

## **Transcription of Jonathan Webber Talk at the GTU, February 20<sup>th</sup>**

I have a difficult subject to talk about. What I want to start off by telling you is it is not; I'm going to tell you what I'm not going to talk about. I am not going to take you on a guided tour; what you will see when you get off your tour bus and you walk around Auschwitz for your statutory two hours and a half or three hours and a half. I have taken students there for a whole week. I'm not going to do that. I want to do something a bit more analytical and try to give you a sense of the problematic of present day Auschwitz in a way which I hope will be accessible so, what I'm going to do is show you a lot of photographs. These were taken by Chris Schwartz, the photographer who I worked with to produce this book that you've heard about now four times already and who's really outstanding. Unfortunately he's in the Garden of Eden right now, he's enjoying himself in eternal bliss, he passed away about four or five years ago, but his museum lives on, his legacy lives on. I will show you a lot of pictures of his, about fifty photographs, I won't spend too long on the photographs, and then I'd like to say a few more theoretical thoughts about Auschwitz.

It's not exactly an uplifting subject, it's a very challenging and complicated subject, so I apologize in advance. I also want to say that, one other thing I'm not going to do is I'm not going to resort to tear-jerking emotions; I am going to speak plainly about Auschwitz as a reality which exists and which our generation has to deal with. Yes, of course, every inch of Auschwitz is tear-jerking and is emotional, but that's not going to be the style of my presentation this morning. And for that, for those of you who think that the only way to speak about Auschwitz is in that mode, for that, I apologize, not because I'm incapable of speaking in that way, I'm perfectly capable, I think, of getting you all to sit there and start crying, but that's not really what I feel I came here today for so I apologize if you like, for that, speaking about it in a matter-of-fact, analytical, intellectual way.

Auschwitz became a death camp, let me just review the brief historical outline, it became a death camp for Jews in March 1942, after it had already been an internment camp for Polish political prisoners for nearly two years. So from a Polish point of view, it started as a Polish camp, then it became an international and largely Jewish camp nearly two years later. The main gas chambers in Auschwitz-Birkenau, which is a sub-camp of Auschwitz, about two

miles away from the original camp, or Stamlage, opened in the spring of 1943. So, the actual functioning of the gas chambers was only about eighteen months; it stopped, the gas chambers ceased functioning in the autumn of 1944. The camp was liberated in January 1945 by the Red Army, Mr. Stalin's Brigades. By the time that the camp was liberated, in January 1945, about 1 million Jews had been murdered in Auschwitz, of whom 40% were from Hungary. And they arrived in the spring and early summer of 1944. The other 60% came from just about every occupied country in Europe, including Jews from Norway, in the north, and the Greek islands in the south. Auschwitz was the largest German concentration camp and the single largest place of Jewish victimhood during the Holocaust. But of course, at 1 million, it's only 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the 6 million. So, lots of other places too, but this talk is only, today, about Auschwitz itself. Auschwitz was the most international. And there are many testimonies about it because they had probably about 200,000 people who survived. That's because Auschwitz included a very large labor camp, and if you were selected, being strong enough, young enough, and healthy enough, to be selected by the German doctors to supply labor for the German war economy, then you were sent to the lay camp and then you had a chance, a *chance*, a small chance of survival. Statistically about 15% of everyone who entered Auschwitz survived the war. Hence a lot of testimonies about Auschwitz and why Auschwitz became so terribly well-known. Most famous perhaps is the Italian Jew, Primo Levi, and the Hungarian or the Transylvanian Jew, Elie Wiesel.

In addition to about 1 million Jewish deaths, we say about, because not every person who arrived there was in fact registered. Despite tremendous German bureaucracy and systematic nature, how they ran the place. In addition to about 1 million Jewish deaths, we have to note that that accounts for only about 92% of the total, the overwhelming majority, but there is still another 8% which needs to be added in, including 75,000 Ethnic Poles, 75,000 Ethnic Poles, making Auschwitz the largest Polish cemetery in the country, 20,000 Gypsies, 15,000 Soviet prisoners of war, as well as other groups: petty German criminals, homosexuals and Jehovah's Witnesses.

What this lecture is about is the relationship between the Holocaust as a historical event and what's been left behind and what can still be seen at the actual site of Auschwitz. What I want to try and do is to deconstruct the nature of what the present-day visitor actually sees

of Auschwitz. Given the importance of the place as the single, largest single site where the Holocaust took place, the question of just how and in what way present-day Auschwitz can suitably symbolize the Holocaust, as is often said, or act as a representation of it is, therefore, a rather important and even fundamental issue. It's a very complicated place, and it has a very complex memory and the challenge for our generation is really what to do with the place, what should be done, what can be done, what needs to be done there, and so on.

