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Photographic Diplomacy in the Postwar World: UNESCO and the conception of photography as a universal language, 1946-56

Tom Allbeson

ABSTRACT

In the postwar decade, UNESCO aimed to create an international public sphere to secure peace. The organisation made extensive use of photographs to do so, including the photographic archive of works of art and photojournalism from the ruined cities of Europe. However, photography was not simply a transparent medium for communicating internationalist ideals; it was a formative influence in shaping UNESCO's effort to build "peace in the minds of men." This article analyses the conception of photography as a universal language articulated in UNESCO-sponsored forums; the use of photography in UNESCO publications concerning human rights and educational reconstruction; and the internationalist ideals of world culture and world citizenship relevant to UNESCO's early work. Analysis reveals that UNESCO's use of photography was less the valuable deployment of a universal language suited to an internationalist agenda, than the universalising of certain cultural values in pursuit of the organisation's utopian vision.

“Photographs do not need translation. They cross barriers of language and illiteracy to bring their message to people everywhere.”

Ahmed Bokhári, Under Secretary of the United Nations

Photo-Monde (1955)¹

In 1955, the French National Commission to UNESCO hosted an international colloquium in Paris. Delegates from museums and organisations around the world debated the role of visual material in contemporary life and recommended the establishment of *Le Centre International de la Photographie (fixe et animée)*.² Though never realised the mooted international centre for the still and moving image was founded in a widely-held belief in the ability of photography (and visual media derived from this technology, like film and television) to communicate across boundaries of language and nation. This article examines the conception of photography as a universal language and its significance in the field of postwar international relations through the campaigns and publications of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

¹ “La communauté humaine: Album Spécial du 10e Anniversaire des Nations Unies”, *Photo-Monde*, 49-50 (1955).

² In a report to the General Conference of 1956, the dates were given as 4 to 16 May 1955 (“Report of the Director-General on the Activities of the Organization in 1955” (1956), 100 <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001608/160875eb.pdf>> [accessed 27 May 2013]). The title given to the event in this official document was, “The Role of Visual Aids in Modern Civilisation.” It was reported in the French media (“Les rencontres international sûr le rôle de l’image dans le civilisation contemporaine et la création d’un centre international de la photographie (fixe et animée)”, *Photo-Monde*, 47-48 (1955), 86-90).

The preamble to UNESCO's constitution famously asserts that, "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."³ The organisation reflected explicitly on the various media available to communicate and achieve this objective. This self-reflexive approach was enshrined in Article I of the constitution which stated that UNESCO would "collaborate in the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through all means of mass communication and to that end recommend such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image."⁴ In the early years, UNESCO thus represented a concerted effort to shape what Glenda Sluga has termed "a newly constituted and self-consciously international public sphere."⁵ The task was peace; the means, mutual understanding; the challenge, communication.

This utopian project was conceived and articulated in the historically conditioned culture of Western Europe in the 1940s and 1950s – a culture saturated with visual material, the most pervasive mode of representation being photography. As implied by the constitution's explicit emphasis on "word *and* image," photography played a formative part in both the conception and pursuit of this effort to establish an international public sphere. Jay Winter argues that any utopian discourse is expressed at a particular historical moment and is consequently bound up with "contemporary conditions and language."⁶ However, it is not only contemporary conditions and language that are important in assessing UNESCO's utopian project in the postwar moment. Visual culture is also central to such an assessment.

³ UNESCO, "Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation" (1945), 7 <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001337/133729e.pdf>> [accessed 27 July 2013].

⁴ UNESCO, "Constitution", 8.

⁵ Glenda Sluga, "UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley", *Journal of World History*, 21 (2010), 393-418 (394).

⁶ Jay Winter, *Dreams of Peace and Freedom: Utopian Moments in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, 2006), 3.

The title of the French photo-magazine which published a special edition on “The Human Community” to mark the tenth anniversary of the UN suggests the ubiquity of the medium and the need to analyse its impact; *Photo-Monde* implies not simply photography of the world, but a world constituted by photography. An historical understanding of the pursuit of an internationalist agenda in the postwar world must address the intertwining of language, visual culture and ideas.

To do so, this article analyses two ideas mobilised as part of UNESCO’s early efforts to shape a postwar international public sphere (world culture and world citizenship) alongside two key publications (the *Human Rights Exhibition Album* and *Children of Europe*). First of all, an examination of the visual culture of the postwar moment is required (with reference to the photo-magazine, *UNESCO Courier*) in order to explain how UNESCO’s deployment of mass communication technologies had its roots in a wartime experience which gave rise to a discourse of international relations permeated with visual terms and figures of speech. This broader visual discourse includes one of the most widely discussed phenomena in the history of postwar photography, *The Family of Man*, curated by Edward Steichen (who attended the UNESCO-sponsored colloquium on photography in 1955) and critiqued by Roland Barthes. However, as will be demonstrated, this prominent example and its familiar critique are insufficient models for a fine-grained historical analysis of the work of UNESCO. While in principle, it is possible to be committed to internationalism (a belief in the merits of organising international cooperation to address issues of human welfare) without committing to universalism (the belief that certain ideas, ideals or actions have universal validity), examination of the conception and deployment of photography as a universal language reveals that internationalism and universalism had a problematic relationship in the postwar debates and early campaigns of UNESCO. Overlapping and sometimes contradictory internationalist ideals expressed by the organisation and promoted through its

strategy of mass communication entailed specific universalising assumptions or particular universal claims.

Mass Communication in the Postwar Moment: The Mirror and the Window

Benedict Anderson highlighted the printed word as fundamental to the establishment of national identities up to the nineteenth century by promoting a shared, standardised language.⁷ At the start of the twentieth century, the advent of affordable reproduction of photographs greatly added to the resources of “print-capitalism” (the deployment of the printing press within a capitalist society) in creating “imagined communities” (intellectual and emotional bonds between individuals who may never meet, but consider themselves part of the same collective). The political mobilisation of modern media techniques was refined and advanced during the century’s early decades. (Indeed, Hanno Hardt suggests the term “mass communication” may have been coined in the early 1940s “in the context of government work related to propaganda activities”).⁸ And as a consequence of public information campaigns during the Second World War, mass communication became an increasingly salient feature in the postwar relationship between a state and its subjects. As Francis Williams (Controller of News and Censorship at the British Ministry of Information from 1941) argued, a “new conception of Government Public Relations [...] developed during the war.”⁹ Photographically-illustrated products became commonplace to the extent that, when it came to re-establishing a public sphere in defeated Germany, one of many public information initiatives undertaken by occupying Allied forces was the establishment of a

⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991).

⁸ Hanno Hardt, *Myths for the Masses: An Essay on Mass Communication* (Oxford, 2009), 15.

