

HUMANITY'S NEW HERITAGE: UNESCO AND THE REWRITING OF WORLD HISTORY*

World history is not the soil in which happiness grows. Periods of happiness are empty pages in it.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

In the eyes of many observers, the United Nations' Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization — or UNESCO for short — perfectly embodies the noble, if long-faded, dream of remaking the world afresh in the wake of Nazism and the Second World War. Originally it was called into being as part of the broader mid-century liberal project to recast post-war international relations in a new ecumenical spirit, whose distinctive 'cultural internationalism' was designed to help introduce a 'new globalism' after 1945.¹ UNESCO's agenda was an ambitious one: to strengthen, enrich and even redeem the United Nations' experimental foray into world affairs, providing a 'soul' for the body of the organization.² It was to do so by means of soft power, aiming to promote and spread international peace through cross-cultural appreciation, general education and a new international affirmation of what was revealingly called at the time 'world civilization'. One commentator described its brief as nothing less than 'humanity in the making'.³ While UNESCO may have lost much of its lustre over the decades, it remains a visible survivor from the short-lived age of internationalism following the war, still carrying on in various ways with its own civilizing mission of global peace and inter-cultural understanding.

Its history, however, has attracted relatively little scholarly attention, as it has typically been dismissed as a quaint relic of

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¹ Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore, 1997), esp. ch. 4.

² *Conference for the Establishment of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Held at the Institute of Civil Engineers, London, from the 1st to the 16th November, 1945* (London, 1946), 87.

³ Roger-Pol Droit, *Humanity in the Making: Overview of the Intellectual History of UNESCO, 1945–2005* (Paris, 2005).

early post-war romanticism. Attitudes have started to change in recent years, as the UN and its spin-off agencies have garnered growing academic interest. In no small measure this has been driven by the desire to trace the renaissance of transnationalism after the defeat of Hitler in 1945.⁴ After all, UNESCO incarnated a bold new world of post-fascist internationalism, one in which comity, knowledge and cultural exchange were to replace nationalism, prejudice and violence as the defining characteristics of the age. Yet UNESCO was not only concerned with fabricating a new present and future for the international community. It was also preoccupied with the past. The task of preserving the crumbling remains of what it called the 'global patrimony' was central from the very beginning, and some of the earliest UNESCO projects were dedicated to preserving ancient cultural ruins around the world. Today most people associate UNESCO with its most high-profile initiative since the early 1970s: the active management of designated world heritage sites across the globe.

Less well known is that UNESCO also set its sights on a much grander project: to write global history anew for a world emerging from the death and destruction of the Second World War. This essay explores the story behind UNESCO's high-profile, but now largely forgotten, six-volume, multi-authored 'History of Mankind' series of books, which originated in the early 1950s and continued into the 1970s. The series included hundreds of contributors and consultants from all over the world, and never before (or since) has a world history project attracted such intense international interest and media attention. Glenda Sluga and Poul Duedahl have recently examined various aspects of UNESCO's 'History of Mankind', casting new light on its initial vision and troubled publishing history.⁵ This essay, by contrast, concentrates on the crowning instalment in the series, the volume covering the twentieth century, which was the first serious attempt to grapple with the problem of writing world history in an age of Cold War, decolonization and resurgent nationalism. Recent scholarship, such as Mark Mazower's 2009

⁴ See, for example, the pioneering special issue on 'New Histories of the United Nations', edited by Sunil Amrith and Glenda Sluga, *Journal of World History*, xix (2008).

⁵ Glenda Sluga, 'Unesco and the (One) World of Julian Huxley', *Journal of World History*, xxi (2010) and Poul Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind: UNESCO and the Invention of Global History, 1945–1976', *Journal of World History*, xxii (2011).

No Enchanted Palace, has highlighted how imperial concerns continued to overshadow the early history of the United Nations;⁶ however, the 'History of Mankind' project was conceived in a different spirit. The main challenge driving the project was how to conceive of global history as something other than a chronicle of competing political elites, warring blocs and rival civilizations. For those involved in writing the last instalment in the series, the pressing question was how to imagine the twentieth century beyond the explanatory framework of world war and the Cold War. Such an undertaking may seem particularly odd to today's readers, given the way that the history of the last century has been conventionally narrated for decades in both academic and popular histories. Here, by contrast, was an alternative global history based on a concept of anti-imperial 'world civilization', organized around the prosecution of peace, shared scientific learning and technical achievement across national borders. How and why UNESCO's bold enterprise of writing a new global history for a new global age sparked such intense political conflict and international controversy is the subject of this article.

UNESCO was created a year after the birth of the United Nations in 1945, and its mission was no less lofty. Its purpose was given popular resonance by the British Prime Minister Clement Attlee's famous phrase, 'wars begin in the minds of men'. The US poet and UNESCO delegate Archibald MacLeish thereafter embellished Attlee's remark to compose the sentence that opens UNESCO's constitution — 'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed'. In part, UNESCO was founded to compensate for the shortcomings of the ill-starred League of Nations, which mainly concentrated on political matters in its effort to achieve some semblance of collective security. If war was ideological, so went the logic, then peace must be ideological as well. UNESCO's brief was thus to wage war on war itself. That a number of key figures associated with UNESCO had either spent time in concentration camps or were active in anti-Nazi resistance groups across Europe (including Leon Blum, Robert Fawtier, Pak Wertheim and Paul Rivet) lent UNESCO a powerful moral

⁶ Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton, 2009).

dimension.⁷ With the start of the Cold War, UNESCO was also seen as a possible locus for dialogue between the USA and the USSR and aid to developing countries, as well as an instrument of transnational cultural diplomacy.⁸

The obvious roots of UNESCO go back to intergovernmental organizations between the wars, such as the League of Nations' International Institute on Intellectual Cooperation and the International Bureau of Education, based in Geneva.⁹ In the 1920s these agencies called for the elimination from school history textbooks of passages inimical to peace and mutual understanding, especially in former enemy nations such as France and Germany, on the grounds that 'bad history made bad neighbors'.¹⁰ This education campaign was even broadened during the Second World War. In 1942 the Allies set up a Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME) in London,¹¹ gathering education authorities from eight governments in exile with the objective of planning for the reconstruction of education systems in a liberated Europe. Much of the initial discussion pivoted on the availability of books, periodicals and libraries, and the need to counter the effects of fascist propaganda on the continent.¹² During his 1944 mission to CAME, the US delegate J. William Fulbright was convinced that international efforts in education could 'do more in the long run for peace than any number of trade treaties'.¹³ An international agency was to be included in a new United Nations to foster 'intellectual and moral cooperation between

⁷ Chloé Maurel, 'L'Histoire de l'humanité de l'UNESCO, 1945–2000', *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines*, xxii (2010), 165.

⁸ Walter H. C. Laves, 'Can UNESCO Be of Aid in World Crisis?', *Foreign Policy Bulletin*, 1 Nov. 1958.

⁹ T. V. Sathyamurthy, *The Politics of International Cooperation: Contrasting Conceptions of UNESCO* (Geneva, 1964), 17.

¹⁰ Gilbert Allardyce, 'Toward World History: American Historians and the Coming of the World History Course', *Journal of World History*, i (1990), 30.

¹¹ Derek Heater, *Peace through Education: The Contribution of the Council for Education in World Citizenship* (London, 1984).

¹² F. R. Cowell, 'Planning the Organization of UNESCO, 1942–1946: A Personal Record', *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale / Journal of World History / Cuadernos de Historia Mundial*, x (1966), and H. H. Krill de Capello, 'The Creation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization', *International Organization*, xxiv (1970).

¹³ James P. Sewell, *UNESCO and World Politics: Engaging in International Relations* (Princeton, 1975), 79.

nations'.¹⁴ Ideas for a new organization geared towards international understanding had been brewing in the US State Department since 1944, driven by Franklin D. Roosevelt's conviction that 'civilization is not national — it is international'.¹⁵ At the San Francisco conference that gave rise to the United Nations, President Truman stressed the importance of a new international commitment to cultural and educational cooperation.¹⁶

The UNESCO world history project was born of the perceived need to restore a lost sense of common humanity after 1945.¹⁷ This attitude reflected that of the agency's first director, Julian Huxley. Huxley was the grandson of Thomas Huxley, the friend of Darwin and fervent champion of his ideas about evolution, as well as the brother of the renowned writer Aldous Huxley. Julian Huxley already cut quite a figure in his own right. He was an eminent zoologist and popularizer of science for mainstream British society, having written a number of books on the subject of evolution and the relationship between science and society. During the Second World War, Huxley was a regular participant in the popular BBC radio programme 'The Brains Trust', and was something of a household name by virtue of his frequent media appearances. He was an outspoken liberal and humanist in the scientific community, and a famous opponent of Nazism and its pernicious promotion of scientific racism. The book he co-authored in 1935, *We Europeans*, was a widely cited denunciation of racism from the vantage point of scientific inquiry, famously concluding that race should 'be dropped from the vocabulary of science'.¹⁸ Although his early views on race and eugenics were complicated, and even quite conservative, Huxley did change with time, and headed a UNESCO dedicated to eradicating racism in all its forms.¹⁹

¹⁴ Walter H. C. Laves and Charles A. Thomson, *UNESCO: Purpose, Progress, Prospects* (Bloomington, 1957), 18–23.

¹⁵ Cited in Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*, 93.

¹⁶ *Documents of the United Nations Conference on International Organization*, 16 vols. (London, 1945–46), i, 683–4.

¹⁷ Archibald MacLeish, 'How Can UNESCO Contribute to Peace?', *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*, xxxiv (1948).

¹⁸ Julian S. Huxley and A. C. Haddon, *We Europeans: A Survey of 'Racial' Problems* (London, 1935), 107.

¹⁹ Sluga, 'Unesco and the (One) World of Julian Huxley', 397–414. On Huxley, see also Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (Cambridge, 1992), 179–86, 235–48.

