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Three Approaches to Transnational Intellectual Cooperation: The Entente Committee of the Royal Society of Literature, International PEN, and the Co-ordinating Committee of the Major International Associations, 1916-1939

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The International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation was both preceded and supported by a diverse range of transnational non-governmental efforts towards international intellectual cooperation. This paper explores three approaches to transnational intellectual cooperation through three case studies, delineating and comparing their origins, structures, methods, and trajectories in the period from the First World War to the Second.

The first case study – the Entente Committee established by the Royal Society of Literature in 1916 – was a significant forerunner of the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation. Founded in the context of the First World War and supported by the British government, the Royal Society of Literature's Entente Committee aimed to work with other associations in Britain and abroad with a view to promoting an "intellectual entente" as a basis for lasting mutual understanding and peace following the conclusion of the conflict. It is an example of a nationally-oriented approach to intellectual cooperation, spearheaded by an association located in a single country forging horizontal linkages with similar societies in other countries. Dependent on the national political opportunities provided by the British government, the Entente Committee's efforts were anticipated to be superseded by those of the League of Nations following the conclusion of the conflict. Although an impressive and pioneering effort while it lasted, the Entente Committee did not prove to be an enduring approach to private international intellectual cooperation.

The second case study – the Co-ordinating Committee of the Major International Associations – was established in 1925 in response to the 1924 League of Nations Assembly's call for coordinated efforts to establish intellectual cooperation as the "normal method of conducting the affairs of the world," which the League Secretariat explored not only with governments but also with private international associations. The Co-ordinating Committee emphasised close relations with the International International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, where it established its secretariat. The Co-ordinating Committee is an example of an internationally-oriented approach to intellectual cooperation, responding to the opportunities provided by the League of Nations and the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, and aiming to co-ordinate the intellectual cooperation efforts of a diverse set of private international associations with educational and peace promotion objectives. It advanced a wide range of youth education activities, but its trajectory was constrained by those of the international organizations that it aimed to support. Impressive on account of its diverse international membership, and more enduring than the nationally-oriented efforts of the Royal Society of Literature, the Co-ordinating Committee's work did not persist into the post-Second World War era.

The third case study – International PEN – was much more independent of governmental and intergovernmental political opportunities. International PEN was conceived in London in 1921 to bring together writers around the world in friendship and hospitality, and it was to develop an expansive agenda for free expression and intellectual entente. Its first President, John Galsworthy, hoped that International PEN would serve as a "League of Nations for Men and Women of Letters" and through its membership of writers function as "the one disinterested link between peoples". It is an example of an extra-national approach to intellectual cooperation in that it was conceived from the outset as a transnational association

independent of governmental and intergovernmental interests, uniting the work of participating PEN clubs around the world. Unlike the Royal Society of Literature's Entente Committee it did not depend on government support, and unlike the Co-ordinating Committee of the Major International Associations, it did not rely on an international organization for its secretariat. Its work for free expression and intellectual cooperation expanded over the course of the period between the two World Wars, and International PEN remains a leading international centre for intellectual cooperation today.

This paper delineates each of these three cases of private international intellectual cooperation in turn, drawing on archival research in repositories including the archives of the Royal Society of Literature, UNESCO, the League of Nations, and International PEN, as well as the private papers of leading figures in the three cases. The cases are used to elucidate three approaches to transnational intellectual cooperation: nationally-oriented, internationally-oriented, and extra-nationally oriented. A qualitative comparative analysis is made of their respective origins, aims, structures, methods and trajectories. Whereas the nationally-oriented approach of the Royal Society of Literature and the internationally-oriented approach of the Co-ordinating Committee of the Major International Associations were to be heavily dependent on the political opportunities provided by national governments and international organizations respectively, the extra-national approach of International PEN was to be more enduring.