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Higher Standards for Higher Education: The Christian University and Solidarity

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Ten years ago, in November of 1989, a commando unit of the Salvadoran armed forces entered the campus of the Central American University (UCA) and killed two women colleagues and six Jesuit priests. The tenth anniversary of the UCA massacre offers us a rich opportunity to continue our reflection on what a university must be for the 21st century, especially a Christian, Catholic and Jesuit university.

The murdered university president, Ignacio Ellacuría, and those who shaped the UCA wanted a university at the service of their country. They argued that this meant the "liberation of the poor majorities". The UCA was to pursue its goal of service to the poor, and to the nation, *universitariamente*, that is, by doing the work proper to a university, not that of a church, a political party or some other kind of organization. A university seeks the truth. The objective of human liberation threw into sharp relief that the UCA was to pursue the truth about *la realidad nacional*, the national reality. The three instruments, or means, proper to the university in the pursuit of this goal were to be the familiar two of teaching and research and the less familiar one of *proyección social*. This last, *social projection*, includes all those means by which the university *projects* the truth it discovers directly into the social world outside the campus in order to help shape social consciousness.

University personnel carried out *proyección social* through public speaking and appearances in the media, publications, the work of Segundo Montes's Human Rights Institute, Martín-Baró's Institute for Public Opinion and the Pastoral Center.

Projecting that truth into society generated conflict. It meant unmasking the official lies. Under conditions of mass injustice, violent repression and then civil war, Ellacuría and others argued that *proyección social* was the most important instrument by which the UCA was to realize its mission of service. That was what led to the killings of November 1989.

We cannot hope to photocopy the UCA in the U.S. Yet, we need to ask how we can shape our universities to respond more faithfully, and *universitariamente*, to an unjust world, in a manner analogous to what the martyrs of the UCA did.

Several months after their deaths, John Paul II published his exhortation on Catholic higher education, *Ex corde ecclesiae*. It has stirred the old controversy over whether Catholic identity threatens free inquiry. But the document also challenges all in Catholic higher education to undertake teaching, research and *proyección social* very much in the spirit of the UCA martyrs. Of the Catholic university, it says that its

research activities will . . . include study of *serious contemporary problems*, such as the dignity of human life, the promotion of justice for all, the quality of personal and family life, the protection of the natural environment, the search for peace and political stability, a more equitable distribution of world resources and a new economic and political order that will better serve the human community at the national and international level. University research will have to be directed toward in-depth study of the roots and causes of the grave problems of our time . .

The document states that "The Christian spirit of service to others in *promoting social justice* is especially important for each Catholic university and should be shared by professors and fomented among students." The university should help promote the development of the impoverished whom Ellacuría called the crucified peoples of the world.

What I propose to explore here is the difficult issue of educating for justice, especially international justice, in these confusing times in which we find ourselves.

Signs of the Times: The Bad News.

At the turn of the millennium, we find it very hard to say where the world is headed--whether economically, politically, socially, culturally or intellectually. But one thing is certain.

We are finishing up this century in bad shape. The U.N.'s 1999 *Human Development Report* informs us that "The income gap between the fifth of the world's people living in the richest countries and the fifth in the poorest was 74 to 1 in 1997, up from 60 to 1 in 1990 and 30 to 1 in 1960." Inequality is increasing everywhere, including the U.S. and Europe. Globally, more than twice as many women are poor as men, and the division of rich and poor is perhaps the single greatest cause of environmental destruction. With the growing resource gap, U.N. documents speak of spreading crime and violence and, in general, social disintegration. I witnessed that disintegration in spades during the 80s in the South Bronx: the crumbling of communities, families and egos. Since then we have been witnessing a kind of globalization of the South Bronx and that threefold crumbling. Governments and parties, left, right and center, are suffering a global legitimation crisis. We don't believe they can eliminate poverty, save the environment, stop the violence or advance the cause of human rights.

Hopeful Signs: Grassroots Movements in Civil Society.

What is the good news? Who is advancing the cause of humanity? When I ask people these questions, they answer: Amnesty International, the United Nations, environmental groups, women's groups, community groups. They mention non-governmental organizations, NGOs. It was a coalition of more than 1,300 NGOs who spearheaded the spectacular success of the Land Mine Treaty and won the Nobel Peace Prize three years ago. These groups of ordinary citizens carried off one of the most successful humanitarian campaigns in history. Signs of the times.

In Central America most of the ferment, and the locus of hope, is in civil society. Like other poor regions, Central America is witness to the steady growth of *la sociedad civil*: groups of neighbors, indigenous and black people, environmental groups, unions, small and medium-sized businesses, cooperatives, communal banks and consumers who are pushing for change from the bottom up and across the base of society. Within what have been traditional authoritarian societies, these movements increasingly stress democratic participation, transparency and accountability in their own internal organization.

These movements hold great promise; and yet, they remain weak. In countries like El Salvador, the micro-initiatives run up against macro-obstacles. If you directly challenge companies who are polluting the Acelhuate River in San Salvador, they could find you floating face down in the Acelhuate tomorrow morning. This means that environmental activists need to link up with Greenpeace. The human rights office at the UCA is working hard to end impunity of prominent public figures involved organized crime and even murder. The director of the human rights office is no fool. He makes good friends with human rights groups in Washington and San José, Costa Rica. Groups of women, indigenous peoples and unions connect with others locally and internationally. Poor local communities link up with sister parishes and sister communities in Europe and North America. Without international allies, the fledgling groups of the *sociedad civil* have no chance against those who control the market and the means of violence.

That seems to be the pattern as we move into the next century. On the one hand, our major institutions have entered into crisis and social disintegration is spreading; and, on the other hand, non-governmental groups and movements are sprouting up to combat social crumbling and are sowing the seeds of a new social order. While fire rages among the tall pines, new shoots are springing up on the forest floor. But, again, the local micro-initiatives in poor and violent countries face macro-obstacles and need international allies to survive.

The Century of International Solidarity?

This situation leads me to suggest that we will have to make this new century the Century of International Solidarity. The powerful of the world are extending their power through globalized markets and communications. The response from those who hope to advance the cause of humanity can only be to globalize solidarity, that is, to globalize the practice of love. It is not clear at this point just how to organize more humane societies in this new century or how to get from here to there. But one thing is certain. There will be no new societies unless we have new

human beings capable of identifying with the cause of the world's majorities. In the Ignatian spirit of *tantum/quantum* rather than the consumer spirit, we will need to take advantage of the new technology--internet, e-mail and discount air fares--and make them channels of love and service instead of their opposites. But above all, we need to concern ourselves with the formation of *new human beings*.

(Parenthetically, the situation I described, suggests to me a general agenda for the next phase of liberation theology which I expect to thrive well into the next century. It suggests the need to reflect theologically on that least-noticed "second meaning-level" of liberation which Gustavo Gutiérrez described in his *Theology of Liberation*, the level of new human relations, micropolitics or horizontal politics if you will, the level of cultural revolution and democratic values, all of which require *new human beings*.)

For our purposes, this is crucial. If the micro-initiatives of the poor South are not to be crushed by the macro-obstacles they face, that will depend, decisively, I think, on a critical mass of people in the rich North capable of assuming the cause of the poor as their own, and, indeed, as the cause of humanity, and responding effectively. Although important strides have been made in this direction, we are still a long way from the solidarity movement we need to do battle for life in the 21st century.

Education for Solidarity: Higher Standards of Excellence.

Christian universities and, above all, Jesuit universities in the U.S., are in a position to play a signal role in the formation of a new generation of international solidarity--not just people for others, but specifically people *for* the crucified majorities in the poor countries of the world.

{ {Some might object that we have plenty of poor and suffering people here at home and that charity begins at home. But let us not overextend a good principle. We need to take suffering here with utmost seriousness, certainly that of our poor inner-city neighborhoods and neglected rural communities, but also the deep pain of the affluent suburbs and anguished professional. At the same time we need to take very seriously the way the suffering of the non-poor and their societies are intimately related to the suffering of the poor and their societies.

{ {The real suffering of the affluent in this country is directly related to the kind of society in which they live. It is in great part the reflection of the suffering of the poor and unimportant people from whom the non-poor distance themselves. In a similar way, the very grave social problems of the U.S. are also related to the kind of society we have constructed here which depends on the foreign policies which have distanced us from the poor majorities of other nations and even contributed to their misery.