The project for a new 'History of Mankind' was driven forward by Huxley as what he called a natural history of world civilization.²⁰ According to Huxley, UNESCO's mission above all should be — acknowledging Wendell Willkie's bestselling American book of the same name — the creation of 'One World in the things of the mind and spirit'.²¹ Huxley subscribed to an idea of progress as a union of all separate traditions into a single advance of 'world civilization'. As he explained:

Civilization, because civilization implies peace, and is indeed in essence the technique of peaceful living. World civilization because peace must be global, and because civilization conferred to one section of humanity is not compatible with UNESCO's constitution, and is indeed provocative of violence and war; advance of world civilization because world civilization is in its infancy and because we need the dynamic appeal of a distant and ever-receding goal.²²

Such idealism framed the UNESCO world history project, and his hope was that UNESCO would write 'the first truly scientific and comprehensive account of psycho-social evolution as a process'.²³ To be sure, a number of Victorian anthropologists had recast the story of human development from an evolutionary standpoint, and historians such as James Harvey Robinson had endeavoured to rewrite modern history through the lens of social evolutionary theory around the turn of the century.²⁴ Even so, Huxley was keen to refit this approach to a new post-war setting. As he remarked in his 1947 primer, *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Philosophy*, the driver of this new one-world history would be 'world scientific humanism', based on an idea of evolution that would encompass all human endeavour and provide the full integration of science and culture.²⁵ In 1946 UNESCO

²⁰ Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind', 111.

²¹ *General Conference: First Session. Held at Unesco House, Paris from 20 November to 10 December 1946* (Paris, 1946), 25, quoted in Sathyamurthy, *Politics of International Cooperation*, 98. Alexander Ranasinghe, *UNESCO's Cultural Mission: An Evaluation of Policies, Programs, Projects* (New York, 1969), xvi. Other public intellectuals were interested in the One World idea at the time, such as the US anthropologist Margaret Mead. See Peter Mandler, 'One World, Many Cultures: Margaret Mead and the Limits of Cold War Anthropology', *History Workshop Journal*, lxxviii (2009).

²² Julian Huxley, 'The Advance of World Civilization', *UNESCO Courier*, i (November 1948), 6.

²³ Julian Huxley, *Evolution in Action* (New York, 1953), 154.

²⁴ Daniel A. Segal, "'Western Civ'" and the Staging of History in American Higher Education', *American Historical Review*, cv (2000).

²⁵ Laves and Thomson, *UNESCO*, 49.

spearheaded a new research and educational initiative dedicated to the theme of 'Tensions Affecting International Understanding', which enlisted a range of international psychologists to study the roots of human aggression and the (unconscious) causes of militarism and fascism.²⁶ While Huxley's philosophy of 'world scientific humanism' met considerable resistance from both the left and right at the time, and anticipated the agency's Cold War entanglements,²⁷ Huxley remained undeterred in his belief that UNESCO should facilitate the 'emergence of a single world culture'.²⁸ The History of Mankind, as a result, should 'lay stress on the cultural achievements of the human race . . . dealing with war and politics only in so far as they influenced cultural and scientific progress'.²⁹

Of course the idea of global history has deep roots, though it arguably emerged as a modern subject of inquiry at the end of the nineteenth century and during the inter-war years. Lord Acton described world history in 1898 as 'distinct from the combined history of all nations' and stressed the 'common fortunes of mankind'; Karl Lamprecht and Hans E. Helmolt championed similar ideas of world history at the same time in Germany, wherein international exchange rather than warfare was foregrounded.³⁰ In the 1920s H. G. Wells wrote that world history was 'something more and something less than the aggregate of the national histories'. In his 1921 book *The Salvaging of Civilization*, Wells argued that one particular book of world history, the Bible, had united Western peoples for centuries, and now a new book was needed to unite world peoples in the same way.³¹ Spengler and Toynbee lent further popularity to the idea of world history, especially in an era of growing professionalization and emphasis on the nation state.³² Nonetheless, most of these

²⁶ Daniel Pick, *The Pursuit of the Nazi Mind: Hitler, Hess and the Analysts* (Oxford, 2012), 207.

²⁷ US suspicion of Huxley's materialism and atheism could be seen in the 1947 *Life* magazine profile, 'The Huxley Brothers', *Life*, 24 Mar. 1947. See also Theodor Besterman, *UNESCO: Peace in the Minds of Men* (New York, 1951), 108.

²⁸ Julian Huxley, *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Philosophy* (Washington, 1947), 17, 61.

²⁹ Julian Huxley, *Memories II* (London, 1973), 69.

³⁰ Matthias Middell, 'World Orders in World Histories before and after World War I', in Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmeier (eds.), *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s–1930s* (London, 2007), 97–117.

³¹ H. G. Wells, *The Salvaging of Civilization: The Probable Future of Mankind* (New York, 1921), 109.

³² Allardyce, 'Toward World History', 24–5.

histories were written from the perspective of the West; in the case of Wells and Toynbee, they tended to present their narratives as tales of separate, distinct civilizations. Notably, this idea of universal civilization — even if based on a Western model — found some resonance among Asian intellectuals in the Ottoman and Japanese empires in the late nineteenth century,³³ though these views were increasingly muted after the First World War, as the stress fell upon the primacy of distinct civilizations.³⁴ Universal histories continued to be published, however. A clear antecedent of UNESCO's world history is H. G. Wells's 1,100-page *The Outline of History*, published in 1920. This book was the most popular work of history in the first half of the twentieth century, reportedly having sold over a million copies by 1931, and it built its narrative around issues of evolution, ecology and social Darwinism.³⁵ Huxley knew Wells very well, and even collaborated with him on the volume's 'companion' piece, *The Science of Life*. It is not difficult to detect various themes that found their way into the UNESCO 'History of Mankind' project: the endeavour to write an accessible world history from the dawn of time to the present for a broad readership; the focus on the earth's pre-human history; pride of place being given to non-Western ancient civilizations such as India, Egypt and China; and science as a common thread. Even Wells's contention that the danger of nationalism lay in a 'de-civilization of men's minds' and that 'our true nationality is mankind' became cherished UNESCO beliefs.³⁶ While Wells's pet idea of a federal world state enjoyed less support, his call for a unified global history certainly resonated in the UNESCO project, as did his book *The Way to World Peace* (1930), which argued that technological and economic developments were 'forcing us toward the realization of a single world community'.³⁷

³³ Cemil Aydin, 'Beyond Civilization: Pan-Islamism, Pan-Asianism and the Revolt against the West', *Journal of Modern European History*, iv (2006), and Dominic Sachsenmeier, 'Searching for Alternatives to Western Modernity: Cross-Cultural Approaches in the Aftermath of the Great War', *Journal of Modern European History*, iv (2006).

³⁴ Michael Adas, 'Contested Hegemony: The Great War and the Afro-Asian Assault on the Civilizing Mission Ideology', *Journal of World History*, xv (Mar. 2004).

³⁵ Paul Costello, *World Historians and their Goals: Twentieth-Century Answers to Modernism* (Dekalb, 1993), 42–4.

³⁶ H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History: Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind* (1920; London, 1934), esp. 1144–7.

³⁷ Cited in Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*, 89.

UNESCO's world history project gained additional lustre from the involvement of several internationally famous historians. Arnold Toynbee, for example, served as a kind of consultant for the project and lent his support to the idea of writing a world history from the perspective of science and technology.³⁸ No less prominent was the involvement of the great French *Annales* historian Lucien Febvre. Febvre had founded the journal *Annales d'Histoire Economique et Sociale* in 1929, and was president of the committee overseeing a new *Encyclopedie française* in the 1930s. Febvre had been one of France's delegates to the UNESCO preparatory conference in London in 1946, and attended UNESCO's general conferences in Paris, Mexico City and Beirut. In 1949 he stated that the whole project 'arose in my mind as the result of a long-standing desire to be of service to UNESCO',³⁹ and several French commentators have credited him as the originator of the 'History of Mankind' initiative.⁴⁰ In a 1949 report for UNESCO, Febvre set out the chief objective of the project as 'to act upon the minds of people in order to extirpate the fatal virus of war. To act upon the minds of men and of women, to be sure, but, above all, upon the minds of children', so that we 'create the possibilities of a new kind of teaching — the teaching of a non-political world history, a teaching which will be, by definition, consecrated to peace'. As a consequence, the histories were aimed at both universities and schools in their attempt to imbue the younger generation with new universalist values of peace and transnational solidarity. By the late 1940s the United Nations' initial enthusiasm for reforming higher education in the name of new humanist principles was waning. The short-lived UNRRA University in Munich, created by and for displaced persons, had closed its doors by 1948,⁴¹ and UNESCO increasingly saw this history as instrumental in

³⁸ Arnold Toynbee, personal paper to special joint committee on UNESCO Project for a Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind, 20 Feb. 1950: ED 157/30, The National Archives, London (hereafter TNA).

³⁹ 'Report of Prof. Lucien Febvre', typescript, 2 May 1949: SCHM 23 2.633, Unesco Archives, Paris (hereafter UAP).

⁴⁰ Charles Morazé, 'Obituary of Lucien Febvre', *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale / Journal of World History / Cuadernos de Historia Mundial*, iii (1956).