⁹ Francis Williams, *Press, Parliament and People* (London, 1946), 84.

photo-magazine, *Heute*.¹⁰ Mass communication initiatives were not limited to meeting national agendas, however; in the postwar period mass communication played an important role in international relations, as noted in one of the first histories of UNESCO.¹¹ Uniquely for an international organisation at the time, UNESCO debated the role of mass communication in meeting its constitutional aims from the start.¹²

The postwar moment represents a watershed in political, technological and cultural terms. Owing to the political will to establish a new world order (exemplified in the creation of the United Nations) the years after 1945 marked what Jürgen Osterhammel and Niels P. Petersson characterise as “a global turning point” in terms of international relations.¹³ The period was also marked by the further development and increased availability of technologies effecting impressions of space and time, such as faster transport and more

¹⁰ *Heute* exemplifies the transnational history of the photo-magazine: “If the *Berliner Illustrirte* was once the model for *Life*, *Life* now became the model for *Heute*” (Bodo von Dewitz and Robert Lebeck ed., *Kiosk: Eine Geschichte der Fotoreportage, 1839-1973* (Göttingen, 2001), 292). See also, James Rolleston, “After Zero Hour: The Visual Texts of Post-War Germany”, *South Atlantic Review*, 64 (1999), 1-19.

¹¹ Walter Laves and Charles Thomson, *UNESCO: Purpose, Progress, Prospects* (Bloomington, 1957), 116.

¹² J. P. Singh, *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO): Creating Norms for a Complex World* (Abingdon, 2011), 109.

¹³ Jürgen Osterhammel and Niels P. Petersson, *Globalization: A Short History*, trans. Dona Geyer (Princeton, 2009), 111. The charter of the United Nations is a commitment to internationalism, but as Mark Mazower points out, the specific form is no straightforward matter (Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton, 2009)). In the postwar moment, internationalism encompassed those who promoted cooperation between individual sovereign nation states; those who considered colonialism reconcilable with internationalism through a notion of stewardship of “weaker” nations by more “advanced” nations; and those who saw the ultimate goal of world organisation as the establishment of a world government.

pervasive communications media. Related to these political and technological issues producing easier and more rapid movement of people, products and ideas around the globe), was a concerted effort to imagine various transnational communities. The postwar moment thus entailed an epochal shift from the monopoly of national identities to an increased sense of the world beyond national boundaries – what Manfred B. Steger terms the rise of the “global imaginary.”¹⁴ Internationalism and the establishment of a global imagined community became a concerted intellectual project in the postwar moment, as the concept of the nation state and the establishment of national imagined communities had been previously. The establishment of UNESCO did not inaugurate thinking about the problem of peace as a lack of knowledge hindered by differences of language and of culture. What differentiated the postwar effort from previous initiatives was the increased political will for and technological possibilities of promoting such an idea.

Photography – the technological innovation underpinning modern visual culture – was a key facet of this internationalist project. Developments in image-making, telecommunications and printing, the efficient transmission and affordable reproduction of photography represented a further influence on (to paraphrase Anderson) the manner in which people thought about themselves and related themselves to others, helping to reshape imagined communities from national to potentially transnational entities.¹⁵ Media like radio and television were eagerly mobilised to meet UNESCO’s objectives along with the printed word, but in the organisation’s first decade, photo-books, photographic exhibitions, photo-magazines and other illustrated ephemera offered a particularly compelling means to

¹⁴ Manfred B. Steger, *The Rise of the Global Imaginary: Political Ideologies from the French Revolution to the Global War on Terror* (Oxford, 2008), 10 & 133.

¹⁵ Anderson, 36.

overcome barriers of nation, language and even illiteracy.¹⁶ Two examples illustrate this point. In 1950, Leigh Ashton, Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, wrote a preface to UNESCO's bilingual *Répertoire international des archives photographiques d'œuvres d'art* (1950), in which he argued for the photograph as a neutral and transparent medium valuable to scholars and students. Ashton described the photographic reproduction of works of art as, "the guide and counsellor of all study," able to speak with "an International Voice" and "act as an Ambassador."¹⁷ Likewise, the development and publication by the Department of Mass Communication of UNESCO's own photo-magazine, *Courier*, demonstrates the considerable value placed on photography. Originally a newsletter published from 1948 in a newspaper format, *Courier* was refashioned and re-launched in 1954 in a format resembling the successful photo-magazines of the time, such as *Picture Post* (1938–57), *Life* (1936–72) and *Paris-Match* (1948–).¹⁸ The editorial stated that the publication would "serve as a window opening on the world of education, science and culture through which the schoolteacher in particular – for whom this publication is primarily conceived and prepared – and other

¹⁶ "UNESCO World Review," for example, was a radio programme produced in English, French and Spanish, broadcast in forty countries by 1951 (Theodore Besterman, *UNESCO: Peace in the Minds of Men* (London, 1951), 89). By 1955, however, it had been subsumed into UNESCO's regular publication of press releases, UNESCO Features – an initiative which distributed 37,000 UNESCO photographs to the press that year (Fernando Valderrama, *A History of UNESCO* (Paris, 1995), 107).

¹⁷ Leigh Ashton, *Répertoire international des archives photographiques d'œuvres d'art* (Paris, 1950), ix.

¹⁸ While *Courier* did not replicate circulation figures of these titles, the new format produced a marked increase. By October 1955, the magazine was on sale in 100 countries with a total circulation of 21,000 – up from 8,000 in 1953. By December 1956, *Courier* had a circulation of over 70,000 ("The UNESCO Courier: Item 8.4.5 of Provisional Agenda [for 8th UNESCO General Conference]", 6 October 1954, <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001607/160798eb.pdf>> [accessed 27 May 2013]; Laves and Thomson, 118).

readers in general can look out on to wide global horizons.”¹⁹ Ashton’s comment on photography’s ambassadorial potential employs a diplomatic metaphor to assert the importance of the medium to postwar cultural diplomacy, while the editorial’s articulation in visual terms of education, international relations and peace implies that if one views the world from the right perspective, the rectitude of an internationalist standpoint is self-evident or plain to see.

Photography did not simply offer itself as an available means to meet the ends of an independently-conceived internationalist agenda; it held a central position in UNESCO’s conception of its diplomatic mission pursued through mass communication. The conception of what photography was (a universal language) and of what cultural diplomacy should strive to achieve (mutual understanding) dovetailed, because ways of thinking about the medium and the internationalist challenge were co-constitutive or mutually dependent.²⁰ The prominent role of visual culture in the public information material produced by all sides in the Second World War fostered a conviction in the potency of images on a global stage, bringing mass communication to the top of UNESCO’s agenda. Vision – both metaphors employing visual terms like the “window on the world” and photographs themselves – was threaded through the project of securing peace in the postwar decade. In the historical and cultural context in which UNESCO was established, mutual understanding meant facilitating the right way of looking at the world and its problems – a way of looking which needed to be actively promoted and created. The many official UNESCO publications designed to promote the

¹⁹ *UNESCO Courier*, 1 (1954), 2. The photo-magazines of the period likewise offered readers the world through the medium of photography, as articulated in their titles and strap-lines. For instance, in France there was *Point de vue – Images du monde* (1945–), while in West Germany readers of *Quick* (1948–92) were told the world belonged to them (“Dem *Quick*-Leser gehört die Welt”).

²⁰ For a discussion of the conception of photography as a universal language which also addresses its relevance prior to the mid-twentieth century, see Allan Sekula, “The Traffic Photographs”, *Art Journal*, 1 (1981), 15-25.

organisation's work and popularise its utopian aspirations (including magazines, exhibition materials and photo-books) constitute a collection of "image-over-text" publications in which the photograph is the main operative or communicative element.²¹ These publications were informed by a discourse that united peace and vision through photography.

