

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
UNIVERSITY SEMINAR ON THE NATURE OF MAN

**Topic:   The recent Nobel Foundation Conference in Stockholm  
          on "The Place of Value in a World of Fact"**

Speaker:  Mr. W. H. Auden

Minutes

Date:                    January 15, 1970

Time:                   7:30 p.m.

Place:                   Home of Dr. Ruth Anshen

Presiding:             Dr. Margaret Mead

Secretary and Rapporteur, Mr. Chauncey G. Olinger, Jr., M.A. 1971

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Present:

Dr. Margaret Mead, Chairman. University Seminar on the Nature of Man;  
Adjunct Professor of Anthropology, Columbia University, Curator of Ethnology,  
the American Museum of Natural History

Dr. Ruth Anshen, editor

Dr. Francisco Ayala, Assistant Professor, Rockefeller University

Mr. W. H. Auden, Poet

Dr. Richard Courant, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics, NYU

Dr. Theodosius Dobzhansky, Professor of Genetics, Rockefeller University

Dr. Adolph Lowe, Alvin Johnson Professor Emeritus of Economics,  
New School for Social Research

Dr. Hans Morgenthau, Albert A. Nicholson Distinguished Professor of  
Political Science and Modern History, Leonard Davis Distinguished  
Professor of Political Science, City University of New York

Dr. Roger Shinn, William E. Dodge, Jr., Professor of Applied  
Christianity, Union Theological Seminary

Dr. Morton Smith, Professor of History, Columbia University

Dr. Barbara Wells, Dean, Thomas More College, Fordham University

Dr. Joachim Weyl, Dean of Sciences and Mathematics, Hunter College  
of the City University of New York

Next Meeting: 7:30 p.m., Monday, March 9, 1970  
Speakers: Dr. L. C. L. Huan and Dr. C. N. Yang

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
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Minutes of the Meeting of January 15, 1970

[I – Introductory Remarks]

Dr. Margaret Mead convened the January meeting of the University Seminar on the Nature of Man at 7:30 p.m. She noted that the Seminar, having struggled in its first year to find itself, had now become a seminar in a real sense. She said she felt that recent meetings of the group, which had focused on particular problems or particular periods of history, on “rather intense and dense bits of experience,” had been quite successful.

Dr. Mead then introduce to the Seminar the speaker for the evening, Mr. W. H. Auden. She said that Mr. Auden had agreed to give his impressions of a conference, sponsored by the Nobel Foundation, which they both had recently attended in Stockholm.

[II – The Recent Nobel Foundation conference in Stockholm on “The Place of Value in a World of Fact”]

Mr. Auden:

“I was asked to start off with my impressions about Stockholm...They [the Nobel Foundation] had the idea that they would get thirty-five people together to discuss ‘The Place of Value in a World of Fact.’ Now, the first surprising thing was that the students estimated that our average age was sixty-nine...which made me actually, being nearly sixty-three, quite a chicken. But, anyway, all of us there were aware of the world before World War I, and presumably we were brought up before permissiveness came in. I can speak for myself—and I am sure I speak for most of the people there—that, in that time one naturally, as in every generation, had to fight one’s parents for one’s independence; [but,] I don’t think I ever questioned their values. I might think their taste in pictures wasn’t very good or something; but, on the whole, then I hear about young people now, questioning their parents’ values—it was not a thing which, I think, we did.

“And, it’s curious to think that at that time, when I grew up—of course, I grew up in England—somebody could write, without thinking there was anything surprising, ‘I traveled alone to Bonn with a boring maid.’

“[Now, to return to the conference,] ... what was interesting to me were the people who were not there. Most of the people were scientists. Koestler, who organized the thing, though, of course, he has written novels, calls himself an interdisciplinary writer and didn't speak as a novelist. The only representatives of the arts who were there were myself and Gombrich, an art historian. That was all right, because we all know artists can't do very much.

“I found it rather odd that we only had one philosopher--and I am sorry to say not a very good one... Though Margaret was there, we didn't have any real historian. If one is thinking about the future, what kind of knowledge about the past will you need? That can vary. I think that at this particular point in history, the things we have to study—and here we need the help of historians—are the various European revolutions, starting, let us say, with the papal revolution, then coming on to the Reformation, the English Revolution, the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution. These things have to be studied; we can learn from them. The rejection of the past, I think, is all nonsense. I must say, I agree very much, about tradition and the past, with a remark by Chesterton, when he says, ‘Tradition means giving votes to that obscurest of classes, our ancestors. The democracy of the dead refuses to surrender to the arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking around,’ which I think is admirable. Then again, needless to say, there was no theologian. I think an obvious person we should have invited was Austin Farrer.

“Now, I think the title, though I know what Koehler meant in his book, The Place of Value in a World of Fact, was slightly unfortunate, because basically we were there to discuss how we can make the world better. The word ‘value’ to me has too much economic connotation. If I say a painting by Cezanne is ‘valuable,’ I mean in an auction it gets a great deal of money. It's quite different from what I mean if I say it's a great painting. And I also don't think any man who is in love with a girl says to her, ‘I think you are valuable.’ I think the word ‘value’ is a very questionable word to use.

“Incidentally, I may say, as most people there were scientists, that I know how prima donna-ish artists can be; I never realized that scientists are just as bad!