⁴¹ Anna Holian, 'Displacement and the Post-War Reconstruction of Education: Displaced Persons at the UNRRA University of Munich, 1945–1948', *Contemporary European History*, xvii (2008), 170.

helping to train a new post-war generation of primary and secondary school students.⁴²

For Febvre, the new ‘peaceful history of humanity’ would be ‘an instrument of a greatly widened, universal, and sympathetic knowledge of the world as a whole’.⁴³ In this endeavour Febvre collaborated with Paul Rivet, director of the Musée de l’Homme in Paris. At the UNESCO Third Conference in Beirut in 1948, they stated that ‘History is badly constructed, for it is incomplete, and nationalistic in tendency’.⁴⁴ In 1950 Febvre and his colleague François Crouzet drafted a thirty-page primer on a new history of France that would celebrate its diverse ethnic make-up (*sang-mêlés*) and cultural borrowings from other peoples.⁴⁵ In keeping with this spirit, Febvre founded the *Journal of World History* in 1953, which included a number of pieces dedicated to reconceiving world history from this intercultural approach. In his foreword to the first issue of the *Journal of World History*, Febvre boldly announced that this new UNESCO world history would be composed ‘not of those so-called Heroes, those “scourges of God”, who for thousands of years seem to have been brought into the world only to covet, kill, plunder and burn’. Instead, this history

does not breed hatred. It does not tend to crush the so-called ‘small nations’ beneath the weight of the great ones. It considers them all as so many participants in a great common enterprise . . . And that, to parody the slogan of that would-be Caesar who ended in the mud, in Sedan, we may say, and we repeat, ‘History is peace’. Peace, that foretaste — for the believer — of a divine order. That triumph — for the unbeliever — of free human reason.⁴⁶

⁴² UNESCO General Conference, 4th session, ‘Present Position of the Project Concerning the “Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind”’, Paris, 30 Aug. 1949, 4: NCUAC 54.3.95, D163, Joseph Needham Papers, Cambridge University Library (hereafter JNP).

⁴³ ‘Report of Prof. Lucien Febvre to the International Council for Philosophy and Social Sciences, May 1949’, *Cahiers d’Histoire Mondiale / Journal of World History / Cuadernos de Historia Mundial*, i (April 1954), 955–6.

⁴⁴ UNESCO General Conference, Third Session, Sub-Commission of Natural Sciences and Cultural Questions, 26 Nov. 1948: NCUAC 54.3.95, D161, JNP.

⁴⁵ Lucien Febvre and François Crouzet, ‘Origines internationales d’une civilisation: éléments d’une histoire de France’, 28 Dec. 1951: ED/TB/10, UAP. Their long-forgotten full manuscript has now been published as Lucien Febvre and François Crouzet, *Nous sommes des sang-mêlés: manuel d’histoire de la civilisation française* (Paris, 2012).

⁴⁶ Lucien Febvre, ‘Foreword’, *Cahiers d’Histoire Mondiale / Journal of World History / Cuadernos de Historia Mundial*, i (1953).

This was a direct challenge to standard 'great men' historical narratives, in which the history of warring elites would be replaced by chronicles of the peaceful exchanges of cultures, humanity on the move.⁴⁷

Another central figure behind the conceptualization of the UNESCO history was the renowned Cambridge biologist and historian of science Joseph Needham.⁴⁸ Needham is best known for his 24-volume *Science and Civilization in China*, published between 1954 and 2004, long considered one of the towering monuments in the history of science. In it Needham argued that Chinese knowledge was responsible for many of the world's scientific discoveries and technological breakthroughs up until the fifteenth century; and he dedicated his work to restoring China's pivotal place in the broader history of scientific civilization. Needham was a colleague and close friend of Huxley, and spent much of the Second World War in China, as head of the special British Council mission to maintain links with the Chinese scientific community during the Japanese occupation.⁴⁹ Needham's deep knowledge of Chinese science and culture was seen as a great asset in the world history initiative. Indeed, Needham had already outlined what this history might look like in his short 1945 book *Chinese Science*,⁵⁰ and hoped this primer would serve as a guiding model.⁵¹ Like Huxley, Needham was convinced that science and technology should serve as the backbone of any history of mankind, since he believed that cultural interaction and the transfer of scientific knowledge accounted for much of what we call civilization.⁵² His initiative was also well timed: integrating science into UNESCO's brief was seen as especially urgent following the explosion of atomic

⁴⁷ Patrick Petitjean, 'Needham, Anglo-French Civilities and Ecumenical Science', in S. Ifran Habib and Dhruv Raina (eds.), *Situating the History of Science: Dialogues with Joseph Needham* (New Delhi, 1999), 177.

⁴⁸ Huxley credited Needham as the prime mover behind the 'History of Mankind' project. Huxley, *Memories II*, 54.

⁴⁹ Joseph and Dorothy Needham (eds.), *Science Outpost: Papers of the Sino-British Science Co-Operation Office (British Council Scientific Office in China), 1942-1946* (London, 1948).

⁵⁰ Joseph Needham, *Chinese Science* (London, 1945).

⁵¹ Joseph Needham to Julian Huxley, 13 Oct. 1948: NCUAC 54.3.95, D161, JNP.

⁵² Joseph Needham, *Science and International Relations: Being the Fiftieth Robert Boyle Lecture Delivered before the Oxford University Scientific Club on June 1, 1948* (Oxford, 1949) and Petitjean, 'Needham, Anglo-French Civilities and Ecumenical Science', 167.

bombs in Japan in August 1945, bringing with it the sudden imperative of managing science and atomic energy. In his view, a new history stressing cultural interchange would serve as an antidote to conventional histories focusing on ethnocentric biases and preconceptions, and thus would contribute to UNESCO's more general drive towards 'education for peace'.⁵³ In key respects, this new 'scientific popular front'⁵⁴ was understood as a means of bridging what C. P. Snow later famously called modernity's irreconcilable 'two cultures' — the humanities and the sciences.⁵⁵

Hardly less novel from a practical standpoint was the fact that this history was to be written by an international commission of historians. In 1951 the International Commission for a History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind was formed. Overall responsibility rested with the Brazilian permanent delegate, Paulo Carneiro; and the US historian Ralph Turner, of Yale, was chosen as head of the editorial commission, largely on the strength of his two-volume, 1,300-page book, *The Great Cultural Traditions* (1941), which surveyed ancient cities and classical empires from India to Greece. In 1942 Turner had been hired by the US state department's division of cultural relations to head its new research programme, and thus he was in a good position to oversee the project.⁵⁶ A wide array of international consultants and advisers was integrated into the process for the sake of coverage and fairness. In the planning stages it was reported that around a thousand historians were involved as writers, editors, researchers or collaborators.⁵⁷ While the end result did not encompass quite so many, there were overlapping international committees and commissions that enlisted hundreds of scholars worldwide. Never before had a history project attracted such interest, or involved so many participants across the globe. The obvious precedent for such a collaborative project was the Enlightenment-era French

⁵³ Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind', 104.

⁵⁴ Petitjean, 'Needham, Anglo-French Civilities and Ecumenical Science', 170.

⁵⁵ C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures* (Cambridge, 1959). For discussion, see Guy Ortolano, *The Two Cultures Controversy: Science, Literature and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain* (Cambridge, 2009), esp. chs. 1 and 2.

⁵⁶ Frank A. Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: US Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938–1950* (Cambridge, 1981), 66.

⁵⁷ Benjamin Fine, '1000 World Scholars Plan a Vast History of Mankind', *New York Times*, 18 Dec. 1951.

encyclopaedia project; the only twentieth-century equivalent was the flurry of new collective diplomatic history-writing in the aftermath of the Versailles Treaty, when virtually every belligerent state commissioned teams of national historians (often funded by their respective foreign offices) to counter charges of war guilt and misdeeds by their soldiers.⁵⁸ In any case, UNESCO's internationalist and collaborative history-writing project was new and on a scale completely unknown before. It was a vast and Herculean undertaking, and expectations ran high. Turner was not shy in announcing that this UNESCO world history would be 'the most influential ever written', and would 'form a source from which all peoples can take a vision of humanity as a whole'.⁵⁹

The history was to be divided into six volumes: prehistory to 1200 BC, 1200 BC to 400 AD, 400 to 1300, 1300 to 1775 and 1775 to the end of the nineteenth century, with the final instalment on the first half of the twentieth century. Volume 1 was first published in 1963, and quickly translated into six languages. It was lauded as an 'international endeavor without parallel in history', the 'first truly international account of the history of mankind'.⁶⁰ The print runs were 100,000 to 150,000 copies, and the volumes were accompanied by shorter companion books designed for classroom instruction.⁶¹ The history, as noted in the preface to the first volume by the new UNESCO director, René Maheu, was one in which the 'intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind' to which the preamble to UNESCO's constitution refers 'can really be seen at work'. It was also welcomed as a temporal counterbalance to the post-war world's interest in space exploration. As Maheu solemnly put it: 'At a time when man is preparing to launch out from this planet into space, it is well that History should hold him in contemplation of his

⁵⁸ Keith Wilson (ed.), *Forging the Collective Memory: Government and National Historians through Two World Wars* (New York, 1996).

⁵⁹ Cited in Allardyce, 'Toward World History', 27–8. Background can be found in Jacquetta Hawkes and Sir Leonard Woolley, *History of Mankind: Cultural and Scientific Development*, i, *Prehistory and the Beginnings of Civilization* (London, 1963), xvii–xxiv.

⁶⁰ Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind', 128, 130.

⁶¹ These included *The Evolution of Science: Readings from the History of Mankind* (New York, 1963), *The Nineteenth-Century World* (New York, 1963), and *Religions and the Promise of the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1965), all edited by Guy S. Métraux and François Crouzet; Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind', 121.

trajectory through the ages'.⁶² This was the dawning of space-age historicism.

There were three distinguishing characteristics of this UNESCO universal history project. The first was the overarching idea of writing world history as a record of cultural interaction.⁶³ At first this may sound rather banal, especially given today's enthusiasm in the historical profession for 'networks' and 'flows' as the basis of new transnational histories. However, UNESCO's view of history was quite novel in the late 1940s, not least because modern histories (be they in Spengler's or Toynbee's iterations) had largely conceived of civilizations as geographically and culturally distinct blocks with their own internal logic, life cycle and unique contributions.⁶⁴ Similar views were present in popular world histories of the 1950s and 1960s such as Will and Ariel Durant's eleven-volume *The Story of Civilization* (1935–1975) and Carroll Quigley's *The Evolution of Civilizations* (1961). UNESCO, however, constructed the world differently in its universalist history; here the world was not composed of spatially distinct civilizations whose histories were reconstructed in parallel narratives. Nor was it cut into clear temporal periods organized around political events; the emphasis on science and technology meant that classic political periodizations did not shape this global history. Instead, the record of a shared 'world civilization' was one linked spatially and temporally through intercultural activity, accumulated scientific knowledge and mutual learning. UNESCO's 'History of Mankind' project was, therefore, about civilizational interaction and cross-fertilization, with a view to relativizing the role and place of the West in a more hybridized world of global encounters and borrowings. As the back cover announced, this work 'is not the story of reigns, battles and political rivalries but of the way in which people lived, developed their ways of life and borrowed from each other and diffused their respective cultures'. Emphasis was placed on trade, travel, migrations, the exchange of ideas, and even war, but only in so far as war exerted influence upon cultural exchanges and

⁶² René Maheu, 'Foreword', in Hawkes and Woolley, *Prehistory and the Beginnings of Civilization*, xiii, xi.

