In his book, *The Birth and Death of Meaning*, Ernest Becker argues that our self-esteem, our sense of who and what we are, our identity, is to a large extent a social construct, significantly shaped by the recognition we receive from others, or by the absence of it. Indeed, the “fundamental task of culture is to constitute the individual as an object of primary value in a world of meaning.” Thus, the basic questions of human existence — Who am I? What is the value of my life? — and our search for answers to them, can be interpreted as the poignant, and possibly tragic, thrusts we make to win recognition “as an object of primary value in the universe?” Another form such questions take is: “Where do I rank as a hero”? Because culture serves as a vehicle for heroism, defining which of its qualities are to be considered meaningful and worthwhile and valuable, and determining which roles might best embody such qualities. From an understanding of them, the individual can decide the particularities of her response to a particular social situation, as well as process the feelings occasioned by that response. This means that in order to provide its members an experience of primary value in a world of meaning, the culture must first have a set of prescriptions for meaningful action on the part of all. As Rousseau makes clear in his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, societies determine what personality types, traits, or talents are to be valued. Individuals or groups that possess these qualities are esteemed and rewarded merely for possessing these arbitrarily chosen attributes. On the other hand, those unlucky enough to lack these attributes end up becoming marginalized (and in certain instances even demonized) and even being denied access to society’s fundamental goods (both material and
psychological). Prof. Herbert J. Gans in his book, *The War Against the Poor*, demonstrates, for example, that the war against the poor is always "a war of words — or of pejorative labels — that stereotype, stigmatize and harass the poor" as undeserving.

Becker's analysis of culture, while somewhat dated, complements a turn in contemporary politics that focuses on this fundamental human need to be valued and recognized not only by friends and family but by the larger culture. This is the "politics of recognition." This demand for recognition is most intense in groups that have been subjected to some degree of marginalization by a larger culture that, on account of their differences from it, does not appear to value them enough. The demand for political recognition takes on a particular urgency not only because of the intimate relationship between recognition and the formation of identity, but because identity is also shaped by misrecognition on the part of others. "And so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves."1 In the socio-political realm, acts of "nonrecognition, or misrecognition can be a source of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false distorted, and reduced mode of being."2

The politics of recognition deals with the question of identity, self-esteem, and the good life. In a democratic culture, it is paramount that there exist a sense of equal recognition for all of its citizens. Each of us ought to have a sense of being recognized and valued, along with an awareness that we are participating in, and making a contribution to, the overall good of society. Yet, how well we know that in the case of the poor, there is little by way of positive recognition. There is, more often than not, denigration and misrecognition: people are poor because they want to be, the poor are poor because they lack the moral fiber necessary to be successful. The point of welfare reform appeared to have more to do with not wanting to spend tax dollars on those "types," than a concern for the toll that the cycle of poverty and dependence takes on one's sense of self-worth and the pursuit of the "truly good life".

---

2Ibid.
The purpose of this paper, then, will be twofold. First, I will provide an account of what is meant by the “politics of recognition” as it relates to identity formation and the contemporary notion of self-realization. In order to do this, I will draw primarily from the works of Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor and the German social theorist Axel Honneth. Second, I will suggest that given the social importance of the vital need for “recognition,” the mission statements of Jesuit Universities should be more than just rhetorical devices. Given the Catholic and Jesuit commitment to the “preferential option for the poor”, university mission statements should be, in the words of Axel Honneth, “The moral grammar of social conflict,” a grammar that ought to help shape, structure and direct the academic orientation of the university so as to be not only a voice providing recognition for the poor, but a means as well to help change culturally destructive stereotypes and social structures that too easily justify the exclusion of the poor from the goods of society. Lastly, it should be kept in mind that this essay is, at this point, an initial and tentative set of observations that are designed to be more probative and suggestive than definitive.

