Artes Liberales Lectures

No. 1

Donald W. Harward

LIBERAL EDUCATION AND WE

In the **Artes Liberales Lectures** series we publish texts by eminent scholars who have visited the Collegium Artes Liberales and have given important lectures there.

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- Thomas Molnar, *Unity of Knowledge*, OBTA, Warszawa 2004.
- Roman Szporluk, *Zachodni wymiar kształtowania się współczesnej Ukrainy*, OBTA, DiG, Warszawa 2004.

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Liberal Education and We*

Thank you. I am pleased to be recognized as an honorary member of your faculty, and privileged to have had opportunities over the years, to meet with those who are, or have been, part of Artes Liberales, and who have shared their enthusiasm and talent. And I am honored to be in your presence; you epitomize for me what it means to form a community that is committed to liberal education. Not only from the perspective of its leadership and administrators, but from the perspective of the faculty who teach in it, and the students who engage in the learning – you excel. Thank you for sharing what you learn, and in the community which you continue to establish.

Being with you this afternoon was indeed an added pleasure to my visit; I had not realized that I would have this opportunity. So, to know that not only could I visit, but that all of you would be

* Lecture given at the Collegium Artes Liberales on Dec. 6, 2017 during a seminar organized on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Collegium Artes Liberales.

willing to sit and listen to a retired president for a few minutes, is an honor which I greatly appreciate. I will try to keep my comments brief and hope that we can engage in some conversation about them. I also hope that what I present might be a bit provocative, hoping that it invites stimulation of your thinking not only about the extent of liberal education, but about the obligations that come with liberal education – the obligations for you as students, the particular obligations for you as faculty, and as leaders of Artes Liberales.

Bringing Theory to Practice (BTtoP) project is now in its fifteenth year, working with hundreds of campuses, primarily in the U.S. (although elements of the work have been connected to Europe). The project supports initiatives taken by campuses in their own context, for their own objectives consistent with BTtoP's fundamental mission to advance the greater purposes, the co-core, central purposes of liberal education – to engage in learning and discovery; to cultivate civic engagement attendant to both agency and justice; to offer the opportunities for the realization of the wellbeing of participants (defined in terms of both its hedonic and its eudemonic well-being); and to serve as a valued preparation for meaningful choices in living in the world – including purposeful work. We see those purposes connected to engagement. They are not descriptive; they are relational concepts. The structure of what we mean by liberal education is a composite of engaging activities: engaging the activities of learning and teaching with their compatible activities; engaging the activities of research which supports learning and teaching; engagement in civic activities, which includes robust criticism as well as support; engagement in preparation for life choices, including engagement of what it means

The Greater Purposes of Higher Education

From *Well-Being and Higher Education: A Strategy for Change and the Realization of Education's Greater Purposes*. Washington, DC: Bringing Theory to Practice, 2016.

to prepare oneself for meaningful work in a variety of contexts, over a variety of years; as well as this notion of preparing students to engage meaningfully in ways to help realize their own sense of identity, their own sense of purpose, their own sense of self-actualization – and in recognizing that doing so is only possible in the context of community. Aristotle was quite right – that the notion of a good life is a life lived in the context of community. That is the character of what it means to talk about liberal learning – liberal learning in the context of a community – a community of students, scholars, teachers, and supporters of that context. It is what you are building in Artes Liberales.

While much of Bringing Theory to Practice is committed to supporting campus projects, our scholarly attention has been given to crafting books, monographs, and national conferences (involving both students and faculty). The last conference we held in Chicago this past May – a conference on the topic of intersectionality and identity formation – featuring interdisciplinary scholars as well as practitioners dealing with the significance of intersectionality to notions of self-realization and the forming of multiple identities.

However, what I'd like to talk about today has all to do with another of the co-core purposes of liberal education – civic engagement, and the notion of global citizenship. To begin, I want to ask you to rehearse in your own thoughts what is currently being said here in Warsaw regarding global engagement, national Polish citizenship, and global citizenship. As you reflect on this, it is likely to be – as it is in the United States – intense, sometimes quite difficult – even arousing anger; it may be often incomplete and perhaps disturbing, as it responds to external conversations or fails to respond to them. You likely hear versions of remarks rebelling

against globalism and against global citizenship using appeals to anti-liberal, anti-intellectual, and anti-democratic themes. Much current political rhetoric announces expressions of nativism – encouraging isolation. Those who call for more global cooperation are often dismissed as liberal elites, weak and unpatriotic. You might hear some version of the following: "We must develop a post-truth diplomacy which rebrands and reasserts nationalism, challenging and prevailing against the echo chambers that media bubbles provide, which reinforce globalist snowflakes who cannot deal with realities".