⁶³ *Resolutions Adopted by the General Conference during its Second Session: Mexico, November–December 1947* (Paris, 1948), 27 (resolution 5.7).

⁶⁴ Michael Lang, 'Globalization and Global History in Toynbee', *Journal of World History*, xxii (2011).

interactions. Such a 'unity in diversity' model for world history accorded with UNESCO's high-profile 1957 initiative to integrate its growing Asian membership, the so-called Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values, initiated by Indian and Japanese delegates as a means of fostering more inter-cultural dialogue and to help assuage political conflict in the region.⁶⁵ The second trait was the history's accent on peace. In this UNESCO harked back to the League of Nations' inter-war interest in school textbook revision; indeed in 1949 it published *A Handbook for the Improvement of Textbooks and Teaching Materials as Aids to International Understanding* for distribution to all its member states, stating that 'too much emphasis on military and political factors' tends 'to *divide* the nations from each other and to give too little attention to the history of civilization — science, technology, and the arts, for instance — which tends to *unite* the nations'.⁶⁶ The world history project arose from this pacifist sentiment. The third, and perhaps most controversial, feature was a strong disavowal of Eurocentrism. This was evident in the Febvre and Needham vision of the project, and these two scholars did more to shape the histories than anyone else.⁶⁷ Febvre's *Journal of World History* displayed a decidedly anti-Eurocentric perspective, and the appointment of the well-known Indian historian and diplomat K. M. Panikkar as one of the editors of volume 6, on the twentieth century, lent further credibility to this internationalist dispensation.

Other volumes in the series were similar in conception. Louis Gottschalk, co-editor of the fourth volume, dealing with 1300–1775, made clear that this new world history was predicated on moving beyond the Eurocentric bias of the 'so-called "universal histories"' of the Enlightenment; in a section called 'Major Religions', Christianity featured last after Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Islam and Judaism.⁶⁸ The same spirit

⁶⁵ Laura Elizabeth Wong, 'Relocating East and West: UNESCO's Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values', *Journal of World History*, xix (2008), 350–3.

⁶⁶ *Better History Textbooks* (UNESCO and its Programme, vi, Paris, 1951), 2 (original emphasis).

⁶⁷ Petitjean, 'Needham, Anglo-French Civilities and Ecumenical Science', 175.

⁶⁸ Louis Gottschalk, 'Authors' Introduction', in Louis Gottschalk, Loren C. MacKinney and Earl H. Pritchard, *History of Mankind: Cultural and Scientific Development*, iv, *The Foundations of the Modern World, 1300–1775* (London, 1969), xi.

infused volume 5, by Charles Morazé, which covered 1775–1905; for this reason it was described as the ‘première encyclopédie historique moderne’.⁶⁹ The conscious effort to ‘de-Europeanize’ world history was seen as a vital step towards a history of ‘intricate interdependence’ that would ‘stress civilization rather than politics’.⁷⁰ All these factors created a good deal of excitement about this new world history. Indian scholars, for example, welcomed the project as a means to ‘correct the myopia of Western savants, so many of whom, unable to see beyond Greece, have withheld from the East and especially from India the credit for cultural priority’.⁷¹ The cover blurb to each volume described the UNESCO history project as ‘the first global history, planned and executed from an international viewpoint’. UNESCO’s public relations stepped up media coverage and publicity via the agency national chapters around the world. Not for nothing did the *New York Times* hail this as a ‘grand and unparalleled publishing venture’.

Volume 6, on the twentieth century, began preparation in 1952, and was mainly overseen by the US historian and New Deal activist Caroline F. Ware, of Howard University. She was recruited in part on the strength of her editorship of *The Cultural Approach to History* in 1940. Ware was a distinguished labour historian, having written the influential *Early New England Cotton Manufacture: A Study in Industrial Beginnings* (1931) as well as a pioneering urban study, *Greenwich Village, 1920–1930: A Comment on American Civilization* (1935).⁷² During the war, Ware had published a book on US consumer advocacy,⁷³ and in 1961 she was appointed by President Kennedy to the Commission on the Status of Women, chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt. One of her co-authors was the Indian historian K. M. Panikkar, based at the University of Calcutta, who had published a number of books including

⁶⁹ Pierre Grappin and Philippe Wolff, ‘Charles Morazé: Essai de biographie’, in *Culture, science et développement: contribution à une histoire de l’homme. Mélanges en l’honneur de Charles Morazé* (Toulouse, 1979), 15.

⁷⁰ *Better History Textbooks*, 14–6 (original emphasis).

⁷¹ E. M. Hough, *UNESCO and World Unity and Peace* (Transactions of the Indian Institute of Culture xiii, Basavangudi, 1952), 5, quoted in Laves and Thomson, *UNESCO*, 400.

⁷² Ellen Fitzpatrick, ‘Caroline F. Ware and the Cultural Approach to History’, *American Quarterly*, xxxiii (1991).

⁷³ Caroline F. Ware, *The Consumer Goes to War: A Guide to Victory on the Home Front* (New York, 1942).

Survey of Indian History (1947) and *Hindu Society at the Crossroads* (1955). His 1953 *Asia and European Dominance*, which surveyed what he called the 'Vasco Da Gama' period of Asian history (1498–1945), was widely recognized as a model of synthetic East–West comparative history, and concluded with a call to move beyond 'narrow Europeanism' by integrating the 'past of the Great Asian peoples' as 'part of the general heritage of civilized man'.⁷⁴ The other co-author was Jan Marius Romein of the University of Amsterdam, an international specialist in Modern Europe and Asia (especially China), and a disciple of Johann Huizinga.⁷⁵ That the editors came from three different continents underlined this volume's internationalist approach and coverage. This was not the easiest of arrangements, however, given the great distances and national differences of the editors.⁷⁶ In a 1959 article in the *Journal of World History*, Ware noted with relish that this was to be a 'genuinely common product' between 'a Dutch professor, an Indian diplomat and an American, who was also a woman, and the chairman of the group'.⁷⁷

Soon thereafter the volume ran into Cold War conflict. For if UNESCO was to undertake a truly universal history, the Soviet Union's absence represented a real problem. The USSR was the one major power that refused to join the agency in the first decade, publicly dismissing it as 'capitalist and colonialist'; UNESCO's exclusion of Mao's China and its support for the UN's intervention in the Korean War were further proof to the Soviets of undue US influence and control. At the very first UNESCO conference in 1946, the Yugoslav representative Vladislav Ribnikar took issue with UNESCO's guiding ideology, in classic Marxist fashion, by arguing that wars do not begin in the minds of men, but rather in material conditions, and that international understanding could neither explain the causes of wars nor remove them in the future.⁷⁸ The Soviets responded

⁷⁴ K. M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco Da Gama Epoch of Asian History, 1498–1945* (London, 1953), 508.

⁷⁵ An overview of Romein's universalist views can be found in J. M. Romein, 'The Common Human Pattern', *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale / Journal of World History / Cuadernos de Historia Mundial*, iv (1958).

⁷⁶ K. M. Panikkar, *An Autobiography* (1954; Delhi, 1977), 305–6.

⁷⁷ Caroline F. Ware, 'The History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind: Some Problems of Interpretation', *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale*, v (1959), 271.

⁷⁸ *General Conference: First Session*, 38–9, quoted in Allardyce, 'Toward World History', 38.

to the 'History of Mankind' by commissioning their own ten-volume history of the world in 1953, to be written by the Soviet Academy of Social Sciences from a decidedly Marxist vantage point.⁷⁹ Such separatism left a gaping hole in what Huxley sheepishly called 'our pretended universality'.⁸⁰ Stalin's death in 1953 precipitated a new spirit of openness in Soviet foreign policy, and the USSR elected to join UNESCO in 1954.⁸¹ The agency took great pains not to stoke differences between East and West,⁸² and the international press was initially very positive about UNESCO's newest member.⁸³ But if the initial absence of the Soviet Union from the 'History of Mankind' project was a thorny issue, so too was its new presence. In the name of fairness, the draft for volume 6 was sent to the Soviet delegate to the commission, Alexandre Zvorikine, whereafter he and his colleagues duly returned over five hundred pages of objections to the characterization of communism, technological developments in the USSR, the Soviet economy and the USSR's political system. The authors repeatedly pleaded that they were neither anti-Soviet nor anti-communist, and they were under fire from Western members of the commission for being too sympathetic to the USSR in the book. But their policy of non-alignment was cold comfort to the Soviet delegation, and vocal Soviet criticism of UNESCO's all-inclusive history delayed the project for years.

The UNESCO history project was the subject of simmering controversy in other areas as well. Years before the first volume appeared, press reports circulated that UNESCO was nothing but 'the UN's Brainwashing Apparatus', and that its 'one-worldism' world history project 'smack[ed] unpleasantly of the Kremlin'.⁸⁴ Religious leaders — whether Catholics, Protestants or Jews — voiced their misgivings about the project, on grounds ranging from its supposedly atheistic thrust to the downplaying of Jewish

⁷⁹ 'A Ten-Volume "World History" in Preparation in the USSR', *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale / Journal of World History / Cuadernos de Historia Mundial*, ii (1954).

⁸⁰ Huxley, *Memories II*, 26.

⁸¹ Ilya V. Gaiduk, 'L'Union soviétique et l'UNESCO pendant la guerre froide', in *60 ans d'histoire de l'UNESCO: actes du colloque international, Paris, 16-18 novembre 2005* (Paris, 2007), 282.

