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University of Massachusetts at Boston

Zahn Speaks On the Historical Moment and Values of Society

Prof. Richard Robbins, Sociology, summed up the recent Distinguished Lecture by colleague Prof. Gordon Zahn as a "thread of compassion and commitment" that reflected upon Zahn as being a humanist as well as a professional sociologist.

This was the second in the series of lectures sponsored by the Office of Graduate Studies.

"The essential characteristics of the historical/cultural moment in which we live are only too familiar to anyone who has read the latest headlines or watched last evening's television news," he said.

Even if it is an exaggeration to speak of the contemporary family as being in a state of total collapse, "it is in serious difficulty" and some of its traditional functions are not being performed, or at best are performed erratically.

And the transfer of functions--from family and self to other institutions are on the increase and is producing something that "is no Orwellian fantasy."

We must reach "behind the statistics and the depressing details to the causes and circumstances which produced the grim consequences we are now forced to endure," Prof. Zahn stated.

"The answer must be sought in the realm of values, especially those values upon which our society rests and from which so much of our daily life, whether we are aware of it or not, derives its meaning."

He said a breakdown or a sudden change on society's core values "can mean collapse and chaos for society itself."

He cited research of Pitirim Sorokin, whose works fell out of favor for a time and, said Zahn, are getting serious attention again which in itself could be a good sign for the future.

Sorokin sees a cyclical movement repeatedly shifting from one to another of three dominant value orientations: the idealistic, the ideational, and the sensate.

"Our moment", according to Sorokin in the 1940s and Zahn as "sensate," is reflected in our architecture of the modern urban skyline dotted with "banks, insurance companies, transitional corporations and vast governmental bureaucracies over our life."

Zahn Speaks On the Historical
Moment and Values of Society
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Prof. Zahn reflected on Sorokin's thesis that there must be "a complete change of the contemporary mentality, a fundamental transformation of our system of values, and the profoundest modification of our conduct toward other men, cultural values and the world at large."

So, Prof. Zahn asked: where to begin? "If values are to be changed, it would seem the appropriate vehicles will be, as always, the principal value-creating and transmitting social institutions--most particularly, the family, the polity (or state), religion, education. The first two hold little hope: the family because it is itself a prime victim of the sensate value system; the state because it has been the principal beneficiary of the crisis, gaining ever greater domination over the individual members of society by filling the vacuum left by the breakdown or weakened state of other institutions.

"Religion holds considerably more potential if only because it bases its claims upon universal and eternal values. Indeed, as a sociologist of religion, I would argue that religion may be the best, possibly even the last, hope and ultimately the source of the "charisma" the Sorokin formulation foresees as a necessary stage. Nevertheless, for reasons that should be obvious, I prefer to direct my concluding reflections on this historical moment to education and the part it could play.

"Humility is advised at the very outset. Education is always more the instrument of society than its shaping force; given the charge of producing citizens tailored to meet contemporary standards and needs, it is more likely to be the reflection of what a society is and wants than a source of models for what should be.

"Then, too, the educational institution bears a major share of responsibility for the ease with which the sensate definitions of reality and value have gained their dominance; and it may well constitute the last barrier of defence against that 'complete change of contemporary mentality'. There is good reason to believe that 'empirical man', its product, may prove much more resistant to such change than did either of his predecessors--the 'idealistic' man of wisdom or the 'ideational' seeker after holiness and faith. To say that the content and direction of sensate education with its concentration on the sciences--the physical sciences mainly, but the social sciences as well--has contributed mightily to the crisis of our age is not, of course, to condemn the scientists or all of their discoveries. The problem is that both have been exploited by a technology concerned primarily with measurements and utilitarian applications in the here and now and largely indifferent to what the religionist and the humanist would regard as the more important dimensions of human nature and behavior."

He concluded by saying: "If the challenge of the crises which surround us is to be met, it is crucial that each of us make an honest assessment of his own values and the degree of his commitment to them and then proceed to contribute what he can where he is. If that suggestion begs the question by assuming that man is free to make choices and to influence his own and his society's future, I proudly admit the fault, though others, I assume will see different views from this same 'window on all time'."

Slover on The Tempest

An article by Prof. George Slover, English, entitled "Magic, Mystery, and Make-believe: an Analogical Reading of The Tempest" will appear in Volume XI of the annual Shakespeare Studies. In this article, Prof. Slover develops the idea that Shakespeare reveals his own understanding of the playwright's art through "stage managerial" characters such as Prospero. By studying the way Prospero directs his play-within-the-play, we can learn from Shakespeare himself, Slover argues, how he wants his play interpreted.