What is not being discussed is how that anti-global perspective is in conflict with the core purposes of the university, or specifically, how it conflicts with liberal education. How it conflicts with who *you* are, your own identity as a student or as an educator, and what you value. All of us applaud institutions which want their students to become aware of global realities. And, as we fittingly say, all the real challenges that we face, challenges of the environment, challenges of scarce resources, economic challenges, the challenges of peace and freedom are all global challenges. So of course we want students to have a global or a greater global perspective of those realities. They engage in global learning understood as critical analysis of an engagement with complex inter-dependent global systems and legacies and their implications for people's lives and the earth's sustainability. Many institutions have strategies which make possible student global experiences or prepare their curricula for future pools of possible attendees "from away", perhaps providing opportunities for migrating populations to attend universities and remain as contributing citizens. Or, within CLAS or MISH, internationalizing the curriculum becomes a priority, developing

global dimensions or implications of interdisciplinary teaching and research – indeed, preparing students for a complex, inter-dependent, globally organized world.

While many of these manifestations of work at globalization are real and have the integrity of serving greater educational purpose, often the adopted strategy is far from noble. Instead, globalizing for some means a self-serving strategy for the institution, one that is explicitly utilitarian. In the U.S. (and perhaps in Europe), it is revealing to observe institutions try to market to more global audiences, to recruit students from afar, to seek graduate students and faculty from global pools. For some institutions being global has become a significant dimension of the institution's business plan; it identifies various markets and it finds willing institutional partners to help share in the work of recruiting students and faculty. We might ask, though: how are these strategies and emphases advancing global engagement or promoting global citizenship for all of those at the institution? Are they connected to all of the students' greater understanding of what it means to be a global citizen and to have their own global identity?

Pop culture icon, musician and vocalist Rihanna encourages global citizenship by organizing charitable donations to educate children in mostly remote areas of the world. She makes a global difference. The human rights project of the U.N. Council tries to hold countries accountable to international human rights and commitments, to be responsible for "citizens of the globe". The Pope and the Dalai Lama are said by many to be global citizens by virtue of the power of the ideas and ideals they espouse and their evident humility, their evident wisdom in being vulnerable. Audiences at global citizen day rallies held in London, Berlin, Paris and New

York hear entertainers and top-tier bands advocate global human values, collaboration and peace, letting the common appreciation of music penetrate difference.

But what does it mean for higher education or for the university to advance or promote global citizenship? Could a commitment to being global be a greater educational purpose, like one of those four on the diagram? Could the university have the objective of educating global citizens, i.e. all students in authentic and clearly confirmable ways? To promote global citizenship as a purpose, as a clear educational objective, would require the crafting of global communities, for the logic of citizenship requires a community in which citizenry is even possible. So we have to have global communities in which citizenship is understood and welcomed, communities that are crafted on sharing values and common practices. It requires considering how being a global citizen is possible beyond the strategies of student exchanges or even international study semesters, which are common in the U.S. How students with or without a passport, i.e. those who travel and those who don't, who do or do not travel beyond the local, can have and gain empathetic understanding and authentic encountering of difference embedded in their education and in their identities, and how doing so will make possible the gaining of their own global identity. Global learning must extend beyond seeking to inform regarding integrated global systems and their implications, moving beyond that to encouraging those campus practices where self-interest is deferred, replaced with the humility of seeking a common good, where existing privileges and their attendant economic and social power relationships are suspended or even revoked, where the full practices and opportunities for reciprocal engagement with

difference could move students beyond tolerance, beyond even empathy to being sufficiently compassionate as to act to make change. A campus crafting a global community brings clarity in practice of global values and adherence to their demands. It creates a campus culture that encourages the development among a student's various threads of identity, the adoption of a global citizen identity. Such an identity would be the gaining of a perspective of trying to understand the world more synthetically, as a whole, seeing citizens locally and globally, synthetically, as being whole persons, as constructions of integrated collections of identities, like strands of a woven piece of hemp. The whole citizen as a construct of overlapping strands of identity.

