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**Oral History Project  
Interview Transcript**

**Immanuel (Ike) Kohn  
Interviewed by Linda Arntzenius  
May 2, 2011**

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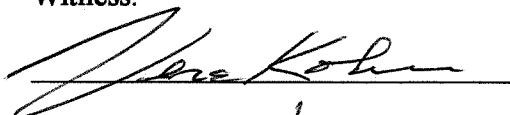
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Date: July 13, 2011

Linda Arntzenius: Good morning. I will just say, for the sake of the recording, that it is Monday, the 2nd of May, and I'm here at the Institute for Advanced Study with Ike Kohn. Is that the correct pronunciation?

Immanuel Kohn: It is. Ike is for the initials. "I" is for the first name and "K" for the second name.

Linda Arntzenius: Okay and the purpose of our conversation is to gather material for the Archives for the use of future historians of the Institute for Advanced Study. But before we talk about your association as board member, Friend and supporter, I'd like to ask you a little bit about you, before you came to be associated with the Institute, and about your parents. Because I think there's an association there we should discuss.

Immanuel Kohn: Yes. Well, my father was Hans Kohn,<sup>1</sup> and he was an historian and a professor and a newspaper correspondent and a writer for many years. He came to the United States on a lecture tour, the first time in either 1930 or 1931 and came for a second lecture tour in 1933.

He then moved to the United States in 1934 and taught at Smith College and at various other institutions in the United States: Harvard and quite a number of other universities. Even when he retired, which was at the age of 70, he was still teaching a year at a time at various universities: University of Berlin, University of Texas, University of Pennsylvania. He died in 1971 at the age of 79.

Linda Arntzenius: Was he a refugee to this country?

Immanuel Kohn: No, he was not a refugee. He was born in Prague in 1891 which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and he went to university there. He got his doctorate at the University of Prague.

He was a junior officer in World War I in the Austro-Hungarian Army, and he was captured on the Russian front in the spring of 1915 and then spent the remainder of the war – at least as long as Russia was in the war – in prisoner of war camps. Even though, in those days, they abided by the Geneva Conventions and officers had a pleasant and easy life in the prisoner of war camps, he nevertheless escaped twice and was captured and brought back. And each time, they sent him further to the east to a different camp.

In any event, after the revolution broke out in 1917 and after the communists got into power, he made his way to the east through China, Japan and then came around and settled in London in 1920.

He had already written something back in those days, and he met my mother, who had lived in Berlin during World War I, and she came to England because things were not good in Germany at the end of the First

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<sup>1</sup> Hans Kohn (1891-1971), Member in the School of Historical Studies, 1948, 1955.

World War. They met there, and they married in the early 1920s and then they lived in London and in Paris.

They went to live, in 1925 I think it was, approximately at least, in Palestine - because my father was involved with the Zionist movement in those days, and the organization with responsibility for the settlement of Jews in Palestine.

But he became disillusioned with the Zionist movement because of the enmity between the Jews and Arabs in Palestine. He had made up his mind already, by 1929 at the time of the Arab (1929) revolt in Palestine, to move. He was at that time, already, a correspondent for, I think, the Zurich, Switzerland, newspaper and the Frankfurt, Germany, newspaper. He was also writing books, at that time, primarily on the Middle East and nationalism in the Arab countries in the Middle East.

Linda Arntzenius: So perhaps that's what prompted his interest in nationalism— do you think?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, no, I think what prompted his interest in nationalism was growing up in the Austro-Hungarian empire because that was a hot bed of nationalist tendencies of one kind or another with many different aspiring nationalities ruled by the Hapsburgs at that time.

He was interested also in Russia. He took a trip in 1930 through Russia and wrote about nationalism in the Russian republics.

In any event, he made up his mind to leave Palestine, and he was looking primarily at the United States. And that's why he made the lecture tours and then moved us permanently to the United States in 1934.

Linda Arntzenius: And were you already born then?

Immanuel Kohn: Yes. I was born on December 6th, 1926, in Jerusalem.

Linda Arntzenius: Jerusalem. Oh and so you did some traveling before you eventually came to the States with your parents.

Immanuel Kohn: Oh, yes. I think I did more traveling in my first seven years than I've done since. I went to a boarding nursery school at the age of four in Vienna. I went to kindergarten in Cairo at the age of five, and I went to first grade and part of second grade in Jerusalem. Then I started third grade in Northampton, Massachusetts at the Smith College Day School.

Linda Arntzenius: That's amazing.

Immanuel Kohn: So that's the story of my early life.

Linda Arntzenius: I understand that your father did a lot of teaching.

Immanuel Kohn: Yes.

- Linda Arntzenius: Perhaps he didn't have a lot of time for research?
- Immanuel Kohn: Oh, no.
- Linda Arntzenius: He did?
- Immanuel Kohn: He wrote more than 30 books. And a lot of articles in addition. So he was—
- Linda Arntzenius: Very prolific.
- Immanuel Kohn: Yes.
- Linda Arntzenius: So what brought him to the Institute?
- Immanuel Kohn: Well, he was here as I think you know as a Member for one term in the late '40s and another in mid '50s.
- Linda Arntzenius: And did you visit him here at that time?
- Immanuel Kohn: Yes. Both times, I visited him here and was very impressed by the Institute. The first time I saw the Institute was when he was here in the 1940s, and I stayed for, it was a few days, when my father was a Member here. I believe both memberships coincided with sabbaticals.
- Linda Arntzenius: Right. So he was using his sabbaticals, presumably, to write his books.
- Immanuel Kohn: Well, he was always writing, but he liked the atmosphere of the Institute, which was very conducive, as is still the case today of course, to research and writing. I remember one time, Arnold Toynbee<sup>2</sup> was here at the Institute either the first time or the second time my father was here. I don't remember whether he was here as a Visitor or in what capacity, but I remember we took him driving around in the Delaware Valley, along the river. It was a privilege to meet Toynbee.
- Linda Arntzenius: You were a young man in your twenties then, I take it.
- Immanuel Kohn: I was – that's right.
- Linda Arntzenius: Yes. So these were your father's impressive friends. Yes. Did you meet Einstein<sup>3</sup> at that time?
- Immanuel Kohn: No. I never met Einstein.
- Linda Arntzenius: And what about your father? Did he?

