8 The Place of Humanities in a World of Science

Nobel Symposium 14 and the Vanishing Humanist

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Abstract

Nobel Symposium 14 on "The Place of Value in a World of Facts" (1969) addressed the then current discussion of "world problems," thought to constitute a crisis for ideals of modernization. Renowned intellectuals from the sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities addressed aspects of the crisis, with a group of student radicals commenting. The initiative had originated with the Swedish Academy that awards literary Nobel Prizes, but the humanities were marginalized in this context as a technocratic approach came to dominate. The students, critical of technocratic solutions, nevertheless found little use for traditional humanistic thinking. They represented a group that soon, by adopting "critical theory," would transform academic humanities.

Key words: Nobel Foundation, modernization theory, student radicalism, world problems, international scientific conferences, fact-value distinction

> [T]he [atomic] explosions produced a kind of psycho-active fall-out which works unconsciously and indirectly, creating such bizarre phenomena as flower-people, drop-outs and barefoot crusaders without a cross. They seem to be products of a mental radiation sickness, which causes an intense and distressing sense of meaninglessness, of an existential vacuum, a search for the place of value in a world of facts. But in a world that refuses to face the facts there is no such place. (Arthur Koestler)[1]

1 Koestler, "The Urge to Self-Destruction," p. 297.

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Introduction: A Sense of Crisis

The International Federation of Institutes of Advanced Study (IFIAS) was founded in 1972 as a network-based international organization for the promotion of interdisciplinary research addressing problems of global import. Sixteen years later, a commemorative volume was published where some key officials reminisced about the organization's history and achievements. IFIAS' origin was traced to discussions at the fourteenth Nobel Symposium in 1969, titled "The Place of Value in a World of Facts."[2] Alexander King – second Chairman of IFIAS – noted that the symposium, in which he participated, was planned during "one of the crisis points of our century, in which widespread dissatisfaction with many aspects of our science-based and materialistic society suddenly erupted." He pointed especially to the student revolt, the emergence of anti-establishment groups like the hippies, and the sudden environmental awakening. This, he said, was the "atmosphere in which the symposium was held. [---] It was clearly the right moment to reassess the place of science in society and in relation to human values."[3]

The main authors of the IFIAS volume were three Swedes, two of whom had been among the organizers of the Nobel symposium: Nils K. Ståhle, former CEO of the Nobel Foundation and first Chairman of IFIAS, and Sam Nilsson, a physicist and engineer who became the first Director of IFIAS. The Swedes agreed that Nobel Symposium 14 had been marked by a sense of urgency because of "the widening gap between the younger and the older generation," the environmental crisis, and a general sense that science was losing touch with "the humanities." All of this influenced the agenda of the symposium: "perhaps [it is] symptomatic that the initiative came from the humanists who, at that time, were more sensitive to the new 'vibrations' in society."[4]

The years around 1970 were indeed ripe with discussions about issues variously labeled "world problems," "problems of the modern society," the "predicament of mankind," the "problematique," or the "crisis of civilization."[5] This has been described as a general crisis for modernization theory – that is the idea that western welfare-oriented liberalism (and, in a European context, social democracy) would continue to deliver exceptional levels of

2 For edited versions of symposium papers and a transcript of discussions, see Tiselius and Nilsson, *The Place of Value*.

3 King, "Introduction," p. xxvi.

4 Ståhle, Nilsson and Lindblom, *From Vision to Action*, p. 4.

5 Agar, "What Happened"; Andersson, "The Future of the Western World"; Schmelzer, *The Hegemony of Growth*, pp. 258–266.

economic growth and provide technical or technocratic solutions to medical and economic problems, for example, while at the same time exporting market economy and democracy globally, not least to the so-called Third World.[6] One aspect of the crisis was the student revolution with many young people reacting, sometimes violently, against the politics of modernization, including the environmental consequences of technoscience, Cold-War and Third-World policies notably but not only in Vietnam, and market-economy driven consumerism. Student radicals and technocratic elites shared a sense of crisis but both groups tended to view the other as part of the problem.[7]

Nobel Symposium 14, which is the focus of this chapter, would deal with world problems in general and also constituted an attempt to foster dialogue between established elites and radical students, with around forty of the former and ten of the latter participating in the sessions (the students gave no papers though). The organizers acknowledged that the generation gap was among the world problems and argued that the students should be heard out, not least because they represented the future.

Interest in the future, or more specifically "futurology," provided another tension-filled common ground between students and elites at the symposium. In futurology (or futurism or future studies – there were different labels sometimes representing different political tendencies), the future was envisioned not only as a domain for political or economic planning but as a research problem that called for the mobilization of interdisciplinary expertise.[8] By 1969 it had become part of the vocabulary of pop-culture, left-wing radicalism, and Cold-War strategizing and was also taking a technocratic turn with its employment in government or corporate prognostication.[9]

Several symposium organizers and participants engaged with futurological issues from a technocratic perspective.[10] After the event, symposium-attendant Arthur Koestler even wrote a novel, *The Call Girls* (1972), satirizing the symposium as an example of futurological naïveté.[11] As we will see, the student radicals too saw themselves as engaged on a futurological project

6 Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, chs. 6–7.

7 Schmelzer, *The Hegemony of Growth*, ch. 7.

8 I use the term futurology as that was the one mostly used by the actors, student radicals as well as organizers.

9 Andersson, The *Future of the World*, esp. chs. 1, 10.

10 Members of the organizing committee and speakers are listed in Tiselius and Nilsson, *The Place of Value*, pp. 8–10. About futurological interests of organizers and participants, see e.g., Block, *Framtidsmiljö för utbildning*; Calder, *Unless Peace Comes*; Carl-Göran Hedén's archive, Futorologi I–III, Karolinska institutet (KI), F1A:7; McHale and Cordell McHale, *The Futures Directory*, p. 383; Nilsson and Block, *Framtiden*.

