

## IN MEMORIAM



**Mortimer J. Adler**

December 28, 1902 - June 28, 2001

*In Memoriam for the third anniversary of Dr. Adler's demise, we are presenting the transcription of Dick Cavett's delightful television interview with Dr. Adler. [1978]*



---

---

## THE DICK CAVETT SHOW WITH MORTIMER ADLER

### Part Two:

**DICK CAVETT:** Gee, well! *[dropping the book on coffee table]*

**MORTIMER ADLER:** What a weight!

**CAVETT:** That was recorded on the Harvard seismograph when that hit the table. Welcome to the second of a two-part conversation with a man who spends a lot of his time conversing, mentally at least, with Aristotle, Aquinas, Montaigne, Tolstoy, and so on, who believes that you should to. That is the point. And perhaps more importantly is that you can if you want to.

I am referring, of course, to Mortimer Adler, the man who brought us the famous 102-volume set of *Great Books of the Western World*.

**ADLER:** Can I correct that?

**CAVETT:** Yes, it is not 102 volumes. It is 102 authors.

**ADLER:** No, it is seventy-four authors, 102 great ideas in fifty-four volumes.

**CAVETT:** Oh, that's right. How do you know? I knew that was wrong as my eye read past it on the cue card. See now, I'm off the hook. Whatever the number is, it is a wonderful thing. And he has reshaped the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as Chairman of its Board of Editors. It has been the forefront of numeral educational publishing projects aimed at bringing these great works, great thoughts into the everyday lives of ordinary working people. And as you know, if you watched last night, here is a man who talks wittingly, fascinatingly about all of this. So if you will welcome, again please, Mortimer Adler, we will resume.

Mr. Adler, this hefty book that I dropped there, of course, is one that I think I referred to. It is called the *Great Treasury of Western Thought*. My guess is that is about five pounds. It is quite a wonderful thing to have around. It raises a question in my mind that isn't answered in there.

**ADLER:** Good.

**CAVETT:** Which is this idea that is sometimes formed or framed as a criticism of you in that sort of thing. That to reduce knowledge to tablets, so to speak, that are numbered and can be looked up in an index, and so on, is convenient. But somehow it is intellectually suspect in some way. And some of your colleagues even say—and I guess my point beyond that is the idea that you can take a

book like that and look up, let's say, *love*, and find out what Plato and others have thought about it and said about it, and so on, might lead people to the idea that they can solve their problems that way.

**ADLER:** Oh, no.

**CAVETT:** And if that were true, then highly intelligent people would still not have problems with love, even though they know what the greatest minds have said about it.

**ADLER:** Oh, nothing could be further from the truth. And if anyone charges me with that, that is really slander.

**CAVETT:** Well, I'm certainly glad I didn't say it.

**ADLER:** You know, what one reads in books may improve the mind but it doesn't solve problems. One has to solve problems by practical thinking, not by understanding ideas. I think the more understanding you have, the better you can think, the more likely you are able to deal intelligently with life's difficult, practical problems. But there is no assurance. I would not recommend that book to solve the problem of the jilted lover or divorce or the problems with parenthood—there is a marvelous section in that book on—marvelous statements. It is not just an ordinary book of quotations, because in an ordinary book of quotations the quotes are very short, memorable sayings, you know. These are long statements, the best statements we can find.

**CAVETT:** This isn't one of those useful for after dinner speaker books where you get fifteen witticisms on—

**ADLER:** No, it is not portable material but readable material. There is a marvelous series of chapters there on the family, on parents and children, on what's involved in rearing children. In my judgment there is no more difficult problem in the world than the problem of rearing

children. In fact, no one knows how to do it. Everyone—I've been a parent in two marriages, I had two sets of boys, and I can think of no problem more difficult than the problem of bringing up a young person up well. I think no one is skillful at it.

**CAVETT:** As Abe Lincoln said in another context, "If all of the wisdom of the world were brought to bare on it, it would still be a problem."

**ADLER:** That is right. And I think things like the *Great Treasury of Western Thought* are a joy to have merely because they, shall I say, catch the mind, not solve problems. On other hand, I don't mean that the more understanding you have of important ideas, that isn't helpful to solving problems but no assurance that you can solve them. Many problems are so difficult that no aids are going to do the job for you.