“I must tell you about certain things that surprised me. A biologist got up...and claimed to be a Cartesian. Now really! I think it might still be possible for somebody who builds bridges or dams to hold the Cartesian position; it's certainly not possible for a biologist, and I don't think it's even possible any more for a physicist. The whole Cartesian thing really is based on a presupposition, which Whitehead once said—which is no longer true, I think—that scientific reasoning is completely dominated by the presupposition that mental functionings are not properly part of nature.

“Well, certainly the physicists have changed their mind about that. For example, Heisenberg says, ‘The scientist no longer confronts nature as an objective observer, but sees himself as an actor in this interplay between man and nature. The scientific method of analyzing, explaining, and classifying is

unconscious of its human limitations, which arise out of the fact that by its intervention science alters and refashions the objects of its investigation.’ In other words, you cannot make the distinction between res extensa and res cogitans any more.

“And then I couldn’t believe my ears when I heard people calling for a series of ethical axioms. Now, the idea of an axiom comes from mathematics. You can have a series of axioms for Euclidean geometry; you can have another series of axioms for another kind of geometry. There is no possible question of talking about one being better than another. And to suppose that anything we know about how to behave, or that when we talk about right or wrong, that this is based on logic, seems to me to be an utter misunderstanding of how human beings work at all. The statement, ‘A straight line is the shortest distance between two points,’ and the statement, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,’ belong to two completely different worlds of discourse. If we think how in practice we ever learn anything about ethics and behavior, it is in a series of commandments: ‘You should do this.’ ‘You shouldn’t do this.’ It is always stated in the imperative.

“With that comes another thing—and this again comes back to the Cartesian thing—that in the sphere of growing up, all of us as children do in fact start with ‘credo ut intelligam.’ If I was a baby and I didn’t believe, when my parents said to me that there is a word for a thing, I should never learn to speak, obviously. Belief must always precede doubt—this seems to me to be quite clear.

“Now, about the development from Darwin on in biology: to what extent has it changed our view of human nature? In my view, very little indeed. Human beings have always known that, like other mammals, they were born viviparously, they have to die, they have to reproduce sexually, they have to eat, they have to defecate, and so on. This we have always known. The curious thing actually is that in spite of our scientific knowledge—now this may not be anything to do with the sciences, it may simply have to do with technological society—that, in fact, we feel far less, probably, contact with the animal world than a hunting tribe did. We are always being told, whether we start with Copernicus or whether you come on to Darwin, that the result of this was to humble human beings so that they would realize that they were not as grand as they thought. I see no evidence that this happened at all. We got much more conceited, in my opinion.

“On the other hand, I have great suspicion about the motives now of the people who use the fact that we are descended from primates, to try to prove that we are just the same; because, I think, what they are really trying to do is to tell us that we don’t have to bother about how we behave. Here again, if I may quote Chesterton, who said, ‘If it is not true that the Divine Being failed, then one can only say that one of the animals went entirely off its head.’

“We both can behave better and much worse than the animals. Various people have gone into this. For example, Konrad Lorenz points out that the problem of aggression in human beings...is so serious, [because,] first of all, our weapons are not part of our bodies, so that there are no built-in physiological

and psychological inhibitions to using them. And secondly, no animal lets the sun go down on his wrath; we, because we have memory, can do this. On the other hand, one must remember that no animal can forgive another animal.

“Now, though I think, as I say, that the knowledge through Darwin and biology of our direct connection with more primitive creatures has not made much difference to our idea of ourselves, the advance in astronomy and in physics have completely changed our picture of the physical universe, because previously it was thought of as a static and full thing which did not change. We now know it to be a process, a history. We have always known that our history as a species was part of a story, but we did not know that this was also true of the universe in a much more mysterious way.

“This brings me on to something: I heard people talking in Stockholm about random events. Now, it is one thing to say an event is unpredictable. I think the use of the word ‘random’ betrays a metaphysical presupposition: there can be no such thing as teleology. But, if somebody says that one event is random, why shouldn’t all thoughts be random events, in which case why should I believe a word anybody says?

“I personally do not believe in random events. I believe in miracles and I believe in providence. Take, for example, the question of the ‘invention’ of photosynthesis, which was certainly completely unpredictable, and without it life as we know it could not be. All I can say about it is that this was a very providential event. Again, I know that, knowing what I know about the process of human reproduction and how long we have been here on earth, it is a statistical impossibility almost that I should be walking this earth. How can I take it except as a miracle, which I must do my best to deserve?

“Then, if you think for a moment about natural selection, it seems to me that disaster is often predictable. For example, it is quite obvious that if you were to get a sudden violent climatic change, as you did in the ice age, a great many species would be wiped out. But, I don’t think that success is predictable. What we observe is that whenever there is an ecological niche vacant, somehow or other some creature fills it. In some cases, the history is extremely complicated—take the case of a parasite like the liver fluke. Now, if you ask me only to believe that this is the result of random mutations—and as you probably know most random mutations that we observe are lethal—put through the sieve of natural selection, I think this is much crazier than believing in fairies.

“How could this come about? I will have to say that I think that a lot of people who were present in Stockholm have forgotten two of the three worlds which I think essential for life. I will tell you what the three worlds are first of all. They [those at Stockholm] were speaking from the point of view of the vita activa, by which I include all purposive action; [but,] it does not mean you know your purposes will be realized. It includes politicians, it includes artists, scientists, bus drivers, and so on.