{ {That means that we need to become reconciled with the poor majorities of the world to be healed of our own internal divisions. In addition, as Christian, or simply humanitarian citizens of

this colossal world power, we have a special responsibility toward the poor majorities of the world, to help remove the crucified peoples of the world from their crosses, as Ellacuría put it. There is a political dimension to this responsibility. We all disagree with the U.S. teaching torture and the subversion of democracy at the School of the Americas and all the sordid policies which our government has carried out in poor countries. Many of us disagree with skewed economic policies imposed by the U.S. and its allies through the international lending agencies and the unfair trade practices imposed on the poor nations. But it is not as simple as that. For these policies are carried out *in our name and with our tax dollars*. We all have different vocations, it is true, but here, silence and inaction amount to a complicity unworthy of our deepest Christian and human vocation.}}

These days more people recognize the importance of promoting justice in the university. Kosovo, East Timor and the misery of Africa are topics for study in the classroom. Debates over affirmative action, the virtues and vices of the market, U.S. policy in Latin America and foreign debt take place in the student cafeteria and the faculty lounge. A high percentage of students engage in service. Some go to the Dominican Republic or Mexico and come back "ruined for life". And yet, many feel that justice remains on the margin at the university, that, even in the debates, a great deal of disinformation frames what genuine information is discovered and shared. The agenda of forming those enlightened and committed "new human beings" gets stalled because of people's limited experience, the requirements of the job market, personal prejudice and institutional inertia. Is it wildly utopian to expect more? I don't think so.

Today not only the signs of the times but *the deepest needs of students and teachers* require that the Christian university reach beyond an excellent "liberal" education--plus sacraments and pastoral attention. A truly humanistic, Christian education demands more. First, of course, we want to help students understand the world, *la realidad mundial*, and not just "the literature" of their major fields (as important as that obviously is). We want them to understand the world's suffering and the causes of that suffering, as well as possible solutions. But, in addition, we want them to be morally prepared to *change* the world when they leave the university.

This requires more than bare intellectual training. It also requires moral conversion and conscientization. The Christian university needs to take moral conversion seriously, especially since intellectual formation itself suffers without it. Intellectual training also suffers unless it includes conscientization, by which I mean intellectual conversion, the development of moral sensitivity to and awareness of suffering and its causes. The holistic outlook on formation has a long history in the Ignatian educational tradition.

Does this agenda threaten academic excellence? No. These standards of excellence are *much higher* than those of the Ivy League competition.

A frequent experience in El Salvador can throw the wider educational challenge into relief.

Encounter with the Victims.

Waves of foreign delegations have come to El Salvador during recent years. The pilgrims deplane a little anxious, vaguely dreading what awaits them. They fear, half-consciously, that the people might lunge for their wallets, or that when they, the visitors, arrive at their first poor community, they will suffer a massive Irish-Catholic--or Jewish or Methodist--guilt-attack; or at least that they will have to sell their VCR when they get back home.

As happens with most of our fears, it doesn't turn out that way. On the one hand, the visitors spend much of their time in El Salvador wondering why these people are smiling. The people are glad they came and receive them with open arms. On the other hand, if the pilgrims listen to the stories of bombings and flight from the army, death squads, hunger and premature death, the victims will break their hearts. And *that*, after all, is the main reason the pilgrims have come. It is an experience of extraordinary richness, if the visitors can take it in.

The encounter stops them short and focuses their attention. "My God!" they cry, "half their children die from preventable disease. The powerful steal from them at will. There is no justice. And what has *my* government done here in my name?" The visitors are shocked. Not that the poor are all saints. They just do not deserve what they have had to suffer. The injustice clashes strikingly with their humanity.

This humanity, pressing upon the visitors, can shake them to their roots. The more they allow the poor to crash through their defenses, the more unsettled they feel. They begin to see their own reflection in the eyes of their hosts, and they say to themselves, "Hey, these people are just like us!" They sense a gentle invitation to lay down the burden of their own superiority (of which they are mostly unaware) and identify with these humble people, despite the differences between them. They begin to feel smaller and more "ordinary". The visitors feel themselves losing their grip; or better, they feel the world losing its grip on them. What world? The world made up of important people like them and unimportant poor people like their hosts. "Things fall apart," as the poet says; the visitors' world is coming unhinged as the poor welcome them without demanding that they clean up their act with their hosts and billions like them. The northerners' disorientation is like the sweet shame and holy confusion of falling in love. In fact, that is what is happening, a kind of falling in love. The earth trembles. Their horizon is opening up. They're entering unfamiliar ground, a richer, more real world.

In this interchange, the anonymous masses of the world's poor emerge from their cardboard-cutout reality and take on the three-dimensional status of full-fledged human beings.

This kind of encounter can blow our world apart. It discloses that the world is far worse off than we dared to imagine. But right there, the victims reveal that there is also something going on in the world that is far more wonderful than we dared to imagine. Sin indeed abounds, but grace abounds even more (Rom 5,20). When the victims share their last tortilla with a visiting stranger,

they pull back the veil on their hope, a hope they themselves seldom fully understand. It seems we need to allow their suffering to break our world apart in order for them to share with us the secret of God's transforming work in the world. Only then can we participate in that smile of theirs which seemed to have so little basis in the facts.

My Middle-class Tribe.

I belong to a peculiar tribe. The middle-class cultures of the North are newcomers to world history and have only existed for about 200 years. We're not all bad people; we're just a tiny minority under the common illusion that we are the center of gravity of the universe. The poor can free us of this strange idea.

The middle-class cultures have made extraordinary advances in civilization. True; historically, many came at great cost to the despoiled nations and races. Nonetheless, these are historic achievements. I'm not so much referring to the ambiguous technological progress. I mean the spiritual, cultural and political breakthroughs: the unheard-of opportunities, political liberties, democracy, the critical consciousness of the Enlightenment, and so on. The problem for the non-poor is that the new freedoms and economic security have distanced us from the kind of daily life-and-death struggle that has always been the daily fare of the. Perhaps 90% of all the people who ever lived have struggled every day to keep the household alive against the daily threat of hunger, disease, accidents and violence. By distancing the non-poor from the daily threat of death, the benefits of modernity have induced in us a kind of chronic low-grade confusion about what is really important in life, namely life itself and love. To make matters worse, our superior technology and the media induce us to think of our culture and perspective on life is the norm, basically on track.

The encounter with the poor can free us from these illusions. When we come out on the other side, we realize that the marginalized are really at the center of things. It was we, in Chicago and Paris, who are on the fringe. Clearly we need these victims--the poor, abused women and children, racial and sexual minorities, prisoners--more than they need us. They draw us out of ourselves and usher us into the heart of reality. Like practically everybody, we live habitually on the periphery of life's deep drama--more so, on average, in affluent societies. The reality of the periphery is thin, one-dimensional, "lite," compared to the multi-layered richness of the center where life struggles against death. The poor reveal to us both the horror of evil in the world and the possibility for a more humane way of living together. They bring us up against the world and ourselves all at once. When the world's pain crashes in upon us in the person of the victim, the encounter dredges up from within us the parts of ourselves that we had banished into unconscious exile. The outcast outside us calls forth the outcast within.

We don't have to go to El Salvador for this. But, for all our courses and diplomas, can we really consider ourselves educated people unless we allow the poor to break open our world like this?

As I see it, experiences like this reveal three lessons for humanistic education today: First, authentic education requires cognitional hygiene, especially for my middle-class tribe. It must challenge students to open their horizons and overcome prejudices rooted in social conditioning. Second, books alone are not enough for this. It requires engaging students at the level of experience and practice in such a way as to challenge their intellectual and moral commitments. In most cases this will provoke wholesome crisis. Third, this raises new questions and helps students to re-configure their world-view, re-locating important issues at the center and de-centering less-important ones.

None of this means less study or book-learning or rigor. It aims at greater intellectual rigor by tackling the prejudice and limited horizons that undermine intellectual authenticity. It raises the issues that send people to the library and the classroom searching intently for answers. Our best-intentioned professors frequently find themselves proposing the justice answers to students who lack the questions.

I will say a word about each of the above three points: prejudice, liberating education and new world-views.

Resistance, Prejudice, Searching for Truth.

What are the conditions for coming to know the truth about reality in a pluralistic setting like a university? What can help us move the debates forward? To answer that we need to confront the way common-sense discourse, personal and institutional prejudice and social conditioning stand between us and reality, and we need to ask how these obstacles can be overcome.

I have found Ignatius Loyola a helpful guide here. Ignatius understood people to be on a journey either toward greater union with God and greater humanity, or away from these. His passion was to help them advance on their journey. He would locate the intellectual formation of members of the university community within the wider framework of their personal journeys and their journey together.

Along our journey, our intellect and the way it functions is bound up with basic myths and assumptions, symbols and myths with which we are committed. Our thinking is like the branches of a bush, below which a network of roots extends deep into the soil. If I can mix metaphors here, these assumptions and attitudes establish the horizon of our experience, the framework in which I interpret and evaluate data, and the questions that arise in my experience. This framework is less the product of reason than of interaction with my earliest family environment and the value-bearing institutions of the society in which I was raised. So, I live in my world. Everything at its center moves me. Everything on its periphery leaves me cold.

My horizon helps me understand reality but it also partly distorts reality, thanks to bias, blind spots and sheer lack of experience, all of which I share to some extent with other members of my

class, race, sex and nation. So, searching for the truth involves unmasking the falsehoods and half-truths, public and private, that stand between us and reality.