11 King, *Let the Cat*, p. 350; Koestler, *The Call Girls*.

but with a different orientation than the establishment participants. They represented a visionary and system-critical tendency opposed to the technocratic variety.[12]

The themes of crisis and futurology were connected. As Jenny Andersson has pointed out, discussions such as those at the symposium were often steeped in an alarmist discourse where the future was not only of interest but at stake.[13] So for example did the symposium's main organizer Arne Tiselius explain, in a preparatory discussion about the program, that its *raison d'être* was the contemporary "situation of catastrophy [sic]."[14] It was imperative, he said, that scientists broke free of sterile specialization and developed a sense of social responsibility.

All of this makes Nobel Symposium 14 a prominent example of various trends in the years of perceived crisis around 1970. It was unusual in three senses: because of its association with the status and prestige of the Nobel Prizes (with a quarter of the participants being or later becoming laureates); because it included student radicals representing the future as well as one of the important world problems; and because it was "cross cultural" in that it included representatives of all Nobel-Prize categories and also social science, about to join the Nobel club later in 1969 when the Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel was awarded for the first time, to symposium participant Jan Tinbergen together with Ragnar Frisch.[15]

This chapter will investigate the role of arts and humanities at the symposium and in relation to the perceived crisis, in particular the generation gap and the not well-defined problem of values. The humanities embodied a different kind of tension than that between student radicals and elites, namely that between utility and waste, productivity and luxury. The combined focus on "value" and "facts" in the symposium title indicated that the humanities were important for the success of the cross-cultural approach to world problems which the organizers advocated. But a sense of crisis permeated the humanities themselves at this juncture which, unlike

12 Already a month before the symposium took place it was acknowledged that the organizers were aware of these tensions: Block: "Vetenskapen och framtiden."

13 Andersson, *The Future of the World*, ch. 8.

14 Arne Tiselius, *Nobel Symposium* (undated memorandum in English on "Some questions to be discussed within the framework of the proposed program"), p. 2. In Uppsala universitets arkiv, Institutionen för naturvetenskaplig biokemi, Arne Tiselius: Nobelstiftelsen (Uppsala University Archive, Department of Biochemistry, Arne Tiselius: the Nobel Foundation) (UUA INB ATN), F13:5.

15 The term "cross cultural" (*tvärkulturell*) was used frequently, e.g., in Tiselius, "Opening Address," p. 12.

the dwindling trust in science at the time, indicated not that they were too powerful or even harmful but that they had too little to offer by way of alleviating social or other ills, not least because they seemed not at all to be future-oriented. In Sweden the expression "crisis of the humanities" was to become broadly discussed in the 1970s and a cliché thereafter.[16] The rhetoric was partly inspired by a UK discussion, not least C. P. Snow's essay *The Two Cultures* (1959), which was soon translated into Swedish (1961). In Sweden, Snow's critique of literary culture was translated into a discussion about the relationship between academic science and humanities, which added fuel to a more general marginalization of the humanities from the late 1950s to the 1970s.[17]

As Hampus Östh Gustafsson has shown, the humanities were broadly criticized for being of little utility from the point of view of a Social Democratic policy agenda focused on technological development, growth, and "rational" social planning. He notes that academic humanists in general were ineffective in responding to such criticism and that, as a consequence, the idea to "adapt [the humanities] to a scientific model" became central to Swedish knowledge politics in the early 1960s.[18] This ambition characterized also Nobel Symposium 14 but it did not exactly succeed. As will become evident in the following, the failure to align arts and humanities with more technical or technocratic approaches to world problems was not a symptom of the crisis of modernity that inspired the symposium agenda, but rather of the fact that the humanities – in the eyes of scientists, social scientists, and student radicals alike – had not even become modern enough to merit serious attention. As we will see, some humanists at the symposium (and perhaps those who declined an invitation to participate) seemed to confirm that diagnosis.

A Cross-Cultural Nobel Symposium

Nobel symposia had been held since 1965. Funded by a research foundation created by the Swedish central bank, *Riksbanken*, they were aimed at small groups of elite scientists and scholars from areas pertinent to the five (soon to be six) prize categories. Nobel Symposium 14 was different in that it was

16 Östh Gustafsson, *Folkhemmets styvbarn*, pp. 244–245.

17 Eldelin, *"De två kulturerna."*

18 Östh Gustafsson, *Folkhemmets styvbarn*, pp. 240–265 and *passim*. "humaniora behövde anpassas utifrån naturvetenskaplig förebild." Cf. Östh Gustafsson, "The Discursive Marginalization."

cross cultural and would address world problems from scientific as well as social-scientific and humanist angles (which some later symposia would also do). It would break the mold of the symposia's elitism by creating a public space, or arena, for interaction between intellectual elites, media, and the general public.

As we have seen the initiative came from the Swedish Academy responsible for the choice of literary Nobel laureates. In early 1966 its perpetual secretary Karl Ragnar Gierow suggested a sypmosium on the problem of atomic research.[19] After some hesitation, he got scientific backing as Arne Tiselius – Nobel Laureate biochemist, former President of the Nobel Foundation, and hence a pillar of the Nobel system – supported a modified version of the scheme, giving the symposium a "broadened and 'modernised' scientific foundation."[20] The focus on atomic research was replaced by a wider approach, to discuss ways to mobilize the vast stockpile of knowledge already at hand so that it could be optimally utilized to solve problems on a global scale. Nuclear issues receded into the background and focus was directed toward other world problems, including the generation gap. The importance of cultural issues in diagnosing problems was acknowledged through the emphasis on "value" whereas *solutions* were to become associated with "facts."