Charles Taylor, in his attempt to recover a richer and more nuanced understanding of what constitutes authentic self-realization, suggests that if a proper understanding of human authenticity is to be lifted out of its contemporary distortions, one must ask the further relevant question: “what are the conditions in human life that facilitate the realization of an ideal of this kind?” This question is at its root a question about: What it means for one to have an identity? How do I see myself? What animates and moves me? What do I hold dear, and how am I defined by these various answers? To claim an identity is to proffer an understanding of who one is, and what one’s fundamental defining charac-

---

Taylor sees the contemporary discussion concerning authentic self-realization as polarized between what he calls the “boosters and knockers.” The boosters are those who support this drive to realize one’s self according to a chosen ideal, yet the problem is that ultimately their position becomes a form of soft relativism. The knockers, conversely, claim that any talk of self-realization or human authenticity is just a cover story for pernicious forms of self-centeredness and ultimately destructive of the body politic.
teristics with respect to being human are. In other words, one's identity is the ground which makes all of one's tastes, desires, hopes and opinions intelligible. In taking his cue from Martin Heidegger, Taylor points out that the human person is embodied and that human existence is a context of relations. The condition of our being-in-the-world is that we "be already engaged in coping with our world, dealing with the things in it, at grips with them." In other words, society is the locus of an individual's identity, which means that one's sense of self is grounded in a horizon or framework of meaning. A horizon is foundational because it is that "in virtue of which we make sense of our lives spiritually. Without a framework, one falls into a life that is spiritually senseless." In short, our horizon expresses the particular ideal that is behind our intentions, choices, and reactions; it shapes our sense of who we are, our identity, as well as the moral realm we inhabit. It is what it means for one to be authentic — to truly realize one's self.

There is another way to understand the nature of framework or horizon, and that is to see it as a set of answers to a set of questions that each of us may have regarding what is most important and worthwhile. For Taylor, each of us exists within a space of questions. Our various frameworks, or horizons are the answers to these questions. Horizons are the background which give meaning and structure to our life, as well as articulate for us what we consider of worth, and how we are to understand ourselves vis a vis this background. To be truly a self, to be truly authentic, one needs to exist in a "space defined by distinctions of worth." What it means for me to be authentic is "defined by the com-

7Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 18. See also The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger p. 325. "When we find the Self, in a certain experience intelligible, what we are attending to, explicitly and expressly, is this experience. The context stands as the unexplicated horizon within which — or to very the image, as the vantage point from out of which — this experience can be understood."
9Human Agency and Language, p. 3.
mitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, valuable, ought to be done."\textsuperscript{10} We define ourselves, then, by the evaluations we make with respect to the aforementioned criteria. Evaluations of the type that Taylor is suggesting indicate that one possesses a sense "that one way of acting or living is higher than others, or in other cases that a certain way of living is debased . . . Some ways of living and acting have a special status, they stand out above others; while, in certain cases, others are seen as despicable."\textsuperscript{11} To have an identity, to be authentic means that one must choose and decide within a constellation of evaluations that are shaped by what one considers to be most worthwhile, important, good, truthful etc. — one's horizon. In fine, one's identity is intimately connected to one's ideal of authenticity, and authenticity refers to "certain evaluations which are essential because they are the indispensable horizon or foundation out of which we reflect and evaluate as persons."\textsuperscript{12} Moreover, even "the sense that the significance of my life comes from its being chosen . . . depends on the understanding that independent of my will there is something noble, courageous, and hence significant in giving shape to my own life."\textsuperscript{13}

It is quite clear that one's identity, and thus the issue of authentic self-realization, is shaped by the decisions that one makes with respect to what is worthwhile; furthermore, these decisions arise within an already constituted foreground of self-understanding and self-interpretation. However, one would be quite misguided to think that this process of self-constitution is as solitary as it might first appear. Quite the contrary. From Taylor's point of view, the ideal that structures a given orientation is not something that exists in a vacuum. The question of my being an authentic person is not something that resides outside the context of human relationships and, more specifically, outside the community. Human existence is "dialogical." "We become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining an identity through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression."\textsuperscript{14} One's

