

# One World, Two Cultures? Alfred Zimmern, Julian Huxley and the Ideological Origins of UNESCO

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## Abstract

Against the background of revival of interest in the ‘two cultures’ controversy of the 1960s, this article examines an earlier episode in the struggle between literary intellectuals and scientists for cultural leadership – the choice of a British candidate for the leadership of UNESCO. Why was Sir Alfred Zimmern, the obvious choice for the post of founding Director-General, not selected? This article argues that Zimmern was ousted as front-runner because he had failed to gather the support of the burgeoning British scientific establishment, which had mounted its own successful agitation to have science included explicitly in the new organization’s remit. It examines the actions and motivations of Ellen Wilkinson and John Maud, whose joint decision it was to replace the classicist Zimmern with the biologist Julian Huxley. It concludes that the main factor behind the replacement of Zimmern was his failure to bridge the two cultures of arts and science. Nevertheless, these events should not be viewed merely as a prologue to the two cultures debate as Huxley and Zimmern’s attitudes to science and culture cannot easily be separated from their respective approaches to broader international political questions.

The year 2009 marked the fiftieth anniversary of C. P. Snow’s Rede Lecture, in which he claimed that Britain had two cultures, a culture of the literary intellectuals and a culture of the scientists, separated by barriers of mutual incomprehension. It was F. R. Leavis’s Richmond Lecture of 1962 savaging this claim that created ‘the two cultures controversy’.<sup>1</sup> Snow’s lecture has been attacked by David Edgerton as a profoundly flawed ‘anti-history’ of British science and technology, but the prolific media coverage of the anniversary made clear that, right or wrong, Snow had touched a nerve that remains raw to this day.<sup>2</sup> Guy Ortolano’s recent interpretation has rightly emphasized that

The authors wish to thank Andrew Hurrell for a helpful discussion on the work of Alfred Zimmern and John S. Partington for useful information and suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> Guy Ortolano, *The Two Cultures Controversy: Science, Literature and Cultural Politics in Post-war Britain* (Cambridge, 2009) [hereafter Ortolano, *The Two Cultures Controversy*], pp. 28–101.

<sup>2</sup> David Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain, 1920–1970* (Cambridge, 2006) [hereafter Edgerton, *Warfare State*], p. 201. Examples of the press coverage include Robert Whelan, ‘Fifty Years On,

the Snow–Leavis encounter went beyond the confines of the arts versus sciences argument, which, he asserts, merely provided the language for a much broader conflict of their world-views. In this analysis, Leavis’s radical liberalism attempted to demolish Snow’s technocratic endorsement of the role of science in modernizing societies.<sup>3</sup> While this is valid, it would be a mistake to conclude that the arts versus science issue was mere camouflage for a more fundamental disagreement.

As Snow himself was aware, the science–culture clash had been publicly debated before. A similar exchange – albeit one that was much less violent – had taken place between T. H. Huxley for the scientists and Matthew Arnold as the guardian of literary culture in 1880–2.<sup>4</sup> Although anti-science sentiment grew in the closing years of the nineteenth century, the ‘bankruptcy of science’ debate had largely petered out by 1900.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps for this reason, comparatively little historical attention has been paid to the ‘two cultures’ issue in the first half of the twentieth century. Yet if there were no particularly eye-catching disputes at that time, this does not mean that the question was dormant. As Eric Hobsbawm has remarked perceptively, in one way the Snow–Leavis debate ‘was about the 1930s, the scientists’ age of glory’.<sup>6</sup> It was also about the 1940s, when the experience of war and of Cold War had important effects on the position and perceptions of British scientists.

This article examines a neglected aspect of the background to the ‘two cultures’ controversy of the 1960s. It takes the form of an examination of the British role in the pre-history, birth and early years of UNESCO – the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. As was the case with other aspects of the UN system, British influence on the creation of UNESCO was considerable.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps even more than other parts of the UN, however, UNESCO failed to live up to the high hopes that many had vested in it. The British role, then, was less significant for its long-term impact on global affairs than for the light that it sheds on domestic attitudes about science and culture and on the growing influence of one group of British scientists, and of popularizers of science, at the dawn of the Attlee era. This can be seen in the outcomes of two key episodes. The first of these was the process by which it was decided to include the ‘S’ in ‘UNESCO’, which had originally been conceived simply as the UN Educational and Cultural Organization (UNECO). This was

C. P. Snow’s “Two Cultures” are United in Desperation’, *Daily Telegraph*, 5 May 2009, and ‘Science and Art: Still Two Cultures Divided?’, *New Scientist*, 6 May 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Ortolano, *The Two Cultures Controversy*.

<sup>4</sup> C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures*, Rede Lecture (Cambridge, 1993; first published 1959) [hereafter Snow, *The Two Cultures*], pp. xiii–xvi.

<sup>5</sup> Roy MacLeod, ‘The “Bankruptcy of Science” Debate: The Creed of Science and Its Critics, 1885–1900’, *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, vii (1982) [hereafter MacLeod, ‘The “Bankruptcy of Science” Debate’], 2–15.

<sup>6</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Era of Wonders’, *London Review of Books*, 26 Feb. 2009 [hereafter Hobsbawm, ‘Era of Wonders’].

<sup>7</sup> John Toye and Richard Toye, *The UN and Global Political Economy* (Bloomington, IN, 2004), pp. 21–5.

the product of the assertion by scientists of the importance and distinctiveness of their metier, and their rejection of the view held by T. S. Eliot and others that 'science' was a term to be subsumed within 'culture'.<sup>8</sup> The second episode was the replacement of Alfred Zimmern, classicist, doyen of international cultural cooperation between the wars and of a strong anti-science bent, by Julian Huxley, the biologist grandson of T. H. Huxley, as the British candidate to be the first director-general of UNESCO. This was a considerable political success for the British science lobby, and the literary intellectuals of the day were caught unawares by the degree of its strength and organization. Nevertheless, the triumph was a qualified one. Although Huxley was indeed confirmed as the first director-general, Cold War concerns about his political reliability – fears that the embittered Zimmern and his wife Lucie did their best to promote – helped to ensure that he was appointed for two years only. The tensions between the British scientific and literary cultural communities were in this context inevitably influenced by the wider currents of international affairs.

## I

Zimmern's downfall draws attention to an aspect of the 'two cultures' issue that has been neglected in the historiography. Whereas Ortolano's narrative is firmly centred on Cambridge, where science had unusual prestige, and Edgerton's on the representation of scientists in the British government, Oxford University also played a significant part in the pre-history of the controversy. In the 1930s scientists were less influential there than in Cambridge, and literary intellectuals still ruled the roost. Zimmern himself was in many respects a typical Oxford product. Born in 1879 to a family of liberal-minded German Jews, he was educated at Winchester and New College, Oxford, where he took a first class degree in *Literae Humaniores* (or classical Greats) in 1902. He remained at New College until 1909 as fellow and tutor, teaching ancient history. Like many of his generation at Oxford, Zimmern contributed to the enthusiastic revival of Hellenic studies, so central in Matthew Arnold's definition of culture and education. In *The Greek Commonwealth* (1911) he focused on fifth-century BC Athens, when Greek civilization had reached its apogee. Using new archaeological evidence, he drew a picture of a society imbued with a sense of harmony and proportion in its art, conduct and institutions. He described ordinary Greeks as uncommonly happy and virtuous people and saw the polis as the political expression of the values of friendship and family life.<sup>9</sup> For Zimmern, these propositions were not of mere academic interest; they were of supreme relevance to the contemporary world.

<sup>8</sup> T.S. Eliot to the editor of *The Times*, 20 Sept. 1947.

<sup>9</sup> Julia Stapleton, 'The Classicist as Liberal Intellectual: Gilbert Murray and A. E. Zimmern', in *Gilbert Murray Reassessed: Hellenism, Theatre, and International Politics*, ed. Christopher Stray (Oxford, 2007), pp. 261–92.