“But, I think they have forgotten two things. If you think about human beings, it seems to me that there is one...activity which is unique to them--and that comes into the vita activa--and that is the activity of personal speech, of which animals are not capable; they are not even capable of calling each other by name. Then, animals are not capable of laughter, and they are not capable of prayer.

“What I felt about a number of the people at Stockholm was that they had forgotten either how to laugh--and by that I don't mean the Voltairian smile of reason, I mean belly laughter, which I shall talk about in a moment as the spirit of carnival—and they had forgotten how to pray.

“If I talk about prayer, I think the petitionary side of it is purely a preliminary, superficial thing, because it is quite involuntary. Naturally, we are always asking: Can I marry the girl I love? Can I sell my house? or whatever. But prayer really begins at the point at which one listens to a voice. I am not going to argue with people [about this]; I would call it the voice of the Holy Spirit, you could call it the inner light. The only things you cannot call it, you cannot call it reason, and you cannot call it the superego, because the superego could never say anything new.

“[In prayer, then,] you listen and you are told, ‘Now, do this.’ It is often something you don't want to do. So, the motto over the world of prayer is ‘Respondeo etsi mutatus [?],’ ‘I reply even though I am changed.’ Now, when I saw that these people had forgotten it, I knew that any and all of them had at least prayed once in their lives, when they heard a voice telling them, ‘You are to serve science.’ This addressed them not as scientists, but as human beings...

“On the other side...I should say a few words, first of all, about the vita activa. This is purposeful action in which we take responsibility for the results of our actions, whatever they may be. Here, of course, there is no question of equality. There is independence, interdependence, but not equality. I can't say a scientist is equal to an artist or even that a man is equal to a woman; they are different...

“If you take the world of prayer, here we are all equal in the sense that each of us is a unique person, with a unique perspective on the world, a member of a class of one. The myth of our common descent from a single ancestor, Adam, is a way of saying that as persons we are called into being, not by any biological process, but by our parents, our siblings, our friends, our enemies, and so on. This is where one listens to be told what one is to do next; and there is always something new.

“On the other side is what I would call—connected with laughter as I think of it--the spirit of carnival, as exemplified in the Saturnalia, in medieval carnival, and the Roman carnival brilliantly described by Goethe in February of 1776. In the world of the vita activa there is no question of equality. There is a special kind of equality in the case of prayer. In the case of carnival, there is complete equality.

“Essentially, what is carnival about? Here the great writers about it are Rabelais and Dickens. It is a common celebration of our common fate as members of our species. Here we are, mortal, born into the world, we much die, and this applies to everybody, so that there is a mixture. This is what laughter also implies, because laughter is both an act of protest and an act of acceptance. There is joy in the fact that we are all in the same boat, that there are no exceptions made. On the other hand, we cannot help wishing that we had no problems--let us say, that either we were in a way unthinking like the animals or that we were disembodied angels. [But,] this is impossible; so we laugh because we simultaneously protest and accept.

“In the world of carnival there is absolute equality. All distinctions of rank and even of sex are abolished. The women dress up as men, the men dress up as women. We discard ourselves; you can wear masks. It is also a world of grotesque and parody; you wear grotesque masks, grotesque noses, and things. It is a world of mock obscenity, mock abuse, mock blasphemy.

“On the question of blasphemy, I was reading a book by a Russian about Rabelais, who tried to think that the private parodies of religious rites were a protest against religious beliefs. But of course, this is all nonsense. First of all if the ecclesiastical authorities had thought so, they would have very soon stopped it. The fact is that blasphemy, of course, always implies belief, just as literary parody does, as Lewis Carroll pointed out: you can't parody an author you don't admire. So that, all blasphemy implies belief, and it is no accident that carnival comes just before Lent, which is a time for fasting and prayer.

“This is a time when, naturally, there is mock obscenity, there is mock aggression. I will just give you a passage here from Goethe, describing one scene: ‘Here come young fellows dressed up as women, one of whom seems to be far advanced in pregnancy. They are all strolling up and down peacefully, until suddenly the men start to quarrel. The brawl gets more and more violent, until both sides draw huge knives of silver cardboard and attack each other with them. The women cry murder and try to part them, pulling them this way and that. The bystanders intervene just as if they believed that the affair was in earnest. Meanwhile, as if from shock, the pregnant woman is taken ill. A chair is brought, and the others give her aid. She moans like a woman in labor and the next thing you know she has brought forth some monstrous creature into the world to the great amusement of the onlookers. The players and the troupe move on to repeat the performance or some farce like it elsewhere.’

“Again, the mock abuse from which all distinctions of rank are excluded. There is a small boy screaming to his father, ‘Sia ammazzato il signor padre!’ Now, all these things seem to me essential. Without the carnival, prayer tends to become Pharisaic or gnostic. Of course, without the vita activa we should all perish in style. Without prayer, carnival turns ugly and dirty and instead of the inner voice, there comes the voice of a demagogue, because people without prayer have forgotten how to address others, and they try to keep it objective--and then there is trouble for that.

“It seems to me, for example, that the hippies are trying--and quite rightly because this tends to disappear in a technological civilization--that are trying to revive the spirit of carnival. Unfortunately, it will fail, insofar as they reject the active life of work in between, it seems to me. Now, that is something valuable that we can learn from them.

“Trying to think about what changes have come about through astronomy and physics in our position in the physical universe, I look at it this way. It is true--and from a Christian point of view this seems to me essential--that it is absolutely right that the physical universe should exist *etsi Deus non daretur*, as if God did not exist. It has to be purged of all kinds of polytheism, which is then expecting, on the earth, God to do for us what we are supposed to do for Him.