\textsuperscript{10}Sources of the Self, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{12}Human Agency and Language, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{13}The Ethics of Authenticity, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 33.
community is constitutive of one’s identity. My self-understanding is mediated by my ongoing interactions in community. We are languaged beings; one’s self can never be properly understood outside the context of a dialogical relationship. Taylor notes: “Community is constitutive of the individual, in the sense that the self-interpretations which define him are drawn from the interchange which the community carries on.” In other words, “each young person may take up a stance which is authentically his or her own, but the very possibility of this is enframed in a social understanding of great temporal depth, in fact, in a tradition.” It would seem then, that notions like the rugged individualist, or the “punctual self” are atavistic, and that one’s identity is always constructed linguistically and socially. The full measure and definition of someone’s identity usually incorporates not only the stand he takes on various moral and spiritual matters, but it also includes some reference to a defining community. Finally, “discovering my own identity doesn’t mean that I work it out in isolation, but I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others … My own identity (my self-understanding) crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others.” In other words, our identities are formed by reciprocal acts of “recognition.”

As Taylor has shown, we are dialogical beings already bound to one another in a web of social relations. My identity, my sense of who I am and what is valuable, what is worthwhile about me, is to a significant degree a social construct. Because of this dialogical relationship (which we never fully avert to), our identity is significantly shaped by the approval of or disapproval from others. Another way to articulate this dialogical relationship would be in terms of what Axel Honneth calls the “struggle for recognition.” “The language of everyday life … contains the reference to a concept based on the theory of intersubjectivity … According to this theory, human individuation is a process in which the individual can unfold a practical identity to the extent that he is capable of reassuring himself of recognition by a growing circle of partners to

---

15 Sources of the Self, pp. 34-35.
16 Human Agency and Language, p. 8.
17 Sources of the Self, p. 39.
18 Ibid., p. 36.
19 Philosophical Arguments, p. 231.
communication."\textsuperscript{20} Thus, as one's self-understanding grows and develops, a person comes "to depend to an ever increasing extent on the conditions of recognition one is afforded by the life-world of his or her social environment."\textsuperscript{21} In other words, "we define our identity always in dialogue with and sometimes in struggle against the things our significant others want to see in us."\textsuperscript{22}

For Honneth, this primordial need for recognition suggests that the "precondition for self-realization is the struggle for the establishment of relations of mutual recognition."\textsuperscript{23} Our ability to realize ourselves in accordance with a particular "identity-ideal" is contingent upon the establishment of three types of "practical-relation-to-self."\textsuperscript{24} Moreover, each of these three types of "practical-relation-to-self" correspond to three types of recognition. The three types of practical-relation-to-self may be differentiated as "self-respect, self-esteem and self-confidence" which for Honneth are the necessary and sufficient inter-subjective conditions for the possibility of self-realization. The notions of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem\textsuperscript{25} articulate those affective experiences of mutual recognition which regard one's status "either as a focus of concern, a responsible agent, or a valued contributor to shared projects."\textsuperscript{26} Again, for Honneth, our self-understanding, our identity is intrinsically linked to a dynamic intersubjective pattern of experience constituted by relationships of mutual recognition. This intersubjective pattern is the affective experience of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. "The only way in which individuals are constituted as person is by learning to refer to themselves from the perspective of an approving or encouraging other, as beings with certain positive traits

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Philosophical Arguments}, p. 230.
\textsuperscript{24} For Honneth, "practical-relation-to-self" is a "dynamic process in which individuals come to experience themselves has having a certain status..." \textit{Ibid}, p. xii.
\textsuperscript{25} Self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem may also be understood as vital values, and therefore constitutive elements of the whole human good and the good of order.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{The Struggle for Recognition}, p. xii.
and abilities.” However, because self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem can only be maintained through spontaneous and natural intersubjective relationships of mutual recognition, the primordial need for recognition becomes a continuous struggle that at times is poignant and, at worst, tragic.