At the planning stage it seemed as if the humanities might play a more prominent role in the symposium. As the Paris student revolt erupted in May 1968, Gierow was on a visit to the writer Arthur Koestler – an advisor to the organizers – in Tyrol, where they "yodeled together" a program for the symposium rather different from that which was finally adopted. Its tendency was humanistic with speakers like the futurological writer and architect Richard Buckminster Fuller, the linguist and literary historian Walter Jens, and the psychologist Jean Piaget. Several talks, it was suggested, should take their ques from literary works – Goethe's *Faust* and Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma* – and it was suggested that Herbert Butterfield should speak on whether we can learn from history. Butterfield was invited but declined and the same was true for other prominent humanists or artists, like philosopher Raymond Aron, theologian Krister Stendahl, Walter Jens, and Igor Stravinsky.[21] The only humanists on their list to make it to the

19 Karl-Ragnar Gierow to the Board of the Nobel Foundation, February 11, 1966; Gierow to the Nobel Committee of the Norwegian Parliament, March 11, 1966; Gierow to Arne Tiselius, March 17, 1966. UUA INB ATN: F13:5.

20 Gierow to Tiselius, March 17, 1966, UUA INB ATN: F13:5.

21 Raymond Aron to Sam Nilsson, March 28, 1969; Krister Stendahl to Sam Nilsson, April 7, 1969; Herbert Butterfield to Sam Nilsson, February [?] 27, 1969; Walter Jens to Sam Nilsson, undated

symposium were art historian Ernst Gombrich and Koestler himself; they would be joined by the Brandeis philosopher Henry D. Aiken and the poet W. H. Auden. As the program was finalized, the idea that arts and humanities would play a prominent role in the discussions on world problems seems to have faded, though as we will see humanistic issues were addressed in some sessions. The tendency was rather, like in Swedish knowledge policy at the time, to view them as possible auxiliaries to science.

In his opening address, Arne Tiselius discussed the importance of arts and humanities from such a perspective. Science produces true facts, he said, but values are subjective; humans are irrational and not always convinced by science-based arguments. It was therefore necessary to "find the way to [a person's] mind" in order to make "him [...] *engaged*" by important facts, like Rachel Carson had succeeded in doing with *Silent Spring*.[22] Similar concerns had been raised by microbiologist and organization-committee member Carl-Göran Hedén during preparations for the symposium, when its preliminary title was "Science, Arts and Peace." He focused on the psychological capabilities of literary authors to dissect "patterns made up of interactions between individuals and groups." As authors were however part of those patterns themselves Hedén argued, as Snow had done in *The Two Cultures*, that they would have much to gain from the "stimulus of contacts with some outstanding specialists in the natural sciences and medicine." This might help them formulate values that reflected emotional needs rather than "some outdated -isms."[23] Hedén's approach was technocratic and, though he sometimes seemed more positive to arts and humanities there was no room for them in the outline for a program attached to the remarks quoted here. Overall, Hedén seems to have seen the value of the humanities as constituting a psychological counterbalance to pernicious ideologies such as Marxism and nationalism.

As we will see, the view that arts and humanities were of little practical value in and of themselves was seconded, at least implicitly, by several symposium participants including the students and a few humanists. An especially explicit example is Gunnar Myrdal's choleric reaction when he, as one of two Swedes, was invited to contribute a paper. He criticized

telegram. Stravinsky's name appears on a list of invitees ("Inbjudningslista Nobelsymposium 14") dated November 29, 1968. All in UUA INB ATN, F13:4.

22 Tiselius, "Opening Address," p. 14. Cf. Tiselius, *Nobel Symposium* (undated memorandum in English), p. 2, UUA INB ATN, F13:5.

23 Carl-Göran Hedén, "Science, Arts and Peace – A conference on Alfred Nobel's ideas in the light of our predictable future," undated memo in English, p. 1, UUA INB ATN, F13:5.

the cross-cultural ambition, claiming the issue of values must be treated *scientifically*, which ought to have excluded the humanities as well as practical politics:

> The borderline to journalism, literature and art should have been sharply drawn. The accidental fact that there are Nobel prizes also in literature and peace should not be permitted to conceal the fact that there is, or should be, a gulf of difference between the objectives in these two major realms [science including social science vs. the humanities and politics] of intellectual exertions.[24]

Myrdal's outburst was undiplomatic but nevertheless symptomatic of the trend since the 1950s to define the humanities as less "scientific" and less relevant than the social sciences – a position adopted also by sociologist Torgny Segerstedt, a central figure in policy for research and higher education in this period and together with Myrdal, the only Swede who gave a regular paper at the symposium.[25]

The Generation Gap

Last in his opening address, Tiselius presented a "unique" aspect of the symposium, the participation of the so-called World University Study Group (WUSG), who were expected to voice opinions different from those of the more established speakers. The radicalization of youth, in particular students, was seen as symptomatic of an emerging, and very dangerous, divide between value systems in western societies. The study group was expected to provide a reality check from this perspective. They also represented the futurological tendency of the symposium: "They belong to that future which we are going to discuss."[26]

The student movement in Sweden, as elsewhere, was fueled by opposition to various reforms aimed to streamline university education. More importantly in this context, student radicals voiced a broad critique of the universities' inability to address contemporary predicaments such as war,

24 Gunnar Myrdal to the Organizing Committee for Nobel Symposium 14, January 9, 1969 (in English). UUA INB ATN, F13:4.

25 Östh Gustafsson, *Folkhemmets styvbarn*, pp. 187–198.

26 Tiselius "Opening Address," p. 15.

global inequality, and environmental degradation.[27] Another common denominator among the radicals was a demand for "democratization," interpreted as collective decision-making and opposed to "technocracy."[28] In his magisterial overview of Swedish student radicalism in this period Alexander Ekelund writes that the "most fundamental aspect" of the students' intellectual radicalism was the question of "values and scientific objectivity" – that is to say, the same problem that defined the agenda of Nobel Symposium 14, and understood in the same context (world problems).[29] The technocratic tendencies decried by student radicals were the same as those associated with the marginalization of the humanities. But in 1969 this had not led to an alliance with the beleaguered humanists, except when it came to opposition against philistine university reforms.