⁸² 'UNESCO in 1948: an Impartial Assessment', *World Today* (Mar. 1949), 116.

⁸³ 'Soviet Decision to Join UNESCO', *Times*, 22 Apr. 1954.

⁸⁴ *American Mercury* (Feb. 1954), unpaginated.

history.⁸⁵ Perhaps the most trenchant criticism came from a seemingly unlikely source — the Roman Catholic Church. Efforts were made to bring the Church on board with UNESCO from the beginning: a permanent papal ambassador to UNESCO was appointed in 1949, and the papal nuncio in France, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli (later Pope John XXIII), was invited to address UNESCO's general conference in July 1951. However, the Church remained sceptical. By the early 1950s it was aware of the 'History of Mankind' project, and sought to impress upon UNESCO the importance of the Christian perspective in the writing of this new world history. Over the centuries Western world histories — from Augustine to Toynbee — had been mostly written from a Christian vantage point. This was no less the case in the early years following the Second World War. A condensed version of the first six volumes of Toynbee's famous Christian-inflected *The Study of History* was issued in 1947, and became a great international success, especially in the United States — so much so that Toynbee was featured on the cover of the weekly US news magazine *Time* in that same year as a prophet of a new world order.⁸⁶ For their part, US Catholics put pressure on the State Department to oppose what they perceived as the atheistic attitude of the UNESCO 'History of Mankind' project committee.⁸⁷ The US national UNESCO commission reportedly received many letters impugning Ralph Turner's character as one 'who has little mercy either on God, or on those who believe in Him'.⁸⁸ Things were similar in the UK. In a meeting at the British foreign office in 1952 with the UK delegates to UNESCO and the World Health Organization, it was reported that the Holy See 'holds strongly that UNESCO is run far too much by free thinkers, and free thinking instead of Christianity undermines the best ideological defence which the Western world has against Communism. The Holy See also makes the specific complaint that the UNESCO History of Mankind is being compiled preponderantly by Atheists'.⁸⁹ The Catholic press in Britain

⁸⁵ 'A World History for World Peace', *The Reconstructionist* (Feb. 1952), 5–6.

⁸⁶ William H. McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee: A Life* (New York, 1989), ch. 9.

⁸⁷ See Ralph Turner to Louis Gottschalk, 26 Jan. 1952: UCSC, box 17, folder 5, Louis Gottschalk Papers, University of Chicago Special Collections (hereafter LGP).

⁸⁸ US National Commission for UNESCO, tenth meeting, 26–27 Jan. 1952: box 18, folder 15, LGP.

⁸⁹ Foreign office minutes on Christian representation of UK delegations to UNESCO and WHO, 2 Oct. 1952: FO 371/101440, TNA.

intensified the crusade,⁹⁰ and the Vatican also sent in extensive criticisms of the early drafts of the histories.⁹¹ Such reactions registered just how fraught and suspicious a UN-sponsored world history was at the time, even one organized around the theme of peace and international exchange; it also underscored the powerful presence of the Church in international cultural affairs in the early Cold War.

Further complications arose from UNESCO's foray into the new field of human rights. It is often forgotten that UNESCO played a key role in promoting human rights for an international audience in the late 1940s, feeling emboldened that they were on the right track with their understanding of a common humanity. In June 1947 UNESCO sent out a questionnaire on human rights to dozens of international lawyers and public intellectuals across the world, including specialists on Chinese, Islamic and Hindu law and custom. Respondents included Gandhi, Benedetto Croce and Aldous Huxley, among others. Most heartening to UNESCO was the fact that virtually all those asked affirmed the common idea — if not necessarily the vernacular terminology — of human rights. As the editor of the collected responses, the well-known French Catholic champion of human rights Jacques Maritain, noted with great relish in the introduction to the published report, the respondents could agree on a set of practical values and concepts (such as the 'right to live a life that is free from the haunting fear of poverty and insecurity') as a 'sort of common denominator', after which the UNESCO committee was 'convinced that the members of the United Nations share common convictions on which human rights depend'.⁹² This was seen as a key conceptual breakthrough internationally, especially at a time when the UN drafting committee for the Declaration on Human Rights was making heavy weather of defining any programmatic meaning for human rights for global consumption.⁹³ While it may have been little more than wishful

⁹⁰ 'Atheist Will Direct UN History Book: with the Help of Agnostics', *Catholic Herald* (London), 4 Jan. 1952; and Pro Memoria to Right Hon. A. Eden from Apostolic Delegation to Great Britain, 3 Oct. 1952: FO 371/101440, TNA.

⁹¹ UNESCO secretary general to Louis Gottschalk, 20 June 1956: box 17, folder 9, LGP.

⁹² Jacques Maritain, 'Introduction', in *Human Rights: Comments and Interpretations* (London, 1949), 10.

⁹³ Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York, 2001), 73–8.

thinking at the time, it did give UNESCO's search for a common humanity across the centuries some needed intellectual ballast and international blessing early on.

Christian antagonism towards UNESCO's world history project deepened after the organization's high-profile 1950 travelling exhibition on the history of human rights, 'The Human Rights Album', probably the very first major international show on the theme anywhere.⁹⁴ For it, UNESCO prepared a kit of photographs and captions that was sent to all UNESCO national commissions for display and education, mostly aimed at schoolchildren. The exhibition was a kind of slide show of human progress, highlighting the abolition of slavery and inhumane treatment; religious tolerance and mutual respect; the emancipation of women; the rights of the citizen (for example, free speech, opinion and assembly, and universal suffrage); economic and social rights (the dignity of work, the right to relief); as well as cultural rights (education, scientific research). The information pack accompanying the photographs stated plainly its universalist message that 'the well-being of society depends on the evolution of Human Rights. This fact will be illustrated by showing that the same paths of liberty have been trodden, throughout the centuries and throughout the world, by civilizations that were very far apart — Vedantic India, Classical China, Greece, Islam, Medieval Europe, and so forth, up to modern times . . .' In this way the show was keen to insist that 'Human Rights' indeed 'bear witness to the brotherhood of men', and that 'World Peace depends on the concrete and universal application of Human Rights'.⁹⁵ The teachers' guide included in the pack went so far as to say that 'the [Universal] Declaration [on Human Rights] must be recognized as international, expressing, as it does, the essentials of a heritage common to the human race'.⁹⁶ Yet UNESCO's propounded 'heritage common to the human race' barely featured Christianity at all. Especially galling to the

⁹⁴ At its 1949 general conference in Paris, UNESCO organized a small exhibition on the Universal Declaration, which remained on view for three months; a short film, 'Droits de l'enfant, droits de l'homme', accompanied the exhibition and was shown in twenty-five Parisian cinemas on Human Rights Day (10 December) that year. Laves and Thompson, *UNESCO*, 267–8.

⁹⁵ Exhibition of Human Rights, conspectus of the display, Apr. 1949, 1–2: 342.7 (100) A066 '54', UAP.

⁹⁶ Draft for layout of 'Teachers' Guide to the Declaration of Human Rights', 1949: 37 A31, UAP.

Churches was that Jesus went unmentioned. Scorn poured in from the Christian press across the world: from France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Canada, Mexico, the US and even Czechoslovakia. One Montreal-based newspaper was outraged that 'Christian history in its entirety has been either ignored or cast aside'.⁹⁷ Another paper, from Madrid, articulated the common concern that the exhibition's sidelining of Christianity's role in the story of human rights might 'give some indication of the line which will be followed in the [UNESCO] Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind'.⁹⁸

Despite these fears and objections, volume 6 moved towards completion. It was no easy task to get all sides (especially the Soviets) to sign up to an agreed version of the century. To move things along, Ware travelled the world in 1955–56 to consult several hundred scholars, making sure that a vast army of specialists had looked over the draft. Contributors to the volume came from more than thirty-seven countries, and the draft was sent to no fewer than twenty UNESCO national commissions for approval. It was finally published in 1966, a full fifteen years after the 'History of Mankind' project was originated. The authors boasted that the twentieth-century volume was in many ways the most distinctive to date, and the crowning achievement of the whole enterprise. As the authors stated in the preface, 'it is only in the twentieth century that such a History could have been undertaken at all, for only then have people of different culture areas come to know the range of other cultures. Only in the twentieth century have we had access to the knowledge which enables us to see mankind as one'.⁹⁹ Alan Bullock, the well-known biographer of Hitler and Stalin, praised the book as the first 'genuinely international account of the history of the world in which differences have been sufficiently contained to enable an agreed version to be published'. The editors frankly admitted in the preface that there had been strong criticism of the volume, mostly emanating from three

⁹⁷ 'Whither UNESCO?', *Gazette* (Montreal), 18 Jan. 1950, 8, as well as 'L'Unesco raye-t-elle Christ?' *La France Catholique*, 5 Apr. 1951.

⁹⁸ *ABC* (Madrid), quoted in Unesco's press review, 1952–54, UAP.

⁹⁹ Caroline F. Ware, J. M. Romein and K. M. Panikkar, 'Author-Editors' Preface [April 1960]', in Caroline F. Ware, J. M. Romein and K. M. Panikkar, *History of Mankind: Cultural and Scientific Development*, vi, *The Twentieth Century* (London, 1966), xvii.

camps: Western liberals, who felt that there was not enough on the story of individual freedom and responsibility; Marxist-Leninists, who thought that there was too little on the laws of dialectical historical materialism; and exponents of what was called the 'Catholic historical view', who wanted more emphasis on unchanging spiritual values across the century.¹⁰⁰ In the name of fairness and inclusivity, Ware, Panikkar and Romein elected to publish the objections, and there were many, in lengthy footnotes to each chapter.¹⁰¹

If UNESCO's twentieth-century world history was an effort to transcend the Cold War by integrating the USSR and China into a one-world narrative of scientific and cultural achievement, it endeavoured to distinguish itself in other ways as well. The authors decided to showcase the anti-Eurocentric novelty of volume 6 by announcing that decolonization was the pivotal event of the century. The book's opening sentences — in a chapter revealingly called 'The Shift in World Power' — made this plain:

In 1899 the British poet Rudyard Kipling wrote his famous lines: 'Take up the White Man's Burden — ye dare not stoop to less'. In 1957 the African state of Ghana took its seat at the United Nations along with eighty other nations of the world. The history of the first half of the twentieth century is the story of the revolutionary shift in power reflected in these two events. For Kipling wrote not alone for the British Empire, on which 'the sun never set', but for the French Empire and its *mission civilisatrice*, and the Dutch and Belgian, the Portuguese and the German — in short for the white man of Europe who had carried his power and his civilization to the ends of the earth. And Ghana was not unique, for more than a dozen independent countries, formed by those whom Kipling had seen as the white man's 'burden', had already taken their places as sovereign equals in the family of nations.