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<sup>2</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975), Member in the School of Historical Studies, 1947-1953.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Einstein (1879-1955), Professor in the Schools of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, 1933-1946; Emeritus Professor, 1946-1955.

Immanuel Kohn: I assume he must have, but I don't know that. I was not present, in any event.

Linda Arntzenius: Do you remember any other of the faculty?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, I don't really. I know that, in history, I think one of the professors was a gentleman whose name was Earle,<sup>4</sup> and I did meet him. I met some other people, but I don't remember who they were anymore.

Linda Arntzenius: I wonder if you recall Llewellyn Woodward<sup>5</sup>. I believe your father may have worked with him or been collegial with him.

Immanuel Kohn: He may well have been, but I don't have recollection of it.

Linda Arntzenius: So, at this time, where were you?

Immanuel Kohn: Where was I? Well, I went to school from third grade on in the United States, at and the Smith College Day School through sixth grade. Seventh and eighth grades were at Williston Academy Junior School in Easthampton, Massachusetts and then, for four years, I attended Deerfield Academy followed by college at Harvard and law school at Yale.

I was 17 when I got out of Deerfield, and of course World War II was going on, this was in 1944. My eyes were not good enough uncorrected to get into the kind of military training programs that my classmates got into. In fact, my eyes weren't good enough to get into most things in the service.

In any event, before I was 18, I enlisted in what in wartime was the U.S. Maritime Service (the peacetime Merchant Marine under military supervision). I went to training at Sheepshead Bay in Brooklyn, and again, because of my eyes, I couldn't qualify for deck or engine room service. The only thing that was open to me – aside from what I did which I'll get to in a moment – was being a mess boy which was not at the top of my preferences. But they did have a program whereby they took the business officer and they gave him 12 weeks of medical training and four weeks of internship and a government indemnity policy, and he was the medical as well as the business officer on board.

The training was run by the Navy, and we got uniforms and ranks and so on. I didn't ship out until about two or three days after VJ Day. And then I went on a converted cargo ship, converted to a troop carrier, taking troops back from Europe at the end World War II. After that, it was shuttling army cargo in Italy. By the fall of '46, I was discharged and went back to Harvard College – and finished up at Harvard College. I lost another year because I was offered and accepted a traveling fellowship from Harvard, spending the 1949-50 academic year in Europe and the

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<sup>4</sup> Edward Mead Earle (1894-1954), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1934-1954.

<sup>5</sup> Ernest Llewellyn Woodward (1890-1971), Member in the School of Historical Studies, 1946, 1950; Professor, 1951-1960; Emeritus Professor, 1961-1971.

Middle East. The fellowship stipend for the academic year was only \$2,400 but in the postwar period one could manage abroad very well on that amount.

Linda Arntzenius: Changed times.

Immanuel Kohn: Changed times. Exactly. In any event, after I got out of law school, I joined a law firm in New York: Cahill, Gordon & Reindel, of which I became a partner after nine years and then a member of the executive committee and thereafter chairman of the executive committee.

I retired from the firm at the age of 79 which was five and half years ago. After retirement I retained the title of Senior Counsel as well as my office and assistant.

Linda Arntzenius: And what brought you to Princeton?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, after I started working in New York, for the first two years we lived in the city but we had already had one child, and another one was on the way. We decided we'd better move out of the city, and we moved to Westchester first to what we considered to be a temporary house. We were there for 13 years, but we were always looking for a permanent place to settle.

A number of my classmates had gone to Princeton. And I had familiarity with Princeton. We didn't want to live in New York City, but we didn't want to live in a bedroom community either. And of course, I grew up in a college town – and so we settled on Princeton as the place we'd like to live. In 1968, we moved to Princeton.

Linda Arntzenius: You became a member of the Board in '97, what relationship did you have with the Institute before that?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, I was a supporter of the Institute in a small way in those days, and we had a neighbor and friend who was the IBM faculty member at the Institute. He had been in charge of research at IBM for a number of years prior thereto.

Prior to going with IBM, he had been at the Institute working with von Neumann.<sup>6</sup> On the computer.

Linda Arntzenius: Can you tell me his name?

Immanuel Kohn: Yes, Herman Goldstine<sup>7</sup>. We became close friends of Herman and his wife, Ellen, and so he brought us to some functions at the Institute and we

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<sup>6</sup> John von Neumann (1903-1957), Faculty in the School of Mathematics, 1933-1957.

<sup>7</sup> Herman Goldstine (1913-2004), Electronic Computer Project staff, 1946-1956; Member in the Schools of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, 1951-1958; Member in the School of Natural Sciences, 1972-1985; Member in the School of Historical Studies, 1977-1985.

met a number of people on the faculty and, later, the Director, and in any event we became very interested in the Institute.

When the Friends were formed, which must have been in the early '70s, I think – I could be off by –

Linda Arntzenius: Yes, I think it was the '80s.