Media coverage of Nobel Symposium 14 was carefully staged by the organizers and expectations of media impact were high. They seem to have been fulfilled but on the national level in a sense that the organizers had not planned, as a lot of press reporting focused on the student radicals. After the first symposium day, the conservative broadsheet *Svenska Dagbladet* published, on its front page, a large photo of Nobel Laureate biochemists Arne Tiselius and Jacques Monod with the headline "Good Morning, Super-Brains!"[30] This referred to an intervention by the study group. Carrying NLF badges and Mao pins, they had transmitted that greeting to the participants through the loudspeaker system. Margaret Mead was quoted as saying that she thought the participation of the study group was the most encouraging aspect of the event.[31]

The study group distributed flowers to the participants along with a booklet, *To Superminds* [not "super-brains"] *with Love*. In an interview a student said that researchers were too isolated in their fields of expertise and that they should pay more attention to for example generational antagonisms and future studies [*framtidsvetenskapen*]. Judging from press reports and the WUSG booklet, this was a general theme in the students' contribution to the symposium.[32]

27 On student radicalism in Sweden, see above all Ekelund, *Kampen om vetenskapen*, chs. 2–4. See also Josefsson, *Året var 1968*; Östberg, *1968*.

28 Ekelund, ch. 5.

29 Ekelund, p. 575. "värderingar och vetenskaplig objektivitet."

30 Lundborg, "Good Morning."

31 [J. B.], "Teknisk kolonialism"; Lundborg, "Nobelsymposiet." The badges and pins were noted in [Unsigned], "Ungdomar irriterar."

32 [J. B.], "Teknisk kolonialism."

The study group was edgily presented as constituting a provocative element, a "time bomb."[33] If so, the bomb had been set by the organizers. Sam Nilsson and Carl-Göran Hedén had over a six-months period coached the students in literature seminars around "[a]ttitudes and values." Fifty books and articles were discussed, a good many of them futurological. A card index of relevant quotations was created from which the booklet, with "provocative or challenging" questions arranged according to the symposium session topics, was produced. The study group were instructed not to make lengthy statements during discussions but rather to sprinkle them with "spicy" comments.[34]

The booklet was mildly spicy. Its tone was established on the cover, with a cartoon depicting a number of world problems and comments indicating a general suspicion concerning the integrity of the "superminds." On the following page was a more professional illustration depicting a poor African man behind a plow with a missile or possibly a space capsule in the sky above. The symposium participants were asked to identify and to suggest solutions to the problem indicated by the cartoon, that progress in one area might hinder progress in another.

The WUSG consisted of ten young males mostly in their mid-twenties that had been invited through contacts with a few radical organizations: LASITOC, Young Philosophers [*Unga filosofer*], and U-Action [*U-Aktion*].[35] Their affiliation to these groups along with a list of eighteen topics that they were engaged on and areas where they were active were presented in a table. LASITOC was an international theosophical group founded in 1964 to address environmental and post-colonial issues.[36] Six members of WUSG claimed affiliation with LASITOC, among them its founder Jan Fjellander, an arts student and self-proclaimed futurologist [*framtidsforskare*].[37] Young Philosophers were engaged in anti Vietnam-War activities as well

33 [Unsigned], "En tidsinställd bomb." The comment was made by symposium coordinator Sam Nilsson; "tidsinställd bomb."

34 *To Superminds With Love*, "Introduction," dated September 13, 1969, UUA INB ATN, F13:4. The booklet has no pagination and will be quoted referring to sections. See also Arne Tiselius and Sam Nilsson, "Nobelsymposium 14: Rapport till Nobelstiftelsen," dated January 1970, p. 2, UUA INB ATN, F13:2; Sam Nilsson to Arne Tiselius, undated, UUA INB ATN, F13:4: "provocerande eller utmanande"; "kryddad."

35 *To Superminds With Love*, "Introduction," UUA INB ATN, F13:4.

36 Nilsson, "The UN Conference," pp. 12–14. On LASITOC and its network, see also Nilsson, *NGO Involvement*, pp. 18–21. For the theosophical affiliation of LASITOC, see photocopied material in the archive of Carl-Göran Hedén at KI, Hedéns framträdanden i radio och TV medier Vol II, deriving from the Theosophic Youth Group [*Teosofiska ungdomsgruppen*].

37 [Unsigned], "Ung attack," p. 23.

as the relationship between research and politics. U-Action, finally, was concerned with Third-World issues.[38] Most popular among the study group's areas of interest were "futurology" (eight), art and music (seven), social science (six), and (with five each) environmental issues, cybernetics, philosophy, and journalism. Only three claimed to have an interest in politics (of the established kind, presumably).[39] The overall impression is that the group was characterized by activism (a choice by the organizers) and what Fjellander described as "searching for knowledge for the future."[40]

The tendency of the booklet is "critical" in that quotations and comments often indicate critique of western societies in areas like science and education, the environment, the north-south divide, armament, and war. Two sources with many quotes stick out: futurological literature and an anonymous publication in the same genre by a US government "special study group," *The Report from Iron Mountain* (1967), the latter being a hoax satirizing Cold War futurology of the Herman Kahn type, abhorred by the student radicals who, among with many others, mistook it for the real thing. The longest futurological excerpt by far, however, was from leftists Johan Galtung and Robert Jungk who emphasized democratic values in contrast to technocratic forecasting. The use of quotations hence indicates the tensions within futurology at this time, between establishment technocracy and visionary radicalism.[41]

The booklet covered the generation gap in a section containing a long text apparently written by the study-group members themselves. They concluded that the generation gap was really a knowledge gap, reflecting that younger people were much better informed than their elders. Adult education was proposed as a solution to this problem.[42] In general, the booklet's message on this issue was that, because of their generational vantage point, the students were able to unmask technocratic authority as represented by the establishment symposium participants. The generation gap was defined as a knowledge gap *and* as a value gap; the generational divide was described in Leninist fashion with the students as a radical vanguard and their elders as in need of re-education.