This new history sought to capture this seismic shift in global politics, and the first chapter ended with the trend towards internationalism: 'In the new structure of power, these peoples [of newly developing nations] had the conscience and self-interest of mankind on their side in their efforts to rise. This provided

¹⁰⁰ Caroline F. Ware, 'Supplement to the Author-Editors' Preface', in Ware, Romein and Panikkar, *Twentieth Century*, xvii–xx.

¹⁰¹ In a typically point-scoring footnote to a bland sentence on labour productivity, one Soviet commentator weighed in with the following: 'It may be added that in the USSR the 8-hour work day was introduced in 1917, whereas in 1919 in the USA, a country with a higher level of labor productivity, a strike for the 8-hour working day was cruelly suppressed'. Ware, Romein and Panikkar, *Twentieth Century*, 288, n. 4.

a new dynamic for world relationship and an imperative which gave international organization a practical as well as a political role'.¹⁰² In UNESCO's account of the century until 1960, Gandhi was given more coverage than Hitler, while Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta got more pages than Stalin or Mussolini.

In other ways, too, volume 6 was unorthodox. The introduction covers the decline of European hegemony, the First World War, the rise of the US and the USSR, growing international resistance to colonial powers, the Great Depression, the Second World War — all breathlessly compressed into thirty-three pages. It is followed by sections on the 'Impact of Nationalism' and 'Trend Toward International Cooperation' in the inter-war years, leading up to the creation of the United Nations, followed by short sections on the State, Industrialism and Changing Society. The main thesis put forward is that modernization — the mechanization of agriculture, industrialization, the uprooting of people and population growth — has become the basis of a new common history of humanity. As the authors put it, the 'world at mid century had become in a very real sense a world society'.¹⁰³ Political events are thus briefly presented as a mere backdrop to technological and scientific achievement. There is little on the formation and growth of states (apart from the newly decolonized ones); instead, the focus is clearly on the development of international society. In fact, the section on the state is compressed into twenty-five pages, while the 'development and application of scientific knowledge' (transport, communications, 'means of destruction', nutrition, fishery, forestry, the home and environment) covers some five hundred pages. Striking, too, is the almost total lack of political names and quotations — only the most significant figures such as Woodrow Wilson and Hitler get mentions, and there is very little accompanying detail. By contrast, much attention is devoted to the insights of Darwin, Planck, Einstein, Heisenberg and Freud, interspersed with key inventions and technological breakthroughs. There are twice as many pages on electrification as on the First World War. This was a direct challenge to twentieth-century world histories organized around wars, states, elites and Europe, as here

¹⁰² Ware, Romein and Panikkar, *Twentieth Century*, 3, 33.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 4.

the emphasis fell squarely on large macro-historical trends across the world, with less concern for their causes than their broader international effects.

In the second half of the book the organizing principle is that the twentieth century brought disturbance to all corners of the world, for better or worse. As the authors make plain in the preface: 'In these years no sphere of life remained unassailed by questions and doubts, no traditional system of thought stood unchallenged'.¹⁰⁴ The global explosion of new leisure industries (radio, cinema, television, sports and travel) is seen to have further accelerated the upending of traditional society, as did the 'democratization of education' and growing literacy worldwide. But here the book changes tack dramatically, as the focus shifts from anonymous material betterment to the power and influence of twentieth-century ideas. Revealingly, the volume is framed by two contending principles — nationalism and the 'concept of the unity of mankind'.¹⁰⁵ The figure who stands behind the contradictions of the century is Woodrow Wilson, whose Fourteen Points 'embodied major dynamic trends of the twentieth century' — the principle of self-determination and the proposed formation of an international organization. Much of the book is about the global spread of the tension, evident in Wilson's thought, between nationalism and internationalism.¹⁰⁶ And, in keeping with UNESCO's broad anti-Cold War approach, this history concedes that communist countries have their own version of the unity of mankind principle, and goes so far as to say that what all regimes across the century have in common is planning and an idea of welfare for all. There are significant sections on the international typologies of military organizations, and religion, education and the family, with no value judgements made between them.

No less controversial was the contention that one of the crucial global developments of the twentieth century was atheism, since a third of all people on the face of the earth in 1950 lived under systems 'whose basic philosophy had no place for God'. What is more, the section on religion mainly portrays world faiths as sources of psychological support in the face of the

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 650.

¹⁰⁵ Ware, 'History of the Scientific and Cultural Development', 274.

¹⁰⁶ Ware, Romein and Panikkar, *Twentieth Century*, 39.

twentieth-century's dizzying changes. Such a sociological approach to religion rankled with a number of readers, and Christian critics in the footnotes repeatedly took issue with the absence of any sense of spirituality as part of the cultural development of humanity, to say nothing of the crude reduction of religion to a form of self-defence against modernization.¹⁰⁷ Notable, too, is the narrative focus on 'drives for cultural integrity and recognition' and 'drives for individual freedom and human dignity', with large sections on various persecuted groups, such as 'Labour', 'Women' and 'Race and Caste Groups Subject to Discrimination'. The histories of the expanded franchise, women's rights, anti-racism, decolonization and the achievements of organized labour are all chronicled as part of a slow march towards recognizing human dignity across the modern world. All this is understood as part of the unmooring of tradition and the re-engineering of communities around the globe. The conclusion is that the twentieth-century individual 'thus found his identity, his status and his role in society less simply and clearly defined by the agencies which had traditionally given him identity and status – his family, his social class, his parent's occupation, his ethnic identity'.¹⁰⁸

Most striking in this provocatively secular and pacifist story of humanity is the relative absence of conflict and crisis. On offer is very little on colonialism, slavery or even war, and most of the unpleasant aspects of history are expunged or subordinated to the main plotline of exchange, commonality and progress across the century. 'The crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind', as one reviewer observed, wryly echoing Gibbon, are 'excluded from its history; conflicts and tragedies were only to be recorded if they somehow had contributed to cultural and scientific development'.¹⁰⁹ And not only is violence driven to the margins, this 'History of Mankind' is also oddly nameless and faceless. In the illustration section there are few images of people, as machines and technology assume centre stage. On one level, such an approach may be interpreted as in keeping with the *Annales* school idea of the early modern world. Certainly the international flavour and interdisciplinary tone (including

¹⁰⁷ Ware, Romein and Panikkar, *Twentieth Century*, 895 n. 1.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 784.

¹⁰⁹ Niels Steensgaard, 'Universal History for Our Times', *Journal of Modern History*, xxxv (1973), 73–4.

the integration of anthropology) in this UNESCO history are very akin to the French historiographical method, particularly in the way that larger macro-level intercultural forces are seen to shape the flow of human history. Febvre liked to cite Paul Valéry's assertion that the 'appearance of electric light in people's homes, for instance, was a greater historical event than certain diplomatic congresses and their transient solutions'.¹¹⁰ Likewise, politics and political events — as can be noted in *Annales* school writing more generally — are sidelined in UNESCO's approach. The *Annales'* emphasis on group research and common enterprise was also central to the UNESCO project. To be sure, the UNESCO histories never went as far as Braudel in dismissing politics and political events as simply 'surface disturbances, crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their backs'.¹¹¹ Rather, the UNESCO history was more inspired by Febvre's long-standing interest in rewriting history as a kind of celebration of human diversity and voluntarism, building on his famous comment, in his 1922 book *La Terre et l'évolution humaine*, that 'there are no necessities, but everywhere possibilities'.¹¹² In fact, Febvre was fond of quoting Marcel Mauss: 'civilization is defined as that which can be borrowed'.¹¹³ What distinguished this final 'History of Mankind' volume was the way in which the *Annales* method was applied to the French school's notorious blind spot — the twentieth century. Such a marriage was long seen as all but impossible, on the grounds that the dramatic, event-driven twentieth century was hopelessly at odds with *longue durée* structural histories.¹¹⁴ Arguably this volume serves as the first effort to write an *Annales*-inspired history of the twentieth century for a broad international audience.

Still, there were key differences. In the UNESCO history, for instance, change itself remained central, with progress the general organizing principle. However this was no simple endorsement of

¹¹⁰ Lucien Febvre, 'A New Kind of History', in Peter Burke (ed.), *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Febvre* (New York, 1973), 30.

¹¹¹ Fernand Braudel, *On History*, trans. Sarah Matthews (Chicago, 1980), 10–11.

¹¹² Quoted in Peter Burke, 'Introduction: The Development of Lucien Febvre', in Burke (ed.), *A New Kind of History*, xi.

¹¹³ See Needham's handwritten notes to the drafting committee for the history project, 12 Dec. 1949, unpaginated: NCUAC 54.3.95, D163, JNP.