Immanuel Kohn: It was the '80s. So I had already been acquainted with the Institute. And with people at the Institute, and I think the first director that I knew quite well at the Institute was Harry Woolf.<sup>8</sup> I think we may have started giving some money to the Institute already back in the '70s. I could be wrong on the timing. Then when the Friends were founded, I was one of the original members. Frank Taplin was the Trustee who was the liaison with the Friends. Mary Keating was the chairman of the Friends. It started as a very small organization and, of course, by now, it's quite large.

Linda Arntzenius: Yes. So, if you came to Princeton in '68 and you're familiar with the Institute, you must have witnessed, I shall say, the Bellah<sup>9</sup> affair. Do you remember that? You know, "trouble in Paradise."

Immanuel Kohn: Well, yes, but that was under the fellow who was Harry Woolf's predecessor. I knew something was going on, but I had nothing whatever to do with it. What was the director's name?

Linda Arntzenius: Carl Kaysen.<sup>10</sup>

Immanuel Kohn: Carl Kaysen, yes. I never met him. My wife was at a dinner with him. And I'm sure I must have heard something about the school of social studies or –

Linda Arntzenius: Science.

Immanuel Kohn: Science, but I had no participation in it, and I really had no knowledge of it.

Linda Arntzenius: But as an outside observer, did it sort of tarnish the –

Immanuel Kohn: Oh, well, it didn't, no. It didn't tarnish it for me. Since my father had been a professor, a member of the faculty of various academic institutions, I was aware that academicians do have some battles over turf – well, battles is an exaggeration – perhaps spirited disagreements would be more apt.

I know that for people here –most of which I learned, of course, after that period – it was a hot issue. But looking at the history of the Institute, I

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<sup>8</sup> Harry Woolf (1923-2003), IAS Director, 1976-1987; Professor-At-Large, 1987-1994; Emeritus Professor, 1994-2003.

<sup>9</sup> Robert N. Bellah (1927-2013), Member in the School of Social Science, 1972-1973.

<sup>10</sup> Carl Kaysen (1920-2010), IAS Director, 1966-1976.



think there were issues in the early years of one kind or another from Flexner's<sup>11</sup> time on.

I don't think it is unusual in academia. I think it just maybe gets more focused on because the Institute has a so much smaller faculty than others do. I gather that, at the beginning, this is all hearsay on my part, in Flexner's time the mathematicians were already disagreeing with the director, but I think that certainly the last two directors, the present one, Peter Goddard,<sup>12</sup> and Phillip Griffiths,<sup>13</sup> have done a wonderful job with the Institute and with the smooth working of the Institute and have had the full respect and admiration of the faculty.

Linda Arntzenius: Well, I'm going to ask you about that. But before we get there, I'd like to just step back a little bit. You served on the Board from 1997. I'd like to know how that came about. Who invited you to join? And what made you accept?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, the acceptance part wasn't difficult. At that time, by '97, Phillip Griffiths was the director and we'd gotten to know Phillip and his wife Taffy quite well. There came a point in time when Rachel Gray telephoned me, and she asked me how old I was, and I told her I was 70.

And she said, "Oh, because I was going to tell you that people here think that you should be on the Board of Trustees." And she added, "But you can't." The rule then was you can't have reached your 70th birthday to be elected a Trustee. And so I said, "Well, sorry to hear that." And a few months later, I got another telephone call from Rachel and she said, "That's been changed now to 75."

That was not changed for me. That was changed, I think, probably for Leon Levy, because I think he had turned 70, and of course, he was a very valuable Trustee and a very productive one.

In any event, that's how the invitation was extended, and I joined the Board. The terms are five year terms, but they can be less than that. And so that they could keep me on for nine years until I was almost 80 years old, my first term was four years and my second term was five years.

Linda Arntzenius: But a good long time.

Immanuel Kohn: Well, it was nine years.

Linda Arntzenius: Yes. And might I ask what did you bring to the Board?

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<sup>11</sup> Abraham Flexner (1866-1959), IAS Director, 1930-1939.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Goddard (1945- ), Member in the School of Natural Sciences, 1972-1974; Member in the School of Mathematics, 1988; IAS Director, 2004-2012; Professor in the School of Natural Sciences, 2012-2016; Emeritus Professor, 2016- .

<sup>13</sup> Phillip Griffiths (1938- ), Member in the School of Mathematics, 1968-1970; Visitor, 1981-1982; IAS Director, 1991-2003; Professor, 2004-2009; Emeritus Professor, 2009- .

Immanuel Kohn: Well, that's hard for me to say. I certainly brought a great deal of admiration for the Institute and a feeling of attachment to the Institute. Jim Wolfensohn, of course, was the Chairman of the Board, and I had, and have, a lot of admiration for him. He was the Chairman, I think, from – was it from 1986 on or something like that?

He had been the Chairman for quite a number of years before I came on, and I think he really is just an amazing person and personality and has done a tremendous amount for the Institute. And so I was very happy to be on the Board.

As to what did I personally contribute, aside from some money, well, there was no Audit Committee of the Board originally, and I think the Institute, like most nonprofit organizations and educational institutions, reached a decision that they really ought to have an Audit Committee. And so I became the first Chairman of the Audit Committee.

And we did change auditors from one of the large firms to another of the large auditing firms, and I got involved in that. And having been a lawyer, I also got involved in some of the documentation for the Institute. What I mean by documentation isn't so much the writing of the documents – just seeing, together with New Jersey counsel and others, that they were in conformity with legal requirements as well as the best practices of other leading educational institutions.

