aid in the establishment of such a council (Resolution 4.3.2.1).

In September of 1948, the Director-General invited representatives from the International Academic Union, the International Federation of Philosophic Societies, the Permanent International Committee of Linguists, the International Commission on Folk Arts and Folk Lore and the International Committee on Historical Sciences to discuss the establishment of the council and draw up its constitution. Director-General Huxley explained in his welcoming address for the meeting that UNESCO needed help in 'the advancement of knowledge', stressing 'the considerable importance of humanistic studies'.[72] Again, the possible inclusion of the social sciences was raised, with one delegate emphasizing the 'intimate connexion' they had with the humanities.[73] Yet, it was also decided at that time that although the council should be flexible enough to include organizations from the social sciences in the future, they were not to be included from the start.[74] In the Report of the Director-General, published shortly thereafter, the 'future International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies' was mentioned as better suited to undertake 'a general review of the field'.[75]

The most important work now was to draft the constitution, work that had already begun a few months earlier, as indicated by an unsigned draft in the UNESCO archives dated July 28.[76] Noticeably, the draft struck a more modest tone regarding the purpose of

71 UNESCO, *Report on the committee of experts*, 3.
72 UNESCO Archives, Paris/UNESDOC, *Establishment of an International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies*, 22 September 1948, PHS/8, 2.
73 UNESCO, *Establishment*, 3
74 UNESCO, *Establishment*, 4.
75 UNESCO Archives/UNESDOC, *Report of the Director-General on the activities of the Organization in 1948*, 1948, UNESCO/3/C/3, 12, 50.
76 UNESCO Archives, Paris/UNESDOC, *Draft constitution of the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies*, 28 July 1948, PHS/7. The draft that the representatives delivered in September was identical in several respects, but there were subtle differences. For instance, the unsigned draft from July writes 'to assist research' rather than 'serve the interest of research' and that the council should 'ensure contact' rather than 'promote liaison.' Instead of 'comprehension of Man' the September draft used the phrase 'Knowledge of

the council than the committee of experts, its preamble stating that the reason for founding the council was to 'promote international co-operation and to serve the interests of research'.[77] No mention was given to the mission of peace. The purposes (Article I) of the newly formed council was to (a) 'ensure permanent contact' between its member organizations, (b) 'encourage the setting up of international organizations' where they did not already exist, (c) 'recommend and co-ordinate the dissemination of information' related to philosophy and humanistic studies and finally (d) to 'promote international gatherings' in order to 'facilitate mutual understanding between the peoples and a knowledge of Man'. The latter purpose then was the most ambitious in terms of diplomatic relations and the most explicitly linked to the overarching goal of UNESCO.

The International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies was founded on the 18th of January 1949, thereby arguably becoming what Chloé Belloc has called, 'la voix des sciences humaines a l'Unesco'.[78] The first constituent meeting of the ICPHS took place in Brussels in January of 1949, where 25 delegates met for several days. It elected economist Jacques Rueff as Chairman, linguist Alf Sommerfeldt as Vice-Chairman and historian Robert Fawtier as Secretary-General. Prior to the meeting, the Prepatory Commission delivered a report which detailed the work the council was to undertake, structured under five separate headings which collectively expressed its aims: *Contacts, grouping of organizations*; *Establishment of international organizations*; *Dissemination of information*; *International gatherings* (which included exchanges of scholars); and *Scholarly research*. However, as a coda to these descriptions was added a more general paragraph, infusing the activities of the ICPHS with a grander diplomatic mission:

> For what the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies has to undertake is a work of peace. If it fulfils its task, the following and progress of these studies will lead men to recognize the errors which set them against each other. To encourage the search for truth and to spread that truth abroad is to help clear away the errors and lies which are the source of every conflict between men.[79]

The meeting also adopted the constitution of the ICPHS, which like the drafts tried to express its *raison d'etre*, beginning with the belief that research in philosophy and humanistic studies could provide a 'detailed, comparative study of civilizations' which could show 'the wealth and dignity of each national culture' and consequently 'right to universal respect'. Second, the constitution stated the conviction that 'a better knowledge of man, of his instincts, his manners and customs, and of his behaviour, individual or collective' was indispensable for reaching a 'closer understanding' between different people. Third, the council recognized the need for furthering 'the moral and spiritual unity of

Man'. A more restricted understanding of the humanities, as 'branches of study related to Philosophy, History, Philology and Linguistics was also stricken.