“It seems to me that just as Adam was put in the Garden of Eden to dress it, we are here to look after the universe. By that, I think, in the end, one has to mean that one has to help the universe realize goals which it cannot realize itself. Of course, this is introducing again the idea of teleology, which we know has been a dirty word.

“If I want to use an analogy, I say that in regard to the inorganic universe, I see our relation rather like that of a sculptor. No sculptor that I have ever spoken to thinks of enforcing his forms on nature. He thinks: ‘I lay bare, I realize in a stone, a form that is latently there.’

“In regard to living things, I think the analogy, possibly, is that of the good animal trainer. I think a well-trained sheep dog has realized his dogginess, so to speak, more than a wild dog, just as a spoiled lap dog has had his dogginess debased. Therefore, I think we might have a decent world, where it is universally recognized that to make a hideous lampshade, for example, is to torture helpless metals. And that every time we make a nuclear weapon, we corrupt the morals of a host of innocent neutrons below the age of consent.”

### [III – Repetition as a Necessary Aspect of Carnival]

In the discussion that followed his prepared remarks, Mr. Auden emphasized his point that the hippies were making a mistake in wanting carnival and the dissolution of individuality all of the time. You just can’t have a perpetual festival, he said. Dr. Weyl, noting “the very attractive structure of the three worlds,” seconded this, saying that carnival involved an

“essentially mnemonic function of society. It becomes unattractive, gross and useless, unless it is scheduled with regular returns, unless those [grotesque] noses are the same year after year, and unless there is underlying it a cyclical and, therefore, essentially mnemonic function.” He continued:

“[I fear that] the carnivalistic part of our life will tend forever to be left behind; over the millennia we are sloughing one form after another [of it]...With regard to the carnivalistic aspect of the life of the young—and it goes well beyond the hippies—it has not found its ritualistic base yet. I cannot envisage a

Woodstock, [or] a Washington Moratorium, reoccurring with any regularity...It is right now...practically a random phenomenon."

Dr. Mead pointed out, however, that interviews of people who had gone to Washington for the Moratorium had revealed that many of them had also gone on every march to Washington in the last five years, i.e., there are beginning to be groups who repeat these events in a periodic way, ritualistically, and who have come to look on themselves as separate and superior. While a period of five years is not very long, she said, it perhaps has some significance in a society where many people never listen to anything twice.

#### [IV – Comments on the Hippies]

Hippies having been mentioned, a variety of brief comments on this subject were made by members of the Seminar. Mr. Auden noted that the hippies seemed to be trying to get back to tribal life, although the sexual mores of the tribe would not seem to agree with the sexual freedom current in hippie life. Dr. Anshen saw the hippie movement as manifesting "a certain spirituality," but lacking "a religious principle. There is," she said, "no revelation, no Messiah." Dr. Mead said that she did not think it was the case that the hippies had no religion. "I think [rather] their religion is a mishmash at the moment, but they are working very hard to find [a suitable] one...They [certainly] don't take a single individual and deify him; they are not prepared to accept a single individual authority." Mr. Auden commented that their fascination with astrology, with its inherent determinism, seemed to oppose their announced love of freedom, but Dr. Mead replied that that problem could be handled: "Astrology is a very manageable applied science...They try to get a deterministic mandate that this is the right period; then you are free"

She also said it would be wrong to take odd and bizarre crimes by gurus or their followers as characteristic of the hippie way of life. We have always had such things, perpetrated by psychotics. In connection with Greenwich Village, to which so many of the hippies have been attracted, Dr. Mead reported some interesting research that had been done by some of her students:

"Among the groups that they looked at (on St. Mark's Place) were the New York chapter of Hell's Angels. They were all, apparently, men who mothers had been caught in adultery by their fathers and beaten up; [at least,] this seems

to be their standard case history. They are very, very masculine with 'chicks,' whom they send out to do housework, to support themselves...

"[These Hell's Angels existed among] groups of hippies, derelicts, the shopkeepers, who were mainly Eastern European, with no children [around] to speak of--no base. [It was in a way] very symbiotic; they all fitted together and everybody who was interviewed was on the side of the derelicts in preference to everybody else--which was interesting. The hippies had brought better begging from the tourists and visitors. These were all fragmented pieces who fitted together and made it possible to live. But, they were all pieces; when they fitted together, there was no life underneath...It was a cluster of fragments with no life, no coherent life anywhere."

"[Now,] the thing that struck me...was that thirty years ago the Bohemians and the deviants of all sorts went to the West Village, where there was a solid base of Italian families, with 12 children each in a cold-water flat. And the deviants were sheltered and protected and lived, really, on the warmth and the sort of social organization that those big immigrant families had. You could walk around and be as deviant as you liked...[just so] you had this [social] base and everyday everyone took the children to the sand pile in Washington Square."

Mr. Auden said he was alarmed by two aspects of the Hippie movement:

"First, one sometimes feels that their lack of interest in the past betrays a lack of belief that they have a future. [Second,] this thing of taking your clothes off on the stage and doing all those things...[makes] me wonder if they have any real friends, because surely there is an essential difference between the public and the private life. You take off your clothes in private; sex is a private matter."

Dr. Mead replied that this had been reversed; now "you keep them on in private to prove that it is private."