**CAVETT:** Yeah.

**ADLER:** So of that charge, can I regard that charge as refuted?

**CAVETT:** I think you have pretty well put it to rest, although you may even have had this experience. I have once in an unnamed city in the heartland of America. I went into a home that had no books, except it did have the Great Books in its bookcase. But you know how you can tell when a book has never been opened once?

**ADLER:** Yes.

**CAVETT:** There is a certain virginity to a book that if the cover has even been—

**ADLER:** Yes, uh huh.

**CAVETT:** And I wonder if some people don't buy it in the same sense that some people get a degree, thinking, "Oh,

now we've got the Great Books right there in our own living room. So we are educated.”

**ADLER:** Well, what Mr. Hutchins and I thought about that when we started to edited the—



**CAVETT:** Dr. Hutchins of the University of Chicago.

**ADLER:** Yes, Bill Benton had just acquired *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1943, at least became its proprietor, publisher in connection with the University of Chicago. He came to Hutchins and me, and said, “I would like to do more than publish the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. I would like to publish a set of Great Books.” He had begun to read the Great Books in the seminar that Hutchins and I taught, which we called The Fat Man’s Great Books Course.

**CAVETT:** Why was that?

**ADLER:** Because they were all bankers and lawyers and industrialists.

**CAVETT:** Oh.

**ADLER:** So we talked about it, and Hutchins said, “I don’t want to publish the Great Books because they would be just a piece of furniture in the American home. Unless we can find some way of getting people to take the books off the shelf, I am not interested in producing a set of books that are going to decorate the American living room. I’m not interested in wallpaper or furniture.”

**CAVETT:** Uh huh.

**ADLER:** He said, “Give me a chance to think about it. Mortimer and I will think about it and see if we can find some device that will give us at least some assurance that when the people or persons buy the set of books, they would be inclined to take the set off the shelf.”

**CAVETT:** Yeah.

**ADLER:** About a month later I came up with the idea of the *Syntopicon*, which then took me eight years to produce.

**CAVETT:** Uh huh.

**ADLER:** I said, Suppose we create an index to the idea content of the Great Books so that a person can find out before he has read through them what Plato and Aristotle or Marcus Aurelius and Aquinas and Locke and Dante and Tolstoy and Shakespeare have to say about, let’s say, *love* or the difference between *erotic love* and *conjugal love* or *romantic love* and *conjugal love*. They might take the Great Books and read in them on that topic, finding points of interest before they read through, before they get them off the shelf. And having they even got them off of the shelves, they might be then tempted to take them off a second time or a third time. It was kind of a seductive process.

**CAVETT:** Uh huh, a kind of guidebook to the Great Books themselves.

**ADLER:** Well, not a guidebook so much as an invitation to read.

**CAVETT:** Uh huh.

**ADLER:** Read in part, not in whole.

**CAVETT:** Yeah.

**ADLER:** Well, Hutchins said, "It's a fine idea, Mortimer, you go and do it." And I gave Britannica a budget of \$45,000 that I could do it in three years. A million dollars and eight years later, I finished the job. It took a large extent of persons reading the Great Books. In fact, it was an investment of 400,000 man-hours of reading to put 165,000 references to the Great Books into 3,000 topics in the *Syntopicon*.

**CAVETT:** You must have been up to your ears in index cards.

**ADLER:** We were as a matter of fact. We had an indexing staff, an intellectual staff of thirty-five and a clerical staff of eighty. That was because we didn't have computers in those days. Just the handling of the index cards was that. Now this book is a product of the *Syntopicon*, because with the *Syntopicon* you have to go to work, you have to go to the shelf, and take the Great Books off the shelf, and look up the passages by volume and page.

**CAVETT:** Uh huh.

**ADLER:** What we did was to take the passages out of the Great Books and put them here. So this is still a further shortcut, you see?



**CAVETT:** Can people turn in their *Syntopicon* and get a refund to get one—

**ADLER:** No.

**CAVETT:** My only quarrel with the Great Books, and I couldn't name all the authors that are in there, and I certainly haven't read them all, is that the one author that I consider indispensable isn't in there.

**ADLER:** Who is that?

**CAVETT:** Mark Twain

**ADLER:** I think you may be right about that. There are two authors in there that I think should not be there and two that are not there that should be there.

**CAVETT:** Who are the two dogs?

**ADLER:** The two dogs are Plotinus and Laurence Sterne. I put Plotinus in because I thought we had to have one great mystical philosopher, which he is. And Bob Hutchins put Laurence Sterne in because he always laughed at *Tristram Shandy*. But that was wrong.

