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Recommended Citation

Saslow, George, "'Public Evil and Private Responsibility'" (1974). *Special Collections: Oregon Public Speakers*. 118.

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George Saslow
“Public Evil and Private Responsibility”
January 30, 1974
Portland State University

PSU Library Special Collections and University Archives
Oregon Public Speakers Collection
<http://archives.pdx.edu/ds/psu/11368>

Transcribed by Evelyn Birnbaum, August 10, 2020 - August 21, 2020

Audited by Carolee Harrison, November 2020

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This discussion includes a question-and-answer period with members of the audience, whose names are not identified. Some speakers are off-microphone during the conversation and are partially inaudible.

GREGORY WOLFE: I'd like to welcome you all to the 1974 All-University Conference. The topic, as you know, is “public evil and private responsibility.” As we get underway, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our committee for the All-University Conference, for a yeoman-like piece of work in developing a curious and yet contemporary, terribly vital subject for the consideration of our institution during the weeks in which it will be under scrutiny. And most particularly, I want to thank my colleague Andries Deinum for not only suggesting the topic, but provoking his colleagues on the committee to think about the questions involved in his remarkably ample way, and to share their talents with his in this ample context that includes, as only he would make us include, not just the hard disciplines of medicine and economics, but art and culture in all its ramifications as well. So I think we owe to him a very special debt of gratitude in helping us appreciate the full weight, as well as the most beautiful context of evil and private responsibility... public evil and private responsibility.

We consider opening this subject this morning on the very morning that the President of the United States, *again*, is wrestling—or at least should be wrestling again—with how he will relate himself to the latest call upon his conscience and the exercise of what may be his private, as well as his public, responsibilities to consider, and to act, and to develop public virtue at a

time when the public is highly aroused about the level of real or alleged—I think both, myself—public evil. He, then, is thinking as President, as public official, as friend of many of those involved, and therefore, hopefully, *as a man*. He is thinking, I hope, as an author as well, who once said, “And let us begin by committing ourselves to the truth—to see it like it is, to tell it like it is; to find the truth, and to live the truth, and that’s what we will do.”

Now, since that statement, as you all know, 14 of his lieutenants have been convicted of crimes in the courts, not counting the Vice President of the United States, whom he selected to help preside over the first law-and-order government in our generation. And, in addition, five more of his lieutenants are currently under indictment, awaiting to see what the test of their alleged violations of law may be, and their relationship, if you will, to public evil. And I suspect, from my conversations with friends in Washington and newspaper people across the country, that in the next few months we will see at least another dozen high public officials—now living nervously under the clouds of legal action—probably be brought to trial. Now, the law may take care of some of the public evil that has aroused our people, and which has aroused—we hope—the conscience of our President, but what is going to take care of the private person—the millions who voted our law-and-order government into power with one of the most overwhelming demonstrations of public support in the history of presidential elections in the United States?

Our democratic concern for the many prompts us, I think, to explore questions like this: who shall participate in leadership and in sort of the moral stewardship of the private concern for public morality? Now, the first public assignment I had after World War II was on a UNESCO commission to explore how governments might escape or be spared *mad* leadership. The question, in a way, is both simpler and more complex, today—how can we encourage honest leadership? What lines are acceptable and workable between public responsibility and private citizenship? How can we be both loyal to the system and to ourselves at the same time? How do we secure survival for our system and our society and reconcile it with the tasks we undertake in defense of liberty?

These are questions which surely confronted Dan Ellsberg, as they confront the poet Mandelstam, and—or his widow—and and the novelist Solzhenitsyn. They also must confront we, the more quiet and more obscure members of the silent majority. Now, are we going to reckon our dilemmas through generalized contempt proceedings that we feel inside by an outbreak of temper tantrums, or by mere rejection of the system and withdraw? These, I feel, would only be cop-outs, but my problem this morning is not to speak to those questions; mine is merely to suggest that they are among the questions that I hope will be taken up by you, our speakers, our seminars, during the course of this All-University Conference.

I turn, rather, to my chief responsibility this morning which is to introduce our keynote speaker: Dr. George Saslow. There is so much to be said about him, that perhaps brevity is the highest honor and best introduction technique I can adopt. Dr. Saslow is, as you probably already know, a psychiatrist—a professor of psychiatry at the University of Oregon Medical School. He grew up in the East and he has... well, I suppose I was gonna say he is kind of a “king of hearts”—I hope you’ve seen that movie, I think it should be a part of this conference—but he has not only played the role, I guess you could say, in some of the work he’s done in the practice of psychiatry, but as... he’s been romantic enough to have romanced, married, and brought to Portland with him his remarkable wife Julia, who we have the high honor of having as a colleague here at the University. And he and Julia have done us—our community—honor as leaders of intellect, as leaders of a perfectly marvelous family, for a great many years, I think, since nineteen hundred and fifty-seven when he came to Oregon.

In his nine pages of—over nine pages—of published works; I was intrigued by them all, for they illustrate the course of his distinguished medical career, which began, by the way, in physiology and not in medicine. But as he moved from physiology into medicine, I was particularly intrigued with some listings he has in the field of communications. I thought I’d carefully check them... ah, here they are. First, he wrote in 1964 on speech durations of astronaut and ground communicator. This was bridging again in a special field while he has bridged in his scientific career, but then he gets down to one terribly pertinent to our concerns in politics, at least today, interviewer “mm-hmm” and interviewer/interviewee speech durations. I was particularly intrigued with the “mm-hmm” and its possible relevance for how we could deal with the long hums and buzzes in the tapes that have been under investigation. And, finally, he has written on the interaction recorder, an electronic punch paper tape unit for recording speech behavior during interviews. I wondered, of course, if those plumbers and tapers in the White House might not have all been better off had they taken a look at some of this... just for sheer technique, if not for [*chuckles from the audience*] aspects of morality. For then, much later—not too much, 1965—he writes a case history of attempted behavior manipulation in a psychiatric ward.

Now, if this isn’t a kind of “king of hearts” biography, I don’t know what could be. He hasn’t decided—I think—though, on the course I suggested would be a cop-out—on rejection. He still lives and works among us mad folk on the outside, but he has indeed, in many ways, bridged a lag in time, and, perhaps for us, he bridged the most important one by coming to Oregon, where I’m told, he found a psychiatric segment of our Oregon Medical School perhaps 50 years behind where the rest of the modern psychiatry was at the time he came. And in a very few short years, he brought the Oregon Medical School’s psychiatric division into the modern world. He brought about change and confidence in it, and he did it because he has practiced as an

effective human being. His confidence then, of the confidence that resulted in his... in *institutional* development, was born of his effectiveness, and his creative application of intelligence that was as contagious as it was infectious.

I can think of no higher praise for any man's performance whether as physiologist, medical practitioner, or medical professor, unless it be one last measure of effectiveness, and that is as a man who not only appreciates effectiveness in the profession, but effectiveness in friendship and in parenthood; whose children found that spending a Sunday with their father was more important to them—more enriching to them—than spending even an hour of that Sunday in Sunday school. So I give you a friend, a professor, a distinguished man of his field: Dr. George Saslow.

[*applause*]

GEORGE SASLOW: Thank you President Wolfe. There's really no way of keying what one says directly into what President Wolfe has told you, so I'll go ahead keying what I meant to say into the third Portland State All-University Conference. By agreement with various members of the program committee, chiefly Andries Deinum and myself, what I intend to do is to try to give you an overview of the theme which is the subject of the conference, and in addition, to urge you to experience as many as you can of the large variety of experiences that have been planned for the next several weeks during the conference period.