In one sense the Oxford Hellenic revival was a conservative expression of humanistic culture, in contrast to the modernist movement that was blossoming in Cambridge and London when *The Greek Commonwealth* was published. However, as a proselytizer of Greek values, Zimmern was also committed to educational reform. In company with R. H. Tawney, William Temple and Richard Livingstone, he supported the workers' education movement, and formed a close alliance with Albert Mansbridge, the founder of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). Zimmern was also part of the campaign for the reform of Oxford University, by improving the curriculum and widening access to it. He became impatient with the leisurely pace of change. He also wanted to write a counterpart volume to *The Greek Commonwealth* that would deal with modern history, which is why he resigned his college fellowship in 1909.<sup>10</sup>

Particularly intriguing are his ideological affinities, during the Edwardian period, with H. G. Wells.<sup>11</sup> In the 1880s, Wells had studied briefly under T. H. Huxley, who greatly influenced Wells's beliefs about evolution and society.<sup>12</sup> As a pioneer author of works of science fiction or 'scientific romance', which were often received well by scientist reviewers, Wells genuinely spanned the two cultures, as a successful popularizer of both science and history.<sup>13</sup> In 1930 he published *The Science of Life*, co-authored with his son G. P. Wells and Julian Huxley. In his earlier *Modern Utopia* (1905), Wells had depicted a world ruled over by 'voluntary noblemen' known as 'Samurai'. This was a version of the 'scientific priesthood' preached by Francis Galton, the sort of idea that had led some nineteenth-century critics to accuse scientists of technocratic arrogance and materialism.<sup>14</sup> Although Zimmern later endorsed such criticisms, at the time he welcomed Wells's thinking. When campaigning for university reform, he wrote to the political scientist Graham Wallas: 'Don't you think H. G. Wells might be enlisted into the campaign? An Oxford such as we want is just what he needs for the training of his samurai, and I know from what he said when he was there that he *does* believe in the future of the place (unlike [Sidney] Webb).'<sup>15</sup> Although this did not come to anything, Wells's work was in some respects better received in Oxford than in Cambridge.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *Acquaintances* (1967), pp. 53–6.

<sup>11</sup> The differences between Zimmern and Wells have recently been stressed in Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton, NJ, 2009), pp. 83–4.

<sup>12</sup> John S. Partington, 'The Death of the Static: H. G. Wells and the Kinetic Utopia', *Utopian Studies*, xi (2000), 96–111.

<sup>13</sup> For Wells's reception by scientists, see for example, John S. Partington, *H. G. Wells in Nature, 1893–1946: A Reception Reader* (Frankfurt am Main, 2008), p. 183.

<sup>14</sup> MacLeod, 'The "Bankruptcy of Science" Debate', 4.

<sup>15</sup> Alfred Zimmern to Graham Wallas, 14 July (1908?), Graham Wallas Papers, 1/36/9, British Library of Political and Economic Science.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Toye, '“The Great Educator of Unlikely People”: H. G. Wells and the Origins of the Welfare State', in *No Wealth But Life: Welfare Economics and the Welfare State in Britain, 1880–1945*, ed. Roger E. Backhouse and Tamotsu Nishizawa (Cambridge, 2010).

Therefore it is no surprise that Zimmern and two fellow Oxonians, Gilbert Murray and Ernest Barker, were amongst those who collaborated – albeit perhaps not very actively – with Wells on two League of Nations Union pamphlets published in 1919.<sup>17</sup> Wells tried also to persuade these men to work on a world history; his idea was that a work that transcended nationally based histories could serve as a tool of international education in the cause of peace. Although Murray and Barker did provide advice, Wells in the end wrote *The Outline of History* (1919–20) himself.<sup>18</sup> This work can be seen as a precursor of UNESCO's ambitious, multi-volume *History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind*. By this time, however, Wells and Zimmern were parting company; it may be significant that whereas the first edition of the *Outline* referenced *The Greek Commonwealth*, subsequent ones did not.<sup>19</sup>

At the root of the two men's differences were their respective attitudes to the League of Nations. As a member of the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office in 1918–19, Zimmern composed an influential memorandum that shaped British proposals for the organization of the League. It was not to be a super-state with coercive powers over its members, but a permanent international conference for inquiring into inter-state disputes, and was thus quite consistent with maintaining the existing structure and hierarchy of states.<sup>20</sup> As such, the League fell far short of Wells's idealistic hopes. He later recalled that he had been 'embarrassed and rather puzzled to find that men I had reckoned upon surely as associates', such as Zimmern, Barker and Murray, were all apparently 'content with this powerless pedantic bit of stage scenery', in spite of their earlier statements warning against a 'sham world parliament'.<sup>21</sup> Zimmern's version of progressive internationalism, which was consistent with influential strands of Labour Party thinking, was based on a strong 'faith in "states" as moral forces'.<sup>22</sup> As seen in a 1916 controversy with J. A. Hobson, the position of Zimmern – who had been associated with Milnerite imperialism before the war – was that the accumulation of power in the British empire would facilitate the creation of a global international order.<sup>23</sup> Implicit in this belief was his Christian idealism, which saw the empire as the guardian of particular moral and

<sup>17</sup> H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain (since 1866)*, ii (1969; first published 1934) [hereafter Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography*, ii], p. 706.

<sup>18</sup> David C. Smith, *H. G. Wells, Desperately Mortal: A Biography* (New Haven, CN, 1986), p. 249.

<sup>19</sup> We are grateful to John S. Partington for this information.

<sup>20</sup> Jeanne Morefield, *Covenants without Swords: Idealist Liberalism and the Spirit of Empire* (Princeton, NJ, 2004), p. 15.

<sup>21</sup> Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography*, ii, 715.

<sup>22</sup> Frank Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation: Commerce, Consumption and Civil Society in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2008) [hereafter Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*], p. 265; Ada Wallas diary, 5 Dec. 1915, Wallas family papers, 2/1/3, Newnham College, Cambridge.

<sup>23</sup> Alfred Milner (1854–1925, ennobled 1901), Britain's high commissioner to South Africa at the time of the Boer War, came to preside over 'Milner's Kindergarten', an informal network of his youthful followers. Zimmern was associated with their journal, *The Round Table*, which was established in 1910, although he was not an original member of the Kindergarten.

political values, which were not shared by all, but which would be vital to the success of an internationalist project.<sup>24</sup> Zimmern opposed Hobson's advocacy of world government because it might involve making concessions to a body composed of authoritarian as well as democratic states.<sup>25</sup> The non-Christian Wells was sceptical of empire (if not as critical of it as Hobson) and was also a fervent advocate of a world state.<sup>26</sup>

Wells's idea of a world state seemed to Zimmern 'delusively simple and therefore quite unreal'. Zimmern accused Wells of assuming that a world state required a common culture when what was needed was to distinguish those elements which should be uniform from others 'which are best left to grow and develop in their own sphere'.<sup>27</sup> In turn Wells accused Zimmern of writing 'mischievous nonsense . . . about the loveliness of nationalism'.<sup>28</sup> Essentially, the two men had different views of the essence of nationalism. Zimmern saw it with the eyes of Herder as a form of culture, while Wells saw it as synonymous with ethnic militarism.<sup>29</sup>

Zimmern established himself as a pioneer of the academic study of international relations. In 1919, he had been appointed to the world's first university chair of international relations, at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, but was forced to resign it two years later when he married Lucie Barbier, previously the wife of a colleague there. The abrasive nature of Lucie's personality was well-attested and would later become a factor in the intrigues that surrounded the birth of UNESCO. Zimmern failed to get a chair at the London School of Economics in 1924, but from 1930 until 1944 he was the first holder of Oxford University's Montague Burton Chair of International Relations. Significantly, however, Zimmern's approach to his subject 'tended to avoid any serious attention to social science'.<sup>30</sup> His inaugural lecture was long on classical and Oxford references, and on rhetoric and aspiration, but contained no analysis of trends and tendencies in international affairs.<sup>31</sup> Zimmern was one target of E. H. Carr's influential book *The Twenty Years Crisis 1919–1939*, which set out to counteract 'the almost total neglect of the factor of power' in the study of international politics in English-speaking

<sup>24</sup> G. K. Peatling, 'Globalism, Hegemonism and British Power: J. A. Hobson and Alfred Zimmern Reconsidered', *History*, ix (2004), 381–98.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Rich, 'Alfred Zimmern's Cautious Idealism: The League of Nations, International Education and the Commonwealth', [hereafter Rich, 'Alfred Zimmern's Cautious Idealism'], in *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis: Inter-War Idealism Reassessed*, ed. David Long and Peter Wilson (Oxford, 1995), pp. 79–100, at 82–3.

<sup>26</sup> See H. G. Wells, 'The Future of the British Empire', *Empire Review*, xxxviii (1923), 1071–9.

<sup>27</sup> Alfred Zimmern, 'War and Peace', *The Listener*, viii (1932), pp. 891–2.

