

American scholar and editor initiates debate at conference

SHEREE-LEE OLSON

At age 81, Dr. Mortimer J. Adler, fiery autodidact and "philosopher at large", was a good bet for the most controversial speaker at York's current conference on the future of university education. That is certainly what York President Ian Macdonald and Master Maurice Elliott had in mind when they chose him for the opening presentation on Tuesday night.

Speaking "prescriptively rather than predictively", Adler summarized, for an audience of mostly York faculty, his recent book, *The Paideia Proposal*, before going on to outline its consequences for university education.

Radical reversal

"Paideia" is the Greek root for the word "encyclopedia", and signifies knowledge in the general rather than the specialized sense. Adler proposed a radical "reversal" of elementary and secondary schooling whereby all electives except for the choice of a second language would be eliminated in favour of a standardized compulsory curriculum that is "humanistic" or general, rather than "vocational" or specialized.

Far from simply a return to basics, said Adler, Paideia would make a truly democratic school system possible for the first time. Said Adler, "We are fomenting a revolution."

With the help of preschool and remedial tutelage for those in need, all children would complete the same high-quality curriculum, thus ensuring a common cultural language and shared experience.



Macdonald

Calling it schooling rather than education Adler said *The Paideia Proposal* would prepare children for post-secondary education and lifelong adult learning by teaching them to think. This could be achieved, he claimed, by instituting two new teaching methods in addition to the basic, but least important process of didactic lecturing that goes on now. Lecturing provides basic subject matter but merely requires memori-

zation. Comparing intellectual habits to physical ones, Adler proposed a programme of "coaching" where the linguistic, mathematical and perceptual skills that make up thinking are developed and strengthened by much supervised practice. Second and most important, pupils would undergo "the enlargement of the understanding of basic ideas and values" by means of the Socratic method, where the teacher becomes "the questioner, not the teller." This kind of learning, said Adler, "is almost totally absent in U.S. schools."

Adler described the goal of *The Paideia Proposal* as three-fold: to prepare an individual for "the duties of citizenship, the demands of work,

No community

and the obligation to make the most of his or her self." The first 12 years of basic schooling is the place to do this because only young people have the time and patience required. "Age 18 to 22 is too near the firing line--by then one feels compelled to specialize." Furthermore, because of the speed of technological change, "particularized teaching in schools is a waste of time."

Admittedly, said Adler, children come to schools with different intellectual capacities. But he was adamant that "if each is filled to capacity with the same type of substance," they are qualitatively equal. "My colleagues and I take



President H. Ian Macdonald spoke with members of the conference audience over wine and cheese Tuesday night.

democracy seriously," he said. "There are always going to be failures but you've got to aim for a hundred per cent."

Adler's application of *The Paideia Proposal* to university education was less extreme. "There is no intellectual community in our universities at all," he said. "The elective system has ruined it completely. But we can't abandon it." Instead, he offered a single measure to "overcome the barbarism of specialization". He would add one required minor for all students, to be taken during all four years. Constituting a "common core of learning", it would involve participation by the entire faculty and remedy the present situation where "not a single undergraduate or graduate class has all read a book in common." Without any common

intellectual experience, students fall into small talk.

After 37 books and 60 year of thinking about learning, Adler can sound brusque when he disagrees. Asked how part-time adult students would fit in his core course he said, "I do not think adults should get degrees. Degrees are for children. Schooling should be over in youth. Adults should have adult learning." This makes sense in light of his repeated statements that "no one is ever educated in school. Youth is an insuperable obstacle to education. Education takes a lifetime."

But Adler's democratic future can never be achieved in a world at war. "We cannot produce both the instruments of destruction and the goods of civilization." This remark, like the talk as a whole, drew warm and sustained applause.

Criteria for membership in Jewish community explored

Social circumstance dictate law

BRYAN HENRY

"The rise of Christianity was due entirely to the fact that men were admitted to this Jewish sect without circumcision." Thus, David Daube, Emeritus Professor of Law, University of California (Berkeley), began a provocative, informative and witty lecture on "Conversion and Jewish Identity".

Daube explained that at the time of the early Christian Church, Judaism "exercised an enormous attraction" and had thousands of converts. But because male converts had to be circumcised--an operation then performed without the benefit of anaesthetics and with primitive instruments--almost all the converts

No circumcision

were women. When this Jewish sect--as Christianity was at the time--began accepting converts without circumcision, they instantly gained thousands of male converts.

If not for this circumstance, said Daube, Christianity might have continued as a Jewish sect but would never have become a world religion.

The body of Daube's lecture was concerned with why whether a child is Jewish today depends upon the whether his or her mother is Jewish.

Daube explained that before the Babylonian exile, a woman's nationality and religion (and in Jewish law and religion, religion and nationality are not separate) was automatically that of her husband. If a woman married a Jew, then she was Jewish. And if a Jewess married a non-Jew, she was no longer Jewish. Whether a child was born Jewish, therefore, depended upon whether his or her father was Jewish.

According to Daube, the first change came during the Babylonian exile. Because the Jewish community was then surrounded by a highly civilized non-Jewish culture, it became likely that a Jew who married a Babylonian woman would be drawn into the majority culture.

To combat this, it became the rule

that a woman had to document her willingness to join the Jewish community by being baptized. Through baptism, the convert becomes a party to the Sinaitic covenant and subject to Jewish law.

Daube said that baptism soon became a requirement for male, as well as for female converts.

He pointed out that the introduction of baptism meant that women could convert on their own, and that to be Jewish, a child's parents both had to be Jewish. Also, baptism meant that agreement with Jewish ideals became a criterion for conversion.