To come to the theme of the conference—it has an interesting sound—in our name: Public Evil, Private Responsibility. First, let me mention briefly what the theme is *not*—that's as important as what it is. The theme is not about the kinds of violence one individual does to another which are generally agreed to belong to the criminal law. Rather, the theme deals with situations of social destructiveness which large numbers of people are involved in, who are treated as though they are not human beings in the name of values that justify or legitimate their treatment. The values which so justify and legitimate their treatment are held by the society that performs the evil or socially destructive behavior, but not all members of the society participate in such evil behavior directly. A great many do not even know the full extent to which the behavior has been going on. Certain men, generally, but sometimes also women, are always selected in these enterprises to carry out the social destructiveness, but they act in the name of various kinds of agencies or organizations: the society, the nation, the church, the army, the police. So the public evil is done in the name of the values of the society carrying it on, and is an example of what has been called “a cruel relationship” between two social groups in which the members of one social group hold the power of death or serious harm over another social group. Such “cruel relationships” are not limited to any one cultural group

anywhere in the world. In this century, it is estimated that at least—probably an underestimate—50 million people have been killed in wars, murderous attacks, and other deadly quarrels. Now, this number doesn't include the estimated millions of people whose lives have been seriously harmed, mutilated, or maimed through public evil. The most conspicuous example, which you're now hearing more and more about through the courageous stand of Solzhenitsyn in the USSR—the most conspicuous group is the estimated 30 millions of persons who were the victims of the USSR secret police from the time of the Revolution in 1917, before Stalin.

No simple explanation accounts for “cruel relationships” and social destructiveness on a mass scale between Americans and Filipinos. We killed 200,000 Filipinos when we decided, at the turn of the century, that the Philippines would be better under our rule than under the Spanish rule. No simple explanation accounts for “cruel relationships” between Americans and American Indians, white Americans and Black, Nazis and Jews, Japanese and Chinese—I don't know how many of you remember the extraordinary massacres at Nanking by the Japanese in the '30s—Protestant and Catholic Irishman, Pakistanis and Bengalis, recently, the USSR secret police and their victims, the American military and the North Vietnamese. On a smaller scale, neither is there any simple explanation for the treatment of the Japanese Americans by the Americans in World War II. And one what seems a still smaller scale, but is felt so acutely by many of us as a vital attack on our social fabric, no simple explanation accounts for the behavior of the Nixon government towards its political opponents, as if they were not just political opponents, but enemies of the United States.

In trying to decide what is evil, since I've used that term—what is socially destructive, what is morally good—it's easy to get lost in centuries-old long debates on the criteria for labeling one particular situation “good” and another “evil.” Instead of doing that, which doesn't seem to me appropriate here, let's proceed from a point of view which was made public by the Black American sociologist W.E.B. DuBois. In reflecting, in a book that he wrote, on American slavery, and the firm stand that John Brown took against it in the middle of the last century, he said, “All men know that there are, in this world, here and there, and again and again, great partings of the ways. The one way wrong, the other right, in some vast and eternal sense.”

I'm going to start from that point of view. If we take DuBois' point of view and apply hindsight, we have not trouble concluding that it was evil to enslave the Black people in America, it was evil to kill in the Nazi concentration camps, it was evil for Spaniards to kill thousands and thousands—nearly millions—of Indians in the new world, it was evil for the secret police of the USSR to kill or maim millions of Soviet citizens. We could find in history and in current affairs, many other such instances of evil, that now, at least, seem clear to many educated persons that

were not at the time. Every such instance, situation, or program of social destructiveness has been defined as legitimate, or as justified by those carrying it out, and that's a startling thing to reflect on, and defined as justified or legitimate in the name of the culture, religion, nation, and so on to which the executors of the program belonged. What are some factors which contribute to the justifying or legitimating of social destructiveness? How does public evil become socially acceptable and therefore likely to be done? I'm going to try to list just a few of the factors which scholars of the subject have been identifying.

One factor, it the belief that around us, as an explanation of the vicissitudes of our lives—the difficulties that we have at various times—whether about food, or the economy, or whatever, an enemy exists who is evil, who is dangerous, who is uncontrolled, and at all times ready to do evil to us. There's a very strong pattern of this kind of American politics in the first colonial days. We, on the other hand, as distinct from such a postulated enemy, are morally superior to the enemy. We are more intelligent; we are all-powerful. It becomes our sacred duty, then, to stamp out evil. By putting these two views together in these two ways, stereotypes of the heathen Indians, the Blacks, the Jews, the Japanese, many others, have legitimized mass socially destructive behavior against them.

Another factor is the authorizing, the permitting, or the condoning of social destructiveness by a person or agency in authority. As an example, take some of our military policies in Vietnam: the policies of "search and destroy," the "free-fire zone," or "Anything that moves may be killed, using whatever means are necessary to destroy the enemy"—these are quotations from military regulations. Now, although such policies by the military agency do not order a civilian massacre as at My Lai, they say, in effect, that anything goes. That's what I mean by permitting or condoning.

As another example, during the... early and late 30s and early 40s when Hitler repeatedly threatened the whole world with conquest, he would say, "I take the whole responsibility upon myself." Now there's no way in which you could make him face up to that responsibility as you recognize when our own President, Nixon, said the same kind of thing at one point in the Watergate investigations—"I am fully responsible." There's no—there's no way of making Hitler face his responsibility, but by declaring himself the all-responsible leader, he legitimized whatever anybody else under his command did. They could then consider themselves exempt from responsibility and guilt. He also generously gave them the right by this statement to blame him for everything if things went wrong.

Now another factor is that it's necessary to mobilize people and resources into an apparatus of social destructiveness in addition to doing these other kinds of things that make it likely to

happen. An army that's geared for total war, a totalitarian government aiming at mass extermination, as the Nazi government, are examples of such mobilization. You don't always need governmental agencies to do this, however, because the history of enslavement of Blacks in America indicates that sometimes independent, social mechanisms appear which mobilize people and resources for evil, and so long as there's permission or condoning by official and formal agencies, the public evil occurs.

Next, I want to point out that a general condition for public evil without individual guilt or responsibility—perhaps the most general condition—is to deny the humanity of the victims. You call the victims various kinds of names such as animals, enemies, “gooks,” “dinks,” “niggers,” “kikes,” “pinkos,” “hippies,” “commies,” “Japs,” “yellow dwarfs with daggers,” rotten apples are some of the examples that have been used. Further, you allow no human contact, or you supervise it very closely, as exemplified in our relations with Cuba, with China (until recently), with North Vietnam, and (until 1930) with the USSR. You ridicule or destroy the culture and customs of the target population, and we have really done this with both North and South Vietnamese family and village, the backbone to their culture.

Another social condition—to move to a slightly different area of interest to students of the subject—which permits public evil, is the idea that the very wellbeing of our society and faith in the society's organizations for violent actions such as the police and the military—faith in the wellbeing of the society, and faith in the society's organizations for violent action are one and the same thing. This soon becomes the idea that the police, or the military, can do no wrong. There are some very startling examples of this in all countries. The USSR secret police, over and over again, are quoted by persons who have survived the labor camps and who—to write about it, and to get it circulated in Western countries—they're saying to a devout communist in the grip of the interrogation process and on the way to the labor camp, “We do not arrest innocent people. The fact that you're here proves that you have been guilty.” Officers in the French army—and the case which almost tore France apart and did in some ways for a long time—the Dreyfus case, “could not possibly have falsified documents and evidence,” they told one of the officers who knew what he had falsified. In connection with some of the recent efforts in which Agnew was involved, and various others in our government—John Mitchell—to extend wire tapping of suspected people, to have no-knock police investigations of suspects, and similar extensions of authority that were a little bit new for us when made public. Over and over again, the questioning was raised by those who *favor* such extension of invasion of privacy: “Why would American police arrest innocent people? That just doesn't happen.”

