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(ARTES LIBERALES)

Artes Liberales

*An Association for the Furtherance of Liberal Education and Democratic
Values in Post-communist Societies*

Artes Liberales was founded in Prague in January 1997 as a cooperative endeavour of educational leaders from Central Europe, the Baltic States, and Ukraine. As a regional educational association, **Artes Liberales** sponsors regular professional exchanges and other collaborative programs to promote liberal education and democratic leadership among scholars and institutions of higher learning in post-communist countries. **Artes Liberales** encourages colleges and universities to adopt innovative liberal arts curricula as a counter-weight to the premature and often excessive specialization typical of communist and post-communist pedagogy. **Artes Liberales** is actively engaged in expanding cooperative ties with other liberal arts institutions, both in the region and in the United States.

Members of the **Artes Liberales** steering committee: Samuel Abrahám, Director, Society for Higher Learning, Bratislava; Jerzy Axer, Director, Centre for Studies in the Classical Tradition, Warsaw; Agnes Erdélyi, Director, Invisible College, Budapest; Serhiv Ivaniouk, Rector, University of Kiev-Mohyla Academy, Kiev; Peteris Lakis, Rector, Latvian Academy of Culture, Riga; Rein Raud, Rector, Estonian Humanities Institute, Tallinn; Jan Sokol, former Minister of Education, Czech Republic, Deputy Director, Institute of Fundamental Learning, Prague; and Julia Stefanova, Executive Director, Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange, Sofia; Stasys Vaitekunas, Rector, Klaipeda University, Lithuania.

US Representative: Nicholas Farnham, Director of Educational Programs at **The Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation**, will act as the Foundation's program liason with **Artes Liberales**. His New York office will serve temporarily as the organization's secretariat.

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ARTES LIBERALES: LIBERAL EDUCATION AND OUR SOCIETIES

OCTOBER 22 - 25, 1998, BUDAPEST

Most conferences only talk about problems. A few go on to talk about possible solutions. The conference organized by the Artes Liberales group, on *What Does Liberal Education Offer to Civil Society* in Budapest last month actually put on demonstrations of liberal education in action. Four seminars on classical texts, from Plato and Machiavelli to Coleridge and a Zen master involved more than 100 rectors, program directors and a sprinkling of students in vigorous back and forth conversations about the underlying issues in the texts in a small-group format. Another set of demonstrations explored the no-man's-land between the established disciplines by involving the conference participants themselves in conversations about relationships of poetry to astronomy, biology to ethics, and literature to economics, politics and psychology.

As they emerged from these small group discussions, participants were enthusiastic about an approach to teaching and learning that allows students to develop their fullest human potential and to integrate the disparate elements of their education. For many, it was a new experience, and for everyone a valuable one, as demonstrated by the unanimous adoption of a conference statement at the end of the meeting, calling for major changes in higher education throughout the region. It was clear to this observer that a movement is underway "to introduce liberal arts," in the words of the conference statement. "as a way of cultivating a spirit and intellectual independence and of promoting the values of civic maturity, without which civil societies and strong democracies are not possible."

Adam Yarmolinsky

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

October 23

9.30 Plenary Session I

Chairman: Jerzy Axer

Introduction & Welcome Nicolas Farnham

"Reforming Higher Education in Central and Eastern Europe, What Barriers, What Promises?" Jan Sokol

10.30 Coffee Break

10.45 Discussion

14.00 Demonstration of Liberal Education Seminars (Concurrent sessions)

Section A: Plato's The Allegory of the Cave.

Moderator: Adam Yarmolinsky

Section B: Selections from Machiavelli's The Prince.