This discourse encompassed *The Family of Man*, a renowned photographic exhibition seen by over 9 million people in 38 countries which also drew heavily on the imagery and conventions of the photo-magazines of the time.²² The exhibition is frequently discussed as the most salient example of the conception of photography as a universal means of communication, but although the exposure it received was unparalleled it was by no means unique.²³ The exhibition's commitment to photography as a universal language mobilised in the service of peace was shared by many other lesser-known photographic initiatives of the 1940s and 1950s including UNESCO-backed projects aimed at promoting

²¹ Discussing photo-magazines, Hall distinguished between "image-over-text" and "text-over-image" formats (Stuart Hall, "The Social Eye of *Picture Post*", *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, 2 (1972), 71-120).

²² Eric J. Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America* (Albuquerque, 1955), 85. See also Kristen Gresh, "The European Roots of *The Family of Man*", *History of Photography*, 29 (2005), 331-43.

²³ Precursors and contemporary examples include: "People are People the World Over" (a series of photo-stories by Magnum photographers which first appeared in the American *Ladies Home Journal* in issue 65, May 1948); the first Magnum exhibition, *Gesicht der Zeit*, which toured five Austrian cities in 1955/6; and *We the People*, a photographic exhibition hosted in San Francisco in 1955 to mark the tenth anniversary of the UN charter. In 2003, Steichen's exhibition was added to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register, a list of archives and documentation considered of worldwide significance. The nomination form describes the exhibition (somewhat contradictorily) as "as the epitome of post-war humanist photography" and "unique of its kind" (Jean Back, "Memory of the World Register Nomination Proposal", [undated], <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/mow/nomination_forms/Family%20of%20Man%20Nomination%20Form.pdf> [accessed 27 March 2014]).

mutual understanding. Roland Barthes famously criticised Steichen's exhibition for evading questions of history and injustice: "Everything here, the content and appeal of the pictures, the discourse which justifies them, aims to suppress the determining weight of History."²⁴ According to Barthes, Steichen's vision – and by implication UNESCO's too – meant viewers were "held back at the surface," prevented from understanding individual situations by a sentimental rendering of human experience. This critique could be levelled at the cover image of the first magazine format issue of *Courier* (fig. 1). Used with very little accompanying text, the closely-cropped photograph of a young girl's face can be taken to represent something other than the individual's experience, or that of a particular community or country. This mode of visual and verbal representation works to decontextualise the experience of a particular individual, projecting it instead on to a supranational plain. Determinate choices frame the image, not as that of a particular young girl in a particular time and place, but as a metonym for human experience. Thus, the image of the girl is not so much universally comprehensible to all individuals through the universal language of photography; rather the individual's experience is universalised. The young girl on the cover symbolises human experience, but in this process of universalising, the specific details of her past, present and future fall away.

Barthes's evaluation of this postwar visual discourse is compelling, but it has become a one-size-fits-all critique of humanist photography. This mode of representing is not simply facile or limiting, as Barthes suggests. At a UNESCO-sponsored event in 1955, writer and curator André Chamson expressed grave concern regarding an apparent public thirst for images. For Chamson, the invention of photography marked a radical shift in society's self-representation and self-conception, comparable to the invention of the printing press, but with devastating potential. He described a tidal wave engulfing humanity which threatened to

²⁴ Roland Barthes, "The Great Family of Man", in *Mythologies* (London, 1973), 101.

breakdown the individual's capacity to understand their world.²⁵ The ubiquity of photography, Chamson argued, results not in mutual understanding, but a fracturing of comprehension through the medium's capability of bringing together objects and people distant in time and space. Understanding the role of photography in the work of UNESCO in its first decade demands an examination of the implications of Chamson's concerns regarding the organisation's "image-over-text publications." The photography mobilised by curators and editors for UNESCO exhibitions and publications does not simply occlude or frustrate understanding (Barthes' "holding back at the surface"); it potentially produces new ways of perceiving and conceiving the world. It is not simply reductive; it is potentially productive of new attitudes and intellectual standpoints.²⁶

In his introductory essay for the catalogue, Steichen (who had worked in aerial reconnaissance in the First and Second World Wars) stated his belief that photography could offer "a mirror of the essential oneness of mankind throughout the world."²⁷ Like the window on the world of *Courier*, Steichen's mirror metaphor highlights how various internationalisms of the postwar period were shot through with questions of vision. Together these figures of speech are indicative of two distinctive representational strategies examined

²⁵ "Une des marques de notre époque, c'est cette sorte de raz de marée qui déferle sur l'humanité [...]. Ce nouveau monde d'images a ceci de particulier qu'il n'est plus un reflet de l'esprit. Il est une sorte d'effraction de l'univers faite avant que nous ayons pu penser à ce que cette effraction va nous donner," André Chamson, "Langage et images", in *La Culture est-elle en péril? Débat sur ses moyens de diffusion: presse, cinéma, radio, télévision, Rencontres internationales de Genève*, 10 (Neuchâtel, 1955), 83 & 92.

²⁶ Chamson's commentary was mentioned in an editorial discussing *The Family of Man*. The editor notes Chamson's strident commentary, only to follow it with purportedly undeniable platitudes: "But even the severest critics do not seek to deny that photography has helped to enrich our lives, that it has given us a new vision of the world, and that it speaks a universal language" (*UNESCO Courier*, 2 (1956), 3).

²⁷ Museum of Modern Art, *The Family of Man* (New York, 1955), 4.

in the following sections: one depicting cultural artefacts, the other picturing the human face. UNESCO publications sought to frame cultural artefacts in a manner that would imply a shared heritage for a global imagined community (the window). UNESCO also used images of individuals to conjure a sense of shared humanity, presenting the human face and inviting identification with or recognition of it (the mirror). These metaphors also reveal the inescapable partiality or agency of modes of visualisation. An image is never simply a transparent medium or a faithful reflection. The window, like photography, frames a scene, excluding elements and accentuating that which is included. Similarly, the mirror distorts that which it depicts, reflecting a reversed image and reducing three dimensions to two. Both metaphoric characterisations of photography inadvertently highlight the constructed nature of the photograph, deconstructing the conception of photography as a universal language and suggesting instead that photography is a mode of visualising which produces constructed and intentional images. This discourse on photography as a universal language was underpinned by the conviction that photography was both a transparent and universally comprehensible means of expression. In actuality, this discourse entailed a constant slippage or cross-fertilisation between the circulation of visual material and figures of speech characterising the challenge of postwar peace-building in visual terms.

World Culture and Human Rights: Landmarks of Civilisation

Working alongside the UN commission on the Rights of Man, UNESCO had established a committee chaired by historian E. H. Carr to consider the content of a charter.²⁸ Following the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December 1948 by the UN General Assembly, UNESCO adopted its own resolution to promote the Declaration. From

²⁸ The conclusions were published in, UNESCO, *Human Rights: Comments and Interpretations* (London, 1949).

October to December of 1949, UNESCO held an exhibition at the Musée Galliera in Paris.²⁹ Using material selected for this exhibition, the following year the organisation's Department of Mass Communication produced and disseminated 12,000 copies of the *Human Rights Exhibition Album*.³⁰ Aimed at facilitating exhibitions in member countries, it consisted of 110 loose-leaf, monochrome, large format plates carrying either photographs or photographic reproductions of paintings and engravings. This visual material was accompanied by mountable titles and captions; a text titled "A Short History of Human Rights," designed to assist those hosting complementary events or tours; and a small pamphlet detailing alternative ways in which to present the album, with sketches illustrating ways to "improve the presentation and *visualisation*" of the narrative and themes depicted in the plates and captions.