Linda Arntzenius: Can you tell me what the reason was for changing auditors?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, I don't want to go into that in detail, but at that time, the large auditing firms had been sued a lot, and therefore, they were extremely sensitive to getting from others whatever backup in the form of statements and representations they could. The auditors wanted the members of the Audit Committee to give them comfort by certifying to the auditors that, in effect, nothing had come to their attention that indicated any material shortcomings in the Institute's financial statements. I regarded this as unacceptable since it was the auditors whose duty it was to report to the Audit Committee and not the other way around. Nor did I think it appropriate for the auditors to inferentially impose a due diligence investigation duty on the Audit Committee for the benefit of the auditors. In addition to this concern, the Institute accounting personnel also had several issues with the auditors.

Linda Arntzenius: When Phillip Griffiths was Director, there was another incident, the Piet Hut<sup>14</sup> affair. Can you tell me about it?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, the Piet Hut issue had been at the Institute for a long time before I joined the Board and I was not aware of it until after I joined. Professor Hut was on the faculty of the School of Natural Sciences, which I believe had six or so faculty members at the time. My understanding was that the permanent faculty in the School, other than Professor Hut, had been of

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<sup>14</sup> Piet Hut (1952- ), Member in the School of Natural Sciences, 1981-1984; ), Professor in the School of Natural Sciences, 1985-2002; Professor in the Program in Interdisciplinary Studies, 2002- .

the view for some time that Professor Hut's areas of interest did not fit with the School and some years prior to my joining the Board there had been an agreement entered into with Professor Hut, with the full concurrence of the permanent faculty, that he would retire from the Institute on a set date in the future – and that date was reached during my tenure on the Board.

But at some point prior to the set date, Professor Hut indicated a change in his position: he did not wish to retire from the Institute and, either then or later, he retained counsel. At some point, the Institute also retained New Jersey counsel since New Jersey law was the applicable law.

At some point, Trustee Rick Black and I were asked by the Executive Committee of the Board and/or the Director to meet with Professor Hut. Professor Hut meanwhile made it known that he wished to meet with the Chairman of the Institute Board, Jim Wolfensohn, who was at the time President of the World Bank. Such a meeting was held in Jim's office in Washington, D.C., with Rick Black and myself attending. Professor Hut made his presentation, which I could not fully follow, but I believe his position was that he was entitled to tenure and that he had been pressured to enter into the agreement with the Institute.

Rick Black and I met with Professor Hut on one or two other occasions. Professor Hut, while sticking to his position, indicated that it was or might be acceptable to him to separate from the School of Natural Sciences provided that his professorship at the Institute continued and he would run a separate program unaffiliated with the School of Natural Sciences.

Professor Hut commenced a campaign, I imagine by telephone, correspondence, email and/or meetings, with academicians arguing that the issue was one of academic freedom and tenure. I believe that this resulted in pressures being brought to bear by a number of academicians upon the Institute's Director and faculty.

In any event, the matter was resolved along the lines of Professor Hut's suggestion at his meeting with Rick Black and myself – that he would withdraw from the School of Natural Sciences and would continue as a Professor at the Institute unaffiliated with any School and would head a Program of Interdisciplinary Studies, which, in addition to Professor Hut, currently has, I believe, three Visitors in it.

Linda Arntzenius: Tell me. Do you think that the Institute would be better served without a permanent faculty or with a permanent faculty that is limited to certain tenure periods such as members of the Board are limited to certain periods?

Immanuel Kohn: No. I don't think so at all. I think the Institute is unique, and one of the things that makes it unique is that it has an outstanding permanent faculty of leading scholars, without teaching responsibilities, in a variety of fields and areas. I believe that if tenure were not available, the quality of the faculty would over time deteriorate since universities' senior faculty do

have tenure. If the Institute were not able to offer tenure it would be at a disadvantage in the competition for the best scholars. Moreover, I suspect that any proposal to abolish tenure generally would be a non-starter with the faculty and would be very disruptive. Any School faculty is of course free to propose that any particular professorship in its School should in the future be on a fixed term basis – as was done with the Kennan Professorship at its inception in the School of Historical Studies.

Linda Arntzenius: But there have been these two instances when – with Bellah, it was one school was happy with the choice, but the other schools were not, and then you have, with Piet Hut, one school began happily with the choice and then decided later it wasn't such a good choice.

Immanuel Kohn: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Is there any way to safeguard against such things happening like this?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, I don't know if there is any 100 percent guaranteed solution to the problem, but the fact that you've had that happen so seldom, is significant. In the case of Bellah, that really dealt with a particular –

Linda Arntzenius: Ah, the individual.

Immanuel Kohn: Individual. I think that was more a fight over the faculty vis-à-vis the Director, and their respective prerogatives.

And so I think that there really has been only this one instance in all the decades that the Institute has been functioning. And in recent times, at least since I've been on the Board, great care has been taken in the selection of permanent faculty and procedures have been put into place, including consultation with outside experts in the field and careful and thorough screening, to make the process as trustworthy as possible. Perhaps the most effective safeguard is that the faculty of the School involved are fully aware of the negative consequences to their School and the Institute of making a selection they will later regret.

There used to be a mandatory retirement age of 70. You no longer legally can have that. But I think that, it continues to be customary to voluntarily retire, with some slight deviations, at 70.

I would note that the quality of the present faculty, and I believe each faculty member in each of the Schools, is today truly outstanding and is, as far as I can tell, recognized as such by the academic community both nationally and internationally. I would also note that, upon retirement, it is common for retired faculty to retain their offices and continue working in their fields and being members of the Institute community. This to me is yet another indication of how well the Institute is performing its goal as envisaged by Flexner and also how attached the faculty are to the Institute and to the environment created by the Institute for their work.