[V – "Ethical Axioms"]

Challenged by Dr. Shinn for making such a strong, almost "Cartesian," distinction between "axioms" and "moral commands," Mr. Auden supported the distinction by pointing out that it was reflected in the grammar of each kind of statement: "All ethical things are in the imperative; axioms are in the indicative."

Dr. Shinn replied that, while he certainly did not wish to identify the two, Tillich, for example, had

“reduced the imperative to the ontological, which is...[expressed in the] indicative...It is also a very familiar theme in the Biblical theology to see a very close relation—not quite identity and not logical entailment—but: ‘I am the Lord thy God...Thou shalt have no other gods before me.’”

Dr. Smith entered the discussion, remarking:

“But, there isn’t any imperative [here]. At least, it is not usually used in the commandments; the commandments are written in the simple future [indictive]: ‘You will not steal.’ ‘There will be no other gods to you.’ These are statements about the future. Also...if you consider, as you began by doing, that all geometrical systems are equal and they depend on merely matters of choice, then ‘The straight line is the shortest distance between two points’ is not an indicative statement, it is a jussive [i.e., a mild command or imperative]: ‘For our purposes, let the straight line...’ So, your [indicative] axioms turn out to be imperatives, and your [imperative] commandments turn out, historically, to be indicatives.”

Mr. Auden replied: “I am not sure it’s really quite true, because you couldn’t possibly talk about one form of mathematics being better than another, could you? Dr. Smith: “You could for a purpose.” Mr. Auden: “Yes, but then you need to bring in purpose. And I defy you to create a series of axioms which are to everybody ethically compelling.” With this, the discussion of the status of ethical axioms concluded.

#### [VI – Evolution and the Concept of Human Nature]

Dr. Dobzhansky then turned to another of Mr. Auden’s comments and noted a possible contradiction. Mr. Auden, he said had first maintained that the theory of evolution had not added anything really new to our understanding of human nature; thus, men have always known that, sooner or later, they had to die. But, then, Mr. Auden seemed to suggest that men and animals differed in that animals do not know that they will die. (Mr. Auden agreed that this was his view.) But, if men know such a significant thing and animals do not, this might imply that through the process of evolution, something new has been added to our understanding of human nature.

Mr. Auden repeated that he was only maintaining that what we know of our evolution has not really changed our conception of what we are. Taking a different tack, Dr. Dobzhansky and Dr. Mead urged that the theory of evolution had moved us from believing that man had a nature “created once, forever, unchangeable” to believing that man’s nature evolved. Mr. Auden replied that

“human beings have always known that there was historical change...I don’t think it was ever thought that human beings didn’t change. People have always known, first of all in their personal lives, that you went through various stages, that you changed...”

Dr. Mead continued to press a distinction between historical and evolutionary change, saying: “Yes, but those historical events didn’t necessarily change man’s fundamental nature.” The discussion at this point became rather excited. Mr. Auden continued to assert that evolution had added nothing new to our concept of man and Drs. Mead and Dobzhansky tried to separate in the conversation the notions of evolutionary and historical change for the purpose of arguing that man seemed quite a different creature when seen as the latest step in a long evolutionary process, rather than as manifesting an unchanging and unchangeable nature.

Addressing himself to Mr. Auden’s emphasis on man’s sense of history, Dr. Morgenthau commented:

“I don’t agree with the assertion that man has always known that he is an historic creature. I think this is a projection of our historic consciousness into the past, which had no sense of history at all, which did not only think that man appeared full-blown and unchangeable at the day of creation, but also even believed that the basic ideas of man were innate and not historical.”

Mr. Auden replied that he did not accept this, that men have “always known that change occurred...There have been historians for quite a long time; from Herodotus and Thucydides on, we have written records of historians. Maybe a tribe doesn’t have a sense of historical change--this may occur--but from the moment there were civilizations, surely people were aware of historical change.”

#### [VII – Progress in the Arts and Progress in the Sciences]

Dr. Anshen then raised the issue of whether a distinction should be made between the history, or evolution, of the arts and the history, or evolution, of the sciences. Mr. Auden responded:

“There is, of course, a difference between the arts and the sciences in that you cannot, in the arts, talk about progress...[while,] in a sense, new scientific discoveries supersede the past. You cannot say that the art of any period supersedes the art of a previous period. There is this profound difference.

“And one other thing--if you ask me what the value of art is on the whole, I will say that it is, generally speaking, the chief medium through which we are able to hold communion with the dead. Homer is dead; his society is gone. But the Iliad is still relevant...I personally think that...an artist must, essentially, always be a traditionalist in one sense, because, after all, what does one try to do? One tries to make an object which will permanently be on hand in the world. That is what one tries to do. All the odds are against one, but I am not going to attempt anything less.”

“The distinction [between art and science] to which Mr. Auden refers,” Dr. Weyl commented, “is really not qualitative, but [rather] a quantitative one. It is quite clear that in art you have, sometimes, very long runs where you really can say some-

“thing progresses, I think. The mastery of oil painting that is prevalent in 1480 is certainly significantly progressed over what was prevalent in 1408. The mastery with which the classical orchestra is handled by, say, a Haydn, versus the way in which Gustav Mahler handles it--there is a progression. Sometimes these runs are a couple of decades, sometimes they come close to a century...