Now, in today's news—I didn't know if President Wolfe would be stuck by the very same thing that I was—but in today's *Oregonian*, you could read that three defendants in the Ellsberg

psychiatrist office invasion, Erlichman, Young, and Liddy, want to subpoena President Nixon to testify on their behalf. What do they want him to testify to? Some White House staff are quoted as saying that what they want him to testify to, in the interest of these defendants, is that breaking into the office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist was an action, during which they were acting as federal law enforcement officers. That's the justification they regard as sufficient for behavior which affronts so many of us who look on it from the outside, but that's exactly the same as saying the police can do no wrong, the army can do no wrong, and if you raise questions about their possibly doing wrong, you are a traitor to your country. People who questioned the authenticity and the evidence of the documents in the Dreyfus case were considered to be impeaching the incorruptibility of the French army, and were traitors to France. That was the common label for them.

Now, extending this last point, the police and the army are right by definition. Loyalty to these organizations takes precedence over every other loyalty when you have that view; over every other consideration, over every other morality. Individuals who belong to such organizations are ostracized for violation of this loyalty. They are not team players, a term with which now we are all lamentably familiar. In some of the recent trials, incidents, indictments, and sentences in connection with the Watergate investigations... Precisely—you heard about the game plan, about the pressures to be a team player, which are precisely the conditions that lead to perjury, break-ins, and other violations of our legal, political, and social fabric. The individual member of an organization can avoid blame by obtaining organizational cover for his actions. You can see what a tempting and dangerous pathway that is.

Another point in social destructiveness: organizations have their own strategies for avoiding responsibility and blame. The most effective one that's ever been found is a combination of secrecy and isolation. Recent examples in our own country are the overclassifying—generally agreed to be the case in a majority of instances, close to 90%—the overclassifying of military actions or documents as “top secret” in the national interest is one of the best ways of avoiding responsibility and blame by an organization. Or, the opposition through most of this country, by police, to the notion of civilian review boards as offering some way of getting feedback from those whose lives are affected by police decisions back to the police.

Next, when a scandal blows up in such organizations as I am describing, the top officials usually claim total ignorance. “I knew nothing about it. I never asked where the contributions went. I never asked what the contributions amounted to,” is what we've heard in our own time. The ones caught always acted on their own without explicit authorization. They were always low down on the totem pole and they're always inept and obtuse.

Now, examples from our country, long and, to date, the Watergate investigations, there have been investigations of scandals among the Denver police, the Chicago police, and so on. And an example far from our country but involving us was the investigation of the massacre at My Lai, and the top people never were involved! They knew nothing whatever about it. That's a feature of such organizations is part of that policy of avoiding responsibility and blame, and that's why they'll always overvalue, from our point of view, secrecy and isolation.

Now, for social destructiveness, considered still from another point of view, there has to be available a target population. It must be vulnerable in some way or other, maybe just by being different—it isn't always skin color, because two groups of Nigerians have been treating each other exactly the same way as people of different color. It must be weaker than the destroyers. The evidence on these points that the target population must be vulnerable and weaker is monotonous; I'll just give you a few examples. Practically always, for instance, the target population which is accused of harming those who carry out public evil, has inflicted much less harm on those who then destroy masses of them than the reverse. A few instances in Czechoslovakia, for example, led Hitler to take over all of Czechoslovakia—that kind of thing. The Blacks in Portuguese Angola, to take some less-familiar examples, they have killed far fewer Portuguese than the Portuguese have killed of them. The Algerians killed far fewer French colonists and military than the French killed Algerians. The Spanish and the Americans killed hundreds of thousands of American Indians, and you know that the American Indians never killed that many of us. The Americans admit, after saying there are very few communists in North Vietnam—or in South Vietnam—to having killed, ultimately, 350,000 Vietnamese in both parts of the country. And so what you can conclude from these kinds of experiences is that by and large, we don't attack a country which has big bombs and can defend itself; we pick a special target population which can't.

The last social condition which I will mention in relation to the public evil is arousing people to carry out social destructiveness—you have to get people het-up to do things. Now, there are various ways in which this is done in different countries, by propaganda machines. In the United States, one way that we have only recently become more alert to and need to remain alert to—one way that's effective is to get high government officials simply to repeat, preferably three times, "In the national interest, in the national interest, in the national interest." This was a procedure used by the FBI when it proclaimed the Black Panthers a subversive group, a couple of years ago, working against the national interest, and then certain acts of violence by official agencies in Chicago soon followed with some people shot.

Now, up to now I have listed a number of social and cultural conditions which paved the way for public evil. There are other pertinent conditions which I'll mention more briefly. I can't

expect to discuss all of them exhaustively, of course. One is this, even when a population is faced with the knowledge of monstrous public evil, monstrous atrocities, monstrous mass social destructiveness, the population—meaning all of us—have ways of defusing their emotional reactions. There's a startling example of this which, in all probability, could be repeated if we ever could do the study with other peoples. That example was what the United States did after World War II in Germany. And what the United States did was to initiate a program of mass education and mass de-Nazification having heard from so many Germans, "We knew nothing whatever about what Hitler did—nothing about the concentration camps and slave labor and so forth, and the genocidal policies." The idea was that unless the Germans find out what happened, maybe they'll do it again. So, this tremendous program, as I mentioned—the de-Nazification, the mass education—was carried out. That's practically never been possible to do anywhere else.

The effort has been agreed to be a total failure. The educators simply couldn't induce people to talk about, think about, what they prefer to forget. Some of us probably saw the first film made—I guess it was made in Scandinavia—about Hitler; that was a realistic one. It was in the middle 1960s, and if you were present in the theatre where there was a German audience, you heard no conversation whatever about a perfectly extraordinary film which could hardly help but move anybody, even from an outer planet—another planet—I would think. But there was no discussion about it, and that was noted among German movie audiences all over Germany.

Now, the population in this U.S. mass education attempt felt morally uninvolved in what they were told about. They felt unconcerned, or they denied the facts, or they blamed others, or they justified the atrocities, or they did all of these even though they don't fit together in any pattern. You could summarize what they did in some such language as "It didn't happen, and besides, they deserved it anyway." There's no other way to put together what they said.

Now, we don't have such data, as I've mentioned, for other socially destructive situations or groups except perhaps in the case of the ongoing right now, USSR treatment by, say, *Pravda* and official agencies of Solzhenitsyn's recent history of the USSR prison camps going back to the revolution time. But there's no reason to suppose that a population would have essentially different reactions that the German post-war population did, whether we were to study French, Americans, Belgians, Turks, Indonesian, Sudanese, Nigerians. Believe it or not, all of these people have done all of these things that I've mentioned.