- Linda Arntzenius: Well, then let me come to ask you a few questions about the Directors that you've known. Perhaps you can comment on Harry Woolf. I don't know if you knew Murph Goldberger?<sup>15</sup>
- Immanuel Kohn: I did.
- Linda Arntzenius: Phillip, of course, and Peter.
- Immanuel Kohn: Yes. Well, I think that both Phillip and Peter, and their spouses, are just extraordinary. In the case of Phillip, the School of Mathematics made clear its respect for him by inviting Phillip when he was first offered the position of Director to become a professor in its faculty when he retired as Director, which is what happened. Similarly, Peter was a leading scholar in mathematical physics who had been a member at the Institute twice, once in the School of Mathematics and the other time in the School of Natural Sciences – and I am quite sure that the faculties of both Schools had and have a profound respect for Peter as a scholar and this is borne out by the fact that Peter upon his retirement next year will become a faculty member in the School of Natural Sciences.
- In the case of Harry Woolf, who I think was a fine person, I'm not sure he had the respect of the faculty to the same extent that Peter and Phillip have. I think Murph Goldberger was only here for about four years and so it's really hard for me to judge it. But certainly, I think both Phillip and Peter have been extraordinarily productive and have added a lot to the Institute and have had outstanding relations with the faculty.
- Linda Arntzenius: So you think the Institute is getting it right?
- Immanuel Kohn: Yes.
- Linda Arntzenius: At last?
- Immanuel Kohn: Well – no, no, no.
- Linda Arntzenius: I'm saying that. Sorry.
- Immanuel Kohn: Not "at last" but I think you have – you know, I never knew the earlier people. That is, Flexner or Aydelotte<sup>16</sup> or Oppenheimer<sup>17</sup> or Kaysen. But I think that the smaller the faculty is, probably the more difficult situations may arise. Of course when Flexner was there, the faculty was very small and there were people of very strong views respecting the Institute on the faculty and that may have made it more difficult.

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<sup>15</sup> Marvin L. Goldberger (1922-2014), Member in the School of Natural Sciences, 1966-1970, 1976-1977; IAS Director, 1987-1991.

<sup>16</sup> Frank Aydelotte (1880-1956), IAS Director, 1939-1947.

<sup>17</sup> J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904-1967), IAS Director, 1947-1966; Professor in the School of Natural Sciences, 1966-1967.

Linda Arntzenius: May I ask you what changes you've seen over the years of your involvement with the Institute?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, the establishment of biological sciences is probably the strongest example of change. And of course, there, instead of founding a new school, it was made part of Natural Sciences, which made it a lot easier to accomplish. And that was very well done, and they didn't do it overnight.

I believe that they first explored the possibility of having a new School of Biology. On an experimental basis, they invited a leading scholar in the field of biology to join the faculty for a period but, after a time, questions were raised by some faculty as to the subject matter focused on by the new professor, and he then accepted an offer of a professorship from Harvard. Recognizing the difficulties of forming a new School and the disagreements that caused problems when the School of Social Science was founded, the concept of a new School was abandoned and it was decided to try a new approach: the School of Natural Sciences determined to include systems biology in their School and were successful in having Arnie Levine,<sup>18</sup> President of Rockefeller University, join the School faculty as the first professor in systems biology.

Linda Arntzenius: So do you think the Institute will survive for another 80 years?

Immanuel Kohn: Yes, I certainly hope so. I think it will.

Linda Arntzenius: Are there any developments that you would like to see in the future?

Immanuel Kohn: No developments that come to mind. I think the Institute is functioning extraordinarily well.

I do believe that it is important to try to maintain the compensation of the permanent faculty at a level that is generally competitive with top compensation at leading universities. Not because the dollars as such are necessarily of great importance to the individuals the Institute wishes to attract but because compensation is, I think, often viewed in academia as a significant factor in the reputation and prestige of a scholarly institution. I know that this is a challenge for the Institute whose endowment isn't large when compared to the endowments of leading universities. And unlike universities, the Institute does not have rich alumnae to draw upon. Nor does it have students who pay tuition. Rather, it has members to whom it pays stipends. But I know the Trustees are very cognizant of the importance of faculty compensation.

I recollect when my father was a member at the Institute, either in the late '40s or mid-'50s, my being told that the Institute paid its permanent faculty \$15,000 a year at a time when Harvard paid its full professors between \$10,000 and \$12,000 (with only a small handful of university professors receiving \$15,000). I also recollect that some ten years or so ago a college administrator, I believe the Dean of Harvard College, commenting

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<sup>18</sup> Arnold J. Levine (1939- ), Professor in the School of Natural Sciences, 2003-2011; Emeritus Professor, 2011- .

on various aspects of the Institute at a Trustees' meeting, remarked that the Institute was not then really competitive compensation-wise with what leading universities were paying their top professors. Since then, the Institute has increased faculty salaries to amounts which I am told are generally competitive. I think it is something that should continue to be focused on and I am confident it will be.

Linda Arntzenius: Now you told me how you had come to be on the Board. Did you bring any others onto the Board?

Immanuel Kohn: No.

Linda Arntzenius: There's two questions I'd like to ask. Again, one about Directors. One about Chairmans of the Board. A very general question about what qualities make a good Director?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, again, I really do think that, perhaps, the most important one is he/she have the respect of the faculty, both as a scholar and as a human being, and that the Director consults with the faculty and is respectful of their views and their authority. It is obviously helpful, in this regard, if the Director has the respect and admiration of the academic community generally - in this country and internationally.

I think the second quality is the Director's ability to get along with and impress individuals and institutions that are being approached for financial support for the Institute and individuals whom a School faculty wants to attract to their School.

And, thirdly, I think he/she needs to be a very dedicated and effective administrator.