Honneth understands personal identity as having an intersubjective structure, and as with any structure it has its relevant parts. If we understand a structure to be a set of internal relations where “each part is what it is in virtue of its functional relations to other parts,” then this intersubjective structure of personal identity has an “intimate sphere” constituted by feelings of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem, and a corresponding “public sphere” constituted by three types of recognition: love, rights, and solidarity. If a structure is indeed a set of internal relations where each part is what it is by virtue of its functional relationship to the other components, then the intersubjective structure of personal identity is a set of functional relations where the three “practical-relation-to-self” are functionally related to the three types of recognition. The possibility of basic self-confidence is functionally related to the experience of love; the possibility of self-respect is functionally related to the experience of legal recognition (rights); and finally the possibility of self-esteem is functionally related to the experience of solidarity.

Love is the first stage of a reciprocal recognition because subjects in love mutually confirm one another with respect to each other’s inherent worth, value, and dignity. This experience of being loved brings about the vital value of self-confidence: self-confidence means, among other things, an “affirmation of independence that is guided — indeed, supported — by care.” Rights regard those individual claims “that a person can legitimately expect to have socially met because he or she participates with equal rights in the institutional order as a full-fledged member of a community.” Rights regard the vital value of self-respect.

---

27 Ibid., p. 173.
29 The Struggle for Recognition, p. 173.
30 Ibid., p. 107. I would also suggest that all three types of recognition are specific manifestations of “care,” and in the Christian context, three differentiated expressions of “Christian Love.”
31 Ibid., p. 133.
To have self-respect is to view oneself "as entitled to the same status and treatment as every other person." Solidarity is to be understood as a mutually conditioning relationship of shared concern, in which communal interests and values are in play. Solidarity regards the vital value of self-esteem. The person understands himself or herself as an object of primary value and contributor to a shared enterprise. In short, Honneth maintains that "a good society, a society in which individuals have a real opportunity for full self-realization, would be a society in which the common values would match the concerns of individuals in such a way that no member of the society would be denied the opportunity to earn esteem for his or her contribution to the common good."

The significance of Honneth’s position concerning the relationship between self-realization and mutual recognition is that self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem not only are vital values and thus part of the human good, and the good of order, but they are constitutive conditions for the formation of one’s identity. Moreover, the intersubjective conditions of recognition — love, rights, and solidarity — provide the basis for what Honneth, taking his cue from Hegel, calls a formal conception of "ethical life." "Ethical life" is to be understood as a normative ideal of a society in which patterns of recognition would facilitate an individual’s acquisition of the above vital values for the full development of one’s identity. The fulfillment of these intersubjective conditions for self-realization then becomes a moral issue, and the notion of an "ethical life" means "the entirety of intersubjective conditions that can be shown to serve as necessary preconditions for individual self-realization." Thus, an "ethical life" is possible only in terms of an intersubjectively shared value-horizon. Which is to say, what makes an "ethical life" possible is the degree to which "self and other" can mutually value, respect, and esteem each other as persons. This is feasible only on the "condition that they share an orientation to those values and goals that indicate to each other the significance or contribution of their quali-

---

32 Ibid., p. xvi.
33 Ibid., p. xvii.
34 Ibid.
36 Ibid., p. 173.
ties for the life of the other.” Our ability, then, to realize ourselves in accordance with a particular identity-ideal is contingent upon the establishment of relationships of mutual recognition and the continuous struggle to maintain that recognition.

Finally, the grammar concerning the struggle for recognition is itself a form of moral discourse (i.e., that which is involved when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it). This is most evident in situations of denigration and degradation (forms of misrecognition) in which feelings of outrage and indignation are generated because of the rejection of claims to recognition. These feelings and their subsequent speech acts “imply normative judgments about the legitimacy of social arrangements,” and its capacity to establish ever-expanding conditions for self-realization and relationships of mutual recognition. In short, our identity is not only shaped by the recognition we receive from others, but it can also be malformed through the misrecognition or denigration of others. Because the vital values of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem are constitutive components of one’s identity, and thus the ground of possibility for self-realization, this struggle for recognition becomes a moral struggle. An “individual or group can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves.” Misrecognition is not just a lack of due respect, nor is it a mere matter of hurt feelings. “It can inflict a grievous wound, saddling its victims with a crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need,” and, for that reason, a moral imperative.