While the majority of illustrations are divided into fourteen themes (each covering the historical struggle for a particular right or set of rights), the first two dozen images offer a preamble. From pre-history to the postwar period, plates 2 to 25 employ imagery ranging from the fossilised footprint of a cave-dweller to the Parisian debating hall in which the UN first met. Within this context, images of architecture are used to symbolise the high watermarks of previous cultures. Plate 13 (fig. 2), for instance, shows the ruined Temple of Poseidon next to a photograph of a bust of Socrates, while plate 17 shows a photographic reproduction of an engraving of the destruction of the Bastille in July 1789. Widely differing cultures and histories are, by their distillation into a few select images, offered up as comparable or equivalent steps in a continuous history. The "Short History" booklet encapsulates this use of architectural imagery with various spatial metaphors. Describing the achievements of past cultures as "landmarks," it also states that "the illustrations mark the

²⁹ Material relating to the planning of this exhibition is held by the UNESCO Archives, Paris (e.g. UNESCO/MC/Droits de l'homme/48 to /50, "Exposition droits de l'homme, Musée Galliera").

³⁰ UNESCO, *Human Rights Exhibition Album* (Paris, 1950).

stages along the road leading from the cave-man [...] to the free citizen of a modern democracy.” Thus, the *Human Rights Exhibition Album* works to universalise icons such as the Bastille or a Greek temple, glossing the contradictions and conflicts of the past under the image of a shared heritage for an imagined global community with which viewers were invited to identify. The universalising tendency immanent in the promotion of this internationalist concept of world culture is also reflected in the organisation’s choice of a Greek temple as its logo, and like the imagery of the exhibition album the choice of logo highlights a Eurocentric view of the principal stages of human development.³¹

Architectural imagery is also pressed into service in the visualisation of individual rights in the second part of the exhibition album. The city is represented as the place in which legitimate debate takes place (the free citizen exercises his rights) and tolerance is exercised. Under the theme “Freedom of thought and opinion,” plate 77 (fig. 3) offers a depiction of political activism. It shows a speaker at Hyde Park Corner and rally posters on a Parisian wall. Under the theme “Freedom of religion,” plate 73 (fig. 4) again represents Parisian streets. The viewer is offered a selection of nine religious buildings (including mosques, synagogues and churches of various denominations), with a caption that reads: “Freedom today is enjoyed by almost all religious bodies, and there is nothing to prevent different religions from existing peacefully side by side in one city.” Thus, Paris (where UNESCO was and is based) stands for the city in general. In turn, this abstract city is presented as the site at which tolerance is realised in the modern world, as if urbanisation and freedom of thought are mutually-supporting phenomena. There is a dark irony in these visualisations of liberty. Despite the depiction of religious tolerance through juxtaposed Parisian religious buildings in plate 73, the city was the site, in July 1942, of the rounding up and deportation of over 13,000 members of the Parisian Jewish population. Prior to

³¹ The logo was designed soon after the establishment of the organisation and first appeared on the cover of UNESCO, *Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Newsletter*, 8-9 (1947).

deportation, they were held in the same velodrome – the Vel d’Hiv – referenced in the bottom poster pictured in plate 77. Notwithstanding such unintentional references, there is a subtle but persistent idealising of architecture and city space in the visualisation of the struggle for human rights which reveals a value judgement at the core of the exhibition: Civilisation and, by implication, the pursuit of human rights finds its ultimate expression in urban life. The urban imagery of the *Human Rights Exhibition Album* mobilises the image of the city as an icon of an imagined global community – albeit that less than thirty percent of the global population lived in urban areas in 1950.³²

Architecture and urbanism, however, are not the only sources of imagery in the exhibition album. Culture generally conceived is the principal subject, architecture and urban experience being just one privileged instance. Photography is used to picture diverse artefacts from diverse cultures, including paintings, sculptures, ceramics and other utensils or devices. From prehistoric tools to the modern press, the changing artefacts of everyday life are pictured in such a manner as to represent a narrative of progress which is the visual correlate of the human rights struggle. This narrative of continuous progress was an idealised view – as Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann characterises it, the history of human rights is “marked more by ruptures than continuities”³³ – and there are notable exclusions from the available examples of the struggle for rights. The catalogue of objects on display includes seminal texts like the British “Magna Carta” (1215) and the French “Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen” (1789), but the Russian “Declaration of the Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People” (1918), for instance, is not mentioned. The Soviet Union is, in a sense, the exhibition’s unconscious; while not explicitly referenced, the threat of nuclear war

³² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, Population Estimates and Projections Section, “World Urbanization Prospects, the 2011 Revision”, <<http://esa.un.org/unup/CD-ROM/Urban-Rural-Population.htm>> [accessed 27 May 2013].

³³ Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann ed., *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2011), 15.

animated much of postwar visual culture.³⁴ Images of Nazism, on the contrary, are mobilised in the *Human Rights Exhibition Album* as a foil to the image of world culture. Photographs of adulation of Hitler, the burning of books and Buchenwald concentration camp are used to assert that the denial of rights is barbarism. The abolition of slavery offers another micro-narrative of the triumph of justice over injustice, subsumed in the overall trajectory of human development. Yet, communism – like the vexed ideological questions raised by colonisation and decolonisation – is notable by its absence, edited out to facilitate the visualisation of civilisation’s progress as a unified narrative.³⁵

The diverse images and captions of the album oscillate between two different conceptions of culture: as a collection of material objects and as a shared way of life. Both demonstrate the instrumentalisation of the concept of culture in pursuit of UNESCO’s peace aims. Photography facilitates the comparison of cultures distant in time and space, bringing them together through metonymic representations to forge a picture of human civilisation in which each culture is simply a component part. Plate 92 (fig. 5) and plate 93, for instance, come under the theme “Liberty of creative work.” The caption for plate 92 reads, “The heritage of civilizations consists in the work of its artists, scientists and thinkers. Every civilization creates a new vision of man which is the mark of its contribution to history.” These photographs of carved, painted and mosaicked faces work to humanise diverse cultures, representing them through recognisably human faces. Thus, the image of world culture forged by the exhibition album – like reference to “the human family” in the preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – collapses difference and projects oneness.

³⁴ While *The Family of Man* catalogue ends with an image of the UN debating chamber, the original exhibition finished with a backlit, wall-to-ceiling colour transparency of a mushroom cloud.

³⁵ The Editor-in-Chief of Penguin Books applauded the original exhibition for demonstrating “how lucidly and dramatically the story of mankind can be made visible and significant” (W. E. Williams, “UNESCO portrays history of human rights”, *Museum*, 4 (1949), 201-5 (202)).

Representations of diverse artefacts play a role in creating an image of this world culture, universally participated in by all nations and historical periods and possessing a democratic teleology.