77 UNESCO, *Draft constitution*, 1.

78 Belloc, 'La création', 57.

79 UNESCO Archives, Paris/UNESDOC, *Report on the programme of work of the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies, drawn up by the Preparatory Commission*, 8 December, 1948, PHS/IC/3, 6.

mankind'.[80] The aims were also found in the November Draft Agreement between UNESCO and the ICPHS.

As things were finally moving ahead, UNESCO's committee for external relations noted 'with satisfaction the growth of co-ordinated international co-operation in the field of philosophy and humanistic studies', urging that the Director-General and the ICPHS should continue to initiate work 'of international importance calculated to serve the ends of Unesco'.[81] In an address to the standing committee of the ICPHS, the Director-General, Jaime Torres Bodet, conveyed UNESCO's expectations of the collaboration as the creation of 'a spirit of comprehension which shall spread to the consciousness of the ordinary man and shall contribute to, […], to establishment of universal sympathy and understanding'.[82]

In this article, I have traced the creation of the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies with the aim to fixate how the contribution of the humanities to UNESCO's overarching goal of achieving peace and unity of mankind was envisioned and articulated. Scholars have pointed out that the strong focus on peace in the early years of UNESCO was soon challenged, resulting, according to Lynn Heskell in 'a mere shadow of its former ambition for a world peace and mutual understanding between peoples'.[83] The swift transformation was tied to US aspirations regarding technical assistance, leading to a more technocratic profile for UNESCO in general.[84] While the development would seem to crudely explain the untethered nature of the humanities in the organization, UNESCO launched a number of major initiatives that depended on the expertise of humanities scholars. These included the Collection of Representative Works, which, according to Sarah Brouillette 'treated books as objects of diplomacy whose exchange would foster cultural understanding'[85] and the History of Mankind project, which seemed a materialization of Huxley's 'chief task' of the humanities.[86] Even the so-called Tensions Project (1947–1957), which although the province of UNESCO's Department of Social Sciences, called upon philosophers to understand the obstacles that stood in the way of peace.[87] They all suggest the kind of diplomatic contribution of humanities scholars that took place parallel or in conjunction with the ICPHS activities, but that remain difficult to track. Moreover, such concrete examples of the humanities as a tool for diplomacy in the History of UNESCO can hopefully be more fully articulated with the framework of Humanities Diplomacy.

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80 UNESCO Archives, Paris/UNESDOC, *Constitution of the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies*, 24 May 1949, UNESCO/PHS/11, 1.

81 UNESCO Archives, Paris/UNESDOC, *Work programme of the International Council of Philosophy and Humanistic Studies*, 30 May 1949, EX/2 CX/13, 2.

82 UNESCO Archives, Paris/UNESDOC, '*Report*'/*Meeting of the standing committee of the International council for philosophy and humanistic studies*, 8 June, 1949, PHS/13, 4.

83 Heskell, *A Future in Ruins*, xvii. See also Patrick Petitjean, 'The Joint Establishment of the World Federation of Scientific Workers and of UNESCO After World War II', *Minerva* 46 (2008), 247–70, 249.

84 Heskell, *A Future in Ruins*, 19.

85 Brouillette, *UNESCO*, 10.

86 Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind', 105.

87 Wisselgren, 'Utopian One-worldism', 159–60; Clemens Six, 'UNESCO's Tensions Project (1947–1957) on India and Israel: Peace Research in an Era of Decolonization', *Peace Change,* 48 (2023), 183–204.

