



CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DE LA PHILOSOPHIE ET DES SCIENCES HUMAINES
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR PHILOSOPHY AND HUMAN SCIENCES

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CIPSH/ICPHS: continuing with a long tradition, a new agenda towards a world conference of the Humanities

CIPSH/ICPHS was established the 18th January 1949, as an academic NGO aiming at favoring international cooperation and fostering research and the dissemination of its results in the domain of Philosophy and Human Sciences. Three years later, it established Diogenes as a major component of this strategy. This was done in the framework of the launching of the United Nations and UNESCO, as part of a strategy that should help preventing a new world war and building from the experience of the Society of Nations.

In its origins, CIPSH/ICPHS was also the occasion to set a new scientific agenda for humanities, based in the *Annales*, fostering a major epistemological renewal open to diversity, complexity and interaction with other sciences.

In its 66 years of existence, the Council had to adjust its agenda to new challenges on several occasions. The convergence of phenomena from the 1960's, speeding up social, technological, economic and environmental changes (the "great acceleration") into major cultural disruptions (that will emerge clearly by the end of the last century), changed its original framework of reference. Natural sciences were well advanced to meet such changes, since they provide growing detailed knowledge on the planet, its resources and its tensions. Social sciences also adapted, offering standardized criteria to quantify social trends, economic tendencies, psychological profiles or new legal constraints. But human sciences remained largely untouched by this acceleration process, having incorporated societal trends (e.g. gender studies) or contributions from other sciences (e.g. quantification of data – yet hardly the mathematics formalization), but remaining uneasy in face of the quality assessment criteria that, conceived for natural and formal sciences, encompassed social sciences as well.

Today, there is an urgent need to reconsider the usefulness and scope of philosophy and Humanities. Although there is a growing awareness that cultural diversity or individual agency do play a key role in daily life, there is still a need to bridge the gap between the *modus operandi* of our disciplines and the other scientific and social mechanisms.

It is in this context that the General Assembly of the International Council of Philosophy and Human Sciences met, the 14th and 15th October 2014 in Paris, at UNESCO.



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The Council had an in-depth discussion concerning the current state of international research and the need to re-think the scope and role of human sciences in contemporary society, based on the efforts undertaken after the last General Assembly held in Nagoya, in 2010.

The need for such an agenda is twofold. On one hand, there has been no global re-thinking on the role and scope of humanities following the major global changes that were accelerated in the past few decades. On the other hand, there is a growing need to re-introduce in the daily agenda of society a mid and long term perspective, that is required in face of the future uncertainty and which finds no answer within the limits of a purely immediate problem-solving approach.

Indeed, the humanities provide unique skills and resources for individuals and societies to meet the growing need for sustainable living, civilized citizens' participation, and peaceful coexistence. Empowered by historical knowledge, critical thinking, and nuanced analysis of human ideas, values, and imagination, the human sciences provide understanding of the new salience of cultural capital in our contemporary world. Humanistic thinking offers a broader, deeper and more creative perspective than conventional problem-solving approaches to societal challenges. It contends that human flourishing can only be realized through renewed awareness of the human condition—past, present, and future – in relation to other sentient beings, our natural environment, and scientific and technological developments. Moreover, the humanities emphasize the potential of artistic expression to provide meaning in increasingly diverse societies.

Besides the preparation of a World Conference on Human Sciences to be organized by CIPSH with the collaboration of UNESCO and in Liège, in 2017 and the support of a local organizing committee, the General Assembly also approved the prospect of preparing a report on the monitoring of cultural responses to local and global challenges. This is a task that will help in bridging gaps among human groups and building a strategy for the understanding of cultural differences and the capacity to imagine different avenues as a unique human strength, paving the way for peace, global sustainability, intercultural understanding and appreciation, as well as for improved quality of life. In this context, the council also expressed its thanks to the University and the Municipality of Liège for their proposal to host this conference. A specific team, assisted by the bureau, began preparations for the World Conference in 2017, developing a detailed work plan and its implementation. Regional conferences in all continents, focusing on more specific topics, will be organized to prepare the world gathering in 2017.

Esteeming that a widespread decrease of attention to the humanities, whether manifested in educational curricula or funding support, diminishes the potential of societies to build mid and long term agendas that can offer sustainable, peaceful and enlightened futures to human communities, the Council confirms its full endorsement of all initiatives that will counter this trend. It also embraces the notion that a better future for humankind requires a mid and long term web of convergent visions, that needs to engage people and, hence, to be rooted in daily



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needs and perceptions, as outlined in the proposal of an International Year of Global Understanding.

In order to pursue these aims, a new board of CIPSH was elected unanimously on October 15th, 2014, during the General Assembly meeting in Paris, at UNESCO. The new board is composed by: Chao Gejin (President), Rosalind Hacket (Vice-President), François Djindjian (Vice-President), Luiz Oosterbeek (Secretary-General), Franco Montanari (Treasurer), Adama Samassekou (Past President), Meenakshi Bharat, Ulrich Grossman, Xiaochun Sun, Isenbike Togan, William L. McBride and Laurent Tissot.

This new board will act as a permanent governing body with individual tasks to be assigned to its members. Special task-forces were constituted to propose to an extraordinary General Assembly, within one year: a strategic approach to outreach, including the future of the CIPSH journal, *Diogenes*; a new framework of scientific collaboration with the International Social Science Council (ISSC), the International Council for Science (ICSU) and other scholarly institutions; an overview of financial difficulties and opportunities for a funding strategy; a revised version of the statutes, including statements of the mission and vision of CIPSH/ICPHS.

Soon after the General Assembly, procedures have been made to secure stronger relations with UNESCO, ISSC and ICSU, including the collaboration of CIPSH/ICPHS with the program “Future Earth”. It is the duty of human sciences scholars organized in a structure like CIPSH/ICPHS to help UNESCO resuming an understanding on the relevance of Philosophy and Humanities for contemporary societies. A new course, rooted in research with the member organizations and in a new collaborative matrix with the other sciences, is to be set. Currently, the Council is preparing several applications for research projects, and undoubtedly *Diogenes* will also echo these in the future.

The wish of CIPSH/ICPHS is that this new course should engage the contributions of all world researchers, and namely of *Diogenes* readers.

Paris, January 19th, 2015

Luiz Oosterbeek