Beichman Lectures in Japan

Prof. Arnold Beichman, Political Science, is making a lecture tour of Japan from January 9-22, 1977. He has been invited to address the University of Tokyo Graduate Department of American studies on the present state of party politics in the U.S.; the foreign policy of the U.S. under the new Administration before the National Defense College. Other appearances in Tokyo will include the Columbia University Alumni Association and the American Center.

Blackwell Participating In HEW Conference

The secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Dr. David Mathews, has invited Dr. James E. Blackwell (Sociology) to participate in a forthcoming national conference on higher education. The theme of the conference, which Dr. Mathews is sponsoring, is "The Changing Agenda In Higher Education". It will be held December 17-18 at Arlie House in Warrenton, Virginia. Among the major presenters will be Margaret Mead, Amatai Etzioni, Martina Horner, Adam Yarmolinsky of the University of Massachusetts, Frank Newman and John Hope Franklin.

Zardoya Lecture and Publications

Prof. Concha Zardoya, Spanish, gave a public lecture entitled "La técnica dramática de Federico García Lorca" on November 18 at the University of Oklahoma, Norman. The lecture was sponsored by the Department of Modern Languages. The Hispanic American Society and the Visiting Women's Scholars Program, in order to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the poet's death.

Prof. Zardoya has recently published an extensive article entitled "El Poeta Político" (En torno a España)--1. Miguel de Unamuno, 2. Antonio Machado. 3. Rafael Alberti. 4. Miguel Hernández. 5. César Vallejo. 6. Pablo Neruda--in Cuadernos Americanos, Mayo-Junio 1976, México, D. F. pp. 139-273, and a poem--"Paisaje Neoyorquino" (Esparavel, No. 90, Santiago de Cali, Colombia, p. 6).

Another of her publications was an article entitled "Imagen de España en la poesía de Luis Cernuda: (Sin Nombre, San Juan, Puerto Rico, Abril-Junio 1976, pp. 31-41).

Public Housing Security

The Boston Urban Observatory of UMass-Boston is conducting a 3-month assessment for the Mayor's Office of the Boston Public Housing Security Program, a series of experimental approaches for improving security in selected public housing projects of Boston. Under the direction of Joseph S. Slavet, BUO director, assisted by Francine Price, a new member of the BUO staff, the evaluation will focus on security activities at Mission Hill and Mission Hill Extension in Roxbury, Columbia Point in Dorchester and Commonwealth in Brighton.

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Public Housing Security
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These security demonstrations in public housing were a joint investment by the U.S. Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in two coordinated efforts: (1) Social action programs, designed to improve police-community relations and to increase community awareness of and participation in crime prevention activities; and (3) Security-related physical improvements.

New Citizen

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Edwards have announced the birth of an eight-pound bundle of beauty, Tara Ann, at Boston Lying-In Hospital. Mrs. Edwards is the former Kathy Cahalane, Accounting, and Chuck was a Copy Center expediter when he worked at the University. Our very best to the triumpherate.

United Way

Heinz Bondy, Special Assistant to the Chancellor, who headed the United Way appeal on campus is happy to report that faculty and staff made donations and pledges amounting to \$10,008 which is 10 per cent more than a year ago. Bondy thanks all who participated in any way to make the campaign so successful.

NASPA Executive Committee

Ms. Peg Furman, Assistant to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs has been appointed to the Region I Executive Committee for the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.

Five College Summer
Charter Flight to London

A Five College Charter flight will be offered next summer Boston-London June 14, London-Boston August 19, \$325 round trip. Pan American 707. Deadline for full payment March 11. Early sign-up urged. Applications are available from Bette Davis, Advising Office, Rm. 211, Admin. Bldg., X2275.

Freiburg Agreement

In 1973 a partnership agreement between the University of Massachusetts and the University of Freiburg was signed which provides for exchange at all levels, from students to professors. The academic year program is open to graduate students and upper-division undergraduates with fluency in German. In addition, students with at least one year of German are eligible for a summer program at the University of Freiburg.

Exchange of professors is possible at all levels, from Assistant Professor to Professor, in all disciplines.

Students or faculty interested in this program should contact one of the UMass-Boston representatives on the Freiburg Committee, Bette Davis, (Advising Office, 2nd fl., Admin. Bldg.) or Luisa Bronner (German Dept., 6th fl., Bldg. 010.)

Kennedy Library Environment
Impact Statement

The University Library has received three copies of the draft statement on environmental impact of the Kennedy Library. They are all available for study by interested faculty, students and staff. One is at the Reserve Desk on the third floor, and two are held at the Reference-Information Desk on the fourth floor.