Could constructing a strand of identity, one of being a global citizen, be compatible with being a patriotic national citizen? Or is global identity fundamentally unpatriotic? In the U.S., President Trump appealed to the nation for unity and a healing of racial fissures by asserting that national patriotism was a common bond sufficient to heal fissures – if the public would only adopt the patriotic ardor found in the military community. Perhaps this is not unfamiliar to you here in Poland. But the common bond may not be the zeal of nationalistic pledges. What holds us together may well be the commitment to ideas and ideals, not to pledges of blood and soil. A bonding that unites, that weaves together differences requires giving priority to identifying the causes and histories of those strands of difference and different identities, challenging the patterns of privilege that pull them apart and determining that being an engaged citizen, nationally or globally, means encountering and being encountered, empathetically understanding and being vulnerable to being understood. What if Trump's appeal or

the appeal of other international leaders were to be made to global patriotism, to the values of global citizenship, to the articulation and defense of a higher, greater common good? Would such an appeal have a different impact, like healing wounds of difference? Would it speak to, would it call out, would it confront as abhorrent the exhibition of the reality of the virulent strains of fascism and racism which persist in our social and political identities?

When asked if one can be a global citizen in meaningful ways and still be a loyal nationalist, some respond: sure, compatibility is possible, as long as advancing global interests and values are not in conflict with national interests. After all, they add, most Western economic and social political policies do champion globalism, but not at the surrender of national interests. They must take priority.

Others emphasize that national citizenship means learning about, understanding one's history, respecting and promoting what is the good in one's culture, society, community or nation, and not be reluctant to call out ignorance and injustice. Such nationalism or nationalistic identity stands with – with but not above – global citizenship and global identity.

To whether globalism and nationalism are incompatible, both of these individuals would answer no, but for different reasons. For one, there is no incompatibility because ultimately the priority goes to nationalism. The practicalities of real politics and self-interest of nations, they argue, will always prevail. For the other, there is no incompatibility because citizenship in both global and national terms is a commitment to a higher common value, the good, not power or privilege, not blood or the accident of soil where we're born, but the universal good of pursuing freedom, truth, fairness,

justice, compassion. The highest of values in any republic. Values at the core, certainly, of democratic civic society; and those values are, I would argue, at the center of liberal education. At the center because liberal education has a unique responsibility for engaging with difference, encountering, understanding, acting in pursuit of learning, wellbeing, justice, a civic common good.

National citizenship, whether by accident or intent, carries specific responsibilities, no doubt, as well as bringing with those duties guaranteed freedoms and rights. Those responsibilities and rights rest on the maintenance and the protection of the ideas and values. It is a participatory requirement. It is in engagement, not passivity or silence, in taking action that we practice those values and ideas. Global citizenship, too, carries responsibilities beyond simply expressing or speaking of shared values. It means acting in support of those values, i.e. supporting the peaceful resolution of conflict, the more equitable distribution of wealth and uses of natural resources, posing challenges, if not opposition, to any hubris of uncritical nativism and the arrogance of power which is blind to justice. It means being committed to an act and recognition of the necessity to align national aspirations and interests with a higher common good.

It is said that this is a hinge moment. On the one hand, a terrifying time of building walls, of emerging nativism, of exiting any common search for shared wholeness. I think it's also the moment to champion our unique role in our commitment to the promise of liberal education, to assert our central responsibility of championing values and practices that reinforce searches for truth and justice, even if they are contrary to prevailing social or political power or demands of utility. If campuses commit to fostering global citizens

as a core purpose, they have to be willing to challenge, to risk naming and speaking out, to denounce ignorance and bigotry, and to act, to demonstrate the creating of contexts for the expression of global citizenship for those with or without passports, those traveling or not, to maximize opportunities to engage, to encounter the other and to be encountered with authenticity.