Now, still another condition pertinent to public evil is the policy-making process of government or agency officials. This has just begun to be studied in the last few years. Careful study of a number of major disastrous decisions—as disastrous as seen in the consequences later—careful

study of a number of major disastrous decisions and policies which ended in large-scale social destructiveness has shown that a small, cohesive group of decision or policy-makers may take little account of major consequences of their actions, including moral and humanitarian implications of those actions—consequences so large you wonder how they didn't consider them, but in their functioning, they often do not. Members of such policy-making groups can be intelligent, experienced, politically skillful, yet unable to express *to each other* reservations they may have about some kind of decision or policy once a certain momentum has been reached in the policy-making process. One of the examples that's been carefully studied has to do with the appeasement policy of the Neville Chamberlain in government in the United Kingdom, as a consequence of which they were turned over to the Nazis without their having to do anything; the populations and resources of Austria, Czechoslovakia, and various other countries of Europe. A similar situation seems to have occurred in the Truman administration when, during the Korean War, a decision was made which led to China's entering the war, a possibility not having been given adequate weight by the decision-making group. Now, the study of such situations are these extremely influential, often politically elected, often highly plausible, intelligent, experienced people. Study of these has emphasized that these groups develop team values that strengthen and boast a group morale at the expense of critical thinking. Loyalty to the policy-making group becomes the highest morality of its members. They seem to be acting as if what they're saying to themselves after a certain amount of time working together and reaching some kind of agreement on policy or decision, "Since we are a good group, anything we decide to do must be good."

Now, the Watergate testimony, to come back to that again, furnishes new examples of such group behavior and one of the students of this subject has called it "group think," a term he's coined it after similar kinds of terms in Orwell's *1984*, and it seems a reasonable term. Lastly, as a condition favoring public evil, must be mentioned the process of selective dehumanization in each one of us as part of our development. This is what I mean by that: No one can possibly carry on the business of life if he or she remains constantly aware of and emotionally sensitive to and reactive to all the misery and injustice in the world. Each person learns, through development, to react to this and not to that—in short, to place things in compartments, to compartmentalize his reactions. An analogy you can think about is the way a person who wants to become a surgeon has to learn how to cut into a living human being for curative reasons and not for other kinds of reasons, but when the process of the surgeon's selective dehumanization goes too far, what you then hear from his patients is, "I can't talk to him." He, himself, becomes dehumanized. Now, similarly, selectively dehumanized behavior must be learned by people in certain kinds of institutions as a necessity. Police, judges, lawyers, prison officials—they can't be bleeding hearts or they can't do their work—by military personnel, in fact, by any institutional personnel. The person who has asked, "I need a passport," can't pay attention to

what troubles I'm having outside of the fact. Do the rules permit me to grant you a passport or not? Have you got the right credentials?

Now unfortunately for us, modern push-button technology in relation to the such possibilities as nuclear war makes killing on a large-scale in itself, so distant from actually handling a human being, that mass dehumanization behaviors are fostered by the very nature of our war technology. And so, these mass dehumanization behaviors related to war technology are behaviors which can either lead to social destructiveness on a large scale because we're saying the other people aren't people, or, the thing which so many people fear, an actual depopulation of the whole Earth.

Now, to leave this topic and to go to another one, I want to mention that you will see and hear and otherwise experience the interplay of these various conditions that favor public evil in the conference exercises now scheduled for the next few weeks. What can individuals do to resist these tendencies, these assumptions, these destructive behaviors in our name, and thus, as individuals, act as responsible members of a society? I want to say a few words about that. Speaking broadly, I draw to your attention three main types of responsible action. They're all aimed at living out the central principles—two of them—that each human being has the right to live, and the acceptance of diversity among human beings as a natural thing.

Now, one of these types of action is this: the authorization of public evil by the military and police agencies—the agencies of forcible action in our society—happens to be a condition that seems to many people easier to modify than many other conditions that are deeply rooted in each person's individual development, like the selective dehumanization thing, or in persons' social and political conflicts and value systems, and are very difficult to modify in any short time. But the excesses that members of military and police agencies so often show—it seems to many of us—can be restricted by legislation. Here are some of the suggestions that have been made; there are others, these are just samples. One suggestion that has been made is wide-spread use of civilian review boards for checking police and military conduct. See, the underlying assumption there is that the police can do wrong, the military can do wrong, no matter what their intentions are, even if they're good intentions, and the only way to get out of the team loyalty business—the only way to get out of secrecy and isolation and approving of your own behavior all the time—the only way is to have some outsider who doesn't share your interest—who doesn't benefit from everything that you do—to give you feedback on your own performance; those pathways can be made open. You can think of such things as honor citations, not for shooting somebody in a riot or explosive situation, but for showing restraint in an explosive situation. You can think of programs which mass media might pay some attention to which show that bravery and courage are necessary to refrain from destructiveness when

there's an opportunity to be destructive or not to be. Now, as I mention these as examples of ways in which one could move—there are others—you'll realize that, mostly, we move in the opposite way. We reward—we give prominence to—the very thing that which makes for minimal private responsibility and maximum cover-up of public evil. Now, the general objective of social efforts of this kind would be to stop regarding the police and military as holy agents that stand without evil, but to regard them, rather, as themselves a necessary social evil, in a sense, requiring continued vigilant monitoring by the society—that's no new idea, but to do it consistently is necessary.

Now, another kind of action has to do with more widespread experience that is now common in our culture with procedures that combat the tendency of small groups to place team loyalty above every other morality. A considerable number of such procedures have been described by various students of the subject, and, in a very broad and abstract way, the notion in a country like the United Kingdom—of a government and a loyal opposition—exemplifies the kind of thing which people have been producing ramifications of. Now, among these procedures, there are a number which involve such arrangements as having people act as advocates for people who are affected by a policy group's decision, and we have examples of that already in this country such as people's defenders, legal aid persons, and the ombudsman idea that comes from the Scandanavian countries. Also, going centuries back in the experience of the Catholic church, is the devil's advocate procedure in connection with who should rightly be canonized as a saint: somebody takes the devil's position that he or she shouldn't be.

Now, such arrangements can be made part of the regular functioning of any policy-making group—they can be institutionalized. We can add to these the deliberate use of a loyal opposition to monitor and question all major policy decisions once a decision has been made. A group of equally competent people can be expected and can be sanctioned to raise questions about snags that nobody foresaw when the decision was first made. Among other arrangements like this is the use of independent-minded consultants outside the policy-making group. We have plenty of able people in this country who could be used as consultants for any of the groups' functioning within the White House. Such arrangements not only have been suggested—I reminded myself what I was thinking about when—where they had been used, but, well, within recent times, there are two well-known instances in which a number of these procedures for combatting the tendency to make loyalty to the group the supreme morality were used. One of them was when the Marshall Plan was worked out; many oppositional kinds views were in conflict and expected to be in explicit, open controversy, and difference as the issues were hashed out. And you may or may not remember that the USSR was invited to join in the whole thing, which would have added still another kind of different view to the final product, but it did not accept the invitation. During the Cuban missile crisis, Kennedy paid

special attention, often to being absent himself from the meetings of high-level officials, to making sure that quite a range of viewpoints was reflected in the discussions, and to making sure that all of them were heard. And we did better in these two procedures than in many others.

To go on with what kinds of arrangements might help in this very special situation about which most people have little firsthand knowledge or experience, vocal protest by anybody—by you, by me—against what seems morally wrong should be accepted as responsible individual behavior. It should be made promptly and publicly as soon as a drift towards possible public evil is detected or suspected. It's one thing to admire the extraordinary courage of Solzhenitsyn, as I do, and 14 other dissenters whose names were published recently when they received the Freedom Award of Freedom House, founded in memory of Wendell Willkie, a couple of months ago. But Carl Rowan, the journalist whose column appears in the *Oregonian* now and then, pointed out a couple of days ago that maybe if we could ask Solzhenitsyn how he would rather have had it, that he would survive this ordeal that he's being put through right now, and the ones he went through before, as against the possibility that a thousand brave men had stood up in 1917 when Lenin first started what Stalin only continued and expanded in the way of annihilating dissenters. Which would he prefer? That a thousand brave men had stood up then, generations ago—that's more than 50 years ago—to fight off the police state in the first place, when there was a chance to do it? So a person like Solzhenitsyn is fighting a rear guard battle, when there's something as entrenched as the system there has been so far as the secret police and the labor camps and suppression of the dissent for so many years have gone on. It's much better for us to scream earlier than later—is the point that I'd like to make—and it's a lot safer.