“In science, on the other hand, it is not just one continuous line. The mathematics that Euclid made and the mathematics that Andrew Gleason at Harvard makes today do not lie on a one-dimensional progressive continuum. You have branches, you have runs. In mathematics some of these runs are a thousand years...Nevertheless, it is much more a quantitative than a qualitative difference.

“Also, the communion with the past and with the dead exists very strongly in the sciences. And, certainly one thing is important—science is action. Even the mathematician, who has no physical substance under his hands, reaches into a spiritual substance. He acts on it, he manipulates it, he functions like a general in the field deploying troops.”

Mr. Auden replied that he agreed that science was much nearer to action than art. “Art is making. The artist,” he said, “is homo fabro. One makes something, an object.” To Dr. Anshen’s proposal that the artist through art also makes himself, Mr. Auden demurred: “No, oneself is completely dispensable.”

Returning to Mr. Auden’s distinction between art and science, Dr. Dobzhansky proposed that:

“Science is cumulative knowledge; art may progress or not, but it is not cumulative. The art of the Middle Ages still is with us, and we can enjoy it

presumably about the same way as people did in the 14th century.” He added later, “Take a book on painting, or sculpture, or art...You can read it at the beginning, the middle, or the end and enjoy it equally. You don’t need to read it in sequence.”

Dr. Mead objected that while it may have been permissible to speak of art as non-cumulative in the past,

“when a people didn’t have access to other people’s art...and you were dealing inside a society...[in which the art] did have climaxes, [after which the people] got bored...[as] a particular style exhausted itself. [Now,] we don’t know what will happen when you have access--as we have been increasingly having--to the art of many different civilizations. [Perhaps,] you get something quite different; we don’t know what it is yet...[There may be] cumulation.”

But Mr. Auden argued that the introduction of alien artistic influences “had been going on for a long time.” He continued:

“In the 18th century, for example, Eastern art began to be an influence. Now we live in a world where more or less all things are available. Of course, you adapt them to your own purposes; but, I think, this has probably been always so. To take an obvious example, we can go back to the Romans, when the Roman poets adapted Greek models, which...if you think of what people like Horace did, changed the whole prosody of Latin.”

After some further discussion, Mr. Auden announced that he must depart. “The older I get, the more sleep I want,” he said.

[VIII – Characteristics of Discussions between the Young and Very Competent and Knowledgeable Adults]

Recalling her own experience at the Stockholm conference, as well as at other meeting in which young people were present to discuss matters of current concern with adults of considerable accomplishments, Dr. Mead said:

“I have been watching the very young ones in these various contexts, where they have been brought into these high-level groups. To begin with, when you bring the young in, you have no way of knowing that they are of the same caliber as the people they are asked to confront...How do you know what [even] your best student is going to be? So they [the young] are always confronted with people who have been selected through time as very special people. And here they are, a bunch of kids, the brightest ones you could find, r the ones you knew about; you got them somewhere and you brought them in. And they have to confront not only the whole weight of knowledge they don’t have, but also a

degree of distinction that they can't possibly have and don't know what to do with. The only hope they have is to know nothing and to get mad. And if they know nothing and are sufficiently angry--and the anger is essential--they can...speak up...Unless, [apparently,] they are angry and ignorant to a degree, then they are so overwhelmed by both the reputation and the knowledge of the people they are confronted with that they are not able to ask."

Dr. Smith wondered if Dr. Mead was sanctioning this anger. He said he had no doubt of their ignorance, but thought the anger "unnecessary." Dr. Mead replied that she did not consider it desirable; she only noted that it was apparently, currently necessary.

"Isn't there something more here?" Dr. Weyl inquired. See how they look at the world:...[they have] an underlying mythology that says that underneath of very many hulls, very many forms of armor, there finally will live warm, molten, and real, live human magma; and the more distinguished and the more knowledgeable the human animal, the thicker that integument of sheer crystalline, conventional, acquired hull. And the only way they feel that they can get through to where it's really warm--'where it's really at,' they say--is if there is anger. And they systematically try to produce it. They try to upset you and try to get you out of...[your] suave, knowledgeable, many-faceted way, so that, finally, you [will] speak with the very center of your bloody guts; then they feel they finally get to you."

Dr. Smith expressed his objection, even revulsion, to offering students his "bloody guts." He maintained that the most valuable contribution of a person of highly trained intelligence and knowledge was precisely his skill in the area of his competency. "But they want a response," Dr. Anshen replied. "They want recognition. They are screaming to the Lord...The student is ignorant; he is searching for that which he knows not...He is demanding a response which he has not received, for his professors have ignored him...He wants the relevance of what you are talking about." To which Dr. Weyl responded:

"There doesn't even need to be human relevance. There are problems before the house now, where you and I and he are practically on even terms: deeply concerned, relatively ignorant, characteristically unsuccessful. To have you talk in this very knowledgeable way about the ancient world to him at the moment is not the issue. The issue is: How do we go about forming a new compact with these stormy-headed youngsters and go after those problems that will not wait, and where his youthful motivation and unencumbered vision and such tools of the trade (that may not be particularly apposite initially) as we may have to bring...may finally get us a workable solution."

Dr. Wells commented that in her generation, students had not achieved what was now, apparently, a right “to ask for ‘the bloody guts’ of the professors or administrators.” She felt that it was the professors and administrators who had given the students this right and this, she proposed, can only have been done by assuming that in some basic way the student is different now. “It is not only that they are different,” Dr. Weyl interjected, “it is also that the agenda for humanity has radically changed in the last twenty years.” Dr. Mead added that this right had not been attained only by the students, but also by the patient in the hospital, the prisoner in jail, the welfare mother, in short: “All the beneficiaries of benevolent authority are now stating that they have a right to participate in that activity...[of determining how they are to be benefited].