When we view at the poor with respect to this struggle for recognition, it is important to see how speech has been used to marginalize them and render them almost insignificant with respect to any national conversation about how we ought to be living our lives together. As

---

37 Ibid., p. 120.
38 Ibid., p. xii.
39 Philosophical Arguments, p. 225.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., p. 226.
mentioned at the outset, Herbert J. Gans has provided a persuasive account of how we, as a nation, have waged a war of words against the poor. We have attached pejorative labels “that stereotype, stigmatize and harass the poor by questioning their morality and their values.” For Gans, such terms as “the underclass,” or “undeserving poor” have justified “actions that involve mistreatment and punishment of the poor” for being who and what they are. Labeling of this kind suggests that those individuals who are classified in such ways are morally deficient and thus not deserving of any economic or other types of social assistance.

Gans sees a particular ideology at work in the way in which we label and even demonize the poor. He suggests there are four elements to this overarching ideology. First, because the poor do not behave according to the values set by mainstream America, they must be undeserving of any type of aid. Second, poor men must be inherently lazy and therefore unable to learn and acquire the proper discipline for work. Thirdly, not only do poor women have an “unhealthy taste for having babies as adolescents,” but they are also sexual libertines. Fourth, if the poor cannot behave as they ought, then they must be forced to do so. In short, at the heart of this unthematized horizon is the belief that poverty and indigence are not caused by “the social or economic system, but by the deviance of the poor. The necessary punishment for deviance is poverty.” The poor deserve what happens to them. For Gans, negative labels do more than stereotype forms of behavior. They take these stereotypical forms and turn them into a moral failure of character.

---

42 Gans makes it clear that his interest is not to romanticize the poor. He is very much aware of the dark side to human nature and how this cuts across class distinctions.


44 Ibid., p. 3.


46 Ibid., pp. 6-7.

47 Ibid., p. 83. Gans continues: “unlike the affluent classes, the poor cannot mask their occasional inability or unwillingness to practice mainstream behavior, which is why the more affluent imagine the poor have bad values. For example, while middle-class people who become jobless generally have family connections, networks, and other resources to fall back on and usually remain home owners, while the working poor who lose their jobs often go on welfare, and some eventually become homeless, or show up in the street crime statistics.”
Consequently, welfare recipients are viewed as defective personalities or deficient moral types. But what is overlooked in this characterization is they also have families, attend church and are neighbors. While one may contend that labels are only words, these types of labels come freighted with a set of normative presuppositions “which can stir institutions and individuals to punitive actions.” In fact, the way in which the poor are labeled makes them outcasts, enemies if you will, and “enemies are just one category of the threatening outgroup of strangers . . . and it is the threatening outgroup that is always, or almost always thought undeserving, whether its threats are actual or imagined.”

From the perspective of the struggle for recognition, these forms of “disrespect” mutilate any positive sense of self-understanding acquired “intersubjectively.” To call certain acts of speech disrespectful points to “the specific vulnerability of humans resulting from the internal interdependence of individualization and recognition.” The type of disrespect, and subsequent misrecognition described by Gans towards the poor not only damages psychologically their sense of identity, but it is also a judgment of disvalue: they are judged not be valuable as human beings. This judgment of disvalue becomes the justification for the way in which the poor are “structurally excluded from the possession of certain rights within a society,” and in this case the exclusion is economic. Conversely, the ethos of disrespect shown to the poor acquires a normative function. According to Gans there are two elements to this function. First, it serves as a force of moral legitimization. The manner in which the poor are labeled, such as undeserving etc., tacitly determines who is deserving and who is not. This in turn creates a moral and political ethos that justifies the marginalization of the poor. The second element Gans calls “norm reinforcement.” Norm reinforcement serves as a way in which culture can reinforce what it values. “Before the