**CAVETT:** *Tristram Shandy*, yeah.

**ADLER:** Well, that was wrong. We should have had Moliere and Mark Twain. We didn't have Moliere because we couldn't get a good translation of the French into English at the time we published it.

**CAVETT:** Yeah.

**ADLER:** And I can't remember the reason why—we do have *Moby Dick*.

**CAVETT:** Uh huh.

**ADLER:** It is certainly a great American novel.

**CAVETT:** Yeah.

**ADLER:** But we should have *Huckleberry Finn*, I think.

**CAVETT:** You cannot have *Huck Finn* and not have some of the, well—yeah, I think you could defend putting *The Essays of Twain* in with—

**ADLER:** Because I think one of Twain's greatest books, very little known, is his book called *The Personal Reminiscences of the Joan of Arc*. Most people don't know that he wrote that book.

**CAVETT:** Was that one of those that wasn't released during his lifetime?

**ADLER:** Yes, a marvelous book.

**CAVETT:** Yeah, his wife had a stern hand on him in censorship. And some Mark Twain things have not even been released yet. There are few things that we have been—and you know some of the things—

**ADLER:** The Great Books, which is fifty-four volumes on the one hand, and the *Britannica*, which is thirty volumes, and yet they represent two different kinds of, shall I say, aids to the mind. *Britannica*—let me put it another way. If I said, Food, shelter, clothing, rest are goods to the body—

**CAVETT:** Right.

**ADLER:** You say, well, those would be goods to the mind. I think there are only four basic goods of the mind, and one of them I can't handle at the moment, but five are information, organized knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and skill—know how.

**CAVETT:** Uh huh.

**ADLER:** Now of those four, let me leave—understand, because you can't acquire skill or know how from reading books.

**CAVETT:** Yes, uh huh.

**ADLER:** But you have to have a coach for. You have to have a coach for playing tennis; you have to have a coach for reading, or writing, or speaking. The *Britannica* as a great encyclopedia, at the best—and I think it does this very well—provides the access to information and organized knowledge.

**CAVETT:** Yeah.

**ADLER:** The Great Books, it is a totally different thing dealing with, don't you think, the Great Ideas provide access to understanding and wisdom?



**CAVETT:** Uh huh.

**ADLER:** And of the two, I think the Great Books are more important, myself.

**CAVETT:** Why *Britannica*? Why not *Americanica*?

**ADLER:** Because it is called *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, because it was created in Scotland.

**CAVETT:** Yes.

**ADLER:** It was created in Scotland in 1768.

**CAVETT:** Yeah.

**ADLER:** It has gone through the last edition, which I was partly responsible for creating, more than 200 years later. It was in 1768, we came out with the fifteenth in 1974. And I think the fifteenth is an improvement on the long tradition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* because it divides the structure to two parts, one in which we call the micropedia, and one called the macropedia. I invented the word Syntopicon, and I invented the words propedia, micropedia, and macropedia. Propedia is the introduction to learning, micropedia is the little learning, and macropedia is the large learning.

**CAVETT:** It sounds like the Greek Marx brothers or something. Dr. Adler, I guess when we say Aristotle, it is an awesome four syllables. “Aristotle, wow! Too deep for me” is a reaction that many college graduates would have. And if you say Aristotle is for everybody, then Aristotle is for the cabdriver, for example, who drove me to work today. I don’t have a limousine, despite something that was said on The Tom Snyder Show. I meet the common man.

**ADLER:** I like to talk to taxi drivers, too. They are very philosophical.

**CAVETT:** Yeah, I wish some of them would shut up already, but I often get, they do often give you a bit of philosophy. But I think if you take Aristotle, and, as you say, make him comprehensible by reducing him in some way, by compartmentalizing him in some way or giving extracts and so on, is it still Aristotle? There are academics who would say, “But philosophy is a tough, rigorous, disciplined enterprise. You can’t expect that Aristotle shouldn’t be for everybody.” Why should the cabdriver feel inferior if he hasn’t read Aristotle? How can he be expected to? I will shut up now.

**ADLER:** Let me answer that by saying three things first. First, along with William James, who said, this in the opening of *Pragmatism*, “I think philosophy is everybody’s business.” It is the one great subject that isn’t a specialist’s concern. And I think the ruin of philosophy in the twentieth century is that it has become a specialist’s concern. Philosophers now only write for other philosophers in journals or books that are technical. I think philosophy is everybody’s business. Everybody, to philosophize is a common trait of the human mind. In fact, the taxicab driver does it, you see?