This construction of a universal conception of culture was a vital enabling concept in UNESCO's campaign to promote the Universal Declaration: The concept of world culture implies a shared ground (and historical goal) constituting the global public sphere in which a declaration of human rights can have universal application. The role of photography and photographic reproduction in this process of visualising culture and history is not incidental; it is foundational, as becomes apparent from considering André Malraux's contemporaneous argument regarding photography's creation of a "museum without walls."³⁶ Malraux contended that photography changed the way art was thought about, transforming art history into "the history of that which can be photographed."³⁷ While the museum divorced art from its original context and function (be it religious devotion or signification of status), the use of photographic reproduction added to this decontextualisation, implying that all works are comparable and thus part of the same narrative of development. Indeed, according to Malraux photography does not simply facilitate comparisons of diverse styles and movements; it demands them, framing all works (whatever separates them in terms of distance and time) as contiguous parts of a whole and engendering an attitude to culture as a shared patrimony. The medium, in Malraux's view, is a dynamic, productive influence, since the "specious unity imposed by photographic reproduction on a multiplicity of objects" makes art "for the first time the common heritage of all mankind."³⁸ In the case of the campaign to promote the human rights agenda, photography is not only a means by which the cultures of the world can be synthesised into a world culture; its history of reproducing

³⁶ André Malraux, "Museum without Walls", in *The Voices of Silence*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (Princeton, 1978).

³⁷ Malraux, 30.

³⁸ Malraux, 46.

cultural artefacts implicates the medium in the very possibility of conceptualising world culture.

But what are the ramifications of this visualisation of world culture; of synthesising through photography diverse cultural artefacts in an effort to forge an imagined global community? In short, culture is reified. It is viewed not as lived experience, but as a set of objects available for arrangement and exhibition. This is a decontextualising view of culture; photography is both a condition of its possibility and a tool of its realisation. Culture, refracted through the prism of photography, becomes a set of musealised artefacts, divorced from everyday life of 13,000BC and 1950AD alike. This conception entails an appropriation of culture and subsumes it into the categories of the museum: The implication is that it can only be understood and appreciated within this context, and that understanding and appreciation are the appropriate operations when faced with diverse cultures. However, in decontextualising cultural artefacts and placing them in a relation of equivalence with one another, the museum without walls created by the exhibition album does not respect diverse cultures or accommodate difference. UNESCO's instrumentalisation of cultural artefacts in the visualisation of a world culture rather imposes the divorce of culture from its bases in individual experience, suggesting particular fixed cultural identities as represented by the material on display. Synthesising diverse artefacts and ways of life into a unified visual narrative of civilisation's progress thus effectively denies both meaningful differences between communities and any change within them, in favour of the universal ideal.

As Alain Finkielkraut observes, a notion like world culture can have ramifications quite different from the emancipatory and peace-building intent which animated it:

At the same time in effect we [westerners] granted the "other" man his culture, we robbed him of his liberty. His very name vanished into the name of the

community. He became nothing more than an interchangeable unit in a whole class of cultural beings. He was supposed to be receiving an unconditional acceptance; in fact he was being denied any margin of manoeuvre, any means of escape.³⁹

The visualisation of world culture may have been an effort to circumvent the dangerous nationalisms seen to be at the root of conflict and to underpin the promotion of the Universal Declaration. Its upshot, however, was not necessarily the construction of peace in the minds of men, but the questionable appropriation and instrumentalisation of culture. Moreover, not only do cultural identities become fixed, they are reduced to their visual aspects. In transforming diverse artefacts from diverse cultures into a catalogue of analogous images, rather than establishing a global museum, this photographic project ends up undermining its own enterprise. The album does not simply effect the “mass distribution” of the original exhibition; the artefacts themselves undergo a transformation in being reproduced as and reduced to images. In 1961, Hannah Arendt decried a crisis of culture precipitated by the advent of mass society. She criticised in particular the efforts of “a special kind of intellectuals, often well read and well informed, whose sole function is to organize, disseminate, and change cultural objects in order to persuade the masses that Hamlet can be as entertaining as *My Fair Lady*, and perhaps educational as well.”⁴⁰ The resultant cultural products, Arendt feared, amounted not to education, but the take-over by the central attitude of mass society – “the attitude of consumption” – and the production of “mass

³⁹ Alain Finkielkraut, *The Undoing of Thought*, trans. Dennis O’Keeffe (London, 1988), 73-4. Filmmakers Chris Marker and Alain Resnais lamented the same issue in *Les statues meurent aussi* (1953); see Chris Marker, “The Statues Also Die”, trans. Lauren Ashby, *Art in Translation*, 5 (2013), 429-38.

⁴⁰ Hannah Arendt, “The Crisis of Culture: Its Social and Political Significance”, in *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (London, 1961), 207.

entertainment, feeding on the cultural objects of the world.”⁴¹ Circulated around the world a decade previously, UNESCO’s *Human Rights Exhibition Album* exemplifies this crisis, realising what Arendt termed the ransacking of culture, in pursuit of a visual reference point for a global imagined community which might underpin promotion of the Universal Declaration.

At the same time, however, explicit discussion within the organisation was moving away from the universalism of internationalist ideals like world culture. This can be seen in the contrasting speeches given by the outgoing and incoming Directors-General during UNESCO’s Annual General Conference in December 1948 (at which the resolution to promote the Universal Declaration was adopted).⁴² In his retirement address, Julian Huxley (a former trustee of the Council for Education in World Citizenship) spoke of the “One World of the human mind.”⁴³ He asked delegates, “Have you looked at your problems from a Unesco Angle – that is to say not merely as national problems but as part of a single world problem?”⁴⁴ In contrast the incoming head of the organisation, Jaime Torres Bodet (a former Minister for Education for Mexico), was more pessimistic and less didactic, advocating a pluralist approach:

⁴¹ Arendt, 211.

⁴² These speeches were published in: Julian Huxley and Jaime Torres Bodet, *This Is Our Power* (Zurich, 1949).

⁴³ Huxley’s phrase (Huxley and Torres Bodet, 10) was a reference to an idea promoted in wartime by American Wendell Willkie who – arguing against isolationism – advocated an internationalist agenda by taking a round-the-world trip meeting leaders and citizens in Allied countries: “Continents and oceans are plainly only parts of a whole, seen as I have seen them, from the air. England and America are parts; Russia and China, Egypt, Syria and Turkey, Iraq and Iran are also parts. And it is inescapable that there can be no peace for any part of the world unless the foundations of peace are made secure through all parts of the world” (Wendell L. Willkie, *One World* (London, 1943), 166).

⁴⁴ Huxley and Torres Bodet, 9.

We can no longer accept, unmodified, the idea of man and of culture that classical humanism bequeathed. [...] Classical humanism was at one time restricted to the Mediterranean region. Modern humanism must know no frontiers. It is Unesco's supreme task to help to bring this new type of humanism to birth.⁴⁵

Rather than world culture, Torres Bodet spoke in more measured terms of "international understanding" and of the "friendly association between cultures in an atmosphere of peace."⁴⁶ In UNESCO's first decade, there was a plurality of internationalist positions held by those supportive of the organisation, from the hardline one-worlders to more pragmatic individuals who looked for a community of nations. The organisation's movement along this spectrum, however, was at odds with the implications of the photographic imagery it mobilised in its work to establish an international public sphere. The *Human Rights Exhibition Album* told a unidirectional narrative of the struggle for recognition of human rights in which the privileging of urban space suggests a Western-centred notion of progress and diverse cultures are reduced to static and equivalent parts of a homogenous world culture.