<sup>28</sup> Wells to the editor of *The Listener*, c. 10 Jan. 1933, in *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, iii: 1919–1934, ed. David C. Smith (1998), p. 465. For the differences between the two, see also Zimmern's letter to *The Times* published on 1 May 1936.

<sup>29</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) was a Prussian philosopher who praised language and folk culture as the essence of national life, but who also held that national cultures could not be ranked as superior or inferior to each other.

<sup>30</sup> Rich, 'Alfred Zimmern's Cautious Idealism', p. 121.

<sup>31</sup> Alfred Zimmern, *The Study of International Relations* (Oxford, 1931).

countries.<sup>32</sup> Carr's target was 'utopianism in international relations', and he tarred Zimmern with this brush because he had once attributed the absence of 'world social consciousness' not to human moral failure or the existence of ill-will, but to limited intelligence and muddled thinking.<sup>33</sup> However, Carr's book was certainly not a straightforward philippic against Zimmern.<sup>34</sup> There was in fact no single 'great debate' between realists and idealists at this time; and Zimmern himself was neither a complete utopian, nor a denier of the role of power in international relations.<sup>35</sup>

For Zimmern, the actual machinery of international relations was not of primary significance. In his view, the 1914–18 war had been the result of rampant materialism and greed embodied in international economic forces, and the moral emptiness of both classical liberal and socialist political philosophies. What was needed, therefore, was a reinvigoration in international affairs of the great moral forces that he believed ruled the destinies of mankind. He looked forward to the growth of an 'international mind', by which the good of all would increasingly be pursued by all in a spirit of truth and good faith. Or, as he put it in 1936, 'the League as an organisation is only enlightening in so far as it points beyond itself to the forces in the mind of man upon which its own future and that of our present-day civilisation depend.'<sup>36</sup> His point of view was not an eccentric one; it had much in common with Norman Angell's pre-war conceptions, and the idea of 'education for peace' was by no means alien to mainstream opinion.<sup>37</sup>

What were the practical implications of Zimmern's viewpoint? In his opinion, a permanent conference of states, such as the League, would be useful in facilitating the evolution of an international mind, but in a multiplex world other different forums of association were also needed for its development. In 1931 he had advised that, 'if we want to have really efficient international government, we must build it up from international voluntary societies, so that at every step voluntary associations watch over the work of governments'.<sup>38</sup> Zimmern invested much imagination and energy in creating unofficial forums and international voluntary bodies for the discussion of international affairs. In 1915, he helped to found the League of Nations Society. He was also a founder of the Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) in 1920. In 1924 he founded his own Institute in Geneva at which he and his wife conducted

<sup>32</sup> E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (1981; first published 1939), p. ix.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40, 43, 81.

<sup>34</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 119–20, 156, 169, 177, 207.

<sup>35</sup> Lucian M. Ashworth, 'Did the Realist–Idealist Great Debate Really Happen? A Revisionist History of International Relations', *International Relations*, xvi (2002), 33–51.

<sup>36</sup> Alfred Zimmern, *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, 1918–1935* (1936), p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> Martin Ceadel, *Living the Great Illusion: Sir Norman Angell, 1872–1967* (Oxford, 2009); The Next Five Years Group, *The Next Five Years: An Essay in Political Agreement* (1935), pp. 244–5.

<sup>38</sup> Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, p. 283.

an annual two-month summer school on international affairs, with considerable success.<sup>39</sup> In the official sphere, he was less successful. In 1922, the League had set up a Committee on Intellectual Co-operation (CIC); in 1925, the French had funded an Institute of Intellectual Co-operation (IIC) in Paris. Relations between the two bodies were difficult; there were diplomatic sensitivities about French domination of the Institute, as well as disputes about spheres of operation. Zimmern was deputy director of the IIC from 1926 to 1930. Despite a congenial atmosphere, with colleagues like Gerhart von Schulze-Gaevernitz sharing his spiritual view of society and his disdain for both liberalism and socialism, he managed to quarrel with both Gilbert Murray of the CIC and the director of the IIC, Jules Luchaire.<sup>40</sup>

Zimmern's rationale for an international organization for intellectual cooperation accorded a central place to the concept of 'civilization', defined as the social and political embodiment of Hellenic/Christian values. Zimmern's definition of civilization had a clear political basis. At root, he was a social democrat, and his sympathies were with Ramsay MacDonald's Labour Party. He stood (unsuccessfully) as the Labour candidate against the former Liberal prime minister, David Lloyd George, in the general election of 1924.<sup>41</sup> However, Zimmern's support for Labour was combined with deep antipathy to Marxist socialism.<sup>42</sup> The success of the Bolsheviks in 1917 posed an obvious threat to his Hellenic idealism, both philosophically and practically. The concept of civilization was essential to him, because it enabled him to draw a line that excluded Bolshevism, putting it firmly beyond the pale. It is therefore unsurprising that, after the Labour Party split in 1931, he supported MacDonald's 'National Labour' faction and was elected to its executive committee.<sup>43</sup> He was also associated with the moderate Next Five Years group (although unlike Julian Huxley and H. G. Wells he did not sign its original manifesto). In 1936, he, Murray, Barker and the internationalist campaigner Norman Angell were all amongst the signatories to a letter from the group to *The Times*, laying out proposals for securing world peace. So, interestingly, was Julian Huxley.<sup>44</sup> There are some indications that, in the later 1930s, Zimmern's scepticism about the League grew, but he did not abandon his vision of an international order infused with Graeco-Christian spiritual values.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Arnold Toynbee described the Geneva summer school as Zimmern's 'chef d'oeuvre in this special line of his, in which intellectual stimulus was humanized by a kindly personal touch': *Acquaintances* (1967), p. 61.

<sup>40</sup> Duncan Wilson, *Gilbert Murray OM 1866–1957* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 357–9.

<sup>41</sup> According to one local Labour supporter this contest was a 'great sensation, comedy and tragedy', in which Zimmern's new wife Lucie proved herself to be a political liability. Silyn Roberts to Thomas Jones, 5 Nov. 1924, National Library of Wales, Thomas Jones Papers, Class Z.

<sup>42</sup> Rich, 'Alfred Zimmern's Cautious Idealism', p. 89.

<sup>43</sup> 'National Labour Executive', *The Times*, 8 July 1938.

<sup>44</sup> 'A Peace Plan', *The Times*, 1 Aug. 1936.

<sup>45</sup> *The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries 1929–1945*, ed. John Barnes and David Nicholson (1988), p. 441; Thomas Jones, *A Diary with Letters 1931–1950* (1954), p. 219.

## II

In support of his vision of intellectual cooperation, Zimmern built up a considerable international network of scholars, academics, diplomats, administrators, religious leaders, even some judges and politicians. Quite a few of them were former students of his summer school in Geneva. Notable for their absence from his network, however, were prominent scientists. Oxford, Zimmern's base, was rather isolated from the influence of resurgent and progressive science in the 1930s. No scientist had been the head of an Oxford college since William Harvey had been imposed on Merton College by Charles I in 1645–6.<sup>46</sup> In the inter-war years, Oxford scientists shared Professor Frederick Lindemann's indignation at the neglect of science at Oxford, and the complacency and ignorance of non-scientists about the intellectual status of science.<sup>47</sup> In stark contrast, Maurice Bowra, a classicist and the most famous Oxford don of his day, saw scientists as a threat to university freedom. He held that their need for expensive buildings and equipment drove the university to depend on government funding, making it vulnerable to government pressures on academic freedom.<sup>48</sup>

The idea of international scientific cooperation was not so well established as to make Zimmern's neglect of it any sense unusual. Although the International Polar Years of 1882–3 and 1932–3 provided a template for cooperation between countries, and H. G. Wells's novel *The World Set Free* (1914) foreshadowed the notion of international control of atomic weapons, no one before the First World War proposed a specific international organization for scientific cooperation. Zimmern's attitude to science, however, was not merely one of lack of interest or understanding but of active hostility. It seems likely that he was reacting against the role that scientists had played during the First World War, and in particular the participation of chemists and meteorologists in gas warfare. During that war, the majority of scientists on both sides were willing to put their skills at the service of their respective military authorities, citing the needs of home, country and empire. In 1925, J. B. S. Haldane, a geneticist who had enjoyed his wartime service in the Black Watch, provocatively defended the involvement of chemists and meteorologists in gas warfare.<sup>49</sup> This apologia was a frontal challenge to Zimmern's conception of civilization.