Secondly, Aristotle is of all the philosophers of the West, and even more than Plato, the common-sense man’s philosopher. Aristotle starts where commonsense starts. And merely by reflection deepens it and heightens it but stays with commonsense, so that when the book of mine, called *Aristotle for Everybody*, came out, I objected to the publisher’s subtitle. I couldn’t make them change it. They want to put on the title—I wanted as the subtitle of the book, *Introduction to Commonsense*. They insisted upon *Difficult Thought Made Easy*. That is false.

**CAVETT:** That is nauseating.

**ADLER:** Yeah, I think it is wrong. I am delighted the book has sold well in spite of that. The reason for that is

that Aristotle's thought is not difficult. The Greek writing is difficult.

**CAVETT:** Uh huh.

**ADLER:** It is a difficult text in Greek, and the translations into English are difficult because, in the first place, the books that we have of Aristotle were not written by him. The scholarly judgment is they are over-complicated pieces of composition with a lot of editorial input—his own notes, students' notes, put together by an editing process. They don't read the Dialogues of Plato we read. They are not written by a fine writer.

As a result, what I tried to do is not make difficult thought easy but easy thought, expressed in a difficult way, easy to read. In other words, Aristotle's thought is easy.

**CAVETT:** To uncomplicate the wording of—

**ADLER:** In words of one syllable for the most part.

**CAVETT:** Yeah.

**ADLER:** And I think it can be done. And I tried, by the way, when I wrote the book, I had my two boys, who were then ten and twelve, read it as it came out of typewriter, and I wrote a chapter in the morning and had them read it in the afternoon and let them ask me questions.

**CAVETT:** To see if they could dig it?

**ADLER:** And they could.

**CAVETT:** But are they young John Stuart Mills or what?

**ADLER:** Oh, no. I have failed.

**CAVETT:** They probably have other qualities.

**ADLER:** They are very nice boys, very nice boys indeed.

**CAVETT:** Maybe you should give an example of the Western mind meeting the, shall we call it, the Soviet mind. You were telling—I heard you telling something in the back room about an audience. Any comic would call a tough audience that you played to—where was it? In Romania?

**ADLER:** No, in Budapest last summer. Carolyn, my wife and I, were visiting Phil Kaiser, who is the United States Ambassador to Hungary, an old friend of ours. We were spending three days at the American Embassy residence in Budapest. And the cultural affairs officer of the embassy said, “As long as you are here, Dr. Adler, would you mind doing us a favor? Would you mind addressing the Hungarian Institute of Philosophy, which is a branch of the Hungarian Academy of Science?” I said, “No, I would be glad to do that.” He said, “What would you talk about?” I said, “An unconventional view of the history of Western thought.”

So we set up at four o’clock one afternoon. We drove downtown in the ambassador’s car with the American flag flying. And there in this large auditorium—well, a decent-sized room, to my surprise were eighty Hungarian philosophers. I didn’t even think they made philosophers in Hungary.

**CAVETT:** Maybe it was the eighty Hungarian philosophers.

**ADLER:** And few of them spoke English. Most of them only Magyar. I was introduced by the chairman, a very gracious introduction, which was translated into English for me. And then I spoke in English, and it was translated. I spoke in spurts, and it was translated in Hungarian. And the part of my speech, which was connected with Aristotle—in the history of philosophy, the contri-

bution of the Greeks is outstanding. Most of the wisdom, I think, most of the philosophical wisdom we have in the West is to be found in Plato and Aristotle, and very little after that. In fact, modern philosophy, for me at least, is almost a total loss of wisdom, rather than an advance of it. And I kept making this point. And toward the end of the lecture, I said, “Let me give you one example of that. A distinction that Aristotle makes, that I think is of fundamental importance in moral and political problems, is the distinction between natural desires, the natural propensities of human nature were common to all of us. And acquired desires, the desires we acquire through reading, advertisements, or being envious of what one neighbor has, or one’s own personal experience”—“And we have two English words,” I said, “to name these common human desires, our human needs, we say, and our individual wants. Our common human needs or individual wants.” Everyone in the room, if we made a list of everybody, there would be as many lists as there are persons. But if you say what human beings need, then the list would be the same for everybody.