Moderator: Samuel Abrahám

Section C: Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient

Mariner. Moderator: Julia Stefanova

Section D: Zen Philosopher Dogen's The Issue at

Hand. Moderator: Rein Raud

16.00 Coffee break

16.15

Plenary Session II

Chairman: Julia Stefanova

"Liberal Education and Transformation of

Higher Education in Eastern Europe: University Perspective" Włodzimierz Siwinski

16.45 Discussion

17.30 End of Day's Discussion

October 24

9.00 Plenary Session III

Chairman: Samuel Abrahám

"What Do Liberal Education Seminars Accomplish and How Can They be Implemented More Widely"

Panel discussion among seminar moderators:

Samuel Abrahám, Rein Raud, Julia Stefanova,

Adam Yarmolinsky, followed by general discussion

10.15 Coffee Break

10.30 Demonstrations of Interdisciplinary Liberal Education (Concurrent sessions)

Science & Humanities: Common Themes

Thomas Darby, Samuel Abrahám

Astronomy & Poetry: Jerzy Dobrzycki, Jerzy Axer

Literature, Technology and Society: Julia Watkins,

Barry Chambers

12.00 Lunch

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13.00 **Plenary Session IV**

Chairman: Jan Sokol

"The Future of Liberal Education in our Region" Josef Jarab

13.30 Discussion

14.00 **Plenary Session V**

Chairman: Jerzy Axer

"What Can Interdisciplinary Teaching Accomplish and How Can it be Implemented?"

Panel discussion among Interdisciplinary Liberal Education demonstrators: Samuel Abrahám, Jerzy Axer, Jan Sokol, Julia Watkins, followed by general discussion

15.15 **Small Group Discussion by Area**

16.30 Coffee Break

16.45 **Plenary Session VI**

Chairman: Serhiy Ivaniouk

Reports from Rapporteurs in Area Discussion Groups (5 minutes each)

18.00 End of Day's Discussion

October 25

9.00 **Plenary Session VII**

Chairman: Julia Stefanova

Conclusions: Where Does Liberal Education Go From Here in Our Societies?

10.30 Coffee Break

10.45 Continuation of discussion

12.30 End of Conference

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CONFERENCE STATEMENT

This statement was prepared by the participants in Artes Liberales: Liberal Education and our Societies, a conference of Central and Eastern European University Educators held October 22-25, 1998 in Budapest, Hungary. The statement was adopted by in the final session with all present voting in favor, save one abstention.

The decade of change that has begun to transform the societies of Central and Eastern Europe from rigid systems into freer and more dynamic communities has affected all aspects of life (the public discourse, values, and ideals being no exception. The change is not finished, nor in a constantly developing society can it ever be. In this situation, the proper role of education has changed in some countries from political and ideological control into a process of raising self-assured, free individuals who are able to cope with the challenges of a rapidly evolving environment.

As a way of liberalizing education, changes have begun to be implemented to various degrees in Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine. These changes have taken place in either completely new institutions, or academic structures within old institutions or small and flexible units outside of academic institutions. Combining the classical traditions of European education with new methods and experiences, they have shown positive results in a relatively short time.

While there are many differences from country to country, needed changes throughout the region include:

- More interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary study
- More and better teacher training
- A closer integration of teaching and research
- The introduction of an academic credit system as an instrument of freer choice of courses for students
- Increased teacher and student mobility and exchanges
- The exploration of new models of international education
- A better balance of the tension between the quality of education and access to it.

After the first conference, *What Does Liberal Education Offer the Civil Society?*, organized in Budapest by the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation's Educational Leadership Program in 1996, participants came to the conclusion that liberal education could become a critical agent in the process of transforming the societies of post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe. As a follow-up, the association Artes Liberales, devoted to the promotion of the ideas of liberal education, was founded in January 1997 in Prague.

A general meeting of Artes Liberales took place in Budapest October 22-25, 1998, with participants including more than 100 university rectors, vice rectors, professors, educators, and students from 15 countries. As a result of the four-day conference of focused addresses, intensive debates, and model classroom workshops and demonstrations, participants issue an urgent call to educational leaders, politicians, and the general public to support the idea of liberal education. They call for the joint effort of everyone who is involved in reforming higher education to introduce liberal arts as a way of cultivating a spirit of critical thinking and intellectual independence and of promoting the values of civic maturity, without which civil society and strong democracies are not possible. •

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FURTHER STATEMENTS ABOUT LIBERAL EDUCATION

STANLEY N. KATZ, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN
COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES

WHAT IS THE CONTENT OF LIBERAL EDUCATION?