[IX – A Challenge to the View that the Students have Changed]

Dr. Lowe, remarked that he “would strongly object to the statement that we [of the pre-World War I generation] accepted the values of our parents and of society.”

“Now, I cannot speak of England. It may be that in the more conformistic tradition of England, it may have been so. It certainly was not so on the continent, and I am not speaking only of Germany. Those twenty volumes of Jules Romains...are extremely illuminating with regard to what went on in France before 1914, and I can only say that it was identical with my own experience. We were in flagrant rebellion against...the hypocrisy and pretense of our elders, who had a ‘Sunday ethics,’ which we took very seriously, but a weekday ethics against which we rebelled. It is the identical rebellion of today against commercialism and hypocrisy.”

He said that when he began his teaching in 1924, there were then many confrontations between the adults and the war generation. He recalled that he used to meet with a group of students each week in his home to discuss with them the “gut problems” of the day. There was, he said, little difference between the confrontations then and those of today, except that the manners were better then. “For me, what happens today is sometimes a little annoying because of bad manners. This is,” he said, “an old prejudice which I still haven’t quite gotten rid of. I mean, I like to be treated as an equal, as it were. I am not too happy if I am kicked around...But I am getting used to that also.” This evoked sympathetic laughter all around.

“In other words, what goes on here and what shocks so many people seems to display a historical lack of the civilization here, however talented it may be otherwise. Europe has gone through this with much less noise and with much less to do for the last fifty years. For this reason, I had no difficulty in coping with what I was confronted with here...But, [here is]...the most important point: after having said that we disagreed with the behavior of our elders, we took their professed values much more seriously than they did. And, I cannot see, frankly, much difference between those values and the values which these children have. They again attack us on the ground of our professing values to which we do not stick. For this reason, I would say I see a continuity in this development...”

“So, what is new—and I think you [Dr. Weyl] put your finger on it—is not that these children pose new values. [Rather,] they are confronted with new facts...So the question is how to adjust or to apply those values which, if I am right, have not basically changed, to these factual changes.”

But, Dr. Smith disagreed that the change of the facts was the important thing. He felt that Mr. Auden had exaggerated the acceptance of basic values in his generation.

“This rejection of values has been...extensive at all these periods. On the other hand--I think you put your finger absolutely on it--a great deal of the rebellion in each case is a rebellion at the hypocrisy of the Establishment, which professes one set of values and acts on another.

“Now, the Establishment in this case started out, as the rebellious young people of your youth or mine, with the adherence to the same set of values. Why hasn't it held to them? I suspect that the reason is that the set of values to which the young are now adhering and to which we adhered in our childhood, were not compatible, actually, with a large practical society. That is the reason that, each generation as it grows up and has to take on the burden of running the society, finds itself compelled in practice, as university administrators and as administrators in practical politics, to abandon more or less those idealistic values to which it held in childhood, and so to create anew, the structure of hypocrisy against which its own children are going to rebel. So, if we were going to change something, I would suggest changing the set of values which children are brought up to admire, recognizing the necessities of a large, complex civilization.”

But, no, Dr. Mead said, it was not that the values were unsuited to our situation:

“You see, we've got something new happening. We brought people up with the belief that you should feed the hungry, you should feel compassionate towards the hungry and the poor, and this was preserved for a very long period as a religious value, when no one could feed the hungry. A rajah could sell his jewels and feed people for a month, but at the end of it, they would be as hungry as ever and his jewels would belong to somebody else. Or somebody could

become a monk and live in poverty to maintain the fact that they couldn't eat while other people were starving. That kept the values alive.

"Today, we can feed the hungry. And the whole situation is basically altered. Now when we don't feed the hungry, we are a very different set of people. And I don't think we should change the values. What we should recognize is that we can now realize the values in a way we couldn't before."

Later, Dr. Ayala expressed his agreement with Dr. Lowe that "it has always been the case that the youth rebelled against authority," and with Dr. Weyl that "what is new is that the facts are different." In 1914, he said, there were less than a billion people in the world, now there are 3.5 billion; in 1914 man did not have the tools to destroy himself, now he does. "So when the youngsters rebel against the values of the elders, they do so with a fantastic sense of urgency, because they feel that mankind is really in danger, in true danger."

Dr. Morgenthau agreed too that the facts had changed and added:

"Certainly, the ability for self-destruction on the part of humanity is a new fact, which has, I think, not always been expressed explicitly, but which surely underlies much of the alienation of the revolt. But, I think, this leads also to a radical change in the values. In my youth--I was conscious already in 1914--certainly we rebelled, but we rebelled in the name of the same values that our parents professed, but didn't live up to. We wanted to make the system better by living up to the values.

"What we have now is, I think, something entirely different. You have a flight from the system, from the values, because it seems to be hopeless to live up to this kind of society. This led in our time to political and social activism. Now it leads to retreat from the public sphere into a private sphere, or into a romantic, Rousseauist world, which for a time can exist, but...[probably not for long]."