This photograph you see in front of you is not from Auschwitz, it's from another camp altogether. It's about 250 miles east of Auschwitz, and it's the place known as Belzec, not to be confused with Bergen-Belsen, which is another camp altogether in Northern Germany. Belzec, in what is now South-Eastern Europe, was the third largest death camp for Jews during the Holocaust, Auschwitz being the first at about 1 million deaths, Treblinka being the second at about 750,000 or 800,000 deaths, and Belzec at number three at around 450,000 or 475,000. Now the interesting difference between Belzec and Auschwitz is that there is nothing left at Belzec whatever. The whole killing of half a million Jews was done in about nine or ten months during the year 1942, and when that task had been completed the Germans demolished everything, all the watch towers, all the barracks, all the barbed wire, and destroyed every sign of that there had ever been mass murder at the place, nothing left there at all. Now, in 2004, the American Jewish Committee put up a very brand-new monument there, which I am not going to show you today, this subject is so large I can only scratch the surface, we'd be here till supper-time, 6 pm, 8 pm, 10 pm if I was to try to tell you everything that needs to be said, let alone everything I could say, but I just want to start off with this picture of Belzec because it contrasts very strongly, of course, with that. There are problems, that the visitor to Auschwitz is so fixed on what there is, and the clutter of what's left behind, that by focusing on this "Arbeit Macht Frei" on the gates, on the barracks, you are focusing on what's there rather than on the nothingness of what was. I mean, how are the viewers, or visitors, to an authentic Holocaust site different from visitors to Belzec, at least before the new monument was put there, as opposed to visiting Auschwitz, that's a question. I'm incidentally not going to have time to do more than ask questions today, not to offer you cheap, simple, formulaic answers, but it's an important question. When I bring my students to Auschwitz, what I always do is take them first to Belzec, and what I did just now, is to take you to Belzec through the medium of a

photograph before we look at Auschwitz. Is the sheer physicality of Auschwitz telling us how to interpret the site, or is it, in a sense, misleading us because we're too focused, perhaps, it's a question, not a statement, on the physicality of what's been left behind rather than on the nothingness that there is in Belzec.

I'm going to divide my remarks about these photographs into two parts; the first part I want to show you is what is left behind in Auschwitz today falls into two categories; things which roughly, very roughly, are as they were during the war, and things which really very roughly, were not. So, what we're looking at here is something which was there during the war. This is the entry to Auschwitz Stamlage, Auschwitz Number 1, "Arbeit Macht Frei," "Work Makes You Free," a cynical slogan, which you have at virtually every Nazi concentration camp, not just Auschwitz. And as you know the sign was stolen by a bunch of Neo-Nazis in Sweden not so long ago, and when that happened a number of Jewish leaders stood up and said, "Ah, this is the symbol of the Holocaust." *The* symbol of the Holocaust. Well, all right, they are entitled to their opinions. I think the theft of "Arbeit Macht Frei" was not a nice thing to do, and so the Museum has to make a copy of this and now there is a copy up there and not an original, because the original was sawed into three pieces and we don't yet know how it's going to be stuck back together again or if we keep the copy there and not the original. Incidentally I say "we" because I feel so very deeply involved with Auschwitz as a place. It became a Museum in 1947 but never had a Board, never had a Board until Webber came along in 1989 and went to the Polish Prime Minister and said, "Don't you think we should have a Board?" They said, "What a good idea, and would you like to become a founding member of the Board?" And I said, "Oh, well, that's very nice." So twenty years later, I'm still a member of that Board and we have a lot of discussions about all kinds of things that should be done there.

So let me lead you into this subject by showing you a few things which, if you like, are still there, which were there during the war. First one of these is the pill box, which is where the roll calls took place, all the prisoners were let out there and had to be counted very meticulously morning and evening, make sure everybody was still present and correct, in the best German way, the pill box man there had to control all that. And in parentheses, let me just drop the thought into your mind now, "Is that pill box original?" Yes it is, no it isn't.