*Prepared for the Educational Leadership
Program Conference, Budapest, Hungary,
October, 1996*

In the last century, older conceptions of educational liberalism prevailed, so that the traditional European idea of the *Artes liberales*, the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, formed the basis of the curriculum. But in the twentieth century, liberal education has generally been defined by what it is not – a curriculum organized by disciplinary skills – and therefore it has often been called “general” education. In its modern form, liberal education in the United States has focused on providing a socially-useful, broad intellectual background for undergraduate students who will devote most of their collegiate efforts to acquiring disciplinary skills.

Discussing liberal education in Europe, however, it is important to distinguish American undergraduate education from European. It is my impression that much of what we Americans try to impart under the rubric of liberal education in college is taught at the pre-collegiate level in Europe – in the *lycée*, the *gymnasium* or the sixth form – and actually recognized by a formal degree – the *baccalaureate*, the *abitur*, the *matura* and so forth. Thus universities in Europe can take for granted (for better or worse) that students have acquired the rudiments of liberal education before reaching the university, and thus can channel students immediately into disciplinary or professional programs. I realize, by the way, that this account of your complicated systems of higher education will strike you as naive and overly-general, but I am painting with a very broad brush in this short talk.

In the United States we cannot take the liberal education of seventeen-year olds for granted, despite the fact that many public and private secondary schools provide a good deal of liberal education. We must, therefore, continue to make special provision

for liberal education, especially in the first two years of our normally four year undergraduate program. Indeed, for those students going on to professional schools (most of which are post-graduate), the entire undergraduate experience may be thought of as providing liberal education. Our lawyers and doctors receive anywhere from three to seven years of post-baccalaureate training, and the applicants to such professional graduate schools are frequently discouraged from pursuing undergraduate training in the immediately relevant arts and sciences disciplines. It is not necessary (or in the view of some medical schools desirable) for a “pre-med” student to major in biology, since a generally well-educated student is what is desired.

In the United States, liberal education has always had several functions. The first, and most important, has been simply acquainting students with the intellectual context necessary to understand the theoretical structures to which they are being introduced in college. This has traditionally meant the introduction to basic texts of the intellectual traditions of Western civilization (the humanities: Greek philosophy, the major religions, the basic history of the West, the history of thought, etc.), the major approaches to understanding society (social science) and the basics of natural science. Until fairly recently, the easy part has always been the humanities and, to a lesser extent, the social sciences, but I will return to the subject later to explain how the “culture wars” of the 1980’s and early 1990’s have complicated our conceptions of the humanities and social sciences. But we have always struggled to know how to introduce non-scientists to science, wavering back and forth from exposing them to a little laboratory science to providing alternative courses in the history and philosophy of science. Fundamental conceptions of the liberal arts in American higher education require the integration of what you in Europe call the “hard” (or “strict,” or “precise”) and the “soft” sciences, but too often we fail to instill in our students more than a superficial acquaintance with the physical and life sciences.

The second function of liberal education has been to relate the academic work of undergraduate education to the social functions of education. This focus on the non-intellectual goals of higher education may be another distinctively American approach. Apart from professionally and vocationally useful skills, we ask,

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what should students know to make them responsible citizens in a democracy? This social function, perhaps best articulated by John Dewey early in this century, has made the word "liberal" a *double entendre*: liberal in the intellectual sense described in the first function, and liberal in the political sense. Traditionally, we have tried to accomplish the social functions of liberal education through the extracurriculum. American colleges sponsor or facilitate a remarkable range of activities, most of which have no place whatsoever in European higher education (with the partial exception of the United Kingdom): athletics, social organizations (fraternities and sororities), newspapers, clubs of all kinds (political, hobby, civic), and so forth. We assume that these activities "round out" our students in a variety of ways: *mens sana in corpore sano*, and that some of them, such as student government, produce specifically civic skills.

Within the past decade, a new range of activities has emerged, specifically designed to build civil society-enhancing skills. The ideal of "community service," always an element in the socializing function of higher education, has taken on new life and new meaning. New campus organizations, with or without college financial support and supervision, have emerged to encourage students to work with local public schools, renovate slum housing, teach adult literacy, or aid in inner city community development. Some of this activity, and this is quite new, is actually curricular, and it goes under the name of "service learning." This means that faculty (or sometimes faculty and students) develop curriculum which involves faculty-supervised (and graded) student social work in local communities. Service learning has been adopted in a great many undergraduate institutions, thus merging the first and second functions of liberal education, and providing the possibility of an entirely new understanding of the relationship of student learning and the exercise of the democratic responsibilities in higher education.