The process of founding the ICPHS detailed in this article illustrates that the humanities continued to occupy a grey area in the organization's diplomatic efforts. Whereas natural and social science were envisioned as tools for diplomacy – albeit not without their own adversities[88] – and formally placed within the organization, such visions were blurred when it came to the humanities, the charge of which was ostensibly in large part delegated to an outside body. On the one hand, they seemed part and parcel of UNESCO's diplomatic mission to create peace and cultural understanding. On the other hand, this conviction wavered repeatedly, and the value of engaging the humanities in diplomatic work was questioned. Yet, as I have endeavoured to show, although an ambivalence was prevalent throughout the process, the role of the humanities in this enterprise could also be expressed in dynamic and ambitious terms as 'a powerful and essential means of action', a 'weapon' to be employed, focused on 'work of peace' and aiming ultimately at universal understanding and unity. In addition, the contribution of the humanities was seen as closely aligned with UNESCO's core values. There existed, in other words, cautiously adapting these findings to a more current terminology, competing views of whether or not the humanities could and should be seen as a form of science diplomacy, a set of tools or instruments applicable in the diplomatic realm. Despite the recurring hesitation, a belief in the necessity of including the humanities in diplomatic work was remarkably consistent in the years preceding the creation of the ICPHS. They were expected to serve the purpose of improving international relations and handling tensions, in practice, by producing and circulating valuable knowledge.

What happened to the humanities in UNESCO's diplomatic mission in the following decades remains to be investigated. To be sure, determining the actual prevalence and historical impact of the humanities in global diplomacy, whether conducted by UNESCO or not, is both an important and a daunting task. While it is certainly possible to question the representativity of UNESCO in view of its specific origins in the postwar climate, its utopian mission, and its, at times, contradictory agendas, because UNESCO has been a prominent object for the study of science diplomacy, it still makes sense to let the small beginnings of the ICPHS outlined here inspire some initial framing for a first exploration of *humanities diplomacy*. At the outset, a burning question is why the humanities have not been a visible part of science diplomacy in the past and how it can be included moving forward. The following five observations from the case provided by the creation of the ICPHS, therefore, seem a productive place to start.

First, the fact that humanities diplomacy is not visible does not mean it does not exist. In fact, the process that led to the founding of the ICPHS suggests that a level of ambiguity and lack of articulation can be expected when looking for the diplomatic role of the humanities. As a result, expressions of ambiguity should inform, not limit, our understanding of what humanities diplomacy entails. The ambivalence about how the humanities can be instrumental in the world of diplomacy is not limited to the creation of the ICPHS or even to UNESCOs wide-ranging creed. It arguably transcends the historical

88 Casper Andersen, '"Scientific Independence", Capacity Building, and the Development of UNESCO's Science and Technology Agenda for Africa', *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue canadienne des études africaines*, 50, 3 (2016), 379–94.

case presented here into the contemporary global stage of international relations. The issue is not unrelated to lingering but often exhausted discussions on 'the value of the humanities' in general but should not be bogged down by entrenched positions on either side of the issue. If humanities diplomacy is to be discovered in agendas, networks, and concrete activities, it is likely only traceable if we accept conflicting and mutating – *contextualized and historicized* – notions of what the humanities are and what purpose they can serve.[89]

Secondly, as the case of the ICPHS demonstrates, the study of humanities diplomacy must take elusive and contested concepts like culture and values into account, and moving forward must be prepared to follow such concepts and ideas across not only national, but cultural, linguistic, and religious borders. In particular, we must not forget to question and analyse attempts to transfer the Western (renaissance) tradition of the humanities into global contexts where the study of history, language, culture, religion, literature, and philosophy is approached from different perspectives, constellations, and epistemologies.[90] To trace humanities diplomacy, *global perspectives* will be crucial.