**CAVETT:** Uh huh.





**ADLER:** I said, looking at these eighty communists sitting in front of me, eighty students devoted to Karl Marx, I said, “You know, come to think of it, what I have just said to you should be of great interest to you because it is a bearing of your understanding of Karl Marx. Doesn’t Karl Marx say at the end of the Manifesto, ‘From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs?’ And that can’t be right, can it?” I said, “because if he really meant needs, they couldn’t be his needs because his means individual. He must have meant to say, ‘to all according to their common human needs.’ And he couldn’t have meant, could he, ‘to each according to his wants,’ because no society possibly can satisfy all human wants? Please tell me whether you think my interpretations of Marx is correct.”

There was absolute silence. Stony silence. I looked at the ambassador. The ambassador looked at me. I said, “This is very important. You are obviously much better students of Marx than I am, but I would like to be informed on this point. I would like to have you instruct me. Am I not right in saying that Marx could not have meant, ‘to each according to his wants’? And he shouldn’t have said, ‘to each according to his needs, but all according to their needs.’” Again, stony silence.

I tried once more. I said, “I have come a long way from Chicago. And I wouldn’t like to go back empty handed. Please, tell me what you think about this point.” And, oh, man, there must have been over eighty.

**CAVETT:** Uh huh.

**ADLER:** And I think so old that he had no fear of any further reprisals from the state. He got up and said in broken English, “Dr. Adler,” he said, “I think you may be right about this. But I am not yet prepared to say so.”

**CAVETT:** He might have been in another ten years. Was there a murmuring?

**ADLER:** Yes, there was.

**CAVETT:** Well, there must have been a murmuring when the name Karl Marx first left your lips, even though, to criticize the fact that he might be correctible in some way—to bring up the idea that Marx might be imprecise.

**ADLER:** Well, it wasn't too shocking to them, though they knew Marx well, to have the name of Karl Marx connected with Aristotle, because in *Das Kapital*, in the great work *Kapital*, Marx said he learned more from Aristotle than anybody else. Aristotle's chapter on justice and the ethics and his dealing with the acquisition at the end of the first book of the *Politics*, Marx found the most instructive texts in the whole of Western thought.

**CAVETT:** Yes, well, an anticommunist would say, "Well, then, let's get not only Marx but Aristotle out of the schools."

**ADLER:** I think that might be the case.

**CAVETT:** Yes, and your answer to that would be?

**ADLER:** Well, what anybody would answer with any sense would be, "Nothing that is capable of being discussed should be out of the schools."

**CAVETT:** Yeah. I wonder if—Marx would have written that in German, of course, originally.

**ADLER:** Yes.

**CAVETT:** Could there possibly be less ambiguity—or in the German original?

**ADLER:** I have to confess ignorance of the German original here. I must say I would like to do the research to find out.

**CAVETT:** Ignorance?

**ADLER:** Ignorance.

**CAVETT:** The man who—

**ADLER:** Yes, knowledge of a German word is an item of ignorance I am willing to confess happily.

**CAVETT:** Happily, yes. So, do you think the less of me if I were to tell you that “*jedem entsprechend seinen Fähigkeiten, jedem entsprechend seinem benötigt*” is the original of that quote?

**ADLER:** No.

**CAVETT:** Do I go to the head of the class?

**ADLER:** Yes, you can have a copy of this book.

**CAVETT:** Thank you, but I think this is already my property. I think I pulled a dirty trick on you. I think I may have ran and looked it up. But I don't think I am capable of such a low—

**ADLER:** Is the word *needs* properly translated?

**CAVETT:** *Fähigkeiten* would be—yeah. Yeah, I think *Fähigkeiten* would be *ability*. And *benötigt* would be needs.

**ADLER:** What would *wants* be in German in distinction? That is because the English words *needs* and *wants*—anyone can test this out for themselves.

**CAVETT:** There are at least twenty-five different words for *want*. One of them means if you want a woman desperately. One of them means if you want more ration coupons.

**ADLER:** But none of these means *needs*.

**CAVETT:** And one means, “if he is the one to get the other.” I mean, German covers everything.

**ADLER:** But in English, anyone that is—

**CAVETT:** I don’t think it means “needs” though.

**ADLER:** In English, anyone that is at all puzzled about that distinction, there is a very simple way of checking it.

**CAVETT:** Uh huh.

**ADLER:** You cannot have a wrong need. You can want something—you can have a wrong want. You can’t have a wrong need.

**CAVETT:** Yes, you can desire the wrong thing, but you can’t need wrong things—because you need food.

**ADLER:** That is right. What you need is right for you.

**CAVETT:** You couldn’t need the wrong thing.

**ADLER:** What you need is always really good for you. What you want is always apparently good for you and may or may not be really good for you.