I think those are the most important qualities.

Linda Arntzenius: And when it comes to Chairmans of the Board, what – you've known Dilworth, I suppose, and Wolfensohn and Simonyi. What makes a good Chairman of the Board?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, I didn't really know Dilworth as Chairman of the Board. Wolfensohn, I think was extraordinary as the Chairman. I think his personality and his way of dealing with people is really absolutely extraordinary and – because he was Chairman from '86 to – so it must have been certainly over 20 years. Wasn't he?

Linda Arntzenius: It was 24, I believe.<sup>19</sup>

Immanuel Kohn: And in all that time, he always handled himself extraordinarily well, and he also was somebody who was extraordinarily articulate and could talk at any time, totally extemporaneously - and with a great deal of charm and humor.

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<sup>19</sup> James Wolfensohn was Chairman of the Institute for Advanced Study's Board of Trustees from 1986 until 2007, 21 years.

And so he was extremely good at that. There was a time when he, I think correctly, thought that the history faculty was not all it could have been – in the way that they interacted and so on. In his own very diplomatic way, he took action, and I think that the history faculty is now extraordinarily respected and work together in a productive manner and also work with other faculties, primarily the social science faculty.

So he was extraordinarily good in a lot of respects, and he was also very good at getting a good Board of Trustees, including getting some people – a handful perhaps, but that's perhaps all you need - who were both very good people and also very wealthy and willing to give significant amounts of support.

Linda Arntzenius: The thought just occurred to me that there must be enormous competition from all sorts of other boards, and other institutions seeking those same people. If you're looking to build a Board of Trustees and you want someone who is supportive of your cause and has means in order to support your cause and is willing to do so, there must be enormous competition. So it might be quite a remarkable thing to do.

Immanuel Kohn: Well, yes. Take Mike Bloomberg, who was a Trustee and a very, very generous one, both during his time as Trustee and thereafter. The Institute was, of course, only one of many philanthropies that he was very generous to. My recollection is that the news media have indicated that his annual giving for years has exceeded \$200 million. I do not know who or what attracted him to the Institute Board but I would suspect that Jim Wolfensohn and Marty Lieberman, who were both his partners at Salomon, had a hand in it.

And we're extraordinarily fortunate to have Charles Simonyi who has just been incredibly generous to the Institute and has a real interest and motivation with respect to the Institute. And, again, I don't know who first attracted him, but when he came on to the Board, there was another gentleman who was also from Microsoft and had made a lot of money. But he didn't have the same interest, and he didn't give the same large amounts of money as Simonyi did. And Charles is not only extremely generous but also extremely effective and dedicated to the Institute.

Linda Arntzenius: Is the Institute living beyond its means?

Immanuel Kohn: No, I don't think it's living beyond its means. Historically for many years the Institute did very limited fundraising because the original amount of money that was contributed to the Institute by the Bambergers in 1930, had been well managed and had grown, and there really wasn't that amount of time and effort put into fundraising, but that's radically changed in more recent years.

And certainly, Simonyi is just a wonderful example of that, but there are a number of others. Jim Simons, of course, has been very generous to the



Institute, and there are others who have been and continue to be extremely generous.

Linda Arntzenius: Tell me about Leon Levy.

Immanuel Kohn: Leon Levy was an extraordinary man. He contributed to the Institute in many ways. Let me mention two. One, he was very generous to the Institute, and secondly, he managed the Institute's money with great skill and remarkable success. He was for many years Chairman of the Finance Committee as well as President of the Corporation. I did not have the privilege of serving under him on the Finance Committee – but of course I watched with admiration the investment results and heard his reports to the Board and I attended various meetings of the Finance Committee. I remember one Finance Committee meeting where, soon after the Euro was launched and was trading about 80 U.S. cents to one Euro, Leon proposed investing a significant portion of the endowment (I think \$100 million) in Euros. A number of the Committee members raised various doubts and misgivings but Leon (with the approval of the Committee) made the investment although in a lesser amount than he had originally proposed. The Euro was of course, to put it mildly, a very successful investment.

The meetings of the Board of Trustees as well as the Board Committee meetings continue to be held in the marvelous Leon Levy and Shelby White [Leon's widow] Room, named in recognition of Leon and Shelby's generosity to the Institute.

Following Leon's death, Shelby White joined the Board and has continued her great generosity and dedication to the Institute. She is responsible for the wonderful landscaping which is taking place at the Institute and which was very sorely needed to make up for many years of neglect and failure to follow the original landscaping vision. It is a vast and much needed project for which she has provided the leadership and the financing. The same is true of the Archives project, with which you are of course well acquainted and of which this interview is a small part. Without Shelby, neither of these important projects would have been undertaken or financed.

Linda Arntzenius: Have you ever read Flexner's essay, "The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge"?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, yes, I have.

Linda Arntzenius: Yes, it's very interesting.

Immanuel Kohn: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: I wanted to ask you, most of the members of the Board are goal-oriented business people, and I wonder if you think there's a real understanding of the purpose of the Institute among the Board members. I hope you don't think that's an impertinent question.

Immanuel Kohn: No, no. It's not impertinent. I think that there have been a very small number of Board members who have come and gone who were not as dedicated as Board members generally have been. I remember that there was one former Trustee who, on one occasion, raised a question of whether, in the digital age, there was a real need for a campus and whether the Institute could function more efficiently and effectively without a campus by utilizing the computer, the Internet and other modern technological tools.