As we follow the roots of our conscious thinking deeper still, we discover that the basic assumptions, symbols and myths are themselves rooted in past and present commitments, in my desires and inclinations and, in the end, in my identity. These have all be shaped and formed in social interaction, so that my basic assumptions are embedded in the habits of my heart and my identity itself. To question those assumptions is to question *me* and to shake the foundations of my world. A whole army of thinkers has helped us uncover the genesis and structure of this non-rational sub-stratum of our conscious and rational life (Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, pragmatism, the sociology of knowledge, Gadamer, and so on).

Christian theology has always recognized a moral component to the problem of intellectual bias. Scripture therefore scoffs at the foolish wisdom of this world, of those who say they see but who are actually blind. But theology rarely draws the necessary consequences for education. If we really take sin seriously--original, habitual, actual and now structural sin--, then we should take seriously the need to overcome original distortion, habitual distortion, actual distortion and institutionalized collective distortion.

Ignatius had a clear sense of the problem, and, although he lacked modern scientific tools, I think he was more radical and realistic than most. According to him, unless our commitments and affective inclinations are in order, we are out of touch with reality. In that case, the search for truth is more than a matter of evidence, logical rigor and even greater self-consciousness. Reality is reasonable, but we are naive if we suppose that reason alone can take us to it. We need to free the chains on our imagination and intelligence and overcome institutional barriers which prevent the most important questions from getting raised. This cognitive liberation depends in turn on untangling our disordered inclinations and ordering our commitments.

Unless education addresses the way our thinking is grounded in our commitments and shored up by the structure of our affectivity, then, for all our rationality, the way we are searching for the truth must be challenged *on strictly academic grounds*. We will have to doubt whether the classroom, cafeteria and faculty lounge debates will advance very far. Persistent, reasonable discourse rarely leads us beyond fundamental philosophical and theological positions to question the commitments behind the ideas.

Most of the modern "masters of suspicion" and sociologists of knowledge who posed the problem of subconscious bias so trenchantly prescribed more reason and more conscious awareness as the solution. Here, too, I think Ignatius is more realistic and radical. He not only recognized that affectivity and commitment are key to the problem; unlike most others he also saw them as key to the solution.

Liberating Education.

The second lesson of the encounter with the victims was this: Genuine education, especially for "our tribe", must engage students *personally* at the level of experience and practice, challenging their commitments and value-priorities. Authentic formation leads to *wisdom* which, we know, involves a kind of knowing that engages the whole person. The encounter of the pilgrims with the poor Central Americans produced in the visitors an experiential knowledge, involving intellect, will and the "affections". This kind of knowledge transforms the person. This, I think, is the *prime analogue of knowing*.

Mathematics and natural science require dispassionate observation, free from affective interference. They depend on something approaching pure reason. This kind of knowledge, while indispensable, is insufficient for understanding life. We cannot grasp life's meaning by analyzing it from a distance (even though we can know *aspects* of life in this way through psychology, sociology, etc.), much less by surgically separating the facts from the values. Understanding the irreducibly moral drama of life requires moral sympathy and practical commitment. It requires entering into the drama and allowing it to enter us. This is what happens when we come to know another person in friendship or as we fall in love. It is what happens when we enter a foreign country or a new neighborhood or place of work. For the truth to sink in, we have to adjust to reality both morally and practically. This kind of experiential knowledge does not depend in the first place in IQ. Many people who are less gifted intellectually and who lack formal education are wiser than many academics, even though the former may find it difficult to express their wisdom. Paul discovered that in their search for wisdom, the Greeks missed the most important truths of all. He preached only Christ crucified--the wisdom and power of God.

Certain kinds of experiences occasion in people who are properly disposed feelings and moods that spring from their very center, feelings and states that Ignatius calls "consolation" and "desolation". These typically reveal the direction which leads the individual toward greater self-transcendence and into greater light, or, on the other hand, they indicate the person's resistance to self-transcendence. Consolation is accompanied by new images and concepts which expand one's limited horizon undermine intellectual bias. Desolation discloses my resistance to this kind of liberation. We need to learn to interpret such feelings and states. In order to assimilate reality, the visitors to El Salvador had to "sit with" the experience, *working through the feelings and the thoughts it evoked*. As they entered that reality, it not only stirred their thoughts but also their feelings. Eventually, it moved the hands and our feet of most of them; for reality invites a response. It draws us out of ourselves. Our response generates new experience which in turn further affects our understanding.

Bernard Lonergan can help us to understand all this better. He argues that the search for truth involves the whole person in a process of ongoing conversion--intellectual, moral and religious conversion. Knowing reality embraces four interconnected activities: experience, understanding, judgment and response. That translates into four imperatives: First, be attentive to reality. Second, be intelligent, that is, think and understand. Third, be reasonable, that is, distinguish between the genuine insights that correspond to reality and those bright ideas that do not. Finally, be responsible. This last step includes evaluating the situation morally, discerning, deciding and

acting. For Lonergan, the search for truth is nothing less than a matter of self-transcendence leading to greater personal authenticity. Lonergan's cognitive theory takes distorting prejudice seriously and also proposes a way to overcome it.

The present perspective leads me to modify this scheme in two ways. First, we need to connect the two ends of Lonergan's chain. Now we see action and experience linked in a first complex step. Thinking must be shaken up and stimulated by practice (in the end, I will argue, by commitment, by love). Practice generates questions for reflection. Tying the two ends of the chain gives us a "heuristic circle," or rather a spiral, which progressively deepens our understanding of reality. It is a spiral which should of itself lead us to the encounter with the victim. However, personal and institutional prejudice can stave off that encounter. We therefore need to incorporate the reality of the victim explicitly into the heuristic circle.

That is the second change we need to make: We need to ask ourselves: Be attentive to *what* experience? *What* reality and *who's* experience are we talking about? As Ellacuría put it, we need to experience the impact of the reality of the victims. That brings us to the heart of reality. The encounter with the poor which we described earlier suggests to me the priority of being attentive to the victims and learning from their experience.

(In a provocative essay, Gil Bailie tries to diagnose the crumbling of Western philosophy which we witness today in the thought of deconstructionists like Jacques Derridá. Appealing to René Girard's analysis of culture, Bailie understands Western philosophy as an attempt to explain reality abstractly while at the same time ignoring the violence which lies at the base of all human societies. By trying to explain reality and at the same time ignore the victim, Western philosophy, for all its progress, has chased its tail for 25 centuries and has entered into a radical crisis, along with most of our social institutions, now that we are no longer able to hide this foundational violence.)

Re-configuring our World.

The encounter with the poor teaches us a third lesson about education: More than other experiences, this one raises the deep questions we most need to ask, stimulates reflection on them and leads people to re-configure their world-view. The practical option for the poor, attention to suffering reality, understanding reality and sound judgment about reality shakes our worldview at its foundations. It helps re-shape the basic anthropological, cosmological and cognitive assumptions that form the horizon for our interpretation. It leads us to what Lonergan calls a "higher viewpoint".

The modified Lonergan schema supposes that we face a *root* prejudice that we all need to overcome. This "original prejudice" is the division of the world into important people and unimportant people. When we read the world, when we watch the nightly news and when we read the gospel, the same thing comes to light. Every existing culture divides the world into

important people and unimportant people. Sometimes it's important races and unimportant races; sometimes it's men vs. women, or rich and poor; or workers and owners; or the elders and the youth. The root distortion is that some are more human than others.

The two modifications we make in Lonergan's schema together imply that commitment to the victim is indispensable for understanding reality. The modern "masters of suspicions" and sociologists of knowledge have helped us understand how bias and interest distort our thinking. They offer partial solutions. Practical solidarity with the victims, love, is the key to overcoming the original prejudice, the key to intellectual conversion.

It is from the foot of the cross that we begin to see straight; it is from there that we can put things in proper perspective. From there, we can certainly do philosophy. But when we avoid the unsettling reality of the crucified victims of history, our wisdom turns to foolishness.

Well, what do we see from the foot of the cross? We see that the center of the drama which we are living is the great struggle between good and evil--the drama of suffering and oppression, on the one hand, and liberation for communion on the other. The victim is at the heart of the cognitive model, and the model confirms that the victim is at the heart of reality.

The Mission of the Christian University.

Ellacuría said that the central object of study should be *la realidad*. If the heart of reality is oppression-liberation in its many dimensions, the central question for all of us is, What does this mean for us? That in turn suggests that understanding this drama and what it means for us should be at the center of the university's agenda.

American universities are not the UCA; the U.S. is not Central America; the new decade will not be the 1970s or the 80s. Can we put injustice and liberation at the center of this university's agenda without violating the spirit of free inquiry, without falling into the worst caricatures of political correctness? It may be difficult, but I think it is still necessary. I do not mean that this should be the exclusive focus of study. There are still differential equations, organic chemistry and biology to learn. But failing to put injustice and liberation at the center means relegating them to the periphery. In that case, we would be conducting a partial search for truth, partial in its omission of large chunks of what we all need to learn, and partial in the sense that the university's search for truth would be driven by interests other than authentic formation and the pure desire to know.

This kind of a commitment gives new dynamism to teaching and research--and stimulates the *proyección social* we spoke of at the beginning.