38 On Young Philosophers, see Ekelund, *Kampen om vetenskapen*, ch. 3.

39 *To Superminds With Love*, "World university study group profile," UUA INB ATN, F13:4.

40 Nilsson, "The UN Conference," p. 12 (from an interview with Fjellander in 2003).

41 See e.g., Hedén, "Anpassning eller undergång?"

42 *To Superminds With Love*, "Adult education," UUA INB ATN, F13:4

Some of these points were elaborated in a xeroxed *Wusg bullet-in* written and distributed during the symposium. It contained interviews with symposium participants and criticism of their lack of social concern and their affiliation with the military-industrial complex. Though the *bullet-in* did print Auden's poetic contribution at the symposium, *Ode to Terminus*, interviews were only with scientists and engineers, not with scholars or writers from the humanities or with social scientists. To the students, the fact-value conundrum seems to have been of interest mainly from the point of view of technoscientific elites, in particular "people over 35" to whom being a "guest of the Nobel Foundation seems to be very impressive."[43]

The position of arts and humanities in this field of intellectual and moral tension was apparently not an issue. A few quotes in the booklet concerned their importance for creativity, but they seemed to have nothing special to contribute to the discussions of concrete world problems, of ideology, or of values. Students and elite participants shared the future- and problem-oriented outlook that was associated with the marginalization of academic humanities at the time.

The last day of the symposium proper, the generation gap came into focus as two of the public evening lectures at *Börssalen*, a venue belonging to the Swedish Academy, were dedicated to the topic. News reports focused on the self-appointed provocateur Konrad Lorenz, who analysed youth culture from ethological and quasi-anthropological perspectives.[44] In an interview published before the lecture, he said the youth acted "as if they belong to another culture," comparing them to "[n]ative tribes in Africa." Members of youth subcultures wanted to *kill* their elders Lorenz suggested, only five weeks after the "Manson family" murders in Los Angeles. This, he said, was not a moral condemnation but a theoretical perspective that should guide future research.[45]

According to a news headline after Lorenz' lecture in *Börssalen* the ethologist had "tamed the students."[46] Apparently he did this by repeating his claim that youths were hateful and that they had become like an alien tribe.[47] Philosopher Henry D. Aiken said on the same occasion that it was

43 The *Wusg bullet-in*, issues 1–2, contained interviews with Jacques Monod, Joshua Lederberg, John Robinson Pierce, Carlos Chagas, Glenn Seaborg, Mikhail D. Millionschchikov, and Linus Pauling. UUA INB ATN, F13:4.

44 Lorenz described himself as a provocateur. See Matz and Lindström, "Hur ser ni."

45 Ehrenmark, "Konrad Lorenz." "som om de tillhörde en annan kultur"; "Infödingsstammar i Afrika." Cf. [unsigned], "Har människan"; Matz and Lindström, "Hur ser ni."

46 [Unsigned], "Lorenz tämjde"; Lundborg, "Beteendeforskare på Börshuset."

47 [Unsigned], "Lorenz tämjde." Cf. Lorenz, "The Enmity Between," p. 400.

the young who saw themselves as a "race apart" revolting against established institutions but, in contrast to Lorenz, affirming their right to do so even in sexual matters, praising their seriousness and calling for collaboration across the generational divide.[48] Anthropologist Margaret Mead, described in the press as more radical than many student leaders, claimed that the young constituted an "alien generation" that had to find its own way.[49] She called them "natives" and those over forty "immigrants."[50] Arthur Koestler associated the student revolt with nihilism caused by a scientism that drained western culture of values.[51] He exemplified by pointing to Lorenz' biologism as an example of "ratomorphism," understanding humans as if they were rats or, in Lorenz' case, geese.[52]

Hence three interpretations of the generation gap were presented by the established symposium participants: that it was a crisis phenomenon caused by a tribal hatred of the older generation (Lorenz), a crisis phenomenon caused by scientism (Koestler), and an often sound reaction against broader problems in society (Aiken and Mead). All of them touched upon the question of values, and the latter three vaguely indicated a constructive role for arts and humanities – Koestler indirectly through his criticism of scientific reductionism, Aiken and Mead by affording a positive role to ethics and education respectively. Of these Aiken, a writer on university issues including the student revolt, was most articulate.[53] He came down firmly on the side of the young, not least because he saw in them a "sustained religious seriousness and [...] tolerance for all genuine expressions of the sense of the holy and the wonderful."[54] As we will see this advocacy of arts and humanities found little resonance with the symposium as a whole.

As for the students they mostly stuck to the Leninist interpretation of the generation gap. At *Börssalen*, they lived up to moderate expectations of youth activism by staging a "happening" – a nod, at least, to the political efficacy of art of the anti-establishment kind, described by

48 [Unsigned], "Lorenz tämjde." "en främmande ras." Cf. Aiken, "Youth and Its Rights," pp. 375–376.

49 Öste, "Margaret Mead"; [Unsigned], "Lorenz tämjde"; "okänd generation"; Lundborg, "Beteendeforskare på Börshuset."

50 Lundborg, "Margaret Mead."

51 Hallén, "Ungdomsrevolt mot tomhet." Cf. Koestler, "Rebellion in a Vacuum."

52 Wickbom, "Arthur Koestler."

53 See e.g., Aiken, *Predicament of the University*, where the last chapters are an adaption of Aiken's paper at the symposium: "Youth and Its Rights," pp. 360–383.