<sup>46</sup> Kathleen Burk, *Troublemaker: The Life and History of A. J. P. Taylor* (New Haven, CN, 2000) [hereafter Burk, *Troublemaker*], p. 440 n. 65.

<sup>47</sup> When told by the wife of the Warden of All Souls that 'a man who has got a First in Greats could get up science in a fortnight', Lindemann is supposed to have replied, 'It is a pity that your husband never had a fortnight to spare'. R. F. Harrod, *The Prof: A Personal Memoir of Lord Cherwell* (1959) [hereafter Harrod, *The Prof*], pp. 52–4.

<sup>48</sup> Leslie Mitchell, *Maurice Bowra: A Life* (Oxford, 2009) [hereafter Mitchell, *Maurice Bowra*], pp. 151, 293.

<sup>49</sup> Ronald Clark, *JBS: The Life and Work of J. B. S. Haldane* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 71–2; Edgerton, *Warfare State*, p. 122.

*Learning and Leadership* (1928) was Zimmern's manifesto for 'the needs and possibilities for international intellectual co-operation'. The material, 'originally written for submission to two Committees of the League of Nations', fell into two halves, reflecting its origins.<sup>50</sup> The first half discussed the need of civilized society to re-establish control over its environment, something that the League 'is not doing and cannot do . . . because its intellectual foundations have not yet been laid'.<sup>51</sup> The second half of the book propounded a much more fundamental theme, one that later informed Leavis's attack on Snow. The need for intellectual cooperation was premised on the idea of a great intellectual schism occurring in the seventeenth century, between science and pre-existing modes of thought. In Zimmern's view, modern science had a tendency 'to pursue facts for the sake of facts, to exalt the means and forget the end, which has given rise to the accusation so often levelled against it as an agency of materialism . . . there is unhappily a large element of truth in the criticism'.<sup>52</sup> In a remark that appeared to refer to the experience of the First World War, Zimmern commented on the 'ghastly paradox' that: 'Science, who should be ministering to the amelioration of human existence, is found playing the horrid role of "procuress to the lords of hell"'. The answer is that Science is helpless. She has lost control over the results of her own thinking.<sup>53</sup> On this analysis, the general task for international intellectual cooperation was to heal the great schism that had resulted from the rise of modern science. First, it was necessary to reunify the world of thought, and to do so in an organization that allowed the restored unity of thought 'authoritative public expression'. Only then could the 'authority of the reunited world of thought . . . be brought to bear on the problems of civilisation'.<sup>54</sup> Ambivalence towards science is no doubt characteristic of the western philosophical and literary tradition, which veers from celebrating of its Promethean creativity to imagining its Frankenstein-like tendencies. Zimmern came down heavily at the latter end of this spectrum. Launching a powerful denunciation of the moral irresponsibility of scientists, however, was a strange way to promote efforts of international intellectual collaboration. It must be assumed that the collaboration that Zimmern envisaged was not intended to comprehend scientists.

Surprisingly, Zimmern's anti-scientism appears to have provoked no intellectual criticism or reaction. In the 1930s, however, the British scientific community gained in confidence and also took on a more left-wing hue. Particularly noteworthy was the Soviet participation in the 1931 London International Congress on the history of science.<sup>55</sup> Some leading

<sup>50</sup> Alfred Zimmern, *Learning and Leadership: A Study of the Needs and Possibilities of International Intellectual Co-operation* (1928), p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>55</sup> Hobsbawm, 'Era of Wonders'.

scientific figures (such as J. D. Bernal, J. G. Crowther and J. B. S. Haldane) were closely linked to the Communist Party, to which Zimmern was so antipathetic. The progressive scientists of the 1930s believed that they had mastered both of the two cultures, while the literary intellectuals had failed to do so. Lindemann, no left-winger, also believed this.<sup>56</sup> Bernal could write books about Iranian art and Haldane could investigate comparative religion, but the literary elite could not do science. Despite feeling a sense of exclusion, to which views such as Zimmern's must have contributed, these scientists nonetheless had a sense of superiority, confident that the future for them would be bright.<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, evangelistic pro-Hellenism was losing ground even at Oxford.<sup>58</sup>

During the Second World War, Zimmern found himself in a somewhat ambivalent situation. On the basis of his contacts with his extensive network of literary intellectuals, he was in a formidable position to claim leadership of the field of international intellectual cooperation in the post-war world. He was the obvious front runner to be the British candidate for the top post in any new world organization for cultural exchange. However, he would be vulnerable to the criticism that his vision was too narrow, and informed too exclusively by the ancient classics, religion, history and literature, at the point when the British science establishment rebelled against a purely cultural design for a post-Second World War international organization for intellectual cooperation.

### III

Once the Second World War had broken out, the defence of science was repositioned. Emphasis was placed on science as a common human endeavour carried on through an international network that recognized no national boundaries. (In this, the dubious science of Stalin's Russia, a wartime ally, was explicitly included.) War gave a new impetus to the public discussion of science, in which the elderly Wells continued to play a role. There emerged a powerful discourse that world scientists could provide the knowledge basis not only to win the war but also for a more rational reconstruction of the world once the war was over.<sup>59</sup> This was the outlook that animated the science establishment as a new international cultural organization was being mooted.

In collaboration with its allies, the United States had resolved to establish, in the United Nations Organization, a permanent forum for international cooperation to secure peace and avert the return of war.

<sup>56</sup> Harrod, *The Prof*, pp. 56–7.

<sup>57</sup> Hobsbawm, 'Era of Wonders'.

<sup>58</sup> In 1936 Gilbert Murray failed to support Maurice Bowra for the Regius Professorship of Greek at Oxford, an indication that the Hellenic Revival was now devouring its own children. See Mitchell, *Maurice Bowra*, pp. 82–7.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Anon., *Science and War* (1940), and J. G. Crowther, O. J. R. Howarth and D. P. Riley, *Science and World Order* (1942).

The UN was not only to be a mutual security alliance; it envisaged a wider agenda in support of peace, which might extend to educational and cultural cooperation. During the war, the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME) was established as a forum for former ministers of education of eight allied governments then in exile in London.<sup>60</sup> It was thought imperative to plan for the problems of reconstructing the education systems of a post-Nazi Europe. One of CAME's concerns was the availability of suitable books and periodicals to replenish libraries in currently occupied allied countries. It established a Books and Periodicals Commission, chaired by Ernest Barker who shared not only Zimmermann's Oxford classicist background but his (perhaps now waning) view of the civilizing mission of the British empire and commonwealth.<sup>61</sup> CAME evolved into the appropriate forum to design a fully international educational organization.

As discussions in the Conference progressed, the view emerged that a concentration on education issues alone would be too narrow, given the importance of national cultural contexts in shaping them. By April 1944, the US was proposing a plan for an Educational and Cultural Organization (UNECO), adding elements – both structural and substantive – from the pre-war CIC and IIC. A critical change, however, in merging elements from the CIC and IIC into UNECO was that the former had had no organic working relationships with governments. Indeed, the British Foreign Office had done its best to ignore both the CIC and the IIC. In consequence, they had been relatively insulated from the political pressures that such relationships bring.<sup>62</sup> Now the Board of Education – and not the Foreign Office – was designated the lead agency for UNECO, a shift that heralded a much more activist approach and a new set of political players.

The most critical aspect of the transition away from the era of 'the international mind' was the question of the place of science in the planned organization, or how UNECO became UNESCO at the constituent conference. The initiative for this change of title came from Joseph Needham, the Cambridge biochemist and historian of Chinese science.<sup>63</sup> J. G. Crowther of the British Council had recruited Needham, who had served as the scientific counsellor at the British embassy in

<sup>60</sup> For accounts of how the CAME evolved into UNESCO, see F. R. Cowell, 'Planning the Organization of UNESCO, 1942–1946: A Personal Record', *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale*, x (1966) [hereafter Cowell, 'Planning the Organization of UNESCO'], 210–36; and H. H. Krill De Capello, 'The Creation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization', *International Organization*, xxiv (1970), 1–30.

<sup>61</sup> Julia Stapleton, *Englishness and the Study of Politics: The Social and Political Thought of Ernest Barker* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 178; Ernest Barker, *Ideas and Ideals of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1942), pp. 67–71, 161–4. For Zimmermann's declining faith in the empire at this time, see Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*, p. 95.