Complicated, there is no little...sometimes you go to Greece and you see a little thing where they show you, "This Ancient Greek Temple, the first two feet off the ground is original, and the rest has been added by our competent archaeologists and art historians." There's nothing like that in Auschwitz. Well, of course, wood like that would rot; you can't leave wood like that out in a heavy Polish winter for 60 years and still expect it to survive, of course it's been restored. They've used old bits of wood, but more or less they've done it faithfully and they've relied on war-time photographs and it's been very carefully restored. Is it a copy? No. Is it an original? No. What is it? Well, I leave that for you to decide. It's complicated. Are the barracks original? Yes. Have they been restored? Yes. Have they used original bricks to restore the barracks? Yes. But if you start to bring your microscope out and start looking at things, all kind of things which a present-day conservationist would turn his or her nose up at, because standards of conservation have changed a lot in these sixty years and you have to remember that this whole place was built provisionally for a particular military or, should we say, genocidal purpose. And it wasn't intended to last like Gothic cathedrals were intended to last for centuries. So, the whole conservation strategy, philosophy, and technology had to be invented on the spot.

This is, of course, the entry gate to Birkenau. It's said there were, that Auschwitz had 40 sub-camps, Birkenau was number two. Some people get confused whether it's Auschwitz or Auschwitz-Birkenau, whether it's just Birkenau. The Germans called it Auschwitz with-a-hyphen Birkenau, which means a sub-camp of Birkenau, so number three, which was Monowitz, would be Auschwitz-Monowitz, or Monowitza in Polish. This is the entry gate to Auschwitz to Birkenau, in quite good condition, actually. It never had a sign up saying, "Auschwitz," I'm sorry, "Arbeit Macht Frei." You can actually read quite a lot of Holocaust memoirs, which tell you they got off the train, walked for a mile, and passed a sign saying "Arbeit Macht Frei" and said "Auschwitz-Birkenau." Well, those survivors may well have been influenced by books they've read or films they've seen. As far as we know, there never was an "Arbeit Macht Frei" sign here, even though Birkenau was intended as a massive labor camp which was supposed to accommodate anything up to 100,000 people, it's a major city. Here you can get a sense of its size. This is only, for those of you who have never been to Auschwitz, this is only probably, I would say, about 20% of the size of the camp, I mean it's really just a small, maybe even less than 20%, you can see in this picture.

The wooden barracks in the foreground were stables for horses which were improvised to house prisoners who had just arrived to Auschwitz, it was an area known as quarantine, and they've been meticulously restored in the last twenty years. The chimneys which are in the background there are nothing sinister, they belong to the heating system of the brick barracks which lay beyond. And if you really look carefully at the top left-hand corner of this picture you can see a half-barrack. And those of you who are interested to know, although a number of the guides will never tell you this, there is a half-barrack there, and why is there only a half-barrack there, it is literally half the length of the others, and the reason is, where is the other half of the barrack? Yes, you guessed it. It's in the United States, Washington, D.C. Holocaust Memorial Museum. They wanted something authentic to show the visitors. So, they came along to Auschwitz, and said "We'd like to have a barrack please." And the Auschwitz Museum people said, "No you can't. We are obliged under law to preserve everything that we have, you cannot do it." So the Mayor said, "What if we offered to contribute a small sum of money to help you with some of your things." And they said, "Well..." Eventually, they agreed to cut the barrack in half, left the half there, and took the other half to Washington. You can see it if you go there, it's quite interesting. But anyway, there it is.

But otherwise these are "original" barracks, they've been restored and conserved. What is the theory and philosophy behind conservation? I'm very interested in this whole question. Is it to be preserved for the next 50 years, 100 years, 200 years, 500 years? You have to get your objectives clearly in mind, because if you need a technology or a methodology, you need to know what you are trying to achieve. Who knows? As I said, I am coming with the questions rather than the answers. You can cross-examine me a bit more if you want to later on. Anyway, excellent photography. Some of the photographs are a bit sentimental perhaps, but they are good. This is probably how it might have looked on an ordinary winter's day, the sub-camps of Birkenau being screened off, electrified wire fences. If you managed to get out of one sub-camp and want to talk to your wife in the other sub-camp, you might have a hell of a job to do that, because you can see, the moment you step out of your sub-camp, there is a guy out there in the watch tower, who is not going to be amused by your attempt just to wander about between the sub-camps.