---

48 Ibid., p. 2.
49 Ibid., p. 67. Gans gives the example of Bruce Link’s studies of people labeled as mentally ill. Link found “that the labeling act itself can lead to depression and demoralization, which prevent those labeled from being at their best in job interviews and other competitive situations.”
50 Ibid., p. 75.
51 The Struggle for Recognition, p. 131.
52 Ibid., p. 133.
undeserving poor can obtain financial help, one of the conventional prerequisites is visible indication of their readiness to practice the mainstream values." Yet, as Gans points out, there is clearly a double standard operating here. For instance, if a woman on welfare is found to be living with a man "without benefit of marriage" she can be removed from the welfare roles. Yet the social worker who removes her can live with his or her significant other "without benefit of marriage," and not have to be concerned about the loss of his or her job.

Finally, this lack of recognition or, more precisely, those direct acts of misrecognition and disrespect that result from pejorative labels, enables culture to politically "emasculate" the poor, "thus excluding them, and their needs from political institutions that are supposed to serve all citizens." Moreover, labeling the poor inferior and lacking moral fiber, permits what John Kenneth Galbraith calls "the contented class" to reinforce and entrench its cultural and economic hegemony and the expense of those less fortunate.

Gans’ analysis reveals how the prevailing grammar of recognition “disrespects” the poor. This act of misrecognition not only oppresses materially and psychologically those in poverty, but also cripples their capacity to realize themselves as God so desires. How, then, should "Jesuit University Mission Statements" address this lack of recognition of the poor?

To begin, one may see Mission Statements in terms of what Honneth calls a "framework of orientation." A framework of orientation is a set of values and meanings that not only inform a common way of life, but also articulates our cultural self-understanding as a society.

The cultural self-understanding of a society provides the criteria that orient the social esteem of persons, because their abilities and achievements are judged intersubjectively according to the degree to which they can help realize culturally defined values. This

53 The War Against the Poor, p. 95.
54 Ibid., p. 96.
55 Ibid., p. 7.
form of mutual recognition is ... tied to the presupposition of a context of social life, whose members, through their orientation towards shared conceptions of their goals, form a community of value.\textsuperscript{57}

In other words, a framework of orientation determines the social worth of particular types of persons, and this worth is measured to the degree that one is judged morally able to contribute to the realization of society's goals.\textsuperscript{58} However, there is a limitation to Honneth's concept of a "framework of orientation." His heavy emphasis on esteeming others in terms of their capacity for production and moral autonomy seems to reinforce the earlier point made by Gans: labeling the poor inherently lazy and lacking a work ethic, makes them morally deficient which then justifies their marginalization.

Perhaps a better way to formulate the issue is to understand university Mission Statements as "constitutive forms of communication," that is, as communication in which "human identity and orientation are peculiarly at stake."\textsuperscript{59} Not only does constitutive communication give us a sense of who we are and what we value, but it orients our concrete living together in a particular way. Mission Statements should be a form of communication by which the moral substance of a Catholic and Jesuit institution "is created and maintained inasmuch as it raises and answers questions about terminal values."\textsuperscript{60} More succinctly stated: Jesuit University Mission Statements should be seen as articulating a "dangerous memory." This dangerous memory is the Christ event. "Human life has the structure of both a conversation and a story. God has chosen to enter into the human story — to make human beings sharers in the divine conversation."\textsuperscript{61} Mission Statements should articulate for us as human beings that "something is truly at stake in our responding to the dangerous memory of Jesus's life, death and resurrection."\textsuperscript{62} As a

\textsuperscript{57} The Struggle for Recognition, p. 122.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 123.