Proyección social.

As I mentioned in the beginning, in Latin America, and at the UCA in particular, we add to teaching and research a third instrument by which the university serves society, namely, *proyección social*, roughly translated as social outreach. "*Proyección social* means *projecting* the information, the critique, concrete proposals for solutions, in short, the educational work proper to a university, out into the society. *Ex corde ecclesiae* calls for the Catholic university "demonstrate the courage to express uncomfortable truths, truths that may clash with public opinion but that are also necessary to safeguard the authentic good of society" (no. 32). The Jesuits at the UCA were killed for just this. They publically attacked abuse and unmasked the official lies during the civil war. They understood this to be, at least in that context, the principle service that the university was providing to society.

Social projection is going on in universities in the U.S. What form should *proyección social* take here? Should a Catholic university criticize military spending? Should the president call for an end to the death penalty? Maybe few would notice! The board of directors would probably notice, and the faculty senate. Would they take the president to task for engaging the university in this way? Wisdom is needed here, but also daring. Martin Luther King said to the decent standers-by: I know where you stand on prudence; I don't know where you stand on courage. Silence is sometimes complicity. Consult, I'd say; then speak out. Let people publically dissent. At the UCA *proyección social* provoked controversy inside the university and bombs from outside. But we are a better university today for all of it.

Conclusion.

When the university gives priority to suffering and the conditions for liberation and takes a stand with the poor, then it is committing itself to greater academic excellence, not less. It is committed to coming closer to the truth. Not everyone will see it that way. Some will object that all this compromises the university and its work. If we are honest, we recognize that every university's agenda is already compromised by a variety of interests other than the pure search for truth. Rather colleges and universities need something like the kind of cognitive hygiene outlined here.

The commitment to excellence will probably invite the equivalent of *persecution* in the United States, that is, loss of prestige and even funding. I suspect, though, that it would also stir up new sources of funding and a new sense of identity, even evangelical "prestige". Persecution also provides the opportunity to bear witness to a fuller set of criteria for educational excellence and to what it means to be a Christian university today.

Ignacio Ellacuría defended the university's option for the poor in these terms.

It is often said that the university should be impartial. We do not agree. The university should strive to be free and objective, but objectivity and freedom may demand taking sides. We are freely on the side of the popular majority because

they are unjustly oppressed and because the truth of the situation lies within them both negatively and positively. Our university as a university has an acknowledged preferential option for the poor, and it learns from them in their reality We take this stand with them in order to be able to find the truth of what is happening and the truth that all of us must be seeking and building together.

There are good theoretical reasons to think that such an effort is well grounded epistemologically, but in addition, we think there is no alternative in Latin America, in the Third World, and elsewhere, for universities and intellectuals who claim to be of Christian inspiration. Our university is of Christian inspiration when it places itself in this preferential option for the poor, who in quantitative terms are the greatest humanistic challenge facing humankind.

We can say the same with each one's search for truth. Augustine stressed faith-commitment as a condition for understanding: *crede ut intellegas!* We must also say today, especially for our middle-class "tribe", *dilige ut intellegas!*, love that you might understand.

END

APPENDIX: SEARCHING FOR TRUTH IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

The Three Poles of Experience (or Reality).

In order to flesh out the implications of the modified Lonergan cognitive scheme, I propose to expand it into an 9-step "path," a "way" to the truth. But first, it will help to attempt to draw a map of reality.

Every experience has a subjective side to it (what goes on inside me) and an objective side (what goes on outside me). When we reflect more carefully, we see, in addition, that our experience includes all those cultural products--symbols and concepts--by which we interpret the world. This cultural word by which we make sense of the world belongs primarily to the world "out there".

This gives us, if you will, three interrelated poles of experience--the two outer poles of (A) concrete reality itself and (B) the word, or *logos*, about reality and (C) the inner pole of my interior life. All three poles of reality overlap, but only partially. Each grows out of the others and is organically linked to the others; but each is clearly distinguishable. Each of the three poles of experience is a source of truth about reality. The truth comes from the world, from the word and from within me. (It may help to consider a trinitarian correspondence: There is the truth that

comes from the Creator of the world, the truth of the Son who is the Word and the truth of the Spirit who lives within us.)

In our quest for truth, we need to attend to all three poles of reality. But this is no simple task, because each pole is highly complex in its own right. My interior life is a complex mix of affect, understanding and volition. Concrete reality is also obviously very complex, and so, too, is the cultural word. It is because of the complexity of this schema that an adequate set of principles for discovering truth will have to include--it seems to me--at least the following nine criteria.

The Path of Truth: Nine Steps.

More than a method, these criteria constitute a way of life. Each criterion has its location on the three-pole map of experience.

1. *Conversion.* The first and most important requirement in the search for truth is undergoing a basic intellectual and moral conversion. This consolidates and deepens over a lifetime. This means developing the capacity to transcend ourselves intellectually and morally--and, ultimately, to fall in love with God. This affects the questions that we raise and framework in which we locate data. According to the Bible, a person who has not undergone such a fundamental conversion is walking in the darkness, no matter how clever he or she might be. Three Ignatian principles are directly related to this personal transformation: the "*magis*" principle, indifference and the "*agere contra*" principle. The first two make up the Foundation (SpEx [23]). The third is embodied in the Two Standards (SpEx [136-147]) and the Third Kind of Humility (SpEx [167]).

2. *Praxis.* Conversion implies practical commitment, and our practice profoundly affects our worldview. Bystanders on the sidelines of a football game might be able to analyze what is happening best. But in the moral game of life, only participants on the field can grasp what is really going on. We do not just need, or primarily need, to think ourselves into a new way of acting. We need to act ourselves into a new way of thinking (Margaret Collins, C.S.J.).

Commitment, like the decision to marry someone, shakes out the ambiguities of one's feelings and thoughts about such a commitment and precipitates either confirmation or its opposite. As Augustine said, I believe that I may understand. I make a revisable commitment that I may understand. In particular, I love that I may understand.

Practical commitment raises questions and forces us to think things through and to change. Of course, a lot of people are active for all kinds of reasons and may "know their way around." The practice in question is love, solidarity.

The search for truth takes place within an ongoing rhythm of action-reflection-action. The following four points have to do with reflection within discernment.

3. *Feeling the Impact of Reality and Discerning Interior Movements.* Getting in touch with the truth is not a matter of experiential or literary consumerism. It is first of all a matter of qualitative appreciation of the deepest drama of life. That drama is the life-and-death, love-and-injustice struggle going on all around us and the most important knowledge of it is via mutual penetration, as we have said. That knowledge shakes us out of our prejudices and opens us up to a wider horizon, draws us out of ourselves. It attunes us like a musical instrument to values and helps us put things in proper order. It makes us susceptible to the interior consolations, desolations and "counsels" of which Ignatius speaks, and permits us to reflect with greater clarity and perception.

As Pascal said, the heart has reasons the mind knows not. The converted heart (not mere impulse) inclines toward what is true and good, and consolation inclines the heart not only toward what is true and good and morally right. See the Ignatian Rules for the Discernment of Spirits and the Methods for Election (SpEx [313-336 and 176]). A person who searches for the truth finds that following the consolation, and also discovering the patterns of consolation and desolation, can aid enormously in understanding the world.

This is a crucial moment in the process of conscientization.

4. *Conscientization.* Searching for the truth requires conscientization concerning objective social reality. Conscientization is a matter of unmasking systematic distortion. It is a matter of waking up from sleep. Christians profess belief in original sin, structural sin and personal sin. (This doesn't require much religious faith; it simply requires perception.) And yet we frequently fail to draw the cognitive consequences: the personal and systemic distortion of reality. Uncovering this reality is much more than a matter of getting the facts straight. In the first place, it includes *evaluating* social reality critically. Who profits here? Who suffers? Who has control? To whom are they accountable? How do these policies and institutions affect the weak? In the second place, conscientization questions *my* world, and my place in it. For this reason, like psychotherapy and conversion, conscientization requires time, effort and mediators.

5. *Utopian Imagination.* Conscientization unmasks evil. But the deeper truth of reality is positive. Conscientization helps us recognize that things are much worse than we thought. But, as we grow in that understanding, we also grow in awareness that reality is much more wonderful than we dared to imagine. There is a revolution of love, precarious and persecuted, underway everywhere.

We not only have the right to dream, we have the obligation to dream. We are the animals with imagination, the ones capable of transcending the narrow confines of the *status quo*. Few things can paralyze effective thinking and action more effectively than short-sighted "realism" that cripples imagination. *Realpolitik*, locked into the visible possibilities, can only bring us armed enclaves and nuclear deterrents. It cannot move us to creative non-violence. It is realistic about human egoism, but not unrealistic about divine grace. It expects no surprises.

Responsible utopian imagination is rational, rooted in present reality and guided by praxis. Utopian imagination answers the questions: What kind of people do we want to be and can we be? What kind of society do we want to have and can we have? What kind of economy? What kind of church? What kind of government?