More recently, liberal education has had a third function, which is to provide an intellectual alternative to what has come to be seen as narrow disciplinary. Scholars now more frequently work across disciplines (interdisciplinary), among several disciplines (multidisciplinary) and in disregard of disciplines, organizing their interests according to the problems they address (nondisciplinarity). Of course interdisci-

plinary approaches first appeared in the hard sciences, and they are international in scope. The sciences have been adept in moving from chemistry to biochemistry and the like, and comparable developments have taken place in the social sciences (political economy, for instance). Similarly, fields like legal history have combined two different disciplines in ways that are genuinely multidisciplinary. The problem orientation of nondisciplinarity, however, appears to have had its origins in the United States, and has had a powerful impact on research and teaching - women's studies and Afro-American studies are only two of the most successful examples. But American tertiary educational institutions are dominated administratively (and therefore fiscally) by disciplinary departments, so that the newer approaches have had to take on new (and normally temporary) organizational forms such as "programs" and "centers" They have also come to be thought of as important aspects of liberal education insofar as they work in tension with highly-focused (and therefore "illiberal") disciplinary approaches.

There are, however, serious challenges to the goals of liberal education. The first is from those who attack it as being too narrowly based on Western culture. These are the so-called "multiculturalists" who argue that to be liberal in late twentieth-century American one must take into account the social heterogeneity of the United States. The multiculturalists contend that the curriculum in a country fewer and fewer of whose people are of European origin must reflect the range of gender, ethnic and racial sources of the national population, with especial recognition of the importance of African, Asian and Hispanic origins and living traditions. This means that the traditional "Western Civilization" framework for general education must be supplanted by a more global (or at least international) approach. It also sometimes means that the professoriate should reflect the current gender, racial and ethnic identity of the United States, both in order to provide a better understanding of the cultural meaning of this diversity, and in order to connect more readily with the newly diverse student population of our colleges and universities. In a short talk I can do justice neither to the multiculturalists, nor to their antagonists (who defend the traditional Western orientation of the curriculum and oppose affirmative action in faculty hiring and student recruit-

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ment), but it is important to remind you that this conflict, sometimes called the "culture wars," has had and still has a profoundly destabilizing impact upon higher education in the United States. Indeed, the issue is no less than the very nature of "liberality" in liberal education. The "culture wars" of the past decade have also done a lot to degrade public confidence in higher education, and one of the most important questions we shall have to work out amongst ourselves is how we shall explain our changing understandings of liberal education to the populace in general.

The second, and much older, attack is the charge that that liberal education is too weak and too broad, and serves to do little more than offer baby food to young adult appetites. This critique has taken many forms, sometimes arguing simply that general education courses are poorly designed and insufficiently rigorous intellectually, and at other times contending that anything other than training in the methodologically-based disciplines is a waste of time in forming young minds. A third and related attack, though this one has not been articulated as such, has come in the past decade in reaction to the intellectual and epistemological revolution of the past generation which has called into question generally received notions of truth. The French are sometimes blamed for the alleged nihilism of deconstruction and post-structuralism, though of course the American academy has been the willing victim of the new continental epistemology. From the point of view of liberal education, however, this attack is closely related to the opposition to multiculturalism in that it argues for bounding the range of intellectual techniques college students should be exposed to. The political ramifications of the traditionalist assault and the multiculturalist/post-structuralist defense of the transformation of liberal education were clearly the driving forces in the culture wars.