\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., p. 231.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., p. 233.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., p. 237.
dangerous memory, Mission Statements should not only provide an orientation towards shared values and goals and thus form the context for mutual recognition, but it ought to reinforce this orientation through its praxis. This praxis should provide the "imaginative and existential conditions for facing the general social and cultural problems" that militate against "our ability to think about standards, or excellence, or comprehensive ends."\(^6^3\)

In the Catholic context, then, it is possible to suggest that Jesuit University Mission Statements should facilitate the struggle for recognition on behalf of the poor because these Mission Statements themselves ought to be a form of discourse that can mediate values of "agapic praxis to human intelligence."\(^6^4\) In short, University Mission Statements and the resulting university praxis which articulate an option for the poor can be and should be seen as the moral grammar of social conflict, that is, as acts of "resistance to public disorder."\(^6^5\)

An act of resistance to public disorder would mean that mission statements specifically articulate a preferential option for the poor, thus binding the community to the poor's struggle for recognition. To have mission statements articulate this preferential option would mean a "radical shift in perspective. Rather than regarding the poor as objects of charity it affirms them as subjects of their own history."\(^6^6\) Moreover, the preferential option for the poor would serve as a means in which to

\(^{6^3}\)Fred Lawrence, "Dangerous Memory and the Pedagogy of the Oppressed," Communicating a Dangerous Memory: Soundings in Political Theology (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), p. 25.

\(^{6^4}\)Matthew L. Lamb, Solidarity with Victims: Toward a Theology of Social Transformation (New York: Crossroad Press, 1982), p. 2. Programs such as Boston College's Pulse and Perspectives programs would be examples of this kind of agapic praxis. Both programs attempt to situate the student in such a way as to facilitate a conversion of heart and mind. The Perspectives Program does this by immersing the students in a conversation with the great texts of the intellectual tradition of the West so as to grapple with the question "what is the best way to live." The Pulse Program with its social service component, places students in concrete situations with the poor and marginalized so as to set the conditions for a shift in how one sees the world.

\(^{6^5}\)"Constitutive Communication," p. 259.

"critique society from below (perspective of the poor) rather than from
the normally privileged viewpoint of the dominating sectors."\textsuperscript{67} Again,
Mission Statements are constitutive speech acts of a specific commu-
nity, which, in articulating the community's commitment to the poor,
would not only provide them with that recognition which they desire,
but would also relate them to a community that socially recognizes,
values, and esteems them as persons, as \textit{image Dei}, denied them in the
present cultural climate.

In addition to being an act of resistance, university Mission State-
ments, and the praxis orientated around the preferential option for the
poor, would serve the twofold function of conversion and prophetic
indictment. All of us live out our existence in the context of a world; it
is a horizon. This horizon is a solid structure; it is apt to define what I
mean by the real. It is the sum total of what matters most to us — our
Concern, what Martin Heidegger has called \textit{Sorge}. "Concern is the se-
lectivity of consciousness... It is what we are interested in that gets into
consciousness."\textsuperscript{68} To state the obvious, this horizon will be limited, for
it is only as large as the area of our concern. Hence, a person's orienta-
tion, which is structured by care, affects and constitutes personal rela-
tions. Anything that falls outside of that concern is meaningless. If this
is indeed the case; then the truthfulness of one's living has a depth,
breath, and width correlative to what one considers worthwhile, truth-
ful and real. All of one's thinking and doing concerning what it means
to be a human being operates under the constraints of a horizon.\textsuperscript{69} The
narrower one's \textit{Sorge} the more limiting is one's horizon. The more re-
stricted one's horizon, the less likely that one will be able to live a truth-
filled existence. When a horizon systematically excludes questions con-
cerning the true plight of the poor and what that might mean with re-
spect to the polity, then that horizon personally and collectively "in-
creases the evils in a given situation."\textsuperscript{70}

Because one's horizon is the boundary and limit to one's existence,
to one's world, there is a real resistance to moving beyond the familiar

\textsuperscript{67}Ibid., p. 6.
\textsuperscript{68}Bernard Lonergan, SJ. \textit{Lectures in Existentialism} (Unpublished lectures given at
\textsuperscript{69}Ibid., p. 105.
\textsuperscript{70}Ibid.
and accessible.\textsuperscript{71} Who and what we are and how we are situated in the larger drama of our human living are defined within this horizon. To find ourselves in conflict with our world view, with what we believe and value most, and our sense of self-understanding, produces a sense of "dread" and a real confrontation with death. Hence, it becomes existentially difficult to raise the question of whether I am what I claim to be, or whether my real world is THE real world.