[X – Consensus and the Majority Principle]

Focusing the discussion on a particular value that she said she had always considered fundamental to the operation of a democratic state (and much more important than matters of [individual] morality), namely, the acceptance by everyone of that candidate in an election who received a majority of the votes, even a bare 50.9% majority, Dr. Wells said that she was deeply disturbed because confidence in this value seemed to be eroding. "I am concerned," she said, "with the kind of consensus...[about]

value which enables the system to continue." She said she had found the young as well as political scientists, doubting this principle. Dr. Morgenthau agreed, but said he would express it differently:

"We accept the accidental majority, however slim it is, as legitimate. But what the youth no longer accepts is the legitimacy of the regime. Youth questions whether there is any difference between voting for this or that man, because they will [both] follow exactly the same policies and will ruin the country. Somebody has said the choice between Humphrey and Nixon is a choice between Sodom and Gomorrah. I am not identifying myself completely with this--not yet.

"But, in any event, this I think is a real problem. The faith in the system itself, in the regime itself, has been enormously weakened. It is not that people object to somebody being elected President because he has only 50.9% of the vote; it is simply that we haven't got any real choice any more. It doesn't make any difference whether you vote for one man or the other man, because they will follow the same policies. We voted for Johnson--Vietnam is very important here--at least, I voted for Johnson in 1964, because I disagreed with the policies of Goldwater. And then we witnessed Johnson essentially pursuing the policies which Goldwater advocated. This undermines faith in democracy."

Dr. Lowe summed up the discussion, saying:

"Dr. Smith has raised, I think, an important question, which still needs an answer, namely, if our students regard us as hypocrites today, because we professed the same values [as they now profess] thirty or fifty years ago, does this prove that we are really hypocrites [because we no longer profess them], or does it show that perhaps our undiluted idealism was incompatible with reality? Now, you [Dr. Wells] have carried it even a little further by saying--I put it now very crudely, but it brings it out--that consensus is more important than doing the right thing...when it comes to practice I am afraid that is what it amounts to; you said if we look at the danger to the cohesion of the society, the question of morality takes second place. Now I would not say...that this is entirely wrong; only that it gives us an extremely subtle problem, and as usual the truth is somewhere in the middle.

"If I look back on the last fifty years, I think there were quite a number of occasions when I might have lived up to my principles a little more strongly without overthrowing the society...In other words, I would say within limits I must accept the reproach of hypocrisy.

"[But,] to put it in your terms, let us be careful of making a shibboleth of a particular status [of things] as the basis for cohesion. [Thus,] in 1935 the entire business world and particularly the big business world saw in the New Deal and in the politics of the New Deal sheer Devil--'That man!' The depth of the depression was continued so long because of conscious investment sabotage on the part of big business. The identical firms--not people, [but] their children, who have all gone through Harvard Business School and have been taught the new

economics--the same firms today...advocate the policy of Roosevelt and in a much more radical way.

“In other words, what thirty years ago seemed to undermine social cohesion is regarded by the same [class of] people today as an important element in maintaining cohesion...The ideological basis for cohesion is changeable. Where we have all fallen down is in not putting our last ounce of strength into this educational process. It is very interesting that Keynes, by producing a rather abstruse book should have become the instrument for a readjustment of the principle of Western consensus in the economic sphere.

“Education has a tremendous responsibility in shifting the basis of consensus in the direction of morality, and this is, I think, what our children mean when they say that they would like to be taught something relevant. This doesn’t mean we have to talk to them about the ghetto from morning to night. The fundamental...[problem is] how to bring the institutions in harmony with the professed principles. It cannot be done in one day, it cannot be done 100%, but much more can be done than we have been doing.”

Dr. Weyl:

“This is an absolutely vital and central point, because as we talk again and again about the young ones, they are a small fraction who are cop-outs all the time; they are a small fraction who are rabble-rousers, revolutionaries, all the time. There are large groups who are some of these things for very short periods of time. But most of the time they are earnest students, taking their notes and working in the library, and essentially committed to the Establishment, if the Establishment will meet them but one-quarter of the way.”

#### [XI – Concluding Remarks and Election of New Members]

The discussion concluded with several comments on whether the United States was flexible enough to make the changes necessary to meet the future. Dr. Mead said she did not think that the United States was “a very flexible society,” and that perhaps we were not the country to lead the vanguard. Further, she said, the problem now was more than simply an American problem. “We have got to think about the world, all the systems that exist in the world (none of which are very good at the moment), and all the systems that could exist.” Dr. Wells thought, however, that since “We are the post-industrial state par excellence,” that it fell especially to us to provide the leadership in dealing with the problems of modern life. Dr. Weyl tended to agree with this because the intellectual and material resources required are so great. He added that the young in America

“today suspect that since large resources are involved, and, since they have yet to find anybody over thirty-five who can be trusted with more than \$100,000, without making a mess of things, they would rather blow the thing to kingdom come, than leave matters in the hands of those who they now find in control...If you can assure them that the kind of morality that Dr. Lowe was talking about will govern the handling of the \$200 billion that this government collects in taxes, you will suddenly find that your problems will vanish...”

This concluded the discussion. Then, with Dr. Mead presiding as Chairman, the members of the Seminar nominated and unanimously elected the following persons to membership:

Mr. W. H. Auden, Dr. Gerald Holton, Dr. Lawrence Kubie, Dr. Lester Little, Dr. Hans Morgenthau, Dr. Roger Shinn, Dr. Morton Smith, Dr. George Wald, Dr. Barbara Wells, and Dr. Joachim Weyl.

With this, the January meeting of the Seminar adjourned.