54 Aiken, "Youth and Its Rights," p. 378.

Lorenz as "people who throw up on a table and stand on their heads."[55] Among the audience applauding the performance were several Social Democratic ministers, notably Olof Palme – a few weeks from becoming Prime Minister – and Minster of Disarmament and future Peace Laureate Alva Myrdal.[56]

One paper printed short interviews with nine students of which eight were members of the study group.[57] The headline, "Young attack against the Nobel symposium," accentuated the negative. Five of the interviewees were critical, for example complaining about the bourgeois dominance among the speakers and their indifference in the face of world problems. The latter comment, by British PhD student Peter Harper, may have referred to one of the few humanists present, Ernst Gombrich, who did say that the world problems were likely insolvable (see below). Four students were more positive, emphasizing the accessibility of the participants and their willingness to discuss important issues.[58]

The three evening sessions at *Börssalen* were open to the public and to journalists but non-participants were not allowed to attend the day-time sessions at a conference center outside of central Stockholm. These discussions were however covered in a 24,000-word transcript in the symposium volume. According to the transcript much of the discussions covered future-oriented topics, sometimes in a science-fiction kind of way and sometimes in a more concrete fashion. As for the student contributions, they were almost completely omitted in print. Only four comments were registered, none more than a few sentences and all anonymously attributed to a generic "student."[59] At the symposium's final press conference, the study group was praised for having brought attention to important political issues, above all those of the Third World, something which the transcript does not reflect.[60] Comments by some organizers after the event critical of the students' impertinence and politics confirm that

55 According to an anonymous profile of Staffan Hildebrand, a member of the study group and a well-known social-democratic youth politician, the group had been invited to "torch" [*kasta brandfacklor på*] the elite participants at the Nobel Symposium. The same metaphor was used in another unsigned article. See [Unsigned], "Frågor av studenter." On Lorenz, see Wickbom, "Konrad Lorenz."

56 [Unsigned], "Lorenz tämjde"; Lundborg, "Beteendeforskare på Börshuset." Lorenz commented in a similar fashion on the youth problem in Ehrenmark, "Konrad Lorenz."

57 The interviewees overlap with but are not identical with the group listed in *To Superminds With Love*, UUA INB ATN, F13:4.

58 [Unsigned], "Ung attack."

59 [Unsigned], *Discussion*, pp. 450, 466, 471.

60 [Unsigned], "Driv utvecklingen."

they intervened rather more than what the transcript shows.[61] If the press coverage exaggerated the political one-sidedness of the students, as for example Tiselius argued, the official symposium publication in effect made their views invisible.[62]

The Place of Humanities

Two symposium sessions leaned more than the others toward the humanities. The title of the second, "The teaching of knowledge and the imparting of values," signalled a focus on the arts-and-humanities theme of values; the title of the third session, "The new republic – scientist, humanist and government," seemed to imply a focus on the importance of science as well as humanities for policy. In the second session, Ernst Gombrich's ruminations on "the parrot cry of relevance" and W. H. Auden's comments on the epistemological and moral character of art and science, though interesting and perhaps too intellectually advanced for the occasion, contributed little to the problem-oriented agenda of the symposium.[63] Gombrich implicitly criticized it by refuting demands for relevance, claiming that many of the world problems were insolvable.[64] In the third session biochemist Ivan Málek talked about creativity, sociologist Torgny Segerstedt gave a systematic overview of futurology (in four pages), scientists Linus Pauling and Glenn Seaborg advocated technocratic solutions to various world problems from a mildly socialist and established policy perspective respectively, and Otto Klinenberg did the same from a psychology perspective. The only arts person in the session was Arthur Koestler who addressed the theme of values by attacking the idea of value-free science, dear to the heart of the symposium's technocratically inclined participants, including Pauling, but criticized also by Gunnar Myrdal.

It was the biochemist Jacques Monod who gave the most talked-about paper on values, in a session on "The menace and the promise of science." Monod

61 August Schou, "Nobel Symposium XIV. Stockholm September 15–20, 1969," undated, pp. 6–7; idem, "Kommentarer till Nobelsymposium XIV," dated October 2, 1969, pp 1–2; both in UUA INB ATN, F13:2. The first of these documents was much more harshly worded than the second and was possibly meant for Tiselius' eyes only. Similar critique was vented in Nils K. Ståhle, "Iakttagelser från Nobelsymposium 14," September 22, 1969, UUA INB ATN, F13:4.

62 Arne Tiselius and Sam Nilsson, "Nobel Symposium 14: Rapport till Nobelstiftelsen," dated January 1970, p. 5; [Unsigned], "Ungdomarna besvikna."

63 Auden, "Freedom and Necessity," pp. 135–142; Gombrich, "Art and Self-Transcendence," p. 129.

64 Gombrich, "Art and Self-Transcendence," p. 130.

pointed to the "phenomenal destructive potential of the scientific method," indicating not the bomb but "the destruction of ideas and concepts."[65] This theme was addressed by several participants. It had, consciously or not been put on the agenda through the organizers' choice to name the symposium after a well-known book from the 1930s by psychologist Wolfgang Köhler which dealt with the science-values issue.[66] Monod's solution was scientistic: to create a new value system from scratch based on axioms. He believed such a system should take the biological foundation of ethics into account and several other participants agreed. Joshua Lederberg's "futuristic" piece on "The Perfection of Man" hesitantly argued in favor of Julian Huxley's idea, that a new humanism or even religion could be founded on insights from evolutionary biology; C. H. Waddington speculated that ethics might, in analogy with Chomskyan linguistics, be biologically grounded. Like these scientists, and also Lorenz, Koestler put an evolutionary spin on the question of values but less optimistically, blaming moral shortcomings on evolutionary "screws loose somewhere between the neocortex and the hypothalamus."[67]