But in my experience, the overwhelming majority of Trustees have been very dedicated to and enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the Institute and they have been and are individuals who have taken their role as Trustees very seriously indeed. The present Board comprises individuals who have accomplished much in the academic world (for example, among others, Martin Rees, Harold Shapiro, Andrew Wiles and Vartan Gregorian) and as well in the business and financial worlds (as a few examples, Charles Simonyi, who was Chief Architect at Microsoft and is presently CEO of International Software Corporation; Jeff Bezos, founder and CEO of Amazon; Roger Ferguson, CEO of TIAA-CREF and formerly Deputy Chairman of the Federal Reserve; Peter Kann, former CEO of Dow Jones and publisher of the Wall Street Journal; David Rubenstein, co-founder and Managing Director of the Carlyle Group; Jim Schiro, former Chairman of Zurich Financial and of Price Waterhouse; Eric Schmidt, Chairman and CEO of Google; and Jim Simons, Chairman of Renaissance Technologies).

Many of the present Trustees, with full appreciation of the Institute's purpose, have been and are extraordinarily generous to the Institute. For example, since the financial crisis hit and the Institute's endowment, like the endowments of practically all leading educational institutions, suffered significant losses, a small group of Trustees have donated \$10 million annually for a three year period so as to reduce the annual draw on the endowment by an identical amount. And a group of Trustees have already pledged as a matching grant \$100 million towards a new \$200 million capital drive to replenish and grow the endowment. And, of course, what you quoted from Flexner about the purpose of the Institute has been quoted over and over again and the Trustees not only have heard about it many times, they are fully committed to that purpose.

And the substance of it is in all the publications that the Institute puts out. So I don't think there's any misunderstanding on the part of the Board, and when they get involved with the Institute, I think they're, in my experience, very supportive of the Institute.

I think, since Kaysen's time, the Trustees are extremely sensitive to the faculty and the sensitivities of the four faculties. So I don't think that's been an issue.

Linda Arntzenius: Talking about fundraising, do you think the Institute makes enough of its connection with Einstein?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, I don't know. I think they certainly use Einstein's name a lot, as they should, and I think that Einstein is the one name that comes to everybody's mind when they think of the Institute for Advanced Study.

Maybe there are more things that they could do with the Einstein connection, but also – you know, Einstein's great discoveries were made when he was a young man, which is now approximately a century ago – well, 1905 and 1915 were the two big years. So I think one of the things you really want to emphasize is the quality of the faculty that's been more recent and their achievements.

I do think that we should continue to emphasize the Einstein connection, but I don't think that there's been any dearth of emphasizing that.

Linda Arntzenius: The Institute has an Artist-in-Residence program which brings humanities onto the campus. Have you ever thought that there might be an expansion towards a fifth school in art and literature? Has that ever been discussed?

Immanuel Kohn: No, I'd never thought – I'd never really given that any thought.

Linda Arntzenius: Again, staying with the early days and Flexner, do you agree with Flexner that the sort of speculative research that goes on here needs a special environment?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, I don't know if it necessarily needs a special environment, but certainly the Institute's environment is indeed very conducive to the sort of research and thinking and exploration that's been here at the Institute.

Linda Arntzenius: Do you think there's an optimum size?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, I think, that's a question that's very difficult for me to answer. But I think the size of the Institute now is very, very good for the purposes that it has, and I think that, every now and then, it will be very rare, I suppose that there comes a situation where there is a coming together, a congruence of some new important area which fits in with what the Institute is doing, as was the case with systems biology.

That's a very good thing. But I think, when you do it, you need to do it with great care. It takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of thought. It takes a lot of effort to get it right, and I think the Institute has gotten it right with biology.

Linda Arntzenius: You and your wife, Vera, have established the Hans Kohn membership in Historical Studies. Unfortunately, that came after your father had passed on. So what would he think about that?

Immanuel Kohn: I don't know. I know he was a great admirer of the Institute and I would guess he would be very pleased and honored.

- Linda Arntzenius: So what now is your association with the Institute? How often do you come to campus? What events do you attend?
- Immanuel Kohn: Well, you know, I'm a Trustee Emeritus which means that I'm invited to attend the meetings of the Trustees and the committees to which all Trustees are invited. Since I retired, I think I've only missed one Trustees meeting. The one thing that Emeritus Trustees don't have the right to do is to vote, but in all the time I've been associated with the Institute, I don't recall there ever having been a divided vote.
- I don't really go to the Executive Committee or Finance Committee meetings which are held in New York, but I did for a while.
- So I continue to attend Board and most local committee meetings. I continue to give some support to the Institute, and I enjoy the atmosphere here. And I enjoy the concerts and so on that they put on, and the dining room and other activities, the lectures.
- Linda Arntzenius: Do you serve on any other boards?
- Immanuel Kohn: No, not – well –
- Linda Arntzenius: In the past?
- Immanuel Kohn: In the past, yes. Yes, I've been on some corporate boards and/or, in the case of some client corporations, attended all board meetings. I was on the advisory board for the Princeton Symphony. I don't do that anymore. Maybe one or two others like that.
- Linda Arntzenius: Well I've come to the end of my questions. I have one more: I wonder if there's a question that you had expected me to ask that I haven't perhaps asked you?
- Immanuel Kohn: No, I hadn't really thought of what questions you would ask. I mean I knew they were about the Institute generally. And so I just brought these catalogues along because they list the people who were Trustees, Directors and faculty members of the Institute.
- Linda Arntzenius: Would you like to take a look at the list and see if there's anyone there who stands out in your memory that you would like to share a story about or comment on?
- Immanuel Kohn: Well, let me take a look. Think which of these –
- Linda Arntzenius: I'm interviewing Marina von Neumann Whitman next Saturday. She'll be coming to the Board meeting. And if there's any others that you think I should speak to or any others who are not Trustees. You know, anyone that you think...
- Immanuel Kohn: I don't know. I assume you've interviewed the living faculty members, both past and present. As well as Trustees both past and present, and,

obviously, the past directors who are still alive. I don't think many of them are alive anymore.