Here you can see a typical sub-camp the central building is standard brick-built prisoner barrack and the right-hand building is the kitchen barrack. The prisoners did get food, not a lot of it, not very nourishing, not very tasty, and not enough to go around, but there was food. Why? Because in Germany, *Ordnung muss sein*, and there has to be rules and regulations and in a concentration camp the prisoners have to be fed, they never said how much they have to be fed. But there you are, there's a kitchen there. The building on the left-hand side is neither a kitchen nor is it a prisoner barrack, it is a latrine where the prisoners can spend thirty seconds in the morning over a hole in the ground and thirty seconds in the evening over this hole in the ground, and that's their lot for the day. And if you leaked during the day, well, it depends on the guard, on his attitude towards you. He could beat you, shoot you, or he could turn the other way. It depended. Luck, divine protection, who knows.

There are three types of building there, actually quite well-preserved as you can see, gives a good idea of the way in which life, if you like, for the prisoners, was organized. There is a block of the quarantine section with the restored barracks. I mentioned the barbed wire here because a lot of people come back and they brought their wire clippers and they say, "I've got six inches of Auschwitz barbed wire, it's my souvenir of the visit. Or maybe they did get it in Auschwitz because it would not be original wartime. Barbed wire, you see, the problem about barbed wire is, it rusts, and you keep it up there throughout the winters for sixty-five years, there's going to be nothing left. So this barbed wire is all replaced. So I'm showing you, it's problematic. This is how the camp was, this is the wartime reality, yes it is, no it isn't. The barbed wire is brand new. People want to see barbed wire. I mean, it's very important for people to see barbed wire. They come to Auschwitz, come all the way from Australia to see Auschwitz, all the way from California to Auschwitz, they've got to see barbed wire and watch towers and they've got to take pictures, you know, photographs of this thing. As for the concrete posts, are they original? Very interesting question. There is no technology known how to restore concrete posts, but we commissioned a study and we came up with a technology to restore concrete posts, because if you don't have the concrete posts restored the barbed wire ain't going to stay up there very long. So, the concrete posts, but they are pretty good copies or restored originals. The wire, just in case any of you were wondering, is today not electrified; you can touch the wire and you will not be electrocuted,

so, therefore, what is there today is not precise as it was then, nor I hasten to add... There's a lot of grass there, if it wasn't covered in snow. But there was no grass there, people plucked the grass and ate it, they were rather hungry and they would eat anything they could find.

Inside a quarantine barrack you can see the stabling for the horses, requisition for prison. Why did they use horses' stable architecture? Because..I'm not a historian, I have to be very careful about what I say in front of the historians. Some people say that Auschwitz was never intended for what it later became, and there's this whole discussion between intentionalists and functionalists; did Hitler intend it from the start, or did it evolve? Well, the whole business about the history of Auschwitz shows an enormous number of arguments in favor of the functionalist point of view; Auschwitz evolved. That's a two-hour lecture, which I cannot give you today: "What is the evidence from Auschwitz for the functionalist point of view?" But I can allude to the fact that they didn't have any of their plans in position, so they had to use architectural designs for some other area of their wartime economy, namely stabling for the horses. And horses were very important in World War II because they didn't have fuel enough and they didn't have everything militarized enough, horses were pulling the heavy loads, so they just put up these stables and then tossed in these three-tiered bunks and said this is a prisoner barrack.

Yes, the railway, very important, the Holocaust cannot be understood without railways; Rolf Hilberg, Oliver Sholem, I think. He said that you cannot understand the Holocaust without looking at railway timetables; where the trains were coming from, how they were scheduled, the use of rolling stock, railways are absolutely critical here. As you can see, the railway leading straight inside the camp; here is an example of functionalist development of Auschwitz. That railway spur in Birkenau, as you can tell from the guard house at the back there, was added only in 1944, so quite late. Birkenau had existed for at least a year before that railway spur was there, because the Germans in March invaded Hungary. And according to all their sources, the Jews of Hungary were going to be a rich captioned area, 700,000 to be murdered in their Final Solution Program. And the decision was taken to bring the whole lot to Auschwitz. They got 450 to Auschwitz, 450,000, that is, brought them by train. That's why the Auschwitz victims, 40% of them are Hungarian, such a colossal... So they brought the spur right into the camp and it's at the end of the railway line, maybe 100 yards from



behind where the photograph was taken, the gas chambers were located, so you were brought to the door, didn't have to walk very far in order to get murdered. People were brought in families and so, therefore, those who were selected by the doctors on this track on the right-hand side of the photograph, selected for the labor camp, this would be the place they would have last have seen their mothers, their fathers, their uncles, their aunts, their children, their pregnant wives. Pregnant wives, it was a dangerous thing to come to Auschwitz, they were not interested in pregnant women. So this is a place of tremendous emotional importance for survivors, and is referred to a lot in the memoir literature.