As we have seen, the initiative behind the symposium came from the Swedish Academy's perpetual secretary Karl Ragnar Gierow. He was part of the organizing committee and attended the symposium, though not as a speaker. In the press he provided it with an essayistic post-mortem focused on the question of values. He quoted Gombrich who had related an anecdote about his former teacher Wolfgang Köhler. In 1935, Köhler and a few friends had spent a last fearful night in Berlin before fleeing Nazi Germany playing chamber music. "Such is," said Gombrich, "the place of value in a world of facts."[68] Gierow reflected on this from the point of view of the symposium's bleak premise, that humankind faced a crisis it might not survive:

> Such was the situation also for the symposium, because such is the predicament of humanity, waiting and wondering who or what will come up the stairs and pound on our door. But with the difference that we have

65 Monod, "On Values," p. 21.

66 Köhler, *The Place of Value*.

67 Koestler, "The Urge to Self-Destruction," p. 300; Lederberg, "Orthobiosis"; Waddington, "The Importance of Biological," pp. 95–103.

68 Gierow, "Randanteckningar vid ett symposium." The quote was in English but what Gombrich wrote (p. 132) was actually "I cannot think of a better illustration of the place of value in a world of facts."

> nowhere to escape and the chamber music does not exist that is fit for even passing the time.[69]

This, then, was Gierow's response to the question of the value of arts and humanities in the face of overwhelming world problems: they will not even serve as a distraction. Consequently, in summarizing the symposium, the humanist Gierow portrayed himself as an outsider, an observer to a discussion conducted mainly by natural and social scientists, with humanists seemingly being afraid to grapple with such an "ethereal phenomenon" as values.[70] He described Monod's attempt "to make ethics a scientific subject" as the symposium "in a nutshell," hesitantly agreeing with the biochemist that a new system of values had to be founded not on tradition but on "a complete tabula rasa."[71]

Throughout the discussions on values ran the theme of science criticism. The organizers were critical of scientific isolationism and the lack of scientific coordination – especially in the face of world problems. The students were critical of modern science not only because of its destructive capabilities but because it was allied with the military and represented technocratic power run amok, an analysis supported by Linus Pauling.[72] Several scientists acknowledged that science had led to disenchantment and suggested remedies founded on science, in particular evolutionary theory. The humanists Koestler and Gombrich both decried scientific reductionism but offered no remedies whereas their colleague Gierow sided with the scientists. Auden provided a poetic comment in the concluding stanzas of *Ode to Terminus*, where he wrote that scientists "to be truthful / must remind us to take all they say as a tall story" and that damnation awaited those poets who "to wow an / audience, utter some resonant lie."[73] Auden alone put any kind of moral obligation on arts and humanities, thus acknowledging their importance in a time of crisis. It is ironic that nonsense was made of

69 Gierow, "Randanteckningar vid ett symposium." "Sådan var också symposiets situation, ty sådant är mänsklighetens predikament, i väntan och undran vem eller vad som ska komma upp för trapporna och bulta på vår dörr. Men med den skillnaden, att vi har ingenstans att fly och den kammarmusik finns inte, som ens kan fördriva tiden."

70 On the humanist as a (critical) outsider in Sweden, see Östh Gustafsson, "Mobilising the Outsider."

71 Gierow, "Randanteckningar vid ett symposium." "luftig företeelse"; "i ett nötskal." Monod was quoted in English.

72 Mead criticized the way education functioned as a power system but also argued that blaming science for world problems was misguided. Mead, "Education for Humanity," p. 424. See also Pauling, "Scientists in Politics."

73 Auden, *Ode to Terminus*, p. 811.

the stanza just quoted in the symposium volume, where it was disfigured by a misprint substituting "life" for "lie."[74]

The Vanishing Humanist

There is a parallel here with the theme of Steven Shapin's well-known paper on the "invisible technician" during the scientific revolution.[75] Technicians had been instrumental in modern science since its foundation but were made "transparent" by upper-class contemporaries and historians alike. The humanities have suffered a similar fate after World War II. In the presentation recently of a new history of humanities journal it was pointed out that despite the "impressive corpus of knowledge that the humanities have discovered, created, and cultivated over many centuries," their role in helping to produce theoretical and empirical foundations for any understanding of social and cultural developments, has often not been acknowledged.[76] One way of understanding this phenomenon, at least before the 1970s, is that the humanists' ways of knowing were appropriated and thus made invisible by the social sciences with their higher theoretical pretensions (also in parallel with the science-technology hierarchy). Though Nobel Symposium 14 was initiated by humanists it would exemplify this tendency, with science and social science stealing the show and with a general lack of appreciation of the humanities' relevance among elite and student participants alike. Gierow recognized this, blaming the humanists themselves for timidly avoiding the value problem.

The other organizers and the scientific participants understood the role of arts and humanities as subservient to the real problem solvers, primarily scientists and to some extent social scientists. Broadly speaking, the solutions that the organizers and many participants suggested, also to value problems, were scientistic or technocratic. This was true of the three organizers who had most influence over the symposium program, Arne Tiselius, Sam Nilsson, and Carl-Göran Hedén. Tiselius kicked off the symposium by defining the role of arts and humanities as an aid to make "the man in the street" more engaged by scientific facts. Like an unreformed modernization theorist, Nilsson argued during preliminary discussions that the goal was to mobilize a global technocracy: "the international of scientists must consider which

74 Auden, "Freedom and Necessity," p. 142.
75 Shapin, "The Invisible Technician."
76 Bod et al., "A New Field," p. 1.

international problems that might be ameliorated through research and where resources may be found to solve them."[77] Hedén expressed himself similarly, proposing "a global plan for political and economic structural reform."[78] In an article published shortly before the symposium he suggested that there was a connection between the high proportion of "humanists and lawyers" among politicians and government officials and their inability to deal with important problems that scientists and engineers could, given the chance, solve with one "coordinated and well-aimed fusillade."[79]

Similar tendencies were manifested in an internal evaluation of the symposium by Tiselius and Nilsson. They put much stress on its global impact. International media attention had been massive and predominantly positive they said. A journalist in the British magazine *Science Journal* had written that the symposium could mark "one of the turning points in the history of humanity" because of its strong emphasis on breaking scientific isolationism; symposium participant C. H. Waddington said in the same journal that it should be seen as a model for planning "priorities in societal developments for the near future."[80] Even the White House had been in touch asking to receive a copy of the symposium volume for Nixon's new futurological committee, "The National Goals Research Staff."[81] All in all the event was described as a great public-relations success for the Nobel Foundation, in particular because the overall message that scientific expertise should be mobilized to stake out policy options had hit home.