Linda Arntzenius: Murph Goldberger I think is still alive.

Immanuel Kohn: Goldberger is still alive.

Linda Arntzenius: And I have Rachel Gray on my list as well.

Immanuel Kohn: Oh, yes. Well, of course, and I think she's a wonderful person. I think she fit in so well at the Institute. I think her manner of conducting herself, including with respect to fundraising, she did so well and with such tact. She's a very remarkable person.

Linda Arntzenius: Did you know Patsy Labalme?

Immanuel Kohn: Yes, I did. Her husband, of course, is still alive, and she was – yes, she was another extraordinary person, and she, of course, was very active in the Institute. And she, also, of course, was a leading authority on Italian art.

Linda Arntzenius: Yes, a student of Felix Gilbert.<sup>20</sup>

Immanuel Kohn: Yes, but I never really knew Felix Gilbert.

I don't know if now that Mario Draghi is apparently going to be the head of the European Bank, whether he will do the same as Jim Wolfensohn and stay on the Board. Jim stayed as Chairman of the Board for the ten years he was head of the World Bank.

Linda Arntzenius: That must have been quite remarkable to do both.

Immanuel Kohn: Yes, that really was, well, it was remarkable. Mike Bloomberg – I think this was the last of the philanthropic boards he was on that he gave up when he became mayor of New York.

Linda Arntzenius: So what is it about the Institute that grabs people and keeps them?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, I don't know if I can express this, but I think it is the atmosphere at the Institute that does it and what the Institute strives, and I think very successfully, to achieve. A lot of it goes back to the quote you had from Flexner.

Linda Arntzenius: Had you ever had aspirations to become a scholar like your father?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, yes. In fact, when I left on my traveling fellowship in 1949, I wasn't sure whether I was going to go law school - I'd been accepted at Yale – or whether I was going to go and get a Ph.D. at Harvard. I still left my options open because my first summer in law school, I went and took

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<sup>20</sup> Felix Gilbert (1905-1991), Member in the School of Economics and Politics, 1939-1943; Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1962-1975; Emeritus Professor, 1975-1991.

some courses at Harvard which still would have counted for my Ph.D., and my father was teaching up at Harvard at that point. But I then decided that I'd do the law.

Linda Arntzenius: And Vera, your wife. Does much of your social life or any of your social life revolve around the Institute?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, yes.

Linda Arntzenius: In what respect?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, you know, we've been friendly with a number of the faculty members as well as the Directors, and also we've participated in a number of the events at the Institute.

As you know, every one of the four faculties has a Trustee on the board – not one that's on the faculty at the Institute, but one that's noted in their field.

Linda Arntzenius: So there's a Trustee on the Academic Affairs Committee?

Immanuel Kohn: Well, the Academic Trustees are on the Academic Affairs Committee. But they're full Trustees. They get designated, I believe, by their School faculty, that is, for example, the Historical Studies faculty has on the Board as their trustee, Professor David A. Hollinger<sup>21</sup> from Berkeley, who is a very noted historian at Berkeley.

Linda Arntzenius: So each school will have a sort of designated Trustee representing them on the Board.

Immanuel Kohn: Well, yes. In form, they all get elected by the Board, I believe, but the arrangement, I believe, is that they are in fact designated by the School faculty.

Martin Rees,<sup>22</sup> at one time, was the Academic Trustee for the Natural Sciences. He's presently on the Board but not, I believe, as an Academic Trustee.

Andrew Wiles,<sup>23</sup> I think, may have started out as an Academic Trustee. I'm not sure what his status is now.

Linda Arntzenius: And that would be for math.

Immanuel Kohn: That'd be for mathematics.

Linda Arntzenius: You never served that function for any particular school?

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<sup>21</sup> David A. Hollinger (1941- ), Member in the School of Historical Studies, 1977-1978, 1999.

<sup>22</sup> Martin Rees (1942- ), Member in the School of Natural Sciences, 1969-1970, 1973, 1975, 1982, 1992-1993, 1996.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Wiles (1953- ), Member in the School of Mathematics, 1981, 1992, 1995-2004; Visitor, 2007-2011.

- Immanuel Kohn: No, and I couldn't. I wouldn't be qualified to do it.
- Linda Arntzenius: Right. So it would have to be someone like Andrew Wiles.
- Immanuel Kohn: Yes and I don't really know what the mechanics of that are. You have to inquire from somebody else who does know.
- Linda Arntzenius: I will. Thank you.
- Immanuel Kohn: The president of Brazil used to be on the board. I don't think he is anymore. What was his name? <sup>24</sup>
- Linda Arntzenius: Well, that's quite a list – isn't it – when you look at it.
- Immanuel Kohn: Yes and there are some like Mario Draghi who was the head of the Bank of Italy and so on, but he was also a partner of an investment bank for awhile. And they've continued to have a lawyer on the Board, Victoria Bjorklund presently.
- Linda Arntzenius: Have you seen any changes in the makeup of the Board that have been significant?
- Immanuel Kohn: Well, I don't know. In recent years some additional very wealthy people have joined the Board, and I believe they've all been people who have worked out in the sense of really taking the Institute very, very seriously and also being very generous.
- Linda Arntzenius: Yes. Thank you very much for participating in the Oral History Project.
- Immanuel Kohn: Thank you.
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<sup>24</sup> Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1931- ), Member in the School of Social Science, 1975-1976, 1978.