The press for an institution of higher education to be global is to craft their own campus as a global community, championing synthetic understanding, calling out nativism and prejudice, facilitating the practice of global values and confirming global citizenship as one essential strand in the weave of identities that students can achieve. I think that challenge is as applicable to my former institution, Bates in Maine, as it might be to Artes Liberales in Warsaw.

The challenge and work for each campus to be a global community is in it becoming a context or a learning culture where the emancipation of a student as a global citizen is anticipated, even expected; that global citizenry is realized as a dimension of each student's identity. For a campus to do so may include all of the following: encourage and expect teachers and learners to rigorously analyze and openly question the sources of the narratives of national and global citizenship, including history; to challenge what is offered as initial evidence, then contest myth, indoctrination and/or propaganda; to strengthen opportunities to demand authentic engagement, question programs or opportunities that simply reinforce the privilege of ignoring difference by being near or naming otherness but not encountering it. (For example, as though taking a selfie with a local, or taking a walk through the rural village, or sharing in the observation of a World Cup match over a beer, is what it means to encounter other).

Risk suspending privilege, be vulnerable to learn when engaging and being engaged, feel the restrictions of being objectified and reflect on the power of objectifying. Analyze what taking a global perspective would mean in actual practice. How would it differ from forms of tourism? Beyond tolerance and empathetic understanding, how could a global perspective lead to actions of compassionate practice, even of solidarity? Here at Artes Liberales dialogic pedagogies open questions rather than make assertions. Questions require the suspension of hegemonic or dominant responses. Questions put at risk certainty. What does being global demand of my identity? They open perspective.

And finally, encourage being vulnerable to being seen as other, risk the sharing of life narratives; learn how the construction of an identity is made for (and not by) some individuals and groups – and what conditions of power and privilege allow that. Each of these would build on extending already existing opportunities for engagement, for cultivating a campus culture of inquiry, an environment for the building of global citizenship.

One can be a global citizen in Warsaw or Washington, on campus, in the neighborhood or in the distant village. One can champion global citizenship as an authentic identity. One can be other to others, as they're vulnerable, and in being vulnerable you engage. A campus culture and community can encourage liberation of its members from the confines of privilege and authority, to come to understand what bridging difference of identity means and makes possible. Paraphrasing author and activist Bryan Stevenson (regarding broken criminal justice systems), he writes that "being broken, being vulnerable is what makes us human".

Our shared vulnerability and imperfection nurtures and sustains our unique capacity for compassion. It is the theme in the work of Rihanna and the Dalai Lama, and it is the theme of a liberal education. It is an appeal to be global, to care, that we can often hear from our students if we dare to listen to them as they discover in their own liberation an identity that goes beyond self-interest. Being a citizen, having a national and global identity, requires the capacity and necessity of being vulnerable, of recognizing where and when we are broken; having compassion for other, standing in relation to difference and being judged by it as well as judging it; recognizing the realities of national or global strength as well as flaws, their history and the implications for others sustaining or altering them. Campuses can be global communities, not necessarily measured by self-hype, but by doing the hard work of actually functioning as a global community – sharing an understanding of common values and the common practices across and above difference – exemplifying and amplifying common global dimensions of the good.

Colleges and universities have unique responsibilities to champion, without equivocation, a search for truth. No other social or cultural institution – not the family, not the school, not the church, not the government certainly, fully share in that mission. It's a unique responsibility: the uncompromised search for the truth. But the current climate is one of fake news, "alternative facts", race baiting, threats of international calamity, power in the hands of those who offer bluster without discipline, the ascendancy of opinion over truth, the threat of repercussions to faculty and administrators in the academy who speak out. Those repercussions are real. They may exist here; I know they exist in my country. There is the prevailing

awareness of the realities of cost and limits of access, the judgments of distrust by students of institutional motives and of the very worth of the outcomes, both internally and externally, and an overriding question of higher education's value and its purposes: Is it worth it? Do I simply play the game, taking my time, going through the years, getting a degree because it'll advance me in the social order of things? Faced with these risks to our privilege, it would appear all too often to opt for comfort of silence and its safety, a reluctance to call out, and to act to demand change. But in silence, in fear of risking support or the benefits of our privilege, by not calling out false claims, demagoguery or biased power, we fail to meet the full responsibility, the greater purpose of higher education as a space for truth; we give fear a place.