Tiselius and Nilsson emphasized that the symposium was well integrated with similar future-oriented initiatives internationally. From early on there was coordination with the planning of two other meetings, by the World Academy of Art and Science in New York in 1970 and the UN conference on the human environment in Stockholm 1972. Three conferences with futurological themes had been directly inspired by the Nobel symposium it was claimed, and the Rockefeller Foundation would arrange workshops

77 Sam Nilsson, "Några tankar inför tvärkulturellt Nobelsymposium," undated, p. 3: "vetenskapsmännens international måste överväga vilka nationella problem som kan underlättas genom forskning och var resurser kan framskaffas för att lösa dem"; UUA INB ATN, F13:5.

78 Carl-Göran Hedén, "Allmän bakgrund till programprioritering för Nobelsymposiet: Science, Arts, Peace and Human Welfare," 21 March 1968, p. 3: "en global plan för politisk och ekonomisk strukturomvandling"; UUA INB ATN, F13:5.

79 Hedén, "Anpassning eller undergång?," pp. 183–184.

80 Arne Tiselius and Sam Nilsson, "Nobel Symposium 14: Rapport till Nobelstiftelsen," dated January 1970, pp. 6, 9 (quote): "prioriteringar i samhällsutvecklingen för den omedelbara framtiden"; UUA INB ATN, F13:2.

81 Charles Williams (Acting Staff Director, National Goals Research Staff) to Sam Nilsson, September 25, 1969; UUA INB ATN, F13:4.

to plan future collaboration with the Nobel Foundation. One result of the Rockefeller workshops would be the creation in 1972 of IFIAS, for over a decade situated at *Ulriksdals slott*, a royal castle near Stockholm, and led by Sam Nilsson.

Considering the networks in which the symposium was embedded it may be viewed as a semi-successful attempt by the Nobel Foundation to establish itself in a transnational context of organizations probing technocratic solutions to global problems. IFIAS was an institutionalization of this ambition. Its goal was in a sense to practice what the Club of Rome preached in their first report, *The Limits of Growth* (1972), by promoting interdisciplinary research relevant to global problems like the sustainable use of natural resources. Their most important contribution, IFIAS would later claim, was to have started the discussion about human-induced climate change as early as 1972. The Club of Rome and IFIAS were dominated by scientists, engineers, social scientists, and businesspeople; the role of arts and humanities in this context was initially small.[82]

In post-war Sweden, sociology and economics consumed much of the oxygen that had been vital for the development of arts and humanities in the first half of the twentieth century, not least for history, still considered a politically relevant area of scholarship in those early decades.[83] The fact that Gunnar Myrdal and Torgny Segerstedt, the only Swedes presenting papers at Nobel Symposium 14, came from economics and sociology exemplifies this, as does the fact that the Prize in Economic Sciences was instituted in the late 1960s to be awarded for the first time in the fall of 1969. Like the Nobel Symposia, the prize was funded through a donation by the Swedish *Riksbank*. The fact that economic power on this scale was grafted onto the Nobel system in these years surely affected the character of Nobel Symposium 14; its spin-off IFIAS would likewise get funding from *Riksbanken* plus a number of private enterprises and foundations.[84]

The disintegration of modernization theory and the technocratic turn in futurology around 1970 both exemplify an instrumentalization of social thinking typical of the first post-war decades and, after the years of "crisis" around 1970, of an emerging neo-liberalism buttressed by the Prize in

82 On climate change, see Ståhle, Nilsson and Lindblom, *From Vision to Action*, pp. 16–17. On projects supported by IFIAS up until the mid-1980s, see ibid., pp. 100–122.

83 Östh Gustafsson, *Folkhemmets styvbarn*, ch. 2.

84 Ståhle, Nilsson and Lindblom, *From Vision to Action*, pp. iii–iv, 9.

Economic Sciences.[85] Under these circumstances it is not surprising if arts and humanities seemed to vanish into the woodwork for a while. During the 1970s they would assume a role less instrumental than what had been suggested but not realized at Nobel Symposium 14 and more in line with student radicals' notion of what *critical* academic thinking ought to be like.[86] As former practitioners of student radicalism increasingly set the tone of academic scholarship, the humanities began, like the social sciences had done earlier, to adopt *theory* – to some extent of the Frankfurt variety but also influenced by the psychoanalytic ideas of Julia Kristeva and Jacques Lacan, and the socialist theories of Louis Althusser. As the ideas of Michel Foucault became central to this movement, the premises behind the fact-value distinction would effectively be deconstructed for generations.[87]

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Archives

The main archive used for this paper is that of Arne Tiselius at the Archive of Uppsala University at Uppsala University's main administrative buildning, the Segerstedt building (named after one of the symposium participants).

The huge archive of Carl-Göran Hedén at the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, has also been consulted. It has not been possibe to utilize it fully, though, as large parts of it is uncataloged.

85 Offer and Söderberg, *The Nobel Factor*.
86 Östh Gustafsson, *Folkhemmets styvbarn*, pp. 343–349.
87 Ekelund, *Kampen om vetenskapen*, chs. 6–7.

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