<sup>62</sup> Richard Hoggart, *An Idea and its Servants: UNESCO from Within* (Oxford, 1978), p. 25.

<sup>63</sup> Simon Winchester, *Bomb, Book and Compass: Joseph Needham and the Great Secrets of China* (New York, 2008), p. 171 n. 14.

Chungking from 1943 to 1946.<sup>64</sup> Needham envisaged an international body to build up the scientific capacity of non-industrial countries, using as a model the Sino-British Scientific Co-operation Office that he had pioneered in China. Originally, he, like others including the CAME, thought that this work might be carried out under the mandate of the new Relief and Reconstruction Board of the UN.<sup>65</sup>

In early 1945, however, while visiting Washington, Needham discovered that 'plans for the United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization were much further advanced' than he had supposed, and that Dr Grayson N. Kefauver, the US delegate to CAME, had already drafted a list of twenty-four aims for UNECO. These coincided with Zimmern's programme for international intellectual cooperation. The words 'science' and 'scientific' were notable for their complete absence. Needham quickly drafted a further twelve aims that fully compensated for their omission, and sent them to Sir Richard Gregory, of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, with the following plea:

[The] position [of American scientific leaders] is strategic since much of the initiative is coming from Washington. But ought we not to ensure that any British delegations . . . are well briefed beforehand about the inclusion of science. May I hope that you will be active in this matter?<sup>66</sup>

Through Crowther, Gregory (who had been an early collaborator of Wells) mobilized the British scientific establishment in support of the Needham amendments. He found channels, through E. F. Armstrong (the Chairman of the Science Commission of CAME), to bring them to the attention of two of Churchill's ministers: R. A. Butler, president of the Board of Education, and Lord Woolton, minister for reconstruction and subsequently lord president of the Council.<sup>67</sup> Meanwhile, Needham himself was urging Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet foreign minister, to 'take the lead in assuring the proper participation of Science and Technology (which alone can raise the standard of life of the masses throughout the World, especially in Asia) in the Cultural Organisation'.<sup>68</sup>

On 11 April 1945, the Science Commission put the Needham proposals to the plenary session of the CAME, chaired by R. A. Butler, which passed them to the Drafting Committee of UNECO's constitution. There the proposals failed, as Crowther reported back to Needham:

I duly attended the Drafting Committee engaged in drawing up the constitution of this body. Fortified with the resolution of the Science Commission, I attempted to persuade the Drafting Committee to insert

<sup>64</sup> Joseph Needham to J. G. Crowther, 1 March, 28 May and 28 July 1942, J. G. Crowther Papers, Sussex University Library.

<sup>65</sup> Needham to Crowther, 12 Jan. 1943, Crowther Papers.

<sup>66</sup> Needham to Richard Gregory, 1 March 1945 (copy), Crowther Papers.

<sup>67</sup> Butler was a Conservative. Woolton at this stage was independent, but joined the Conservative Party after Churchill's defeat in 1945.

<sup>68</sup> Needham to Vyacheslav Molotov, undated (copy), Crowther Papers.

'Scientific' into the title. I am afraid that this was not accepted by the Drafting Committee, the chief opponent being Dr Kefauver . . .<sup>69</sup>

Needham had been right to see the American position as the strategic one. He was, however, soon encouraged by hearing from the Harvard astronomer Harlow Shapley, who thought that he had succeeded in convincing Archibald MacLeish (renowned poet and leader of the US delegation) of the importance of the proper representation of science. Shapley was convinced that the UN Conference on International Organization (UNCIO) 'would, before breaking up, undoubtedly pass the resolution about UNESCO'.<sup>70</sup>

Nevertheless, the British scientists continued to network energetically. A third version of the Needham proposals was widely circulated in July and August, now directly targeting Labour politicians such as Stafford Cripps and Ernest Bevin.<sup>71</sup> David Owen of UNCIO, when approached, contacted Julian Huxley and suggested 'what unofficial action might be taken'.<sup>72</sup> Huxley obliged by convening a meeting of the international relations committee of the Association of Scientific Workers (ASW) on 22 September. A meeting at the Royal Society was held on 4 October 1945, with J. D. Bernal of the ASW in attendance. The meeting ran into difficulty because some scientists argued that science was a component of culture, so to name it additionally was redundant. The note of the meeting circulated by Sir Henry Tizard got around this by claiming that 'ordinary people need to see science in the title of the organisation'. It added pointedly; 'it is hoped that the Director General will himself be a man of scientific education'. This was a clear shot across the bows of 'our literary friends', presumably meaning the Zimmern camp.<sup>73</sup>

On the first day of the Constituent Conference, the British announced that they would propose the inclusion of 'science' in the organization's title.<sup>74</sup> In fact it was Archibald MacLeish who tabled a US proposal to make UNECO into UNESCO, and this was later carried unanimously.<sup>75</sup> Did the use of nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August change the American attitude to the inclusion of science? MacLeish certainly cited the first use of atomic force as a factor making it important to achieve 'the common understanding of man', but Shapley's remark suggests that he had already been persuaded by leading American scientists.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Crowther to Needham, 18 April 1945, Crowther Papers.

<sup>70</sup> Needham to Crowther, 27 June 1945, Crowther Papers.

<sup>71</sup> Needham to Crowther, 5 Aug. 1945, Crowther Papers.

<sup>72</sup> David Owen to Crowther, 6 Aug. 1945, Crowther Papers.

<sup>73</sup> Note of a meeting of the Royal Society Cultural Relations Committee 4 Oct. 1945, Crowther Papers.

<sup>74</sup> Opening Address by Ellen Wilkinson, Conference for the Establishment of the United Nations Educational and Cultural Organisation, Institution of Civil Engineers, London, 1 Nov. 1945, ECO/Conf/, Crowther Papers, Sussex University Library.

<sup>75</sup> Joseph Needham Papers, Cambridge University Library, D. 11 and D.27.

<sup>76</sup> ECO/Conf./Comm. I/P.V.2, Crowther Papers.

## IV

In the spring of 1945, Sir Alfred Zimmern (he had been knighted in 1936) was preparing to take a leading role in the new organization. Invited to accept a visiting professorship in India, he declined on the grounds that the invitation

finds me at a time when I am not free to accept an engagement either for next winter or the winter after that. I have just recently been appointed an Adviser on External Relations in this Ministry [the Foreign Office], and important developments are expected in international cultural relations before long.<sup>77</sup>

He was indeed asked to be secretary-general of the constituent conference for UNESCO, which took place at Church House in London in November 1945. Thereafter there had to be an interval before the Constitution came into force, while the required number of twenty member states went through the formal process of joining the organization. During this interval, the Interim Commission for UNESCO, on which forty-five countries were represented, was scheduled to hold meetings – starting on 18 January 1946. Zimmern was busy organizing these meetings at the end of December 1945.<sup>78</sup> However, during the first half of January 1946, he fell ill, and entered hospital for an operation for prostatitis. He was unable to attend the first meeting of the Interim Commission.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, he was formally appointed as its executive secretary.<sup>80</sup> Although Zimmern's illness was neither life-threatening nor disabling, and would impose only a few months' absence, the opportunity provided by his indisposition was taken to ditch him unceremoniously and to bring in a replacement, in the shape of Julian Huxley.<sup>81</sup> Born in 1887, Huxley was educated at Eton and at Balliol College, Oxford, where he excelled. He took academic posts in Oxford and then Texas, before returning to Britain in 1916 to serve in the Great War. In 1925 he was appointed to the chair of zoology at King's College, London, but gave it up two years later in order to collaborate – as mentioned above – with H. G. Wells on *The Science of Life*. Thereafter he made his living chiefly from writing, lecturing and broadcasting; a paid position as secretary of the London Zoological Society ended after seven years with his enforced resignation in 1942, after he clashed with the society's conservative-minded establishment. By this point, he was – unlike Zimmern – a nationally known figure, even a celebrity, and he had demonstrated a great talent for the popularization of science.

<sup>77</sup> Alfred Zimmern to Sir S. Radhakrishnan, Vice-Chancellor of Benares Hindu University, 26 May 1945, Alfred Zimmern Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford, 49.

<sup>78</sup> Miss Parkinson to Crowther, 20 Dec. 1945, Crowther Papers.

<sup>79</sup> Gilbert Murray to Zimmern, 23 Jan. 1946, Zimmern Papers, 50.