6. *Reason and Science.* This is familiar university terrain. Obviously reason is essential to understanding reality, especially the disciplined reason of philosophy, psychology and the social sciences which are crucial to conscientization. University students have a special obligation to understand how the world works, in order to change it. Ideology has a pejorative connotation today, partly because of dogmatic abuse, but also because of anti-intellectual prejudice and pragmatism. We all need to develop coherent understanding of how the world actually works--a social theory which explains the facts and which is permanently open to revision in the light of new data.

The search for truth takes place in a social environment. Individuals need to draw on a tradition-bearing community of critical support in their ongoing formation. The remaining three criteria are concerned with this communal dimension of the conditions for discernment.

7. *Community.* No one has infinite knowledge or infinite moral sensitivity; we all approach reality from a partial perspective. We need help overcoming our blindness and prejudice. But even apart from that, reality is so rich and complex, so filled with mirages and blind alleys, that getting at the truth requires insight from many different perspectives. Personal intellectual and moral autonomy is a paramount value, but that has nothing to do with self-sufficiency.

We therefore need to belong to a local moral community that can both inform us and call us to account in the daily challenge to discover the truth and put it into practice. Not any kind of community will do for this. The task requires a community that draws on a deep tradition of practical wisdom. Of course, the church is supposed to be just this kind of community. But so is the university, in its own proper way, a tradition-bearing community of this kind.

We do not simply need adversaries to challenge us. We especially need help from others in order to sustain a counter-cultural vision and commitment. Recall those North American pilgrims to Central America. The pilgrims, typically blown away, soon confront the challenge back home of nourishing and maintaining their new vision of the world. We urge them to meet with others who have had similar experiences to help shore up their new outlook against the corrosive effects of the dominant culture back home. This same need for community faces former members of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and anyone, really, who undertakes a serious Christian commitment.

8. *Tradition.* Communities that claim to provide comprehensive guidance for living are bearers of traditions of wisdom. They draw from the well of centuries, even millennia, of experience and reflection (compared to my 20 or 40 or 60 years). Traditions embody prejudice as well as

enlightenment and need to be adapted to changing circumstances. But, as we said earlier, we can neither escape them nor live responsibly without them. This is not bad news at all. As Daniel Berrigan once said, we can't go anywhere unless we are coming from somewhere.

In a university, we certainly need not all identify with the same tradition. Some traditions harbor more wisdom than others. But we can learn from most of them. Pluralism and tolerance need not degenerate into relativism; they should instead foster mutual enrichment and corrective and eventually lead us to a higher unity. Even, or especially, when we are convinced that ours is the *most adequate* tradition, we need to enter into dialogue with others to overcome our prejudices, avoid sclerosis and to develop an ecumenical social agenda.

The point to stress in liberal, individualistic societies is that, unless we identify with a tradition-bearing community, we flounder about formed by traditions of which we are unaware, shaped as much by market forces and mass media as by anything else.

9. *Authority*. Nothing is easier to abuse than authority, but that ought not blind us to its legitimate use. Ironically, authorities (like community and tradition) are essential to authentic personal autonomy, as we said earlier. When I want to have my teeth or my car fixed, I go to "authorities". The same is true in the intellectual and the moral life. Conscience does not kneel before the authorities, however; conscience kneels before the truth.

These nine principles seem to me essential for getting at the truth, that is, for a decent education. Something would be lacking to a serious search for the truth if any one of these elements were seriously lacking.

Three Poles of Experience, Revisited.

The logic of these criteria appears more clearly when we locate them on the map of experience that we charted earlier. As we said, the three poles are internally complex and overlap among themselves. Each of our nine criteria corresponds to one of the three poles of discernment: the subjective pole (conversion, affective movements, utopian imagination and reason); the pole of objective reality (praxis, the impact of reality, conscientization); and the pole of interpretation/evaluation of reality (the sciences, community, tradition, and authority).

In its search for truth, in teaching, research and *proyección social*, the university gives priority to "la realidad". "The literature" (B) serves to illumine reality. In order to be responsible, the search for truth must touch all three of these bases and accord each the attention it deserves.

It is important not to lose the forest for the trees here. I think we can specify a nucleus for each of the three poles. The central element of concrete reality is the victim (see the parable of the Good Samaritan and Matthew's final judgment). As far as the interior pole is concerned, the central focus is reason and (assuming ongoing conversion) the discernment of interior movements. What

shall we say about the cultural word? In the medieval university, the Word of God had pride of place and, in particular, the *person* of Jesus Christ as the Word which interprets all other words. The modern Christian university, may propose (it does not impose) Christ as the supreme Word, because it has confidence in the power of truth and reason, and rightly so. The authority of Christ will be a point of arrival for many rather than a point of departure.

In our times, we are subject to pluralism and, of course, confusion. Intelligent and committed people disagree about interpreting and evaluating reality. Most recognize today that no single philosophical system is capable of accounting for reality. It is also probably impossible to ground an adequate moral system apart from the kind of religious or quasi-religious beliefs which insure disagreement and which, in any case, no university wishes to impose, including a Christian university. These nine criteria do not make up a philosophical or theological *system*, however, but rather a *path*, a discipline. It seems to me that most open and reasonable people could agree that something like these criteria is necessary for us to arrive at theoretical and moral truth. The nine-point path affirms reason and presupposes that we are called to pursue the most reasonable options. But it recognizes that, because of our prejudices and the limits of our brains, reasoning alone is insufficient for arriving at what is most reasonable. Much more is required, including ongoing conversion, practical commitment, attention to affective movements, utopian imagination, a wisdom-bearing community and dialogue. It seems to me that it would be theoretically and morally *irresponsible* to ignore any one of the above points on the path.

I propose this path, not only for its internal coherence but especially because of my own experience. As a university student in 1969, I entered into a four-year period of crisis and confusion about basic truths and values. As I floundered around, I discovered that closeness to the life-and-death struggles of the poor in Lower Manhattan helped to focus and center my scattered thoughts and feelings. As I attended to the interior movements, frequently occasioned by external events, I noticed that some led to peace and light and others to greater confusion. I noticed, finally, that taking tentative stands and making practical commitments brought further light--or sometimes greater confusion, but in any case, they advanced my search.

The first seven markers on the path present fewer difficulties to contemporary sensibilities than the last two--tradition and authority. These meet stiff resistance within an individualistic, pluralistic society. The limitations and dangers of communities and their authority are obvious but we cannot do without either community or authority in our search for truth. While their abuses are inexcusable, they are inevitable in real, as opposed to ideal (non-existing), groups of imperfect human beings. If you want a tradition-bearing community, this is part of the price.

Source: <http://www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/brackley.html>

Meeting the victims, falling in love

by Dean Brackley, S.J.

Waves of foreign delegations have come to El Salvador during recent years. The pilgrims deplane a little anxious, vaguely dreading what awaits them. They know that the people are very poor. They have heard of massacres and bombings of the past and the hunger and sickness of the present. They fear, half-consciously, that these poor people will lunge for their wallets, or that when they, the visitors, arrive at their first poor community, they will suffer a massive Irish-Catholic -- or Jewish or Methodist -- guilt-attack and at the very least they will have to sell their VCR when they get back home.

As happens with most of our fears, it doesn't turn out that way. On the one hand, the visitors spend much of their time in El Salvador wondering why these poor people are smiling. The people are glad they came and receive them with open arms. On the other hand, if the pilgrims listen to the stories of flight from the army, torture and death squads, and since the war, of unspeakable hardship and premature death, the victims will break their hearts. And that, after all, is the main reason the pilgrims have come. It is an experience of extraordinary richness, if the visitors muster the courage to take it in.

The encounter stops the visitors short and focuses their attention. "My God!" they cry, "half their children die from preventable disease. The powerful steal from them at will. There is no justice. And what has my government been doing here in my name?" The poor bring the visitors face-to-face with evil; and the visitors respond with horror. Not that the poor are all saints. (Hardship brings out both the best and the worst in people, the D'Aubuissons and the Romeros.) They just obviously do not deserve what they have to suffer. The injustice clashes strikingly with their humanity.

This presses in upon the visitors, and it can shake them to their roots. As the poor draw deeper into their own reality, the newcomers pass from observers to participants. The more they allow the poor to crash through their defenses, the more unsettled they feel. They begin to see their own reflection in the eyes of their hosts, and they say to themselves, "Hey, these people are just like us!" They sense a gentle invitation to lay down the burden of their own superiority (of which they are mostly unaware) and identify with these humble people, despite the differences between them. They begin to feel smaller and more "ordinary." A sweet shame comes over them, not bitter remorse but more like the shame one feels when falling in love. The visitors feel themselves losing their grip; or better, they feel the world losing its grip on them. What world? The world made up of important people like them and unimportant poor people like their hosts. As the poet Yeats says, "things fall apart;" the visitors' world is coming unhinged. They feel resistance, naturally, to a current that threatens to sweep them out of control. They feel a little confused -- again -- like the disorientation of falling in love. In fact, that is what is happening, a

kind of falling in love. The earth trembles. My horizon is opening up. I'm on unfamiliar ground, entering a richer, more real world.