Liberal collegiate education is also under stress in a completely different way, as we revise and strengthen secondary education. Despite the domestic political advantage of denigrating the quality of elementary and secondary education in the United States (a bipartisan sport), the fact of the matter is that many American youngsters now receive many of the basic elements of a genuinely liberal education in high schools. To the extent that this is true, these students more nearly compare to their European contempora-

ries, and thus necessitate a reevaluation of the remedial function of collegiate liberal education. The interface between high school and college has been a particular problem in the United States, mainly because of the lack of national standards for K-12 education and the consequently vast variation in the character and quality of secondary education across the states and territories. As many of you will know, both the Bush and Clinton administrations have pushed for the establishment of national standards, but at the moment it is unlikely, or at least unclear, that any measure of national quality control will emerge. This leaves us with the problem of how to recognize the learning levels of some, but not all, of our incoming college students as we retrofit our general education programs to form the basis for liberal education at the end of the century. I have elsewhere suggested that we ought to think of the last two years of high school and the first two years of college (grades 11 to 14) as the years in which the basis for liberal education is laid -but of course this cannot be a solution for particular institutions, since the literal institutional gap between the high school diploma and college admission is almost impossible to bridge.

So, at the end of the century, liberal education in the United States is once more in a period of transition. This should not surprise us, since one of its functions has always been to facilitate intellectual, social, political change in the academy, and another has been to readjust the relations of the academy and the larger society. In the United States, rethinking liberal education has always been the most important way in which we rethink the function of higher education. And since this has almost always been done in an ethnocentric manner in our country, comparison and collaboration with other educational traditions seems a particularly good way to continue the re-examination of liberal education at the dawn of a new century.

The stakes of reconsideration of the purposes of education are always high, but I think it is no exaggeration to say that they are particularly high right now. This is nowhere more evident than in the region in which we are meeting, East Central Europe, where the questions of the decade relate to the transition from state socialism to democracy and the free market. My organization and I are working with colleagues in all of the Visegrad countries to develop high

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school programs on constitutionalism, and I have some sense of the ways in which regional universities are trying to establish their role in the task of building civil society. There are comparable, but less dramatic, political changes going on throughout Europe. The same is true in the United States, though we are once again obsessed with the American dilemma – what does it mean to be American? It is not acceptable in my country, as it is in Europe, to speak of an intellectual class, but the challenge to those of us with some measure of responsibility for the social management of the intellect in America to find a way to rethink the content of liberal education necessary for the rebirth of civil society in the United States. I welcome the help of colleagues in Europe in this urgent endeavor.

FRANCIS OAKLEY, PROFESSOR OF HISTORY,
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WHAT ARE THE METHODS OF LIBERAL EDUCATION?

*Outline of the Educational Leadership Program
Conference Presentation, Budapest, Hungary,
October, 1996*

In view of the bewildering array of competing meanings given to the term "liberal education," the paper begins by stipulating the following, historically-conditioned, definition: Liberal education I take to mean that tradition of non-professional but advanced study of the liberal arts that emerged in the schools of Greek and Roman antiquity, crystal in The arts – linguistic, literary/rhetorical, quantitative – of the medieval *trivium* and *quadrivium*, was embedded in the faculty of arts curriculum of the medieval and early-modern universities, cultivated especially in the undergraduate sectors of the institutions of higher education in the modern Anglo-North American world, and made the exclusive focus of undergraduate study in those free-standing American liberal arts colleges still committed to their original educational ideal.

Taking "method" to mean curricular form and pedagogic mode, the paper goes on to take note of the primordial, enduring and fundamental tension in the liberal arts tradition of education between the philosophical/scientific version driven by the urge for discovery and Critical originality, and the literary/

rhetorical version targeted not only on the development of rhetorical skills, oral and written, but also on the development in the student of the moral virtues and civic judgement.

Focusing now on the North American scene and judging the dominant strain in American liberal arts education to reflect the philosophical/scientific strand in the tradition, the paper briefly describes the characteristic modern effort to balance the element of concentration or specialization in a given discipline (required of the student by the "major") with various other curricular requirements ("minor" concentrations, distribution requirements etc.) designed to make sure that the student has at least some exposure to a broader array of subject matter ranging across the arts and humanities, the social sciences and the mathematical and natural sciences.

In such an educational setting, the pedagogic modes employed vary with the nature of the subjects being taught (from large lecture courses, via small discussion courses or specialized seminars, to individual tutorials or independent studies or collaborative research involving a student and on instructor). But the overarching ideal is that of a highly individualized, student-centered form of education preferably in a residential setting where co-curricular activities serve to enrich the intellectual atmosphere, and where the learning process extends beyond the formal moments of classroom instruction.