Now, some last points. In general, it's harder to reduce or eliminate destructive or malfunctioning human behavior than to encourage and increase socially desirable and acceptable behavior. Think, for example, of how much time, energy, money we put into controlling criminals, yet our criminal system is notoriously a failure—we have more people behind walls in this country per hundred thousand of the population than in any other advanced country of the world—and all people who will study the criminal justice system in the country have concluded that it needs radical overhaul. The repeater rates are such as to mean that what we do to stamp out violent behavior or unacceptable behavior just doesn't work. From a long-range point of view, then, we have to make more effort to improve our general social arrangements: our schools, our industry, our technology, that could encourage rich individual human development—that's the way undesirable things don't happen, not by trying to eliminate them where we have really *very* few successful methods. We'd like the kind of individual human development encouraged that is socially sensitive and responsible to all human beings, and we're likely to do a lot better as we move in that direction than when we try

to put the lid on unacceptable or injurious individual behaviors by punishments that, even if they're temporarily successful, produce such by-products of long-lasting hate and alienation that we're faced with the same problem over and over again.

Now, the last thing I want to do is to invite you to try something for yourselves. Now, usually I'm not satisfied with just listening to something—I'd like to do something about it myself and I would like to encourage you to do the same. What about the members of the audience trying this, at least as they go through the conference: each day from now on, you could review by yourself, or with another, this kind of question: What opportunities did I have today for acting responsibly against a public evil? Which of these opportunities did I take some action about? What was the consequence? And I submit that if we could talk with Solzhenitsyn, he wishes people were doing that in 1917. Well, that's where I'll stop, President Wolfe, and, would you like me to answer questions if people would like to?

WOLFE: We would.

SASLOW: Okay, well that's the end of what I prepared as the introduction to your conference.

AUDIENCE 1: [*off microphone and in the background; muffled*] That was fantastic! [*chuckle from audience*] [...] but is it true they keep a permanent record of everything a student says and does from the day he enters the school?

SASLOW: I'm—I missed—"is it true that...?"

AUDIENCE 1: They keep a permanent record of everything a student says or does to his transcripts and [...]?

SASLOW: I don't know that answer to that.

[*questioner's reply is unintelligible*]

SASLOW: Well, would a representative of the university want to tell me as well as the student? [*chuckling*] Do you keep a record of everything a student does? I can't believe that records are that good, by the way. [*chuckling*]

[*a few people talking*]

AUDIENCE 1: I didn't say they're accurate, they just have a lot of things.

[audience members speaking off-microphone, barely audible, for about a minute]

AUDIENCE 2: [...] They must be secret...

AUDIENCE 1: I saw something a year ago.

AUDIENCE 3: Can you describe the contents [...]?

AUDIENCE 1: Well, they have an arrangement one through four [...] and it requires a signature [...] there's a special sticker [...] but every one of their employees [...]

SASLOW: You mean... *[audience reacts]* you mean for fear of some retaliation? *[AUDIENCE 1 doesn't respond]* Do you mean for fear of some retaliation?

AUDIENCE 1: Not retaliation of [...], but say you wanted to get nice job at a bank, your credibility would be [...]

[more conversation in background off-mic]

AUDIENCE 1: [...] but I think they are kept in someplace and I haven't had time to make it through an investigation [...]

SASLOW: Well, I can speak... well, I've got my wits about me 'cause I wasn't with the first—the question as you first asked it. I can speak to part of it in this way: there are a number of kinds of admissions information that various educational institutions request, which I think have been misused—as the answer to which have been misused, in which students could legitimately protest about, and you'd need to find out what they are. That exists in various places. I'll give you an example of an attempt to deal with that at the University of North Carolina. Some years ago, they became aware that they had an admissions form to their medical school which asked a student to say, an applicant to say whether he had ever had some kind of a mental health problem, had he ever seen professional help for it, and this information was used to disqualify some students. It bothered a number of the faculty and they set up a study which admitted students whether they answered yes or no, and whatever details they gave to this kind of question, and the students were followed for either one 4-year period till they graduated or for two 4-year generations of students. And it turned out that none of the information that they had requested in any way predicted how the student would do—would he do well? Would he graduate? Would he leave? Would he get sick? And so on. *Except* if he had been so sick in the way he managed his life that he'd had to lose one semester or more and had to be in a

psychiatric hospital. That was the only thing which made any sense. And all the rest of it was information which was totally non-predictive and useless, but it had been used. Now, I see no reason why people shouldn't ask all the time about the validity of questions that you're supposed to answer—that's all right.

AUDIENCE 1: Well, I heard that psychological tests were the same thing. They had no effect on a person's real [...] yet the government uses up all of its [...] psychiatrists, [...]

SASLOW: Well, if they don't have predictive value and they don't protect your privacy, you have to scream. Now, somebody else was raising a hand. Mhmm?

AUDIENCE 4: Well, I don't know. I'm a member of the faculty and I'm not really clear, in terms of the question; what seems to be the inference that there's a record kept of the questions being made [...] I'm personally having difficulty trying to understand those questions. I tried to [...] but I can guarantee that I'm not in the position to recort these questions, nor do I pass them on, nor have I ever been questioned in this area; and so I don't know where you're getting your information or what it is based upon, because this is all news to me.

[audience member speaking in background]

SASLOW: I can't hear you.

[unintelligible]

SASLOW: His recommendation *[recording skips]*

SASLOW: Well, would you object to such attempts to decide that a particular student...

[audience member interrupts]

AUDIENCE 1: Sounds like [...] but I'm not gonna... make a specific judgement on what they [...] specific school can be different so I'm not gonna say [...].

SASLOW: Well, as you can imagine, the subject is a thorny one. For example, when students are invited to participate in deciding how shall they be assessed for recommendation to further steps in their careers, a great many students are against the simple numerical grade and propose instead a 10 or 11-characteristic kind of way of doing it with rankings from, say, one to seven or something like that on such characteristics as dependability, responsibility, whatever it may be. And the students themselves often prefer to have things done in such a way that their

multiple abilities are separately assessed, and since it's hard to give numerical values to some kinds of abilities, they find that scales of the kind which the other speaker and I have just mentioned, can have sufficient agreement and be sufficiently fair to be used. Those students themselves request them. But again, that's a thing which is so different from institution to institution and you're right on the fundamental point [*audience member tries to interrupt so SASLOW raises voice*] that we ought not to take these procedures for granted without raising questions about what they do. It's true. That's been shown.

AUDIENCE 1: ...it would suggest that they're all students [...] information of all students—

SASLOW: Sure.

AUDIENCE 1: there will be more students [...]

SASLOW: Well, that may be true. [*taking next question*] Yes.

AUDIENCE 5: [...] one was [...] see over time, and the other [*the rest is unintelligible*]

AUDIENCE 1: Can you do it [...]?

AUDIENCE 5:... well, you can at least—it, you know [...]