We all live a bit on the periphery of the deep drama of life, more so, on average, in affluent societies. The reality of the periphery is thin, one-dimensional, "lite," compared to the multi-layered richness of this new world the visitors are entering. In this interchange with a few of their representatives, the anonymous masses of the world's poor emerge from their cardboard-cutout reality and take on the three-dimensional status of full-fledged human beings.

Actually, there are more than three dimensions here. The eyes of the victim beckon. They are like a bottomless well in which something infinite draws me on. In their welcome, peace sweeps over me. I feel almost at home in this strange place. Although an accomplice to the world of important people like me and unimportant people like them, I feel accepted, forgiven -- even before I have cleaned up my act with them or billions like them.

After reflecting on these issues for some years, it only gradually dawned on me that I belong to a peculiar tribe. The middle-class cultures of the North are newcomers to world history and have only existed for about 200 years. We're not all bad people, we're just a tiny minority under the common illusion that we are the center of gravity of the universe. The poor can free us from this strange idea.

Don't get me wrong. The middle-class cultures have made extraordinary advances in civilization. True; many came at great cost to the despoiled nations and races. Still, these are historic achievements. And I'm not even talking about ambiguous technological progress. I mean the spiritual, cultural and political breakthroughs: the unheard-of opportunities, political liberties, democracy, the critical consciousness of the Enlightenment, and all that. No need to demean these gains. The problem for us is that the new freedoms and economic security have distanced the non-poor from the kind of daily life-and-death struggle that has been the daily fare of the poor of all times right up to today. Maybe 90 percent of all the people who ever lived have struggled every day to keep the household alive against the threat of death through hunger, disease, accidents and violence. By distancing the non-poor from the daily threat of death, the benefits of modernity have induced in us a kind of chronic low-grade confusion about what is really important in life, namely life itself and love. Besides, superior technology and the communications media induce us to think of our culture and perspective on life as the norm, and basically on track. The encounter with the poor stops us short; it recollects us. When we come out on the other side, we realize that the marginalized are actually at the center of things. It is we, in Washington and Paris, who are on the fringe.

These people shake us up because they bring home to us that things are much worse in the world than we dared to imagine. But that is only one side of the story: If we allow them to share their suffering with us, they communicate some of their hope to us as well. The smile that seems to have no foundation in the facts is not phony; the spirit of fiesta is not an escape but a recognition

that something else is going on in the world besides injustice and destruction. The poor smile because they suspect that this something is more powerful than the injustice. When they insist on sharing their tortilla with a visiting gringo, we recognize there is something going on in the world that is more wonderful than we dared to imagine.

It seems that the victim offers us the privileged place (although not the only place) to encounter the truth which sets us free. The poor usher us into the heart of reality. They bring us up against the world and ourselves all at once. To some extent, we all hold reality at arm's length -- fending off intolerable parts of the world with one hand and intolerable parts of ourselves with the other. The two go together. As a rule, our encounters with the world place us in touch with internal reality, as well. In particular, when the world's pain crashes in upon us in the person of the victim, the encounter dredges up from within us the parts of ourselves that we had banished. The outcast outside us calls forth the outcast within us. This is why people avoid the poor. But meeting them can heal us. We will only heal our inner divisions if we are also working to heal our social divisions.

The victims of history -- the destitute, abused women, oppressed minorities, all those the Bible calls "the poor" -- not only put us in touch with the world and with ourselves, but also with the mercy of God. There is something fathomless about the encounter with the poor, as we have said -- like the opening of a chess game with its infinite possibilities. If we let them, the poor will place us before the abyss of the holy Mystery we call God. They are a kind of door that opens before that Mystery and through which God passes to get at us. Clearly we need them more than they need us.

Small wonder that people keep returning. Something has happened, a kind of falling in love, I think.

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Source: http://www.rtfcam.org/solidarity/reflections/dean_brackley.htm

Justice and Jesuit Higher Education

Dean Brackley, S.J.

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I want to thank the organizing committee for inviting me to this Conference marking the fifth anniversary of Peter-Hans Kolvenbach’s historic address at Santa Clara on the promotion of justice in higher education.¹ As we share experiences and reflect on how to meet that challenge better, I want to offer some suggestions on how to give the promotion of justice a central, defining role –more than a marginal or extracurricular one-- in Jesuit-sponsored colleges and universities.

I take as my starting point two momentous signs of our times: first, spreading injustice, violence and environmental degradation around the world, along with hopeful signs that another world is possible, and second, cultural pluralism. These two realities intertwine in our educational work. Obviously, helping people learn about injustice and what to do about it is a necessary part of education today. Less obviously, that can be crucial in helping them find their way in a pluralistic world.

In our schools we constantly wrestle with the way people think, dream and act differently. This both enriches and unsettles us, provoking crises of identity and mission for both individuals and institutions. I experienced this myself in college. I will never forget the crisis that overwhelmed me. It began when I found I couldn’t arbitrate between the different worldviews I was encountering inside and outside the classroom. It was the late sixties, a time of cultural revolution and the questioning of all things traditional. Though I was a Jesuit scholastic,

¹ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., “The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education,” discourse given at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California, Oct. 6, 2000, in *Promotio iustitiae*, no. 74 (2001), pp. 9-20.

one day I walked out of church, because I was not sure I could receive communion with integrity. That precipitated four years of painful searching. Much more than a worldview was at stake; I was searching for an identity and a mission. Anybody who works with university students today is familiar with this kind of crisis.

I was especially blessed. After graduation I was sent to work on Manhattan's Lower East Side. There I was mugged by reality, not by the reality of the corporate boardroom like the neocons, but by the reality of the Bowery, of poverty, of drug-related violence. The dense life-and-death drama, with its daily crucifixions and resurrections, helped gather together my scattered self. Out of the chaos a wider worldview slowly came into focus. There were wonderful people available to give me sound advice and serve as models of generous faith. In time, the experience drew me back (or forward, I guess) to a more mature faith. Just then the Jesuits' 32nd General Congregation unexpectedly affirmed the service of faith and promotion of justice as the axis of all Jesuit ministries. I began to feel I was called to something worth giving my all to.

This experience also led me, eventually, to the kind of educational vision which Peter-Hans Kolvenbach outlined at Santa Clara. That vision takes us beyond the liberal and conservative models commonly held up to us. Jesuit colleges and universities dare not measure educational excellence by the exact same yardstick as Harvard or Stanford --and not only because they can't compete with Ivy League endowments and laboratories. But neither are they called to be confessional Catholic enclaves. Today's needs and the heritage entrusted to us demand a more comprehensive set of academic standards than either the pure-reason paradigm of the Enlightenment or pseudo-Catholic fundamentalism.

The Ignatian vision suggests to me seven higher standards for higher education: First, a Jesuit university strives to understand *reality*, the real world. Second, since Christian education pursues wisdom, the central focus of study is the drama of *life versus death*, of *good versus evil*, injustice versus liberation. Third, we must pursue a discipline that will *free us from bias*. Fourth, education should help people discover their *vocation* in life, above all their vocation to love and serve. Fifth, a Jesuit university must be a place where the *Catholic faith* is studied and handed on to those who would embrace it. Sixth, we must reach out to *those who otherwise*

could not afford to come. Finally, we must *communicate knowledge* and criticism *beyond the campus*, into the wider society.

Giving Priority to Reality

Ignacio Ellacuría, the martyred president of the Central American University (UCA) in El Salvador, used to insist that the university's principal object of study is *la realidad nacional*, national reality. The first higher standard I propose is that reality be the primary object of study. This is less obvious than it sounds. Many people graduate from college with little understanding of key issues like homelessness, abortion or U.S. military adventurism. Last year polls revealed a striking degree of ignorance on such vital issues during the U.S. electoral campaign. One explanation I gave to foreign friends was that schools in the U.S. devote insufficient attention to social reality.

Scholars certainly need to master the literature of their fields. By all means, let us lose ourselves in fiction, poetry, drama and the arts. That will, we hope, teach us about life and shape us in ways that will help us live better. But let us resist the kind of obsession with dominating "the literature" of narrow sub-specialties that hides the wider reality from us. When that happens, "the literature" dominates us. The deficient U.S. political culture is one sign that students are not learning enough about the world in which they live. Citizens of the world's only super-power have a special responsibility to learn about the world beyond their borders, the *realidad mundial*.

The Life-and-Death Questions

A second higher standard is related: *focus on the big questions*. The chief goal of education is wisdom, not mere information. When that goal structures education as it should, university life turns around the axis of the most important questions, questions about life and death, injustice and liberation, good and evil, sin and grace. Yes, there are differential equations to solve, obscure insects and obscure authors to study. But let that be part of a quest to understand what life means, how life (human and non-human) are threatened and how they can flourish. In the language of faith: the cross is the center of reality --Jesus' cross and all the other

crosses. From the foot of the cross reality comes into focus. From there the most important questions arise: Who are the crucified people today? What are they suffering and why? How can we bring them down from their crosses?² Without that focus wisdom turns to folly.³

Cognitive Liberation and Reason Integrally Considered

Third, we need to pursue a discipline that will broaden our horizons and *free us from bias*. Teachers frequently offer answers to students who lack the questions because the problems lie beyond their experience. We also know how debates in the classroom and the lounge about free trade and the war in Iraq can drone on without resolving much, even though participants can marshal impressive arguments for or against. Why? Often because of unexamined assumptions and prejudices.