¹¹⁴ H. L. Wesseling, 'The *Annales* School and the Writing of Contemporary History', *Review*, i (1978), quoted in Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The *Annales* School, 1929–1989* (Palo Alto, 1990), 98.

the Cold War modernization theory so popular among US social scientists at the time, in which economic and political liberalism were seen as the natural telos of historical development.¹¹⁵ It was instead an inclusive world history that sought to give equal prominence to different political systems, both traditional and modern, capitalist and communist. At the same time it was suffused with a kind of post-Nazi Whiggishness, in which past and present were read as unifying and reasonable, peaceful and peaceable — in sharp contrast to the dangerous Cold War world that offered little such comfort to most observers. From this perspective, UNESCO's construction of a universal past may be construed as compensation for the agency's inability to build a common international present across Cold War divisions. Noteworthy, too, was the reformulation of the mission of civilization itself. No doubt the term caused a good deal of grief and trepidation, given its associations with imperialism and Western cultural arrogance. In UNESCO's world history project, civilization and peace were synonymous, and this new history was to provide a record of the civilian achievements of humanity in the past so as to safeguard its memory for a divided and belligerent Cold War world. It is well known that UNESCO took the international lead in preserving and maintaining cultural ruins around the world as part of a newly conceived global heritage; in the aftermath of the Second World War, UNESCO insisted that peace itself was the most endangered ruin, in need of care and cultivation.

Given these motivations, the 'History of Mankind' project may have been good politics, but not necessarily good history. Serious concerns were raised about its ideological underpinnings from the beginning; critics questioned UNESCO's guiding presupposition that 'since the world is now becoming a unity, scholarship has a duty to help to bring to birth a world civilization by demonstrating that this has been the direction that History has always taken'.¹¹⁶ Raymond Aron, who was hired as a UNESCO consultant in the early 1960s, challenged the world history project by saying that 'the authors have wished above all for it to be descriptive, neutral, objective, acceptable to everybody.

¹¹⁵ Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and 'Nation-Building' in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill, 2000).

¹¹⁶ Special committee on the Unesco project for a Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind, 28 Feb. 1950: NCUAC 54.3.95, D167, JNP.

Personally, I believe that it can only be problematic, interpretative, sociological, philosophical, unacceptable to some people . . . But in this case it is Unesco's own conception, applied to the twentieth century, that must be called into question'.¹¹⁷

Press reviews voiced criticism too. While the first volume, on prehistory, was generally well received,¹¹⁸ the second attracted far less favourable publicity.¹¹⁹ The press reviews of volume 6 were decidedly mixed. While some greeted it as a 'valuable and fascinating work',¹²⁰ others were less sanguine. One Indian reviewer noted how the project ended up undermining its own objectives: 'What has been the most tragic consequence of the UNESCO project so far is that it misfired on itself. The idea was to develop international understanding. But what has been the reaction to the volumes already published? Some bad feelings were created among the peoples of different countries, especially of the Communist and newly independent and developing countries'.¹²¹ The volume's effort to exclude the world of violent emotions from history was damned by one reviewer writing in *The Guardian*:

The result is moderate consensual liberalism with several minority reports, a series of rousing footnotes by various scholars, mostly Catholic and Communist, appended to each chapter and having the general character of back row interruptions . . . But if archaeologists unearth it in the remains of the UN headquarters, they are likely to find a new consensus: that it was the things this history omits, the emotions and angers of man, which led to violent destruction of the city-level at which it was found.¹²²

No doubt the volume's studiously neutral social-scientific tone and anti-individualist approach may have helped disguise its political thrust in an age of highly charged ideological positions; yet such a narrative style departed both from UNESCO's original preoccupation with investigating (not avoiding) the preponderance of violence, aggression and war in the modern world, and from the

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Ware, 'Supplement to the Author-Editors' Preface', xx.

¹¹⁸ John Ardagh, 'A Noah's Ark of Disagreement by World Historians', *Observer*, 3 Mar. 1963, 5, and Peter Lennon, 'Unesco's History of Mankind', *Guardian*, 11 June 1963, 5.

¹¹⁹ J. H. Plumb, 'A Great Story Left Untold', *New York Times*, 1 Aug. 1965. For a rejoinder, see William Spencer's letter to the editor, *New York Times*, 12 Sept. 1965, 32.

¹²⁰ See L. S. Stavrianos's review in *Journal of Modern History*, xli (June 1969).

¹²¹ M. K. Haldar, 'History under UNESCO', *Thought: A Weekly Review of Politics and the Arts*, 25 Feb. 1967.

¹²² Alex Comfort, 'All Those in Favour?' *Guardian*, 25 Nov. 1966.

popular interest, after 1945, in histories that drew on psychological explanations in understanding the past.¹²³ Other critics vented their dissatisfaction for different reasons: Middle Eastern countries were displeased with the benign interpretation of the Crusades; Christian authorities did not like the view of religion as something dividing people rather than uniting them; and there was criticism of the relative paucity of African and South American history.¹²⁴ In 1969 the once-vaunted editorial commission was dissolved, and the last volume in the series — on the nineteenth century — appeared, with little fanfare, in 1976. For all its hype and investment, UNESCO's two-decade, multi-volume international history-writing enterprise never reached its intended goal and broad audience, seemingly ending up as a dusty museum-piece of early anti-Cold War idealism.¹²⁵

In part this had to do with the fact that both UNESCO and the world changed along the way. Jaime Torres Bodet, the eminent Mexican diplomat and writer who succeeded Huxley as the second director general of UNESCO, devoted more energy to giving technical assistance to poorer countries, turning UNESCO's attention away from world civilization to more concrete tasks with tangible results.¹²⁶ The once-soaring rhetoric of UNESCO's redemptive role in the world — in one 1949 pamphlet, Huxley and Torres Bodet claimed that 'never in human history . . . had [wisdom and truth] been institutionalized on an international scale until Unesco was created. Never before has humanism been made an inter-governmental preoccupation, nor the enlightenment of man an inter-governmental activity' — was toned down by the mid 1950s and geared towards more practical issues.¹²⁷ Under the leadership of the Italian Vittorino Veronese in the late 1950s and early 1960s, UNESCO increasingly turned toward African development and better East–West relations, and undertook its first major preservation project in an effort to save the archaeological monuments and sites of

¹²³ Pick, *Pursuit of the Nazi Mind*, 214.

¹²⁴ Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind', 123–5.

¹²⁵ Steensgaard, 'Universal History for Our Times'.

¹²⁶ Sathyamurthy, *Politics of International Cooperation*, 121.

¹²⁷ Julian Huxley and Jaime Torres Bodet, *This Is Our Power: Speeches Delivered by Dr Julian Huxley and Mr Jaime Bodet during the Third Session of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Beirut, December 10, 1948* (Geneva, 1949), 2.

Nubia.¹²⁸ UNESCO also fell foul of trends in international politics. In Western Europe the early post-war universalism was shifting into new dreams of federalism and Western bloc solidarity; the Council of Europe's creation of a separate European Convention on Human Rights in 1950 reflected how this old universalism was becoming more regionalized.¹²⁹ In the United States there were numerous attacks on UNESCO in the name of patriotism, nationalism and fears about 'world government'.¹³⁰ Journalists railed against UNESCO's history project as a sinister plot to 'extinguish their individuality and their love of country in favor of the miasmatic visions of a bunch of bureaucrats [sic] brought up on a globaloney diet'.¹³¹ US criticism of 'globaloney' was so vociferous that President Eisenhower had to set up a committee to appraise UNESCO and its work. While the committee ultimately vindicated UNESCO in a 1953 report, it did show that UNESCO was coming under increasing attack as an untrustworthy political organ.¹³² Suspicions of communist sympathy within UNESCO resurfaced in the early 1960s within government and the press in the US and Britain.¹³³ What is more, the number of UNESCO member states went from thirty in 1946 to eighty in 1956, and many of these were newly independent countries which looked askance at ideas of world civilization, preferring instead to create new narratives of national arrival and nationalist achievement. Tito impugned UNESCO's supposed anti-nationalist and anti-communist bias as unwanted 'philosophical Esperanto'.¹³⁴ Even the title of the 'History of Mankind' came to seem woefully outdated, as the word 'mankind' was viewed as a

¹²⁸ Paul Betts, 'The Warden of World Heritage: UNESCO and the Rescue of the Nubian Monuments', in Paul Betts and Corey Ross (eds.), *Heritage in the Modern World: Historical Preservation in Global Perspective* (Past and Present Supplement no. 10, Oxford, 2015).

¹²⁹ Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia, 2013), 115.

¹³⁰ Chesly Manly, *The UN Record: Ten Fateful Years for America* (Chicago, 1955), 175–82 and V. Ovrall Watts, *The United Nations: Planned Tyranny. Comments on the Dream and the Reality* (New York, 1955), 40–1.

¹³¹ 'UN Goes into the History Business', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 24 Dec. 1951.

¹³² Laves and Thomson, *UNESCO*, 412–3.

¹³³ 'United Nations: Communist Influence in Specialised Agencies, Soviet Exploitation of UNESCO Projects and UN Conference on Science and Technology', informal note by UK delegation, Paris, 19 Sept. 1963: FO1110/1726, TNA. See, too, 'Soviet Plot in UNESCO: Infiltration on Three Fronts', *Sunday Telegraph*, 7 Aug. 1966.

¹³⁴ Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, 113.

sexist leftover from an unreconstructed past.¹³⁵ UNESCO's world history project seemed like the last gasp of the language and mission of 'civilization' itself, before it was politely replaced by 'development' as the more politically correct watchword of relations between the 'First' and 'Third' worlds.¹³⁶ In other words, what was progressive in the 1940s — writing a new universal history of humanity — was greeted as conservative by the mid 1950s.

At first this may seem surprising. After all, one could argue that the anti-Eurocentric thrust of volume 6 accorded with the critiques of European civilization levelled by Césaire, Fanon, Kenyatta and Nkrumah from the late 1940s onward, especially regarding the legacy of racism and colonialism. UNESCO had launched an international campaign in the early 1950s to discredit scientific racism as a 'social myth' that should play no role in understanding and judging human difference, as noted in UNESCO's famous 1950 'Statement on Race', which emphatically stated that 'all men belong to the same species *Homo sapiens*'.¹³⁷ Claude Lévi-Strauss's UNESCO-sponsored *Race and History* (1952) further condemned race as specious science. Not only was antiracism a fundamental aspect of UNESCO's universalism which converged with its advocacy of human rights and one-world internationalism, but key anti-colonial intellectuals sympathized with the UNESCO project. Take the example of Léopold Sédar Senghor, president of Senegal and one of the most influential African intellectuals of his generation. Senghor is generally associated with the term *négritude*, which he once defined as 'the entire values of the civilization of the black world as they are expressed in the life and in the works of Blacks', whose mission was to 'create in Africa and for Africans, a new civilization, which suits Africa and the new times, which is the fruit of a real culture'. Nonetheless, Senghor also saw Europe as a prospective partner in this civilizational model, and made a number of interventions to build bridges between Europe and Africa, what he called 'Euro-African civilization'. He was convinced that Black Africa could make a key contribution to a 'Civilization of

¹³⁵ Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind', 130.