[*barely audible back-and-forth between the audience members with contrasting opinions*]

AUDIENCE 1: You can [...] upon it.

AUDIENCE 5: No, I think that it's [...] ... if you're ignorant... [*unintelligible interruption from another person*] [...]

[*unintelligible response*]

WOLFE [in background, partly inaudible]: One of the [...] to the emergency, especially the point you made there, Dr. Saslow, about the business of the dilemma of how you get loyalty and policy in a policy-making group but you also build in the opportunity for deception [...] even arguing [...] perform in society. I was wondering... what you [...] how you [...] what we talked about in another... meeting of this conference on foreign service and the, what you call, "fitness report" [...] diplomat every year by completely opposite, and the effect of these "fitness reports" on building the team loyalty. To the extent, it's very often a foreign service officer feels in peril, in terms of his progress, materially and in rank, he [...]. And yet, in the last year or—or

two, the system became so eroded that— [*loud background noise*] and causing one case of a man committing suicide over the effects of his reports [...] and of the organization's—of their procedures, and to open them up in ways that allow a person to engage in the kind of check-off that you suggested in your conclusion of “What can I do?” “What did I do?” “How effective was it?”...

SASLOW: Well, as it happens, some things, including some of the things that I mentioned, were actually tried by the state department some years ago. I forget who the undersecretary was that was responsible, but a number of us were invited to meet with a considerable number of junior officers, and they repeatedly made this complaint that they were not encouraged to express their views unless they were in total agreement—they had to be polite and acquiescent. And their conviction was that this operated through the general narrowing and constraint of state department policy and was a great disservice to the country. Well, as long as that undersecretary was there—I forget how many were involved with us—it must have been close to [*recording skips*] a hundred people at the... [*skips*] the career officer who rang was below the highest level of the person in charge of the mission or a country group or so on, I forget what the title is—but they all felt that it was possible to solve this problem, provided that there was sanction from the top—that was the undersecretary—on open discussion, expressed in the views and a statement of where each person stood with regard to policy that were there. I guess they had no examples of a person saying, “Well, I will sabotage this policy. I’ve told you my views, I don’t agree with your views, but I will sabotage your policy.” That isn’t always the necessary conclusion of differing, of course. Well, in any case, that experiment was tried. It lasted a couple of years and then this undersecretary disappeared. That’s the end of that, but it’s perfectly possible. Somebody’s got to sanction *that* kind of behavior and reward it, just as somebody sanctions the over-conforming behavior. Pay attention to how do you provide rewards for the kind of thing which in the long run seems to us more beneficial to the whole society, instead of pretending that such rewards don’t operate, ‘cause we aren’t looking at the ones that do operate.

[*recording goes to static for about one minute while SASLOW is speaking*]

SASLOW [*as audio resumes*]: ...number of years, it is very difficult to avoid your having put on blinders to some things that a fresh view tells you about, and what I would like to see encouraged at every level is the valuing of those fresh views—the valuing of the expansion of what I see instead my having to make sure you don’t tell me anything new, which is the usual way it goes [*chuckles*], and I think this can be done in any institution. On the other hand, people are *very* resistant to the idea. [*chuckling*] It just isn’t the natural way they’ve grown up! It’s so

much easier to pretend that you're God and know all the right answers and nobody has the right to question you.

AUDIENCE 6: If you wrote a book on the particular view that maybe the next president would read it and put it into effect...

SASLOW: Lots— [*audience member keeps talking*] lots has already been written on how to do this. Would you like to read one such book? There's a beauty, it's written by a man named De Rivera—R-I-V-E-R-A. It's called *The Psychological Dimension of Foreign Policy*, and it describes instance after instance of ways in which behaving in some of these ways that I have mentioned would make a considerable difference, and the end of the book has a whole series of such suggestions which bits and pieces of in various groups have been carried out, with success.

AUDIENCE 6: Maybe they just need to grasp that it's a whole picture, the way you have grasped it, since you're a ...

SASLOW: Nobody's gonna listen to me any more than anybody else.

AUDIENCE 6: [*unintelligible*]

SASLOW: [*chuckles*] I'll have to run for President. Other questions? Yes.

AUDIENCE 7: Do you think there ever has been an error of some culture culture where... the being shielded—the culture hasn't been warranting shielding from the responsibility but rather has been moved—has moved towards what you discussed in the end of [...] everybody having loyal opposition—having evil... [...]

SASLOW: Is everybody's contributions valued? I can't answer that because I don't know history that well. There have been periods, *I think*, in which in some segments of human activity—take, for example, artistic activity during the Renaissance when *all* sorts of new things were encouraged—and I suppose in some utopian society groups there have been approximations to this but I don't know well enough whether a culture across the board has lived like this for any sustained period of time, or whether some tribes live like this—I can't answer that. Anthropologists might know.

AUDIENCE 8: Do you ever ask yourself whether it might be possible to [...] before?

SASLOW: Well, that's an interesting question, but lots of things which have never happened before have turned out to be easily possible—it's awfully hard to take that view. For instance, before the personal income tax bill became an income tax plan, became a constitutional amendment in this country—I guess it was about 1913 or so—nobody believed that the American people would ever accept that, and in the space of less than 10 years, public sentiment changed to such an extent that that was possible. And such rapid changes of mass public sentiment at a time when public awareness has become massive has been documented in a number of things that we've done in this country, so it's hard to be totally pessimistic.

[audience member responds]

SASLOW: You mean besides the income tax thing.

[audience member responds affirmatively]

SASLOW: Well, probably... taxing profits might be another one. Some of the things we're doing about pollution might be another one...

AUDIENCE 9: What about the abortion law? That's...

SASLOW: The abortion law which changed very rapidly; that's another one. It's happened, but you're pointing to a very important point that the larger number of people involved, the harder it is to have things moved—that's one thing. And on the other hand, as these observations on what has been called by one student of the subject "group think" show, a small group of people isn't necessarily more tolerant than a large group. Politeness can be as constraining as contempt so there's just no certain way out of these mazes, and that's the human condition.
[chuckles] Yes.

AUDIENCE 10: When you talked about the justification of evil, earlier [...]

SASLOW: Of public evil.

AUDIENCE 10: Yeah.

SASLOW: Yeah...

AUDIENCE 10: I was thinking of the example of either the Japanese or... [...]

SASLOW: Yeah.

AUDIENCE 10: In World War II. [...] it wasn't evil at that time because of—the thinking was that we were—that people were gonna do our country in. You know, maybe somebody was fighting against it, I—I don't know, [...] evil now, but at the time it seemed to be the right thing to do—

SASLOW: Were doing it for their good, you mean?

AUDIENCE 10: Well, our good.

SASLOW: [chuckling] Well, if the point that you're making is whether the definition of public evil or social destructiveness *always* implies violent action that's overt, that's not true. There are very quiet ways of doing the things which impair people's lives, which involve not regarding them as human as the executors of such policies, and paying no attention to the larger consequences for the lives they could lead of the policies which we defend by our values. So, there are numerous examples—that might be one that comes close to it, though; lots of terrible things happened during that relocation business with regard to the destruction of families. But there are examples of policies which simply have been made the "code of a country," and nobody's property was damaged, nobody was personally injured, but those people were simply made second-class citizens. And the notion of public evil has to include that too, if we all participate and let it happen.

AUDIENCE 11: Well, I'm getting confused, 'cause it seems like the point she brings up that says, "There are sometimes that some kinds of... potentially disastrous things have to be done because it's more important..." [...]