We need cognitive hygiene, or cognitive liberation to overcome our biases and limited experience. Otherwise, our search for truth is open to challenge *on strictly academic grounds*.

From our families and cultural formation, we inherit benefits but also biases that circumscribe our imagination and intelligence. Psychologists and social scientists have long labored to surface the kinds of partly-conscious myths and assumptions that constitute the horizon of each person's world, the "grid" within which we interpret things. Because some of these assumptions resist enlightenment, seeking truth is more than pushing back the frontiers of ignorance. It involves unmasking distortion and hidden interests. If we take sin seriously – personal sin, original sin, and so on-- , then we have to draw the cognitive consequences; we have to take personal, habitual, original and structural distortion seriously. We need to help university

² Cf. I. Ellacuría, "Las iglesias latinoamericanas interpelan a la Iglesia de España," *Sal Terrae* 3 (1982), p. 230.

³ In a provocative essay, Gil Bailie argues that Western philosophy has attempted to explain reality while ignoring the violence which lies at the base of all human societies. Appealing to René Girard's analysis of culture, Bailie believes that Western philosophy has now entered into crisis, along with most of our social institutions, now that we can no longer hide the foundational violence of our social life. When we avoid the victims of history, we lose our way. Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), Chapter 13.

students unmask deception especially in times like these, when war is waged on false pretenses and Fox News claims to be impartial.

In the spirit of the Enlightenment, most modern thinkers prescribe more reason and conscious awareness to overcome bias. I doubt that is enough. Although reality is reasonable, it is naïve to suppose that reason alone will take us to it. Only an “enriched reason” that engages the whole person --intellect, will and emotions-- produces wisdom. This is reason rooted in experience and practice and nourished by contemplation, affectivity and imagination. Above all, modern, liberal thinking frequently overlooks the fact that distortion is rooted in unconscious commitments and habits of the heart. That means that cognitive liberation requires personal transformation, or conversion. In the end, prejudice is embedded in my identity, so that to question my world is to question *me*. For these reasons, wholesome crises can expand our horizons. This frequently happens to students when they engage poor and suffering people.

Santa Clara University sponsors a great semester-abroad program in El Salvador for students of U.S. Jesuit universities, the Casa de la Solidaridad. When students arrive for the program and deplane, most are apprehensive. They have heard about the past war, poverty and endemic crisis. To their surprise, they spend much of their time in El Salvador wondering why these poor people are smiling and why they insist on sharing their tortillas with strangers like them. But as the humanity and dignity of the poor crashes through their defenses, the people break their hearts. They feel disoriented, as people do when they fall in love. In fact, what happens is sometimes just that, a kind of falling in love. As the poor emerge from their two-dimensional anonymity, students’ horizons open. Their world shakes and eventually gets re-configured. Some things move from the margin to the center and others from the center to the edge.

You don’t have to travel far for this. It can happen close to home. But isn’t this a necessary part of education for our middle-class people, who populate private colleges and universities today?

As this kind of experience shows, feelings play a vital role in reason integrally considered. Students have to work through the powerful feelings and the thoughts which their encounter with the victims of injustice provoke. These often include the interior movements

Ignatius of Loyola calls “consolation” and “desolation.” Both have powerful educational implications. The sadness, inner turmoil and leaden discouragement which are desolation pull us back into ourselves and shrink our vision. Consolation --which is peace, joy, a sense of fullness-- draws us beyond ourselves to greater freedom and generosity.⁴ It expands our horizon and dissolves intellectual bias. Consolation leads into the light.⁵

Clearly, these three standards --focusing on reality, especially suffering reality, and the need for cognitive liberation-- aim at greater academic rigor and intellectual authenticity.

Discovering Our Deepest Vocation

Engaging suffering people and injustice frequently awakens in students the crucial question: What am I doing with my life? And that suggests a fourth higher standard. Education of the whole person, in the Ignatian style (as Paul Crowley says), helps students discover their vocation in life, above all their *vocation to love and serve*.

Students confront different worldviews and more versions of the good life than ever before. For some, the world falls apart about once a semester! They ask themselves: What is really true, what is right? More is at stake than ideas. Facing contradictory role models --a Mother Theresa, on one hand, a Britney Spears on the other-- they struggle to find themselves. Postmodern capitalism might offer them a job, but the only vocation the dominant culture proposes is getting and spending. This message threatens everyone’s dignity. Besides helping students with their careers, educators must help them discover their vocations.⁶

That vocation might be to raise kids, to discover galaxies, to drive a truck --or a combination of these. Whatever it is concretely, faith and reason point to a deeper *human calling* that we all share: namely, to spend ourselves in love. People actually “hear” this call in daily

⁴ Cf. Ignatius Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, nos. 313-336.

⁵ Paul Ricoeur says the symbol gives rise to thought. P. Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), pp. 347-57. Consolation gives rise to liberating symbols. It undermines the original prejudice that divides the world into important people and unimportant people.

⁶ See the reflections of Jim Wallis, *God’s Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn’t Get It* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), pp. 362-63.

life, in the form of consolation --enthusiasm for service. Former U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld wrote, “I do not know Who --or what-- put the question. But at some point I did answer ‘Yes’ to Someone --or Something-- and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life, in self-surrender, had a goal.”⁷

Vocations are called forth from us, especially by role models and mentors, including generous teachers, but also by poor and suffering people who show us how much we are needed. A few months before she was killed in El Salvador 25 years ago, Maryknoll sister Ita Ford wrote to her young niece, Jennifer, back in Brooklyn, “I hope you come to find that which gives life a deep meaning for you. Something worth living for -- maybe even worth dying for -- something that energizes you, enthuses you, enables you to keep moving ahead. I can’t tell you what it might be. That’s for you to find, to choose, to love.”⁸ Ita invited Jennifer to discover her deepest calling, to find herself by losing herself. Higher education should awaken not only the dramatist or the chemist in students, but also that deepest vocation which St. Ignatius recognized as the call of Christ.

As Peter-Hans Kolvenbach said, “The real measure of our Jesuit universities lies in who our students become . . . and the adult Christian responsibility they will exercise in future towards their neighbor and their world.”⁹ “Women and men for others” will help transform an unjust world, not just “succeed” within it.

Today poverty, violence, AIDS and environmental crisis are spreading, and traditional political actors have lost credibility. At the same time ordinary citizens are mobilizing all over the world and pushing for change from the bottom up. Struggling neighbors, indigenous people, women, ethnic minorities, consumers, migrants, environmental and human rights organizations, unions, small and medium-size businesses, cooperatives and communal banks are sowing the seeds of a new social order.

⁷ Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), p. 205.

⁸ I am grateful to Ita’s brother, Bill, for providing me with the full text of the letter.

⁹ Kolvenbach, “The Service of Faith,” pp. 16-17.

However, from Zambia to Baltimore, these micro-initiatives are up against macro-obstacles. So they are networking locally and globally. From poor countries they forge ties with NGO's, sister cities and congregations, universities and unions in the U.S. and Europe. Rights workers ally with Human Rights Watch, environmentalists with Greenpeace. The alliances give local actors a fighting chance against those who control the market and the means of violence. In this way they form part of a growing movement of international solidarity which can now pressure powerful governments to sign a global land mine treaty (1996) and concede debt relief to the world's poorest nations (2005). As they say each year at the World Social Forum: another world is possible. With God's help we can narrow the gap between rich and poor, wage peace and defend the environment --but only if we continue to globalize solidarity, as John Paul II urged.

This will depend, crucially, on a critical mass of people in rich countries who are savvy about trade, finance and human rights law and who will become steady allies of the poor. They are indispensable, but where will they come from? Well, if they don't come from colleges and universities like ours, the future looks bleak. Jesuit higher education should play a signal role in forming a new generation for solidarity and, especially in these United States, for international solidarity.

This past May Amherst College awarded an honorary degree to Nelson Mandela, who used the occasion to appeal to the U.S. academy:¹⁰ "In this world under threat, colleges and universities remain our best hope," Mandela said. "Your central mission, the pursuit of truth, must lead the way. We depend on you for leaders who care for, are engaged in and will serve the community, who are schooled deeply and broadly, in all corners of knowledge. We depend on you to point us toward solutions to our problems."

Who Gets In?

Mandela then raised the issue of who gets into universities. "The challenges of ensuring full access, according to ability rather than wealth or privilege, have not been met," he said.

¹⁰ "Nelson Mandela's Address to Amherst College," May 12, 2005, St. Bartholomew's Church, New York, Boston *Globe*, May 13, 2005.