To move beyond one's horizon in any significant fashion involves reorganization of the subject, a reorganization of modes of living, feeling, thinking, judging, desiring, fearing, willing, deliberating, choosing. Against such reorganization of the patterns of the subject, there come into play all the conservative forces that give our lives their continuity and their coherence. The subject's fundamental anxiety, his deep distress, is over the collapse of himself and his world; tampering with the organization of himself gives rise to dread.\textsuperscript{72}

Thus a person may find herself in a situation where her "world" conflicts with the relative horizon of society or community. The awareness that things are not as they appear to be within a given horizon gives rise to the possibility of discovering the means of moving beyond one's limited position. This going beyond the limits of one's horizon, the expansion of one's interests and concerns, is conversion. Conversion is a movement into a new horizon; it is a radical change in one's orientation to the world and others, and this new orientation can reveal ever greater depth, breadth, and wealth to the human drama.

Conversion is a new understanding of one's self, one's world and the key to a "basic horizon."\textsuperscript{73} It is only in terms of conversion that one is able to address the question whether one indeed is living truthfully, morally, and religiously. Conversion, then, is not only foundational for any proper ordering of human relations. It also enlarges our horizon


\textsuperscript{72}Ibid., p. 90.

\textsuperscript{73}For Bernard Lonergan, unlike a "relative horizon" which is always restricted by the subject's Sorge, a basic horizon is a fundamental and all embracing realm of intellectual, moral and religious involvement.
by breaking the cultural cover story that denigrates, and marginalizes the poor for just being poor. It means reciprocally opening ourselves to the poor, appreciating them, and regarding them as persons of worth and dignity regardless of their status, because any “change in orientation brings about a change in personal relations, for a different concern determines a different whole (world) in terms of which one assigns status to persons.” 74 Conversions, therefore, actualize the desire to find God in persons and not in things. 75 Prophetic indictment, on the other hand, is “constituted by an agapic life or praxis whereby the cries of victims are articulated into a voice protesting the victimization of humans by other humans.” 76 Mission Statements and the option for the poor would commit us to a noetic praxis of “dialectically discerning the values and disvalues” operating within the larger culture. 77 Mission Statements that truly in-form the university’s way of life could be a source of empowering transformation; they are “an invitation, a call or imperative to live out (praxis) God’s identification with the victims of history through personal and social conversion, or metanoia.” 78

Finally, what does it mean to speak of a preferential option for the poor? First, to speak of an “option” in this context would mean making a decision for personal conversion, whereby one is put into a new intelligible relation with those human beings who normally “lie beyond the horizon of our intersubjective resonance of feeling.” 79 Secondly, this new relation to persons also means a new relation to God “made possible by the person of Christ Jesus, in his ministry passion and resurrection. In his life Jesus gave unconditional expression of God’s unrestricted living for each and every human being.” 80 Thirdly, “for the

75“Love for the Poor,” p. 11.
76Solidarity with Victims, p. 1.
77Ibid., p. 16.
78Ibid., p. 2.
79“Preferential Option for the Poor?,” p. 43. For Byrne it is the good of order that puts us into intelligible relations with those who are outside our affective horizon, thus “we are always in personal relations with the poor.”
80Ibid., p. 41.
poor” “stresses the seemingly intractable, unfinished agenda of the order of human history.” 81 It is the poor outside the “sphere of prosperity, those who cannot be intelligently and responsibly integrated within the finite order, who give testimony to the unfinishedness of God’s will.” 82 Through the articulation of a “dangerous memory — the life, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus,” it is possible for university Mission Statements, as constitutive speech acts, to bring people into a “truer realm of mutual recognition and personal relations united with God’s” love of the poor. 83

81 Ibid., p. 42.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., p. 44.