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As I reviewed your program for the week, I was impressed by its breadth and its apparent intensity. You have carved out an important piece of work for yourselves. It will tax your power of concentration and your facility for understanding. For each of you who meets the challenge successfully, it should be one of the most interesting weeks in your personal process of education.

As individuals involved in education, we must always ask: how do people learn? Why do they learn? It has always amazed me that we who make a profession out of education do not ask those questions more often. It is frightening when we look at the assumptions many have made for generations. It may be true that our educational systems in the western world have contributed to one of the world's strong civilizations. But the incompleteness of our knowledge about the learning process finds us in a quandary when millions of people subjected to our formal education system do not learn as they are supposed to.

For a new college like William James, no subject could be more appropriate for a synoptic lecture series than the work, thought, and philosophy of Jean Piaget. The complexity of modern society requires greater self-knowledge by man. Simple societies often permit the luxury of ignorance. A complex, rapidly changing society requires new knowledge, and consequently greater learning.
In order to survive, a modern society must encourage people to aspire towards a goal that will provide personal fulfillment without being destructive to the society as a whole. The aspirations of people, the learning opportunities for people to gain the self-knowledge and skills in order to aspire, and the personal and career situations in which people live out their aspirations must be complimentary to one another, in phase with one another. It appears to me that the questions Professor Piaget asks and the answers he is finding are as important as anything else in our society when we try to have experience fulfill aspirations and illicit healthy aspirations for our society.