“Until they are, we will forfeit some of the talent and genius that the world sorely needs. All institutions of higher education have the obligation to open the door more widely.” That goes for Jesuit colleges and universities, too. That is a fifth standard to be met.

In recent years, tuition at these Jesuit institutions has been increasing at an average yearly rate of over 6.5%. If this continues, they will soon have an annual price tag of \$50,000. Since financial aid has been falling, we run the risk of excluding low-income students more than ever. In the complex business of managing admissions and finances, a Catholic and Jesuit university has to ensure a substantial presence not just of minorities but of the economically poor. The diversity that we celebrate on campus must include economic diversity.

Keeping Faith

A sixth higher standard is truth in advertising. Catholic universities should welcome people of other communions and faiths, and no faith, as first-class citizens. At the same time, they must be places where *the Catholic tradition is studied, understood and handed on*. Now that we take pluralism for granted, we no longer take traditions, or faith, that way. While pluralism presents rich opportunities, we should fear for the future if students were to graduate from Jesuit colleges with first-class training in, say, economics, and only a first-communion, or a Newsweek-level, understanding of Christian faith.

Through serious study of Christian faith and life, our colleges and universities should help the church overcome unjust practices that are unworthy of it, as well as the ideologies that support them.

Orthopraxis demands justice throughout the university community. Catholic colleges and universities should be conspicuous in defending the dignity of women and of gay and lesbian people.

Proyección Social

The six Jesuits and two women murdered in El Salvador in 1989 were killed because the UCA pursued a just peace in a time of war.¹¹ The university did this *universitariamente*, that is, in the manner proper to a university, not that of a church, a political party or some other kind of organization.¹² It did so by teaching, research and above all what we call *proyección social*. Social projection includes all those means by which the university communicates, or *projects*, knowledge beyond the campus to help shape the consciousness of the wider society. This includes unmasking the lies which support an unjust status quo, denouncing abuses and proposing constructive solutions. In practice, this means public speaking, including appearances in the media, writing for publications, the work of the Human Rights Institute, the Pastoral Center, the university radio and similar instruments of communication. At least in theory, *proyección social* is the most important function of the UCA, because the society is so unjust and so few can aspire to higher education.

Nine months after the killings at the UCA, Pope John Paul II published his exhortation on Catholic higher education, *Ex corde ecclesiae*. In the U.S., *Ex corde* has stirred controversy over

¹¹ On the UCA killings, see Martha Doggett, *Death Foretold: The Jesuit Murders in El Salvador* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press/Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1993). This is the most thorough account of the killings, the cover-up, the legal case and the political implications. Teresa Whitfield treats the wider story masterfully in her *Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Temple University Press, 1995). For a concise chronicle, see Dean Brackley, "Murder in the University: A Chronicle of Events," in idem, *The University and Its Martyrs: Hope from Central America* 2nd edn. (San Salvador: Centro Mons. Romero, 2005), pp. 6-24.

¹² The writings of murdered university president Ignacio Ellacuría on higher education have been collected in Ignacio Ellacuría, *Escritos universitarios* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1999). See also the book by Ellacuría's predecessor as university president, Román Mayorga, *La universidad para el cambio social*, 3rd edn. (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1976). In English, see the articles by Ellacuría and Ignacio Martín-Baró in Hassett and Lacey (eds.), *Towards a Society That Serves Its People: The Intellectual Contribution of El Salvador's Murdered Jesuits* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991, "Section III. The University and Social Justice," pp. 171-242. For the history and educational philosophy of the UCA, see Charles J. Beirne, S.J., *Jesuit Education and Social Change in El Salvador* (New York: Gartland, 1996). For a concise presentation of the philosophy of education at the UCA, see Dean Brackley, "The Challenge of the UCA," in *The University and Its Martyrs*, pp. 25-42.

whether Catholic identity threatens free inquiry. But the document presents other challenges which have received less attention, including *proyección social*. *Ex corde* says that the Catholic university must “demonstrate the courage to express uncomfortable truths, truths that may clash with public opinion but that are also necessary to safeguard the authentic good of society” (no. 32). Social projection is another higher standard of Catholic higher education.

Conclusion

These reflections leave me with five items pending which I offer for your consideration: First, how do we help our students unmask deception? Does impartiality mean giving equal time to the Swift-boat veterans? If not, what does it mean in practice in the classroom and informal conversation?

Second, shouldn't service of some kind among poor and suffering people be required of all students at our institutions? Peter-Hans Kolvenbach said that this “should [be] . . . at the core of every Jesuit university's program of studies.”¹³ How can we advance toward that goal?

Third, how do you get *your* institution to start up, alone or in collaboration, a study-abroad program in a poor country? How about a temporary freeze on more semester-abroad programs in Western Europe?

Fourth, how can our institutions attract and retain more poor and more African-American and other under-represented minorities? Financing and enrollment involves difficult tradeoffs. To keep Jesuit schools financially viable, administrators commonly strive to provide facilities that will attract more affluent students who can pay full freight and compensate for scholarship students who cannot. This sometimes means providing a first-rate food service, pools, fitness centers and other amenities. To what extent does this strategy foster an unhealthy upscale

¹³ “The Service of Faith,” p. 17. Bernice Lerner, director of Boston University's Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, recently commented on whether service should be mandatory for students. “It depends very much on the program,” she said. “Sometimes they are done very well, and sometimes they are not. If you get the right person in charge, and they are doing it thoughtfully, giving students an opportunity to reflect and have an educational component involved, it can be very strong.” Quoted in Valerie Strauss, “Hurricane Nurtures More Models of Compassion,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 13, 2005.

consumer culture on campus that undermines the promotion of justice and compounds the alienation of lower-income students? How can we cut this Gordian knot? Here are three suggestions: Promote a culture of simplicity on campus. (Remember Ignatius's Two Standards!) Maximize scholarships based on need, rather than athletic or scholastic ability. Raise \$50 million for scholarships in the next capital campaign. What else can be done?

Fifth and finally, what kind of *proyección social* is appropriate in the U.S. where it raises questions –and eyebrows— both on campus and off? Who speaks for the university? How take into account the various stakeholders and constituencies? How ensure accountability and the right to dissent? U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities already practice social projection, for example, when they take a public stand on abortion-related issues. What other forms of social projection have been practiced or might be practiced? Should your university community call for an end to the death penalty? Speak out against torture at Abu Ghraib, the violation of rights at Guantánamo and destruction of Fallujah? Criticize inequitable tax policy and the lack of health care for the poor? Point out how hurricane Katrina revealed serious neglect of the common good? Defend the rights of gay and lesbian persons? In all this, wisdom is needed, but also daring. Martin Luther King chided the decent standers-by: I know where you stand on prudence; I don't know where you stand on courage. Perhaps universities can help the Catholic Church recover its voice and moral authority in the aftermath of the crisis of sex abuse scandals.

Five years ago Peter-Hans Kolvenbach affirmed the centrality of justice in Jesuit higher learning. Ten years earlier *Ex corde* had said, “The Christian spirit of service to others in promoting social justice is especially important for each Catholic university and should be shared by professors and fomented among students” (no. 34). This is not just a matter of extra-curriculars but of university life as a whole. Research activities will

include study of serious contemporary problems, such as the dignity of human life, the promotion of justice for all, the quality of personal and family life, the protection of the natural environment, the search for peace and political stability, a more equitable distribution of world resources and a new economic and political order that will better serve the human community at the national and international

level. University research will have to be directed toward in-depth study of the roots and causes of the grave problems of our time . . . (no. 32).

The document adds that the university should help promote the development of the poor countries of the world (cf. no. 34).

We are called to fashion a new kind of university, building on the rich heritage of Catholic and Jesuit education. This “new” university makes an option for the poor and for justice that refocuses tired debates of liberal vs. conservative, confessional vs. secularist.¹⁴ A university that strives to understand reality, especially the great life-and-death issues; that struggles to overcome bias; that helps students discover their vocation to service; that embraces the Catholic tradition in dialogue with others; that opens its doors to minorities and the poor; that takes public stands on vital issues: that community of learning is committed to greater academic excellence. This may provoke conflict, persecution, even financial troubles. (At the UCA, it has cost 18 bombings and martyrdom.) It may entail a loss of prestige as the world defines it. But it will also provide a stronger sense of identity and mission and more universal and lasting good for the glory of God.

October 14, 2005

Source: Email from author. 11/1/05

¹⁴ Ignacio Ellacuría wrote, “It is often said that the university should be impartial. We do not agree. The university should strive to be free and objective, but objectivity and freedom may demand taking sides. . . . Our university as a university has an acknowledged preferential option for the poor We take this stand with them in order to be able to find the truth of what is happening and the truth that all of us must be seeking and building together. There are good theoretical reasons to think that such an effort is well grounded epistemologically, but in addition, we think there is no alternative in Latin America, in the Third World, and elsewhere, for universities and intellectuals who claim to be of Christian inspiration.” I. Ellacuría, “The Challenge of the Poor Majority,” in John Hassett and Hugh Lacey (eds.), *Towards a Society That Serves Its People*, p. 175.