World Citizenship, Youth and Education: Citizens of Tomorrow

A close connection was drawn in the discourse of postwar reconstruction between a secure global peace and the education of the individual. This issue was a key motivation in establishing UNESCO, prompting the original Conference of Allied Ministers of Education which first met in London on 16 November 1942 and from which the organisation resulted. In

⁴⁵ Huxley and Torres Bodet, 13 & 16.

⁴⁶ Huxley and Torres Bodet, 17.

February 1947, UNESCO hosted a meeting of international voluntary organisations, the Temporary International Council for Education Reconstruction (TICER), to tackle this situation. By the end of the 1940s, this effort towards educational reconstruction encompassed over 200 organisations, and had raised and distributed \$100million.⁴⁷ Predictably, in the publications which accompanied this effort photographs of children were prominent, and the postwar city was a setting particularly rich with significance. As Tara Zahra has noted, “Children were at the symbolic heart of efforts to reconstruct Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War.”⁴⁸ UNESCO’s campaigns to raise funds and awareness in the postwar decade regarding educational reconstruction and the plight of children in war devastated countries demonstrate a very different style of address from the intellectual appeal made by the *Human Rights Exhibition Album* – one posited on identification through the figure of the face, rather than a shared world culture.

The most important example of such imagery, owing to its wide-circulation, is a set of photographs commissioned by UNESCO from photographer and Magnum Photos founder-member David (“Chim”) Seymour and published as *Children of Europe* (1949).⁴⁹ Comprising fifty photographs with tri-lingual captions, three versions of *Children of Europe* were published with a title and preface in English (fig. 6), French and Spanish. The photographs are populated by children whose frank stares and desperate situation set the tone for this

⁴⁷ Besterman, 76.

⁴⁸ Tara Zahra, “‘A Human Treasure’: Europe’s Displaced Children between Nationalism and Internationalism”, *Past and Present*, 210 (suppl 6) (2011), 332-50 (332).

⁴⁹ [David Seymour], *Children of Europe* (Paris, 1949). The three month shooting trip to Italy, Austria, Greece, Hungary and Poland resulted in 257 rolls of exposed film (Carole Naggar, “Lives of Chim”, in *We Went Back: Photographs from Europe, 1933-1956 by Chim* (New York, 2013), 21). The project was announced in *UNESCO Courier*, 4 (1948), 3. It is likely this photo-book was commissioned by John Grierson, Director of Mass Communication at UNESCO from February 1947 to April 1948.

short photo-book, 10,000 copies of which had been produced by 1951.⁵⁰ Seymour's photographs were also used in *Courier*, other UNESCO publications and in UNESCO sponsored exhibitions of the period.⁵¹ The first image in the original photo-book (fig. 7) shows three boys walking along a road bounded on both sides by rubble. Behind them, dominating the top two thirds of the image, are the jagged walls of war-ruined houses. Like the image's composition, the trilingual caption emphasises the devastated urban setting. It reads tersely, "Millions of children first knew life amid death and destruction." In another image, two children turn their empty cups to the camera imploringly questioningly (fig. 8). The eyes of the children stare out from the book's pages with imploring expressions which give the impression of meeting the viewer's gaze uncompromisingly. Through both the ruined setting and the children's faces, the images make a direct, emotional appeal, evoking sympathy and inviting the audience to identify with the children pictured. Captions in the first person plural echo the address of the images, commanding the viewer's attention by suggesting relationships of responsibility between the children ("we") and the viewer ("you"). One reads, "Orphaned, abandoned and bombed out ... we struggle to live in the wreckage you have left us." The emotional appeal of the children's faces is also seconded by the book's preface. Described as a letter written by a seventeen-year-old, the text details the experience and the extent of the deprivation suffered by an estimated thirteen million children in war-devastated countries of the postwar period.⁵² The suggestion of a series of one-to-one encounters (through image and text) works to forge a sense of community with

⁵⁰ In his history of UNESCO published in 1951, Theodore Besterman noted that 10,000 copies of *Children of Europe* had already been printed and distributed (Besterman, 79). His volume was also illustrated with Seymour's images.

⁵¹ Twenty-three sets of images depicting the situation of child war victims were produced for exhibition and circulated internationally in 1949 (Valderrama, 55). Given the date and the extensive use made by UNESCO of Seymour's images in extant publications, it is probable they were included in this exhibition.

⁵² *Children of Europe*, 5-12.

attendant notions of responsibility, helping fulfil the photo-book's function as a fundraising document.⁵³

In addition to this emotional appeal, the images of children had two important characteristics. Firstly, the child is framed as a symbol of the future. Despite the entreating expressions and desperate circumstances pictured, a positive tone ultimately prevails. Following a visual adumbration of the problems, the imagery turns towards a positive look at solutions. Pictures of classes held under a tree or in the shadow of a burnt-out façade illustrate the state of makeshift schooling (fig. 9), while other photographs depict children themselves engaged in the work of rebuilding schools. The privileged solution to the problem of youth postwar is education. The final caption is appears between a photograph of children dancing on the banks of a river across from new high-rise housing blocks and children's drawings on the back cover. It reads, "Share your world with us. We too shall be grown-up people in a few years. Do not abandon us a second time and make us lose forever our faith in the ideals for which you fought." Thus, *Children of Europe* charts a transition of the ruined cityscapes, from manifestations of past trauma to sites of potential. Against this symbolic backdrop, children represent the opportunity for a peaceful postwar future. Secondly, the youth question is represented as being outside, above or somehow disassociated from a given nation. Crucially, the attempt to establish relationships between viewer and viewed is based on a one-to-one encounter, not mediated by associations of nation and nationality. The children are never identified solely as citizens of a particular nation. Rather, they are pictured undergoing a common difficult experience, somehow outside national boundaries. The effort to universalise the image of children as symbols of the future disconnected from a particular nation promotes an internationalism predicated on recognition or identification between individuals, simultaneously shelving national concerns or histories and working to

⁵³ Advertises for the book in *Impetus*, the UNESCO newsletter on reconstruction, make clear its function as a fundraising tool.

replace the difficult symbolism of war-damaged urban space with a redemptive character and a sense of possibility.

This photographic representation of children's postwar situation chimes with the concurrent discussion of world citizenship within UNESCO forums and publications. This idea was posited as a key tenet of education and also an attitude to be fostered amongst UNESCO's audiences. World citizenship was viewed as a means of ensuring peace through social justice and entailed the nurturing of the individual so that they may share in and contribute to society's achievements. A brief manifesto in *Courier* proclaimed the internationalist and universalising character of this ideal: "A world citizen is loyal to his community and to his country, but his primary loyalty is to humanity."⁵⁴ Seeking likewise to deconstruct or overwrite associations of nationalism and nationality which defined both the wartime period and the tensions of the Cold War, UNESCO publications drew on a mode of photography which could evoke a general sense of community through images of specific individuals – that is, one which effectively de-territorialised the individual to evoke the idea of a universal citizenry composed of individual world citizens, as opposed to citizens of different nations. The de-nationalised and future-focused framing of youth is captured in the theme of a special edition of *Photo-Monde*, published in 1956 and sponsored by UNESCO: "Today's Children – Tomorrow's Citizens."⁵⁵ The idea of being a citizen of tomorrow posited by the title neatly divorced citizenship from national association and linked the image of the child with the idea of the future.