<sup>80</sup> Walter M. Kotchnig to Zimmern, 23 Jan. 1946. See also 'Unesco Preparatory Commission', *The Times*, 19 Jan. 1946.

<sup>81</sup> Cowell's 'Planning the Organization of UNESCO', p. 229, said that Zimmern's life was 'despaired of', but this supposedly 'personal record' is very much the bland and official version of events.

These attributes may have appealed to the two people who were responsible for the decision to replace Zimmern with Huxley. The first of these was Ellen Wilkinson, British minister of education after the Labour Party's election victory in 1945, and the president of the Interim Commission. She was a Labour left-winger who had supported the League of Nations in the 1930s. She was acquainted with Huxley, having appeared with him on the 'Brains Trust' radio discussion programme in 1941. She knew little about educational or cultural policy, but had liked studying science at school. She was impatient to get things done, and tended to make rapid judgements and snap decisions.<sup>82</sup> Disliking the official intended as her future permanent secretary, she demanded a replacement who was 'both a good administrator and not establishment-minded'. She was offered Sir John Maud, an Oxford local government expert, who had risen rapidly through the civil service ranks during the war, and who looked kindly on the growth of collective action and government intervention to improve social welfare. He settled down to a harmonious working relationship with Wilkinson.<sup>83</sup> It was he who shared responsibility for the choice of Huxley.

Huxley recalled in his memoirs how, as he was leaving a meeting of the Preparatory Commission at Lancaster House in London, Maud 'casually asked whether I would like to become full-time Secretary of the Commission, with the probability, or at least the possibility, of becoming Director-General of the Organization once it had formally been set up'. At a dinner that same evening, Maud and Wilkinson together successfully pressed Huxley to accept their offer. Huxley later described himself as having felt 'like one of those early Christians who were kidnapped and compelled to become bishops'.<sup>84</sup> According to his wife Juliette, Wilkinson had 'put his [Julian Huxley's] mind at rest about his chief anxiety, namely a distaste and disability for administration'.<sup>85</sup> There were other governments to be squared, and Maud was involved in two meetings in Paris in late January and early February.<sup>86</sup> Huxley's appointment was announced in mid-February.<sup>87</sup>

There is no conclusive contemporary evidence to explain why Maud and Wilkinson acted as they did; such evidence may have been lost when Wilkinson's private papers were destroyed after her death.<sup>88</sup> It is clear that Wilkinson (and possibly Maud) came to dislike the Zimmerns, but the antipathy may simply have been a consequence of their resentment of

<sup>82</sup> Betty D. Vernon, *Ellen Wilkinson 1891–1947* (1982) [hereafter Vernon, *Ellen Wilkinson*], pp. 117, 122.

<sup>83</sup> John Maud, 'The Growth of Collectivism', *The Listener*, 30 Jan. 1935; John Redcliffe-Maud, *Experiences of an Optimist: The Memoirs of John Redcliffe-Maud* (1981) [hereafter Redcliffe-Maud, *Experiences of an Optimist*], pp. 49–52; Vernon, *Ellen Wilkinson*, pp. 204–5.

<sup>84</sup> Julian Huxley, *Memories II* (1973), [hereafter Huxley, *Memories II*], p. 14.

<sup>85</sup> Juliette Huxley, *Leaves of the Tulip Tree* (1986) [hereafter Huxley, *Leaves of the Tulip Tree*], p. 197.

<sup>86</sup> Richard Cowell to Zimmern, dated 2 Jan. 1946, but probably 2 Feb. 1946, Zimmern Papers, 50.

<sup>87</sup> 'Secretary for Unesco', *The Times*, 16 Feb. 1946.

<sup>88</sup> Vernon, *Ellen Wilkinson*, preface.

her choice of Huxley and not the reason for the original decision.<sup>89</sup> Wilkinson could have objected to Zimmern's previous support for National Labour, but such political considerations were unlikely to have weighed with Maud as a civil servant. It seems much more likely that it was Zimmern's and Huxley's differing views about science that played a crucial part in the decision. By November 1945, Ellen Wilkinson was well aware of the scientists' campaign against exclusion. In her opening address to the Constituent Conference she made her support for their position clear: 'It is the scientists themselves, I am glad to say, who have insisted on the UK Delegation putting forward the proposal for the inclusion of the word "Scientific" in the title of the organisation.'<sup>90</sup> Maud's account of the episode in his memoirs also bears examination:

Alfred Zimmern had in due course been made secretary-general of a preparatory commission charged with bringing [UNESCO] into existence. By the end of the war Zimmern was too sick a man to get this job completed in time for a Paris conference which was to convene in 1946, and a substitute had to be found. Julian Huxley seemed the likeliest candidate . . . We persuaded him to succeed Zimmern, and there was soon a momentous consequence: 'science' was added to 'education' in the title of the proposed body.<sup>91</sup>

This recollection was factually inaccurate, in so far as 'Science' had already been added to the title by the time that Wilkinson and Maud suborned Huxley. However, the slip may be unconsciously revealing; it suggests that Maud saw Huxley as the 'science' candidate who brought to the task something that Zimmern could not and whose appointment was 'momentous' for the future direction of the organization.

Zimmern certainly feared that his opposition to the inclusion of science in UNESCO's title had contributed to his undoing. In December 1946 he wrote a long note for the record, which he invited Maud to endorse. After writing that Huxley and Bernal had urged 'by direct recourse to the Minister' the change of title, he added, defensively:

[T]he place of Science in the proposed organisation had been repeatedly discussed at the Science Committee of the [CAME] and in that Conference itself and . . . various changes had been made in the draft so as to make it clear beyond all doubt that the scope of the organisation would include all manifestations of science as a branch of human knowledge. Thus the change in the title did not involve any change of substance but merely a change of emphasis.<sup>92</sup>

Zimmern clearly believed that he had been done down by scientists harbouring unjust beliefs about his attitude to science. Yet it is clear that

<sup>89</sup> Julian Huxley, 'Prep Comm 1946', Julian Huxley Papers, Woodson Center, Rice University, Texas.

<sup>90</sup> Opening Address by Wilkinson, 1 Nov. 1945, ECO/Conf./1, Crowther Papers.

<sup>91</sup> Redcliffe-Maud, *Experiences of an Optimist*, p. 63.

<sup>92</sup> Zimmern to John Maud, 28 Dec. 1946, Zimmern Papers, 51.

he had only been prepared to concede a change of emphasis, whereas the scientists did want a change of substance; and, given his long-standing views, they must have been concerned that under his leadership science would exist in UNESCO only on sufferance. Richard Cowell recalled that Zimmern 'tended to regard Unesco as a more effective Institute of Intellectual Co-operation' served by a secretariat of about fifty or sixty people – compared with the six hundred that Huxley proceeded to recruit.<sup>93</sup>

In compensation for his displacement, Zimmern was offered the post of Adviser to the Preparatory Commission, subordinate to Huxley. The idea was to have him 'available for consultation and advice, but without imposing . . . an onerous full-time job'.<sup>94</sup> He was not content to be palmed off, however. After returning to the Commission's London offices in early April, Zimmern tried to regain lost ground by expanding the Adviser's status and activities. He succeeded in returning to work full time, and in having his salary increased accordingly.<sup>95</sup> Huxley declined his request that the Adviser post be ranked first after the Executive Secretary, but was forced to get his refusal approved by the Executive Board.<sup>96</sup> Predictably, the two men took different views of where the centre of gravity of UNESCO's work ought to be. Huxley later described the situation as an 'impossible' one: 'I was abominably busy and had little time for consultation with him; furthermore, his approach was often opposed to my own – over-stressing the value of classical and traditional cultural studies as against my own views, especially as regards aid for scientific research and the dissemination of its results.'<sup>97</sup>

On 18 September, Huxley and his wife Juliette travelled to Paris for the meeting of the Preparatory Commission. Alfred and Lucie Zimmern went with them. Huxley's diary entry of their arrival paints a vivid picture of the ill-feeling between the two couples, with 'Lady Z . . . muttering and spluttering that no notice was being taken of her'.<sup>98</sup> Shortly after his arrival, the French delegation told Zimmern that the UK government had already declared Huxley to be the official British candidate for director-general. Zimmern upbraided Maud with departing from the position that the UK would support the best-qualified candidate 'irrespective of nationality'.<sup>99</sup> This suggests that by now Zimmern was hoping for the success of an American candidate, although it was not yet clear who this would be. Maud denied any inconsistency of position, and

<sup>93</sup> Cowell, 'Planning the Organization of UNESCO'.