What underlies our authority and credibility is the uniqueness of our responsibility as educators to maintain dual dimensions of our work as colleges and universities. We search and teach and act; we express our contrarian dimension, of being a place apart from conventionality, apart from popular belief, apart from tradition. Doing so makes us capable of being critical, exploratory and even unconventional. We emphasize doubt and the need to find evidence, and not accept unexamined opinion with the power of dogma. If we ask this of our students, we should model it in practice.

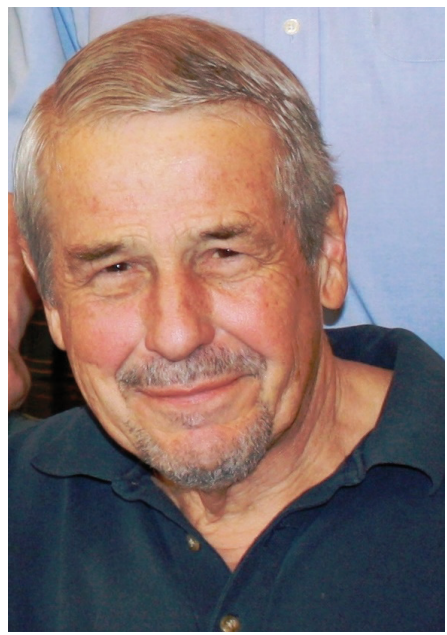
However, we also acknowledge that as an institution we are part of – not apart from, but a part of – a variety of complex communities. We are inextricably linked to those communities of power and practice. We are supported, funded, populated by those communities of power and practice.

Working that tension of being both *apart from* and being a *part of* recognizes the uniqueness of our responsibilities and our essential role in an open society. Universities recognize that they risk the benefits of support by calling out, by insisting on championing pursuit of evidence and justice, by championing global citizenship, by acting in accordance with principles and stated values when doing so is seen as contrarian, even seen by some as unpatriotic. But if they do not take that risk, if they welcome silence and fear of reprisal, they abrogate what being an educator, being a higher educational institution requires.

However, if they only critique and fail to advance solutions, if they fail to labor at listening to those beyond their own echo chambers, they fail to gain greater understanding and fail to work at collaboration with diverse others in order to make progress toward achieving a common good, then they too have failed their dual responsibility. Meeting core responsibilities with advancing purpose has to be done in the face of the realities of power and practices which are more challenging now than ever. Social, political, economic and ideological enterprises are positioned to exert pressure. Public expectations reflect primarily utilitarian aims. Objectives for education often, at least in the U.S., express campuses being described as hostile environments to the public, unable to address the realities the market and the future offers them. And faculty are thereby considered out of touch with modern society and so easily replaced with cheaper labor and with technology. What is required of campuses is to both call out and to act, to critique and to work to find solutions and practices which respond to challenges. On our campuses, particularly institutions committed to liberal education, fear should have no place. No fear from being apart

from; no fear from being a part of – no fear of difference, no fear of action in the steady practice of seeking truth and identifying a common good. For our institutions, for liberal education, fear should have no place here.

Thank you – all of you shaping Artes Liberales.



Donald Harward served as President of Bates College from 1989 through June 2002, when he was appointed President Emeritus. Before taking office at Bates, Harward held the position of Vice President for Academic Affairs at the College of Wooster, Ohio; preceding his tenure there, he taught and served in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Delaware, and subsequently designed and led the University Honors program.

Following his retirement from Bates College, Harward co-founded Bringing Theory to Practice (BTtoP), a national independent project in partnership with the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), whose mission is to advance the greater purposes of higher education. As Director of BTtoP for the last 15 years, he has presented across the country as well as authored and edited several volumes, including *Transforming Undergraduate Education*, and *Well-Being and Higher Education: A Strategy for Change the Realization of Education's Greater Purposes*.

Harward holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Maryland, and honorary doctorate degrees from Bates College, the College of Wooster, and a Visiting Professorship from the University of Warsaw, Poland. In addition to his role as Director of BTtoP, he serves as a Senior Fellow with AAC&U, and as a consultant, advisor, and board member for a variety of higher education organizations, foundations, and institutions.