⁵⁴ Leonard S. Kenworthy, "A World Citizen" [Reproduced from *Education Digest*], *UNESCO Courier*, 4 (1948), 4.

⁵⁵ "Enfants d'aujourd'hui ... Hommes de demain", *Photo-Monde*, 51-52 (1956). Featuring photos by Henri Cartier-Bresson, Marc Riboud and others, it had a tri-lingual preface in French, English and Spanish. The English language title is the official translation as noted in UNESCO publicity material of the time ("To-day's children ... To-morrow's Citizens", *UNESCO Features*, 24 Dec 1956, 2).

The cover of a special edition of *Courier* published in December 1956 to celebrate the organisation's ten year anniversary provides another striking example of the visualisation of internationalised youth (fig. 10). It depicts three children standing in front of a large globe outside the Babson Institute of Business Administration in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Curved along one of the lines of longitude is the title, "1946 - 1956: Ten Years of UNESCO."⁵⁶ The photograph suggests a relation between the youth question and the international community through the straightforward juxtaposition of the one (symbolised by the three children) with the other (symbolised by the globe). It also offers a vision of children outside the confines of one nation or another. They are literally removed from any particular geographic – and hence national – ties. Above all, the photograph works to transfer positive associations from the gaze of the children to the internationalist perspective. The children (representing hope, potential and the future) have the much vaunted global perspective, while the person picking up the magazine also sees the world in its entirety. In that shared object of vision is the possibility of a transfer of positive associations which the children carry, to the global perspective that the viewer shares.⁵⁷

As the cover of the tenth anniversary issue of UNESCO's flagship publication, figure 10 demonstrates the importance placed by UNESCO on the capacities of photography to visualise the organisation's utopian ambitions through a strategy of mass communication. Likewise, a sense of excitement about the capacities of the camera to achieve an internationalist vision of youth was evident when Seymour's images were reproduced in

⁵⁶ *UNESCO Courier*, 12 (1956). Articles in this edition cover the issue of youth and education in detail, drawing on the World Survey of Education published by UNESCO in 1955.

⁵⁷ The first image of the *Human Rights Exhibition Album* is similar, presenting a god's eye view of Earth and replicating an original installation in the Musée Galliéra exhibition in which a globe was suspended in a chamber at eye-level. The photograph and the visual device both enacted the one-world view mooted by Willkie and espoused by Huxley (see n.43 above).

Courier. The accompanying text foregrounded the role of the photographer and the medium through interjections such as, “A photographer highlights the drama of post-war youngsters” and “Through the eye of the camera.”⁵⁸ Notwithstanding such enthusiasm, this mode of image-making had ideological implications beyond those aims. The European children in Seymour’s volume and the American children on the cover of *Courier* present a partial view of the world’s youth. As in the *Human Rights Exhibition Album*, there is a Western- or Euro-centric dimension to the representations used in the campaigns regarding educational reconstruction. Despite the manner in which questions of youth and education are placed on an international footing, these publications existed in a world of very specific relations between specific nation states. The internationalist point of view promoted by UNESCO through the photography of children is indelibly marked by pre-war history (colonialism) and postwar circumstances (the dominance of transatlantic nations in the field of cultural production). The list of photographers is dominated by Europeans, for instance, while the languages of publication are the three main colonial languages. Moreover, white children in urban settings dominate. Visualisation of questions of youth and education thus entailed a privileging or universalising of Western and urban modes of existence. Again, internationalism spills over into universalism and photography is implicated in the process.

The image of the child used in UNESCO publications of the time fulfilled an important function by acting as a mediator of the organisation’s aims.⁵⁹ Encouraging viewers’

⁵⁸ “These are Children of Europe”, *UNESCO Courier*, 2 (1949), 6-9.

⁵⁹ Seymour’s photographs continued to be used in UNESCO publications in the following two decades, often without attribution or detailed captions. These images also appeared in the press (e.g. “Children of Europe”, *Life*, 27 December 1948, 13-9; “Sinistrati – Verlonene und vergessene Kinder Europas”, *Heute*, 16 February 1949, 9-19; “The New Generation”, *Illustrated*, 12 March 1949, 1-7). When a number of them were reproduced in *The Family of Man*, they were credited to “David Seymour – Magnum, UNESCO.” They were also

emotional engagement, the visualisation of UNESCO's programme through the image of the child's face works to elicit a sense of community or obligation and thereby encourage support. These widely circulated images in the concerned mode thus constituted the face of UNESCO; or perhaps more accurately, these photographs epitomised Huxley's vaunted UNESCO point of view. They invited the viewer to acknowledge the child and recognise their plight, and in doing so the images worked to recruit people to a way of looking at and thinking about youth in the postwar period as a pressing and personalised concern. *Children of Europe* created an identity for UNESCO by performing a concerned gaze with which the organisation could be associated. Albeit quite distinct from the logo of the universalised Greek temple which looked to the past, Seymour's future-focused photographs constituted another public image of UNESCO in the conception and execution of which photographic representation was integral. Like the young girl on the cover of the first photo-magazine format issue of *Courier*, the children captured by Seymour as published in *Children of Europe* have become symbols rather than citizens. They are symbolic of need; they are a means to elicit funds; they facilitate the performance of the concerned gaze of UNESCO. But they are not themselves. Even the letter which served as preface, one suspects, is ghost-written.

Moreover, while the emotional appeal of the images is direct, the role that the viewer can play in righting the injustice depicted is far from obvious. The implied idea of world citizenship as a means to forge a global imaged community is problematic. Citizenship suggests a set of rights assured by a sovereign state or other governmental body in exchange for the satisfaction of certain obligations on the part of the citizen. However, the discourse of world citizenship provides no clear framework for such a form of social justice. (What and how are obligations to be discharged? Who or what is to secure rights?) It was an

reproduced in the press following Seymour's death in 1956 and exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago (*Chim's Children*, 15 April to 1 July 1957).

internationalist and universalising ideal without secure grounding in the new world order represented by the UN. As a member state organisation, the rhetoric of this visual culture was also at odds with the political structure of UNESCO. Certainly, wartime education debates were the genesis of the organisation's creation. Following the establishment of UNESCO, many of the National Committees which formed the bridge between the organisation in Paris and the governments of the various member states were invariably affiliated to government departments of education. However, the inspirational vision of an internationalist future articulated in wartime met certain real-world obstacles in the first postwar years. It was not until UNESCO's General Conference in 1949, for instance, that member states decided to "extend parts of UNESCO's programme to Germany and Japan."⁶⁰ West Germany did not become a UNESCO member state until 1951. The Soviet Union did not join UNESCO until 1954, owing to unease about press freedoms which the organisation promoted. This exclusion of former Axis nations (and the reticence of Allied ones) existed alongside the organisation's promotion of world citizenship through the use of concerned photography. The emphasis on the internationalised youth of tomorrow was a reaction to a moment of increasing tension between polarised nations, but it was more the visual expression of a desire than it was the depiction of a reality. The viewing of youth as an international concern on which the future depended was projected through UNESCO publications as a cornerstone of the task of forging peace in the minds of men, notwithstanding the contradictions in such an image for a member state organisation operating in a Cold War context.