**CAVETT:** Okay.

**ADLER:** That is a very important point.

**CAVETT:** Say, Gertrude Stein bopped you on the head once. So would you please explain what I meant just being flippant—

**ADLER:** She did. Once back in 1932, she was visiting the University of Chicago. I mean, she was the heyday then.

**CAVETT:** Did you suggest that Rose was not a rose?

**ADLER:** No, no. Worse than that. She was visiting the University of Chicago, and the president of the University, my friend, Bob Hutchins, invited her for dinner and forgot that while he had invited her for dinner, he and I had to teach a Great Books class. The dinner party went on. Thornton Wilder was there, two trustees of the university, and Bob and I teaching from seven-thirty to nine-thirty, came back to the president's house after the class was over. And the dinner party had coffee and cognac, coffee and brandy. We sat down, and Gertrude immediately attacked the president. She said, "Hutchins, what have you been doing?" And he said, "Miss Stein"—and she said, "Don't call me Miss Stein, call me Gertrude Stein."

**CAVETT:** Yes.

**ADLER:** He said, "Miss Stein." He made that mistake two or three times. He said, "Miss Stein." She said, "Call me Gertrude Stein." Finally he did. "What have you been doing?" He said, "We have been teaching the Great Books?" "What are the Great Books?" she said very quickly. And he said, "Well, they are the most important books in Western interpretation." "Well, what are some of the Great Books?" And so he started to name Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle. And she said, "Do you read Plato and Aristotle in Greek? Do you read Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus in Latin? Do you read Montaigne in French?" "Oh," he said, "No. Miss Stein"—"Gertrude Stein," she said. "No, Gertrude Stein," he said, "we read them in English. Our students are not accomplished linguists, and so"—"Well, you can't do that" she said. "You can't do it at all. You must read Greeks in Greek, Latins in Latin, French in French," and so forth. He said, "No."

At that point, I jumped in, and said, “But, you see, you may be right about poetry, Gertrude Stein. Poetry may not be translated, but ideas belong to any language. And ideas, whether they are expressed in German or Greek or Latin are the same ideas. And we are concerned with our students and ideas.” And I started to argue with her. She got up from the table, walked around, hit me on the head, and said, “Young man,” she said, “I won’t argue with you. I can see you are the kind of young man that always wins arguments.”

**CAVETT:** The one kind she won’t argue with.

**ADLER:** Well, the dinner party finally came to an end. We were sitting at the table still. And the butler came in. And the butler said, “The police are here.” And Gertrude Stein said, “Have them wait.” I was absolutely astounded. And I leaned over to Thornton Wilder, and I said, “What does she mean have them wait?” “Oh,” he said, “she wants to see Chicago at night in a squad car. And Mr. Goodspeed arranged to have two police captains to come and pick her up here and take her for a ride in the ghetto.”

So the two police captains were cooling their heels downstairs, and finally the dinner party ended, and we were standing around. I was standing next to Alice B. Toklas, who was Gertrude’s slender shadow. And Alice said to me, “This has been a most wonderful evening. Gertrude has said things tonight that it will take her ten years to understand.”

**CAVETT:** That’s wonderful. Adler, I’m sorry I didn’t get to ask you the one question I wanted to, which may have to be answered in yes or no, can a great book be written today? We have four seconds left.

**ADLER:** Yes, it can be, but they aren’t being written.

**CAVETT:** Come back some time, and tell us why. Thank you,

**ADLER.** It has been a great pleasure to have you here. See you tomorrow night. Good night.

**ADLER:** Thank you.




---

**NOTE:** For those of you who may be interested, this hour-long program is available in both DVD and VHS formats.

---

## EDITOR'S NOTE

We also mourn the passing of Honorary Member,  
Donald F. Thielke of Milwaukee  
October 11, 1921 - June 23, 2004

---

## THE GREAT IDEAS ONLINE

is published weekly for its members by the  
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE GREAT IDEAS  
Founded in 1990 by Mortimer J. Adler & Max Weismann  
Max Weismann, Publisher and Editor  
E-mail: [TGIdeas@speedsite.com](mailto:TGIdeas@speedsite.com)  
Homepage: <http://www.thegreatideas.org/>

A not-for-profit (501)(c)(3) educational organization.  
Donations are tax deductible as the law allows.