<sup>94</sup> W. R. Richardson to Zimmern, 3 April 1946, Zimmern Papers, 50.

<sup>95</sup> Zimmern to Richardson, undated, and Richardson to Zimmern, 25 April 1946, Zimmern Papers, 50.

<sup>96</sup> Julian Huxley to Zimmern, 25 April 1946, Zimmern Papers, 50.

<sup>97</sup> Huxley, *Memories II*, p. 16.

<sup>98</sup> Huxley, 'Prep Comm 1946', Huxley Papers. Juliette Huxley recalled: 'I was presented with a large bouquet, which a hiss from Lady Zimmern, walking just behind us, nearly made me drop' (*Leaves of the Tulip Tree*, p. 198).

<sup>99</sup> Draft letter from Zimmern to Maud, 19 Sept. 1946, Zimmern Papers, 51.

forcefully advised Zimmern to 'keep right out of all these discussions from now on'.<sup>100</sup> Events then moved swiftly.

According to Huxley's subsequent account:

Lady Zimmern felt bitterly that her husband had been unfairly ousted from his post and prospects. In revenge, she accused me of being a communist, presumably on the grounds of the liberal and anti-dogmatic ideas I had expressed in my writings and public lectures. This made my relationship with Zimmern even more difficult, but we just managed to rub along together in the office.<sup>101</sup>

While it is not clear how seriously anyone took Lady Zimmern's allegations, in the climate of the early Cold War they had the potential to do Huxley much damage if they were believed. Huxley recalled being told by one of his staff that 'Sir Alfred Zimmern (perhaps inspired by his wife) was going round the Embassies of countries represented on the Board, urging that I should not be appointed because of my "communist" (!) leanings.'"<sup>102</sup> Huxley confronted the Executive Board with the choice of either removing Zimmern from Paris, or accepting Huxley's resignation.<sup>103</sup> The Board took the first option, sidelining Zimmern by asking him to carry out a study on international intellectual cooperation; the investigation was to be undertaken from London.<sup>104</sup> Zimmern immediately returned there, and Wilkinson later advised him not to return to Paris for the forthcoming UNESCO Conference.<sup>105</sup> The boil had been lanced, but not, it would seem, without damage to Huxley's position. The US government now expressed doubts about Huxley's candidacy, and divisions on the issue emerged within the British government. In particular, the Foreign Office became very lukewarm, both towards Huxley and to UNESCO itself.<sup>106</sup>

## V

Huxley did not help himself by the way in which he promoted his own views. In the summer of 1946, feeling the need to clarify his ideas about UNESCO's role, he took two weeks off to write a substantial pamphlet. This was published on 15 September with the title *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Its Philosophy*. Huxley wanted not only to clarify and elaborate on UNESCO's constitution, but also to provide the organization with 'a working philosophy . . . concerning human existence' to

<sup>100</sup> Maud to Zimmern, 27 Sept. 1946, Zimmern Papers, 51.

<sup>101</sup> Huxley, *Memories II*, p. 16.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>103</sup> W. H. G. Armytage, 'The First Director-General of UNESCO', in *Evolutionary Studies: A Celebration of the Life of Julian Huxley*, ed. Milo Keynes and G. Ainsworth Harrison (Basingstoke, 1989), pp. 186–93, at 189–90. According to Cowell, 'Planning the Organization of UNESCO', p. 230, 'Difficulties arose . . . and the Executive Bureau decided to entrust Sir Alfred with a special mission.'

<sup>104</sup> Minute to the Executive Secretary, 4 Oct. 1946, Zimmern Papers, 51.

<sup>105</sup> Richardson to Zimmern, 25 Oct. 1946, Zimmern Papers, 51.

<sup>106</sup> Redcliffe-Maud, *Experiences of an Optimist*, p. 64.

guide its approach to the issues with which it had to deal. He deduced from UNESCO's concern with peace, security and human welfare that 'its outlook must, it seems, be based on some form of humanism'. Moreover, this humanism needed to be 'scientific' but not 'materialistic'; and furthermore, 'it must be an evolutionary as opposed to a static or ideal humanism'. Although Wells had died in August the pamphlet showed that his world-view still thrived in some significant quarters. It is striking that Huxley does not seem to have appreciated, at the point when he was writing, that his approach was likely to be problematic for many member states – as much so, indeed, as the numerous *other* philosophies that he *did* see were politically impossible for UNESCO to adopt.<sup>107</sup>

Huxley viewed the term 'evolution', in its broadest sense, as denoting 'all the historical processes of change and development at work in the universe'. He believed that humankind could guide these processes consciously, to achieve further world progress. As human societies could benefit from 'cumulative tradition' or 'social heredity', natural selection was being replaced by conscious selection as the motor of evolution, the possible rate of which was therefore 'enormously speeded up'. Huxley believed that UNESCO had a significant role to play in 'constructing a unified pool of tradition' for the human species. Manifestly, his conception of the organization's purpose was extremely bold and ambitious. He argued that 'the more united man's tradition becomes, the more rapid will be the possibility of progress'; and that 'the best and only certain way of securing this will be through political unification'. Whilst conceding that such an ideal was remote and that it fell outside the field of the organization's competence, Huxley argued that there was much that UNESCO could do to lay the foundations of world political unity. He presented examples of activities that UNESCO could undertake to achieve this, in the fields of education, natural and social science and culture and the arts. Perhaps most significantly for the pamphlet's reception, it emphasized the need for UNESCO to promote population control and study of the 'the eugenic problem'.<sup>108</sup>

Predictably, Huxley's ideas proved controversial. The pamphlet had already been presented to UNESCO's Preparatory Commission and had been ordered to be printed as an official document, when Sir Ernest Barker, now one of the Commission's members, took exception to it. Barker was a convinced Anglican and also, as noted above, a long-standing associate of Zimmern. According to Huxley, 'he argued forcibly against UNESCO's adopting what he called an atheist attitude disguised as humanism'.<sup>109</sup> The Commission's Executive Committee therefore agreed that when the document was circulated a slip of paper should be

<sup>107</sup> Julian Huxley, *UNESCO: Its Purpose and its Philosophy* (1946), pp. 6–7.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 21, 37–8, 45.

<sup>109</sup> Julian Huxley, *Memories II* (1973), p. 16.

inserted into it, saying that the essay was a statement of Huxley's 'personal attitude', and that 'It is in no way an official expression of the views of the Preparatory Commission.'<sup>110</sup> In his memoirs, Huxley conceded that Barker had been right to object. 'Though UNESCO has in fact pursued humanistic aims, it would have been unfortunate to lay down any doctrine as basis for its work.'<sup>111</sup> He did not admit, however, that deriving moral principles and policies from the science of evolution was in any sense a doubtful philosophical procedure.

The episode probably damaged his standing with the Americans, who would hold considerable sway over the fate of his candidature. The general conference of UNESCO was due to open in Paris on 19 November 1946. A few days before, Ernest Bevin, the British foreign secretary, sent a telegram to Prime Minister Clement Attlee. Bevin was in New York, attempting to settle details of the post-war peace treaties. Amidst these weightier concerns, he took the time to report that 'Difficulty has arisen re the appointment of chief official of Unesco.' The Americans, he said, were keen to have one of their fellow countrymen in the post. James Byrnes, the secretary of state, had proposed to President Truman the name of Francis Biddle, formerly President Roosevelt's attorney general. Biddle was reluctant, but had agreed. Significantly, Bevin noted: 'It seems to have been conveyed to the American Government that there are doubts as to the capacity of Julian Huxley.' Biddle was a weak candidate, but Bevin told Attlee that, with Truman having spoken to Biddle and induced him to accept, the Americans could not now withdraw him and put forward the far more plausible Archibald MacLeish. Bevin believed that it was necessary to have an American as head of UNESCO, especially as the secretary-general of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Sir John Boyd Orr, was British; therefore 'we should not in the circumstances back up Huxley . . . we should back up the candidature of Mr. Biddle.'<sup>112</sup> Attlee, however, was firm in his support for Huxley. He responded to Bevin with a telegram based on a draft prepared by Wilkinson. This argued:

Huxley has done a good job as Executive Secretary. He was enthusiastically and unanimously called to the post by the Executive Council of the Preparatory Commission when Sir Alfred Zimmern fell ill. He did not then seek it. We pressed it on him and it would really be very difficult for the United Kingdom Delegation to withdraw support except for agreed American candidate who would be good figure-head and under whom Huxley would work.<sup>113</sup>

Bevin nonetheless continued to press for the acceptance of Biddle. He argued in his reply to Attlee that

<sup>110</sup> UNESCO document Misc./72, 6 Dec. 1946.