SASLOW: Sure. Well, there's no way of evading them. That's why you'll have to have a police and you'll have to have an army as long as the world is imperfect, but the point that's been made over and over again as people have examined these problems is: it is so easy to find one's justifications and legitimations for a course of action that at first seems implausible, and you get taken farther and farther out into excesses which at first you, yourself, haven't thought about and you find ways of justifying them, because otherwise you can't sleep at night or you get ulcers. So I'm pointing out that every time a person gets committed to an important policy, or a group does, it's very sensible to say to oneself, "I probably have put on some blinders. Who could be around who could make independent comment on what I'm doing, who isn't beholden to me, whom I don't control?" Human judgement is simply that imperfect, and nobody ought to value his judgement higher than... to be so high as to be immune from correction.

AUDIENCE !!: So only a person that [*unintelligible*] is also gonna have to make a decision anyway...

SASLOW: That's all right.

AUDIENCE 11: His decision-making processes are going to be superior to the experimental consultant.

SASLOW: He may believe that he's capable of making better judgements than a person who is not in such a leadership position, but the rest of us have no guarantee of that. Very able people have made the most extraordinary fallible judgements. We have to have a right to monitor the consequences, and he has got to be willing to listen or we've got to get rid of him. In some way, that's stops having him be a leader. You're quite right about the fact that a person won't take leadership responsibility unless there's some freedom of action, and that's one of the problems in modern large-scale organization in societies—if you put too many kinds of regulations around a person that you give managerial responsibility to, he sees himself as having no chance to exercise his own autonomy, and if he's a capable person, that's one of his major satisfactions in using his ability. So it's, again, a very fine line to tread, isn't it? How do you use people's abilities as leaders and as followers without these various abuses happening to which we all seem to be subject? And I think that what we have to do is to pay attention to those students of the subject who carry on these ingenious studies which indicate that it's possible for groups to function and yet not to be so arrogant and so injurious, but it's only by this constant awareness of imperfection and this interaction between decision and consequence through feedback. [*pauses and tries to start again but is interrupted*] We have our instruments...

AUDIENCE 12: This is not a great example but let's take... let's say Daniel Ellsberg. He had the... had the... [...] that he does today, in 1962, and he was a low-level state department official and they're deciding on sending additional aid to Vietnam. Well, do you think that would have... or it would have been a group of the low-level officials, and they said, "Well, let's ask what some of them young Turks think about it." You know, they say, "Well, you're overinterpreting... overreacting to the [...]." Well, I don't see how talking could sway into really radically altered.

SASLOW: I mean, there's no guaran—[*AUDIENCE 12 tries to keep talking*] I mean there's no guarantee that the persons who have the power would listen to somebody who's an outsider and has less experience than they. Well, there isn't any such guarantee. On the other hand, we have instance after instance on the terrible period we went through between the two world wars when there was *lots* of information available from people just as capable as the Chamberlain cabinet, and they just had no access. So it's no use worrying about such situations

that are so complicated that nothing can be done; there are lots of situations where lots can be done. Now... [to next questioner] you haven't had a chance.

AUDIENCE 13: [*unintelligible*] concept of evil. This is a theological based on our [...] Christian beliefs. How can our concept of evil be the same as, let's say, the liberation of the Chinese and Japanese in [...]. Somebody with a culture that's fully different from our own. [SASLOW starts to interrupt but AUDIENCE 13 keeps talking, partially unintelligible] [...] vocabulary. Is there any other term we would suggest it would be used [...].

SASLOW: That's an interesting question. It's been discussed in writings on the subject, and over and over again people have sought for other terms, and this one keeps on coming up despite its unsatisfactoriness for, among others, the reason that you have mentioned. A society like China's may value, for example, conformity and submission to the collectivity far more than some other, and you wonder how could two societies that differ very much in that regard agree on what is evil? And that's probably why you have to go to this higher-level notion which DuBois tried to put forward, that as you look back on these events, most people don't seem to have any trouble saying, "Well, it was wrong to coerce in this or that particular way or to take people's lives away." Well, if that would apply to all conceivable instances, I can't tell you, but the alternative has turned out to be a series of not only philosophical but theological disputes, which have gone on for centuries with no exit except in some such form as situational ethics, which doesn't seem to satisfy a lot of people either. [*chuckles*] I don't know how to answer that question. So I've given a pragmatic definition of the term using the examples which most of us know about through our own reading in history, and I doubt that I could do any better. Is that... I was going to ask you? There's... well, will *that* kind of question come up in one or other of the exercises of the conference? I thought it would.

WOLFE: [*in background*]: I think it will. 'Course, I was toying myself with whether we should go back to the [...] this morning that those...

SASLOW: [*quietly*] No.

[WOLFE keeps talking in background, unintelligible, with SASLOW making affirmative or negative remarks]

SASLOW: Well, you remember how difficult this turned out to be for Plato. When he wrote *The Republic*, he started out with a simple question which came up at a symposium, which is a dinner with wine and discussion, and somebody said, "What is justice?" And before he'd answered the question, he'd written a book, and in order to decide what is justice, he had to

reorganize society totally and to have a philosopher-king. I guess—no, he couldn't be a poet, he had a dictator who ran the society, and justice was what he decided was your need and your due. [*chuckling*] So this, the question that you've raised, goes back to 2300 years [*chuckles*]... to the 5th century B.C. [*to AUDIENCE 14*] Yeah?

AUDIENCE 14: So you talked about the risks of bad decision-making [...], but you also mentioned at the beginning [...] the whole society [...] discussing ways [*the rest is unintelligible*].

SASLOW: Well, if our society could be persuaded to take that chance. That would be an interesting way for it to move. You're not, I think, correct entirely when you say that in a number of these episodes of mass social destruction, such as what we did to several hundred thousand Filipinos, everybody in the country knew what was happening. That isn't always true, and that's partly because of communication having certainly been, at that time, markedly selective and distorted by the media that—well, like the newspapers and so forth—a lot of people had no idea what was happening.

[*AUDIENCE 14's response is inaudible*]

SASLOW: Well, if you read some of the things published by the protagonists of the slave system in the South, they never des... those kinds of defenses didn't describe the horrors which a person like Frederick Douglass described from his own personal experience. Know that I don't think there's ever been a time when this kind of behavior has been described in its fullness. It's been hinted that people have objected to the rules that we made for them when we dehumanized them and treated them as if they weren't quite allowed to be human beings, so regrettable episodes of *excess* are occasionally mentioned, but the major policy may, in no way, be portrayed as as cruel as the Nazi one was, although Stalin labor camps, or what we've done in Vietnam—that's rarely the case. That almost always comes out later, and is one of the best arguments for the kind of unfettered journalism which often seems so distasteful, because it's sensational to many of us, that led to the Watergate thing being cracked. It's better to have people like that around making noise even if they're wrong a good part of the time or they behave in ways persons in positions of power think are tasteless and ungracious, than to have to have them beg for permission to describe only parts of the scene. Most of what we know now would never have come out any other way. Now, again, if there's a historian here who probably could help me, I wonder if there's ever been a time when unjust policies to victimize groups have been fully described in their cruelty, their devaluation of human beings, their terror, their barbarity... I don't... [*audience member says something inaudible*] Hmm? [*audience member says something inaudible*] I mean, that might be an example of detailed description.

AUDIENCE 15: How about the tiger cages in South Vietnam?