A third observation is that humanities diplomacy is arguably rendered invisible because of knee-jerk reactions to equate science diplomacy with natural science and engineering. The reluctance to understand the humanities as part of science, a notion rhetorically questioned by Fawtier but in the end confirmed by Huxley, very likely hampers the inclusion of the humanities also in the domain of science diplomacy. While such agendas are hardly surprising, materialistic programmes alone do not determine the definition of science diplomacy. Building on insights provided by studies on soft power and cultural diplomacy, we should keep extending our vision as to what kind of activities can be analysed as part of the diplomatic sphere. By way of example, the ICPHS early programs focused their limited resources on the circulation of knowledge, which, while perhaps different from science diplomacy in physics or biology, is no less viable by default. Humanities diplomacy requires that a wider net is cast, recalibrating our *scope* of both what counts as science and diplomacy.

At the same time, the difficulty of locating the humanities within scholarship on cultural diplomacy and soft power suggests that we can, fourthly, add a level of acuity by *disentangling* not only the humanities from art and cultural activities, but also skills and knowledge generally located in the sphere of the humanities in a broad sense (language skills, knowledge of cultural, religious and historical contexts) from the humanities as a set of scholarly, academic, and scientific disciplines, characterized by various epistemic practices and ideals. Again, we are likely to find conflicting views (and national variations), and both aspects may prove worthy of study to determine the impact of humanities diplomacy. But, as we saw, UNESCO ended up placing the humanities under C for Culture rather than S for Science and the implications of this should not be underestimated.

With this in mind, a fifth and final observation is the need to *include* the humanities into current scholarly debates, drawing on insights and theoretical concepts already

89 Herman Paul, 'Genealogies of the Humanities: A Vision for the Field', *History of Humanities,* 8, 2 (2023), 199–207.

90 Rens Bod, *A World of Patterns: A Global History of Knowledge* (Baltimore 2022), 315.

developed. Taking the other observations into account, however, warns us that simple mapping onto existing frameworks is unlikely to produce satisfying results. For example, adapting the well-established terminology of the RS/AAAS would seem a promising first step, but can it – being designed from a universal understanding of science as primarily meaning STEM – manage the complexities described above? While any study of humanities diplomacy is likely to find the distinction too strict, the triptych can, I argue, help us make two analytical points. First, distinguishing between the humanities *in* diplomacy, e.g. the need of knowledge and expertise regarding linguistic, historical, cultural, and philosophical issues to facilitate diplomatic work, and the humanities *for* diplomacy, understood as prescribing for the disciplinary traditions of the humanistic sciences a role and function in the pursuit of diplomatic ends, highlights the difference between humanistic knowledge is an auxiliary to diplomacy, economic, cultural, scientific or other and the contribution of the humanities as the primary means towards achieving an end, such as providing knowledge in order to facilitate better understanding and improved relations. The second point is that adapting the third distinction as diplomacy *for* the humanities reminds us to be mindful of the line between diplomatic goals and international cooperation – a tension we saw existed in the ICPHS 75 years ago. In sum, if when we look for traces of the humanities *in* or *for* diplomacy, we *historicize* them as disciplines, using when necessary *global and transcultural perspectives* and broadening the *scope* of what we define as both science and diplomacy, *disentangling* them from cultural activities and learning, their *inclusion* into the scholarly discussion is likely to produce novel insights and conceptual advancements.

The historical scenario analysed in this article also provides a set of germane, if basic, questions for future study of the role of the humanities in diplomatic work. When and where are humanities knowledge and humanist scholars employed as instruments of diplomatic work, by whom and to what effect? What can they, at different times, be envisioned to accomplish and how does this vision differ from the natural and social sciences? What resources have been provided for the humanities to contribute to global issues, given the less-than-illustrious role of the humanities in current science diplomacy efforts? What are the limitations and crucial challenges of humanities diplomacy? These questions, alongside others found in the dynamic scholarship on science diplomacy, could hopefully be part of a renewed focus on the diplomatic role played by the humanities in the past, addressing ultimately what role they could play in the future.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Dustin W. Dixon for constructive suggestions on an earlier draft and Eng Sengsavang, Reference Archivist at UNESCO, for her invaluable help.

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