¹³⁶ Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley, 1997).

¹³⁷ 'Statement on Race', in *The Race Concept: Results of an Inquiry* (Paris, 1952), 496–501.

the Universal', one that transcended regional divisions.¹³⁸ In the early 1960s Senghor was very keen to develop the idea of 'Euroafricanism' as a possible blend of both, without dissolving the differences and dignity of either — civilization as hybridity. In his eyes, universal civilization could help renew African civilization as an equal partner with Europe and the broader global civilizational project.¹³⁹ Not for nothing did Senghor serve as a member of UNESCO's international commission for the history of mankind, along with Levi-Strauss and the Lebanese philosopher and human rights lawyer Charles Malik.

Even so, such universalism was viewed critically by many in Africa and Asia in an era of decolonization. For some, the whole rhetoric of civilization was still thinly disguised Western domination, even in its UNESCO-style 'unity in diversity' dress. In fact, the Algerian war made some of UNESCO's 'integrationist' policies look rather conservative and imperial, especially in terms of the agency's claims that domestic racism — rather than colonialism — was the real problem at hand.¹⁴⁰ Others saw UNESCO's integrationist language as a cynical French effort to win over the post-colonial world to their side in an effort to curb US influence at the agency.¹⁴¹ To be fair, the world history project — and in particular volume 6 — did not endorse such views, but this larger UNESCO politics called into the question the progressive intentions of its new world history. A vital aspect of decolonization was to celebrate regional and national roots in response to the imperial denigration of the colonized as 'peoples without histories', as the period witnessed new calls to 'rediscover' African civilizations wherever possible. Out of this new political soil grew distinctly Afrocentric histories, as well as proclamations of the

¹³⁸ Léopold Senghor, 'Negritude: a Humanism of the Twentieth Century', in Roy Richard Grinker, Stephen C. Lubkemann and Christopher B. Steiner (eds.), *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation*, 2nd edn (Brighton, 2010), 480.

¹³⁹ Nancy Jachec, 'Léopold Sédar Senghor and the *Cultures de l'Afrique et de l'Occident* (1960): Euroafricanism, Negritude and the Civilization of the Universal', *Third Text*, xxiv (2010). See, too, Kahuidi C. Mabana, 'Léopold Sédar Senghor and the Civilization of the Universal', *Diogenes*, lx (2013).

¹⁴⁰ Todd Shepard, 'Algeria, France, Mexico, UNESCO: A Transnational History of Anti-Racism and Decolonization, 1932–1962', *Journal of Global History*, vi (2011).

¹⁴¹ S. E. Graham, 'The (Real)Politics of Culture: U.S. Cultural Diplomacy in Unesco, 1946–1954', *Diplomatic History*, xxx (2006).

African origins of civilization itself.¹⁴² Jomo Kenyatta's celebration of indigenous African culture reflected this new sensibility, as pre-modern pasts were now invoked as expressions of cultural autonomy that helped reinforce post-colonial independence.¹⁴³ UNESCO's call to study cultural interactions as the very stuff of world history was thus received with scepticism and even rancour, to the extent that newly reinvented national cultures began conceptually turning away from such universalism to champion indigenous, non-European and/or national cultures untainted by Western influence. From this perspective, the fate of the 'History of Mankind' project reflected the fate of the UN's more famous universalist cause of the age — that of human rights — as an optimistic, yet ultimately abstract and impractical, framework for Cold War international relations.

Nevertheless, the UNESCO history project was unique in a number of respects. First, it consciously broke away from the standard assumptions of most history-writing going back to Herodotus, in which history was conceived mostly as a story of war, great men and political events. Instead, this was a conscious effort to write world history as an epic tale of peace and progress, one that borrowed Darwin's evolutionary scheme, but in a softened, more cultural framework. UNESCO's world history was driven by the link it assumed between education and peace, whose guiding faith was that good history unites, while bad history divides. Secondly, it represented a kind of updated Enlightenment-era project, complete with an encyclopaedic desire for universal history based in large measure on the emancipatory powers of science and technology. Missing here was any real scepticism towards science as truth, and as a measure of liberation and civilization; the early 1960s critique of scientific knowledge and positivism — so prevalent across Europe at the time — found little echo here. Granted, the volume did end on an uncertain tone, concluding that 'the events of the first half of the twentieth century' had fundamentally challenged the once palpable belief in progress as 'the sure

¹⁴² Cheikh Anta Diop, *Anteriorité des civilisations nègres: mythe ou vérité historique?* (Paris, 1967).

¹⁴³ Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (New York, 1965). See, too, S. Okechukwu Mezu, *Léopold Sédar Senghor et la défense et illustration de la civilisation noire* (Paris, 1968).

direction of human development'.¹⁴⁴ Even so, this project — along with UNESCO itself — was largely animated by 'a postwar liberal optimism about the power of internationalism and science itself to prevent human tragedy'.¹⁴⁵ An eighteenth-century belief in progress nonetheless remained intact, whereas civilizational decline — so crucial to Spengler and Toynbee — was nowhere present.¹⁴⁶ Thirdly, this world history departed from nineteenth-century conventions too, not least in removing nation states and state formation from the centre of the story. Doubtless the accent on science and technology made it a distinctly materialist history, but not a Marxist one. Violence and class conflict were not central, even if great pains were taken to bring macro-level social history into play, and to take account of Soviet achievements. Fourthly, and perhaps most notably, this UNESCO history effectively downgraded Europe as the protagonist of world history. Although the final result was admittedly more Eurocentric than the editors wished at the outset, in part because many of the non-Western consultants in the project joined late, the UNESCO project managed to put forward a kind of 'equality in diversity' model that dovetailed with the agency's larger international mission.¹⁴⁷

All told, the UNESCO 'History of Mankind' was a brave venture, particularly in recasting twentieth-century history as something other than a narrative of war, violence, state formation and competing elites. No doubt it fell far short of its expected public profile and international readership. It lacked the narrative punch and regional focus of more popular contemporary world histories, such as William McNeill's bestselling 1963 *Rise of the West*.¹⁴⁸ Still,

¹⁴⁴ Ware, Romein and Panikkar, *Twentieth Century*, 1317–8.

¹⁴⁵ Michelle Brattain, 'Race, Racism, and Antiracism: UNESCO and the Politics of Presenting Science to the Postwar Public', *American Historical Review*, cxii (2007).

¹⁴⁶ Toynbee raised this issue about the lack of any 'provision for examining the decline and fall of civilizations' in his 'Circulated Notes by Toynbee on Proposed History of Mankind for Committee Members of National Co-Operating Body for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies', 31 Jan. 1950: ED 157/324, TNA.

¹⁴⁷ This regionalist approach can best be seen in UNESCO's more recent multi-volume histories of Africa, Central Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America. *General History of Africa* appeared in eight volumes between 1981–1993, followed by the 1990s series on *History of Civilizations of Central Asia* (1992–), the *General History of the Caribbean* (1997–), the *General History of Latin America* (1999–2009) and a new *History of Humanity* series, published between 1994 and 2005.

¹⁴⁸ See, too, William McNeill, 'A Defense of World History', and 'Beyond Western Civilization: Rebuilding the Survey', in his *Mythistory and Other Essays* (Chicago, 1986).

it offered a new cultural history that brought together material culture, environmentalism, peace politics, and the centrality of media and communication in forging a global community. And in terms of UNESCO's insistence on interpreting science and technology as the drivers of world history, it could be argued that a new generation of environmental historians, such as Jared Diamond and John McNeill, are taking forward parts of this older UNESCO project in writing new modern histories according to macro-level environmental changes — involving land use, natural resources, technology and food production.¹⁴⁹ What the UNESCO story reveals is just how contested and even scandalous the writing of one-world global history was after 1945, contrasting sharply with our own post-Cold War era and its comparatively easy embrace of inter-continental flows and 'entangled' histories. The critics of UNESCO's project — liberals, communists, Catholics and anti-colonialists — may all have been internationalists in their own way, but UNESCO's universalism was an internationalism too far at the time. This is not because universalism has collapsed as a political language, as the apotheosis of human rights amply attests. What Ware, Panikkar and Romein endeavoured to do in volume 6 was to reinterpret the first half of the century as a story of cultural interaction in which state violence was only one element, and by no means the most decisive, and a story in which peace featured as much more than simply the absence of armed conflict. For them the twentieth-century experience of mass death and violence made such an alternative approach morally and pedagogically necessary, especially for children. However, the comeback of militant forms of liberalism, communism, Christianity and nationalism around the world after 1945 rendered such 'world scientific humanism' a minority taste and dwindling prospect. The fate of UNESCO's 'History of Mankind' is thus a telling case study of early post-war idealism. This ambitious world history project — along with the unique historical moment that produced it — may have long disappeared from our memories and bookshelves as a failed enterprise, but its failure should not obscure the novelty of the

¹⁴⁹ Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: A Short History of Everybody for the Last 13,000 Years* (New York, 1997); J. R. McNeill, *Something New under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York, 2001) and J. R. McNeill and William H. McNeill, *The Human Web: a Bird's-Eye View of World History* (New York, 2003).

project and the high political stakes associated with writing a universal history in the Cold War, especially one closely associated with a controversial international institution. In the end, the bold, if troubled UNESCO aspiration to draft a radically different twentieth-century world history was defeated by the very forces that it was seeking to overcome.

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