Through baptism a convert was believed to become, literally, a new person with the result that his or her family relations no longer existed. Thus, in Jewish law, and in the early Church, if you were re-born, religious incest laws were not applicable.

The rabbis ruled that in order to avoid bringing ill repute upon the community, Jewish converts were obliged to follow the incest prohibitions of the surrounding non-Jewish community. Daube said that the Church fathers made a similar ruling.

Daube speculated that if lax incest laws spread from Sweden (where half brothers and sisters are now allowed to marry), that 'incestuous' marriages between Jewish converts could occur.

Daube explained that the present rule whereby a child is Jewish only if his mother is Jewish came about as a result of Roman terror exercised against the Jews in the second century of the common era.

Roman soldiers raped many Jewish women and, consequently, there were many children born who had a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father. For both humanitarian and political reasons, the new rule that only a mother need be Jewish was introduced. But it took over 300 years or more for the rule to achieve universal acceptance. In the interim, the status of many Jews was

in doubt. By some, a Jew with a pagan father was considered a second class Jew, by others he was considered fully Jewish, while still others did not consider him a Jew at all.

During the question period following the lecture, it was suggested that a similar situation exists today in that someone converted by either a Conservative or a Reform rabbi is not considered a Jew by Orthodoxy. The problem will be further complicated if the Reform Movement begins to recognise as Jews those who have only a Jewish father. These Jews will not be recognised by either the Conservatives or the Orthodox.

Laws may change again

Daube said that in ancient times rabbis often counselled Jews with doubtful status to simply move to a community where they were not known. But he said, "Today we are followed around by credit cards and this is not so easy."

Daube suggested that many problems arising from Jewish law could be solved by exercising "the wisdom of not asking too many questions."

Daube also noted that, just as in the past Jewish law has changed in response to changing circumstances, so now, with the establishment of Israel, Jewish law could change again.

The law requiring, that to be Jewish by birth, a child's mother must be Jewish, resulted from assimilation becoming a threat to the Jewish community. But, since the majority culture in Israel is Jewish, assimilation is not a threat. Thus, said Daube if Israel ever gains a measure of security for an extended period, the law which says that to be Jewish by birth, the child's mother must be Jewish, could lapse.

Daube noted that in Israel, laws regarding the admission of converts are already being applied much more loosely.

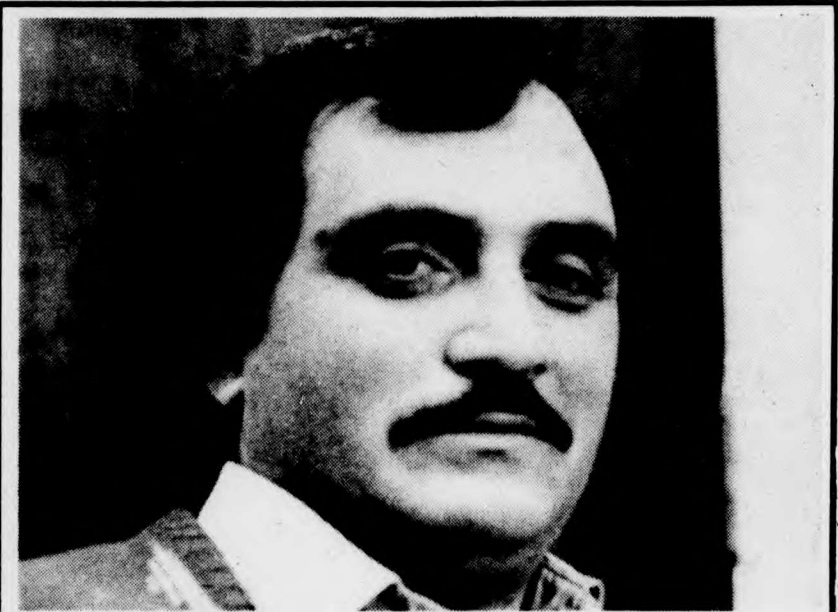


Photo: Nigel Turner

FACULTY FOCUS:

Prof directs translations

PAUL PIVATO

Professor Claude Tatilon, Director of the translation programme at Glendon, wants to stress the professional orientation of the programme, now in its fourth year. "It's often difficult to make a university understand professional training is necessary," explains Tatilon.

Glendon's is the only translation programme in Toronto to offer a degree. Tatilon hopes the programme will eventually offer a master's degree. "We have enough students," notes Tatilon. "As it is now, they have to go elsewhere." The major stumbling block for a graduate programme, however, is fundg.

Tatilon underlines the dual nature of the translation programme. "We have theoretical courses, but we also have more practical courses," says Tatilon. However it is the applied research which gives the programme its distinctive character. Tatilon is busy trying to generate contacts in the professional markets. Simpson-Sears and the Ontario government, for example, have proven to be excellent training grounds for on-the-job employment. Tatilon eventually plans to give credits for such apprenticeship work.

Originally from Marseilles, Tatilon came to Canada in 1968. He taught French and French linguistics at Western for four years. At Glendon since 1972, Tatilon still teaches some language and linguistics courses.

Professional translators assist in the programme, which has slightly under 100 students, who are divided almost evenly between anglophone and francophone. All students have a knowledge of both languages, yet are trained in their mother tongue.

At present, explains Tatilon, the job market is fiercely competitive. However, he can see the day when Ontario will become an officially bilingual province. "It would certainly open up a lot of opportunities," says Tatilon. Yet Tatilon is confident that the three-year programme, with interdisciplinary studies and sound practical training, will produce well-qualified graduates in the field of translation.