SASLOW: That's part of what was done—not the whole thing, but, you know, there were other things that both the South Vietnamese and we did. I don't know where there's a full description, but pieces come out from time to time. Have you read the thing—the “Winter Soldier” business that was published by Vietnamese, and some reports by surgeons in Tokyo who treated Vietnamese war casualties and heard what they did? Well, here and there is a piece somebody begins to try to put together years later to describe what happened, but at the time it's going on, I just don't know of any complete description. I repeat, I may not know.

AUDIENCE 16: I didn't think this couldn't be because the victims. [...] and then you wouldn't believe there might be victims and therefore [...].

SASLOW: Yeah, nobody would believe 'em. [*chuckles*] Mrs. Hirsch.

[HIRSCH (*name unconfirmed*)]: At some point in a child's life when you start training him, [...] that enables him to stand up against authority or against the group [...].

SASLOW: So when he becomes a part of a group, I suppose. You'd like to see that done in nursery school for example. I imagine there are opportunities quite early to stand up for oneself while not harming others avoidably and so on.

[HIRSCH]: Or to stand up for somebody else's [...]

SASLOW: Or to stand up for somebody else, or for what the group, as a whole, is dedicated to. If it's a playtime, it's playtime. It's naptime, it's naptime. It's school time, it's school time. And not to be upset because you are a nonconformist. I think that could be rewarded quite early... as against our usually paying no attention. Well?

AUDIENCE 17: Yes, you mentioned—well, you brought to our attention the fact that the human being seems to have the built-in ability to dehumanize themselves [...]

SASLOW: Yeah.

AUDIENCE 17: [*inaudible*]

SASLOW: No.

[AUDIENCE 17 keeps speaking off microphone, while SASLOW disagrees]

AUDIENCE 17: What gestures or ideas do you have to combat that [...]

SASLOW: Well, a nurse often tells a surgeon, "Look, you gotta talk to that patient." [chuckle] Feedback from somebody who isn't involved in the same way. I guess the thing I'd like to emphasize over and over again is that anything that we do a good deal of, and anything that we get satisfaction from, and anything that we develop competence in tends to blind us to imperfections in how we do it and to the impact of the way we do it on other people, so that we often act with the best of intentions and with lots of competence, but we harm people because we haven't been able to take into account the things that only they can give us because they see the world through different eyes. I don't know of any... I don't know of any way around that.

[multiple audience members start talking at once]

AUDIENCE 17: It's really just that you should consider it your own moral imperative to inform the others.

SASLOW: Sure.

AUDIENCE 17: Giving feedback and also to [...].

SASLOW: Yeah, that would be nice. The freest human relationships are like that.

AUDIENCE 18: Students have a right to improve their situations [...] don't they? As long as they're not in a futile [?] position or anything.

SASLOW: So? Why not? [pauses but continues when the person doesn't have a response] Students should improve everything. [laughter] Yeah.

[question is inaudible]

SASLOW: Yeah.

AUDIENCE 19: [still partially unintelligible] [...] the consequences of that [...] in public [...] to confuse society, and [...] conform to some [...] I think there should be an otherness of something.

SASLOW: There should be a what?

[inaudible response]

SASLOW: You mean with better standards or definitions on what will turn out to be evil?

AUDIENCE 19: Yeah, 'cause if you trying to support others, this is different [...] concept from [...] as they said in China [...] *[inaudible]*

SASLOW: Well, here's how I would look at that: at the present time, 2300 years of effort, and somewhat less than that within the field of theology than of philosophy, haven't led to effective ways of defining what is morally good and what is morally wrong or evil. And when you face a problem that is that difficult, often a helpful thing to do is to point to specific examples and say, "Can we all agree that, say, what was done to the American Indians we don't want to have happen again? What was done to the Blacks in America we don't want to have happen again. What was done in the recent war in Vietnam, and so on, we don't want to have happen again." If we could agree on a few instances of that kind, one thing, which it seems often possible to do, is to test some, now, new policy by, "Is it gonna turn out like that?" Or, "Have we even raised that question?" And that would be a kind of pragmatic way of trying to anticipate the large-scale moral and humanitarian consequences of a new decision without your having to develop a theory that is so clear-cut that it encompasses all the possibilities.

Apparently we have not been able to do that, and I would think it very unwise for us all to say, "Well, we have to sit back and wait until maybe X years hence; some bright people will come to an agreement on a code of ethics and morals which everybody will find persuasive." I think when I said that things have become clear to us afterward, I meant to say that, at least in the instances of a number of the things that various groups have done to each other, there is large agreement throughout the world that this was a violation of human dignity and the rights of human beings to be human, and I think that that is as good a guide as any that we have a present time, and it's a very powerful one. If we had only asked ourselves, "Are we doing things in Vietnam like what we regard as dehumanizing people, and brutalizing them, and maiming and killing them?" the answer to stop would have been much easier. We never asked those questions.

AUDIENCE 19: [...] we don't really need permission, again [...]

SASLOW: You mean every situation will be new.

AUDIENCE 19: [*unclear*] Don't give it permission [?]*—our country—our power 'cause they will come but they won't [?] come with the war.*

SASLOW: You mean ultimately, maybe.

AUDIENCE 19: Yeah, yeah. [...]

SASLOW: And so are you saying that when that time comes, all these decisions will be simpler?

AUDIENCE 19: [...] We won't have any countries [*SASLOW hums in agreement*] but we'll have [...], Russia, and [...] "...Who are you? You [...] your country?"

SASLOW: And so?

AUDIENCE 19: I don't know.

[*SASLOW chuckles while AUDIENCE 19 continues speaking in background*]

SASLOW: You don't like that idea of "one world," huh? [*pauses*] I don't either. [*laughs*] Well, I should stop.

WOLFE: I just want to thank you for speculating here and being along with us today on the difficulty any of us, at least in my field, has in trying to address any one of the disciplines in which you've served: neurosurgery, physiology, or psychiatry, but we think we'd like to give you high marks. With the permission of our colleagues, we'll give you a *summa cum laude* in the fields of political science, history, and communications. We'd probably hang some others on you, but there isn't time for you, since you have to be at the medical at two o'clock, to really summarize the high quality and praise we really feel towards your contribution in starting this conference. We'd like to add that, you know, we've all benefited from the energy crisis in many ways, we're using local resources entirely this year for the All-University Conference. And I'd like just to remind you before you go of the coming events.

My own seminar in American government and foreign affairs will be open to anyone, besides the class, that wants to come, on February 5th from two to four in this room. On February 6th, Professor Franz Langhammer will be meeting—I think here in this room also, Franz—to discuss German writers in exile in World War II. On February 12th from two to four, a reading of "In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer" by a cast of the faculty under the direction of Asher Wilson, our Theatre Arts Department hit, will also be held in this room. On the following day, February

13th, from twelve to two, Michael Reardon, associate professor of history, will speak on the general subject of interpretation of the French Resistance in terms of the film *Le Pitié et la Chagrin* [*Le Chagrin et la Pitié*], which is going to be shown here on days which you can find in the *Vanguard* supplement. I won't go through all those days, but we do commend both the speech of Professor Reardon on the 13th and his discussion of the movie and the movie itself. February 19th from one to two, Professor Wrench of psychology will comment on the film again, and on February 20th from 12 to two there'll be a showing of the film *Obedience* with a panel discussion following, by Professors Murch, Maynard, and Roger Jennings. Finally, on February 22nd and 23rd, there'll be a production of *Caligula* by the PSU Theater Arts Department in Shattuck auditorium. So, in the name of energy and of... in our name, public evil and private responsibility, we wish you all a happy day and hope that you'll come back and join in these deliberations from now on until they're finished. Thank you very much.

[*applause; program ends*]