<sup>111</sup> Julian Huxley, *Memories II*, p. 16.

<sup>112</sup> Ernest Bevin to Clement Attlee, 16 Nov. 1946, PREM 8/375, The National Archives, Kew, London [hereafter TNA].

<sup>113</sup> Telegram from Attlee to Bevin, 18 Nov. 1946, PREM 8/375, TNA.

I do not believe . . . we shall avoid difficulties with the Americans if we continue to press Huxley as against Biddle. . . . Neither is it clear that Huxley would be such a success as Secretary-General of UNESCO as to make his appointment imperative. On the contrary there seems to be a general impression that with all his qualities he is not ideal as an administrator. . . . If you feel you must support Huxley I can say no more. I just want to keep difficulties to a minimum in view of other problems.<sup>114</sup>

It was, of course, very understandable that Bevin might wish to make concessions to the United States on this relatively minor issue in order to ease his path on other, more substantial matters. What remains unclear is whether his and the Americans' concerns about Huxley were really about his (genuinely doubtful) qualities as an administrator, or whether Lady Zimmern's attacks had in fact gained some traction. At any rate, the prime minister stuck to his guns: 'I consider that we cannot now withdraw our support from Huxley.'<sup>115</sup>

Huxley's appointment was not yet secured, though. The task of electing a director-general was in the hands of UNESCO's Executive Board, which met daily during the Paris conference. When William Benton, the leader of the US delegation, urged Maud to back Biddle, Maud 'had to tell him that we could not'.<sup>116</sup> On 6 December, after two weeks of deliberation, the Board announced that Huxley had been appointed – but for a two-year term only rather than the expected five. This was presented in public as being at his own request, although in fact he seems to have been presented with a *fait accompli*.<sup>117</sup> Wilkinson told Attlee that the Americans had in the end voted for Huxley: 'After the two years, which Huxley has accepted as the limit of his tenure, we can gracefully support an American. They admit that they really had not a good enough candidate this time. Anyway their actual vote removes possible pebbles from Ernie [Bevin]'s way.'<sup>118</sup> *The Times* reported: 'In reply to persistent, and often embarrassing, rumours revolving about the name of Mr. Francis Biddle, the American Jurist, Mr. William Benton, head of the United States delegation, announced that his delegation wanted to associate itself most heartily with the appointment of Dr. Huxley.'<sup>119</sup> The French also supported Huxley, as a *quid pro quo* for British agreement that UNESCO's permanent headquarters should be located in Paris.<sup>120</sup> He was finally elected by twenty-two votes to three.

Not everyone regarded it as a glorious victory. Louis Rapkine of the Institut Pasteur reported from Paris to Crowther:

<sup>114</sup> Bevin to Attlee, 20 Nov. 1946, PREM 8/375, TNA.

<sup>115</sup> Attlee to Bevin, 22 Nov. 1946, PREM 8/375, TNA.

<sup>116</sup> Redcliffe-Maud, *Experiences of an Optimist*, p. 65.

<sup>117</sup> 'Director-General of Unesco', *The Times*, 7 Dec. 1946.

<sup>118</sup> Ellen Wilkinson to Attlee, n.d. 'Sunday' (probably 8 Dec. 1946), PREM 8/375, TNA.

<sup>119</sup> 'Director-General of Unesco' *The Times*, 7 Dec. 1946.

<sup>120</sup> Vernon, *Ellen Wilkinson*, p. 213.

Yes, I did hear ‘the UNESCO noise from the wings’. Julian did get it, but really *only just!* And only for 2 years instead of six. The Americans behaved darn badly, and having threatened to cut *all* subventions if *their* Mr Biddle was not nominated, wound up by reducing the budget of UNESCO by a million dollars (instead of 7.5 millions it will be 6.5). But Julian was, by far, *not* brilliant. He proved to one and all that he was *not* the right man for the post. And I heard many of our friends, who worked hard against Biddle & for Julian, say that they were pretty sorry not to have either a better British candidate to push, or even a better American candidate – Joseph Needham is working awfully hard; he’s just marvellous, I think.<sup>121</sup>

Zimmern’s contract with UNESCO was terminated at the end of 1946. He and Lady Zimmern emigrated to the United States in 1947. He lived in America another full ten years after Ellen Wilkinson’s death, working in support of UNESCO as director of the study centre for world affairs at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut. Only one vestige of his Hellenism remained with UNESCO – the Greek temple that it adopted as its official symbol.

## VI

What light does the British involvement in the origins of UNESCO shed on the subsequent Snow–Leavis clash and the various interpretations that historians have placed on it? To begin with, it lends some support, in relation to the 1920s and 1930s, to Snow’s claim that ‘it is the traditional culture, to an extent remarkably little diminished by the emergence of a scientific one, which manages the Western world.’<sup>122</sup> The political momentum of Zimmern and his group of literary intellectuals and their US counterparts was considerable, although it was waning by the 1940s. In the end it was derailed only by Needham’s rapid reaction to US plans for UNECO in early 1945 in combination with both Zimmern’s need of a minor operation at a crucial moment and the much more substantial circumstance of the coming into office of a new Labour government with a certain predilection for science. However, the fact that Zimmern’s cultural leadership was by these means derailed makes Snow’s anxieties about the marginal status of British scientists in 1959 look antiquated, as Edgerton has rightly asserted. By that time a technocratic consensus which was brewing in the late 1930s and early 1940s had been consolidated, so that Leavis was right to see Snow as the embodiment of a politically powerful conventional wisdom, and himself as a kind of diminutive David tackling Goliath.

Yet if ‘antiquated’ is right, to accuse Snow of writing an ‘anti-history’ of science goes too far. What was no longer true when Snow gave his Rede lecture had been much truer of the earlier decades. As Hobsbawm has written, ‘in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the canyon between the

<sup>121</sup> Louis [Rapkine] to Crowther, 27 Dec. 1946, Crowther Papers.

<sup>122</sup> Snow, *The Two Cultures*, p. 11.

two cultures was probably wider than it had ever been, at least in Britain'.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, there is something ironical and anachronistic about the charge of writing anti-history, given that good histories of twentieth-century science were still unavailable when Snow gave his lecture. Science hardly figured in Sir Robert Ensor's 1870–1914 volume of the 'Oxford History of England', and when A. J. P. Taylor was planning the 1914–45 volume, he told the publisher that he would leave out science because he did not understand it.<sup>124</sup> However problematic Snow's account was, it tapped in to a profound cultural anxiety that historians at the time were ill-equipped to address.

Equally, the events of 1945–6 recounted here make clear that attitudes to science and culture cannot easily be separated from broader issues of international politics and even spirituality. If Huxley's views were anathema to the Americans, it was not because the Truman administration was 'anti-science'. Rather, it was because the humanistic baggage they carried was intensely problematic; the labels 'atheism' and 'materialism' (which were attached to Huxley by *Life* magazine in 1947) were considered synonymous with communism by large tracts of US opinion.<sup>125</sup>

This article has sought to illustrate some of the deep background to the 'two cultures' controversy, which needs to be seen as something more than simply the contest of two Cambridge men with contrasting liberal ideologies. But the story presented here should not merely be treated as a prologue to the Snow–Leavis clash – it has its own history, which the 'two cultures' concept does not fully encapsulate. The fault-line between H. G. Wells and Julian Huxley on the one hand and Alfred Zimmern on the other was not just about attitudes to science and culture. Rather, these men differed over the fundamental purposes of international intellectual cooperation and 'education for peace'. Wells and Huxley wanted to create loyalty to a world state on the basis of scientific humanism; Zimmern wanted to educate national citizens towards global responsibility, without believing that this required them to sacrifice their emotional ties to their own countries. In 1945, Zimmern was squeezed out from UNESCO, the organization he had helped to found; arguably, however, his view of the possibilities of international cooperation was more realistic than that of Huxley, the man who displaced him.

<sup>123</sup> Hobsbawm, 'Era of Wonders'.

<sup>124</sup> Burk, *Troublemaker*, p. 303.

<sup>125</sup> 'The Huxley Brothers', *Life*, 24 March 1947.