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⁶⁰ UNESCO, *UNESCO: A World Programme* (Paris, 1949), 17.

UNESCO had numerous critics in its first decade. Novelist Herman Hesse was sceptical concerning the value of increased understanding between nations, since French and German intellectuals' understanding of each other's culture had had no positive bearing on the course of peace.⁶¹ Academic Hans Morgenthau was dismissive of UNESCO's efforts in his study of international politics first published in 1948. Highlighting that Americans read Dostoyevsky and Russian theatres staged Shakespeare, he considered culture incidental to international cooperation: "The problem of world community is a moral and political and not an intellectual and esthetic one. The world community is a community of moral judgments and political actions, not of intellectual endowments and esthetic appreciations."⁶² Examination of UNESCO's use of photographic representation, however, highlights the inadequate seriousness with which a critique like Morgenthau's takes the task of cultural analysis. Shaped by and promoted through visual material, the internationalist ideals of world culture and world citizenship were moral judgements against nationalism, held responsible for the death and destruction of the past world war; they were intended as political actions against the threat of a future war which could be avoided by redefining what the international community consisted in.

As former colonised nations achieved independence and UNESCO membership grew throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the one-world rhetoric was replaced by talk of mutual or intercultural understanding. References to world culture or world citizenship became less prominent, as did other terms not explicitly addressed here such as world society and world understanding. Today, of all the initiatives promoted by UNESCO it is the World Heritage List chronicling sites of cultural or natural importance that is central to the organisation's public image. This discourse of world heritage is less closely aligned with that of human rights than was the concept of world culture in UNESCO's postwar exhibition album. Moreover, the

⁶¹ Cited by Richard Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants: UNESCO from Within* (London, 1978), 59-60.

⁶² Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York, 1993), 353.

unofficial discourse of human rights has now overtaken the official one, with NGOs working to communicate with a global public and put pressure on governments and international organisations like the UN. Samuel Moyn has charted this movement from the postwar primacy of national self-determination to recognition that national sovereignty has to be intruded on to secure human rights. This “move from the politics of the state to the morality of the globe” has seen NGOs help redefine rights talk, aligning it much more closely with the sort of humanitarian initiative represented by the reconstruction effort with which *Children of Europe* was associated.⁶³ Arguably, to fully account for the course and impact of the human rights agenda since the Universal Declaration in 1948, it would be necessary to trace its relation to genres of image-making. As Susie Linfield suggests “photography has been central to fostering the idea that the individual citizen and the ‘international community,’ not the nation-state, is the final arbiter of human-rights crimes. It’s impossible to imagine transnational groups such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, or Doctors without Borders in the pre-photographic age.”⁶⁴ The uses of photographic imagery by UNESCO and other organisations operating on an international stage emphasise that a cultural practice like photography – contrary to Morgenthau’s assertion – is not incidental; it can play a formative role in shaping debate in the public sphere.

In its early years, photography held for UNESCO the promise of a visual culture that could overcome barriers of nation, language and even illiteracy. The conception of photography as a universal language was woven through the objectives and the efforts of the organisation. However, as discussed here, such an instrumentalisation of photography was not ideologically innocent. Emerging from a period of political and personal turmoil defined by the First and Second World Wars, into the tensions of the Cold War and the

⁶³ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA., 2010), 43.

⁶⁴ Susie Linfield, “The Ethics of Vision. Photojournalism and Human Rights”, in Alessandra Mauro ed., *My Brother’s Keeper: Documentary Photographers and Human Rights* (Turin, 2007), 20.

violent conflicts of decolonisation, the manner in which Europe was presented in international debates as the birthplace and long-time home of democracy is conspicuous, to say the least. This article has analysed how the campaigning work of UNESCO in its early years was underpinned by what Mazower has termed “a sense of European civilizational superiority.”⁶⁵ A comprehensive history of UNESCO and visual culture in the first postwar decade would have to cast the net wider, including topics such as the promotion by UNESCO of art in its utopian project, the debate about visual aids in primary education, and the use of film and filmstrips in the many public information campaigns. What has been prioritised here is analysis of the vital part played by the medium in shaping the aims of UNESCO and animating its campaigns, which resulted from the conception of photography as a universal language. What has been argued is that photography was neither a transparent window nor an impassive mirror; the marshalling of photographs of artefacts, individuals and architecture was less the valuable use of a universal language suited to the needs of UNESCO than the universalising of certain values in the pursuit of UNESCO’s effort to build peace.

This article is not intended as an iconoclastic attack on internationalism, on UNESCO, on human rights or on the importance of children in post-conflict situations. The achievements of the postwar period (the effort at educational reconstruction, the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) should not necessarily be undermined by revelation of various prejudices attendant to UNESCO’s early work. Questioning the latter is not synonymous with rejecting the former. Nor is this article a denial of the social and political purpose photography can fulfil. The work of Ariella Azoulay offers a different model for examining the photograph as an historic document from the one undertaken here. Azoulay aims to resist “the abstraction and naturalization of the visible,” working to ascertain the conditions under which a photograph is taken “by cross-referencing the information that

⁶⁵ Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (Harmondsworth, 1998), xiv.

is registered in it with extra-photographic information” to understand the social and political context in which photography as a practice is utilised.⁶⁶ I have sought, instead, to examine that process by which photographs of artefacts and individuals can become decontextualized, fixed images or abstract symbols. Emphasising “the civil potential of photography” and the importance of “taking photography seriously as an encounter,” Azoulay also emphasises the political responsibility of the viewer.⁶⁷ Without denying the inter-subjective encounter offered by the photograph of an individual, I have sought rather to evaluate the ideological implications of the address by UNESCO’s image-over-text publications. This is not to repudiate the social and political recognition demanded by the viewing of individuals in photographs, but rather to analyse the manner in which UNESCO’s historically-constituted visual projects framed people and cultures in ways that worked to side-line or frustrate the social and political demands Azoulay underlines.

From the standpoint of intellectual history, it is necessary to examine the permeation of internationalist thinking with questions of vision in the postwar world, and to understand the presumption of a correct way of seeing the problems of human welfare which underpinned the postwar deployment of mass communication. Explicit debate within UNESCO became sensitised to these issues early on, as evidenced by the contrast between Huxley’s “One World of the human mind” and Torres Bodet’s broader conception of “international understanding.” A unified or uniform internationalism did not exist within the organisation in its first decade. Rather, UNESCO grappled with the overlapping approaches to internationalism in relation to the creation of an international public sphere, and the persistence of conflict in the postwar moment. Nonetheless, the effort to create such a public

⁶⁶ Ariella Azoulay, “Photography without Borders”, in Thomas Cushman ed., *Routledge Handbook of Human Rights* (Abingdon, 2011), 669-82 (670).

⁶⁷ Ariella Azoulay, “‘The Family of Man’: A Visual Universal Declaration of Human Rights” in Thomas Keenan and Tirdad Zolghadr ed., *The Human Snapshot* (Berlin, 2013), 19-48 (30 & 21).

sphere was a visual as well as a verbal one. Attention must be paid to the visual culture of the period and its capacity to influence ideas and shape debate.