A gas chamber. I had the job of putting a caption to this photograph in the Museum, and I thought, "What caption do I give this picture?" This has been restored, that is another story, but it is the original gas chamber in Stamlage, not in Birkenau, we'll come to Birkenau once in a moment. So I found this following passage in a book written by Rafael Scharf, a Polish Jew, used to live in London, whom we were all very fond of, he died a few years ago, and in another context entirely this is what he wrote and I decided to use that text for the caption for this picture, it's in the book. "Mommy, when they kill us, will it hurt?" "No, my dearest, it will not hurt, it will take only a minute," Rafael Scharf says. Yes, it took only a minute, but it is enough to keep us awake until the end of time. That's my caption to this photograph. Nothing much more to say. Well, there is a lot to say, ok.

The bodies were then cremated, following standard German military custom, and in fact, we should be aware that cremation was very popular in 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany. And so, there was not this sense of horror about cremation that you get amongst Orthodox Jews or amongst Catholics even; it was absolutely astounding. But they take the ashes and they would simply dump them in the rivers, spread them on the fields, or in this case just drop them into the nearest pond. This pond is not known precisely, but let's say about 50,000 people are in this pond in the middle of Birkenau. These are the pictures I wanted to show you of places in Auschwitz which really functioned during the wartime.

Let's have a look at another aspect of this, Birkenau in ruins. You see, when the Germans realized Soviet troops were very near and were about to attack them, of course Berlin didn't want to tell them very clearly that they were losing the war, but news filtered through. The

decision was taken to stop the gassings, in the autumn of '44, and to destroy the evidence of the crimes, as they had done in Belzec, as we saw a few minutes ago. However, the Soviet advance was much more rapid than High Command really informed people, and so the destruction of the gas chambers didn't proceed really very successfully, and, therefore, what you've got today is ruins, ruins of the gas chambers. Wow, here as part of the wartime realities of Auschwitz, you actually have the visual, clear, architectural evidence of the attempt by the murderers to conceal the evidence of the crime. Of course these ruins are terribly important, I mean, as part of the message of what this place is all about. That was the crematorium, this is the gas chamber, one of the four gas chambers in Birkenau, covered in snow. I think, for the sake of modesty, we covered it in snow, but for the sake of reality, you know, I got Chris to take a picture in summertime, so you can see, but not the gas chamber, but we've got this one here. That's the undressing room, you can see the steps at the back, everything was done underground, the people would be led down the steps into the undressing room. As you can see, from the conservation point of view, very difficult, because if you don't restore these brick supports, which are underground, the whole thing will fall in. Holocaust deniers have a lovely time, coming along the same world you're reconstructing Auschwitz, it's very problematic.

I won't talk anything about steps, if you're interested in steps down to the undressing room, we can take them during questions. But let me just say, that the existence of steps is part of the evidence from the functionalist point of view, that Auschwitz, this was not built as a gas chamber. The architectural plan provided for a ramp, not steps. And as you know, the difference between a ramp and steps is that steps, you need to be alive to walk down the steps, but a ramp, you can be dead, a corpse on a trolley of some kind and be wheeled down the ramp. Very interesting, but I'm not going to sidetrack myself into functionalism there, but still the steps were there, used during the war for people to walk to their deaths you see, down these steps.

Another kind of ruins, which are in Birkenau as well, are ruins which are there, I would say, not because of any intention from the Germans to destroy the evidence of the crime, but simply, we have to say, the passage of time. I am trying analytically to distinguish these categories. These are ruins which are created because of the passage of time. Here you can

see no more barbed wire, this is a part of the camp that not many visitors actually see, so they can't be bothered to put the barbed wire back up again, but you naturally see from this photograph that barbed wire just disintegrates if you don't do anything.

Here you can see the ruins of those big brick barracks and the heating chimneys, and here a better close-up of the heating chimney, and our friend the half-barrack there in the distance, you see. This was ordinary heating chimneys to heat; if they didn't put any heating in at all, of course the heating was insufficient, not enough fuel, not long enough time, but if you didn't put any heating in there at all everybody just froze to death in 20 minutes, so obviously you had to provide some heating to prevent that happening. After all, it was very important to the Germans to keep these people alive, because it was business for them. You know that the Jews were being sent to these factories around about and the factories would pay the SS per head so many *Reichsmark* per day, and the money would go, not of course to the poor Jew who had to supply his labors, but of course to the coffers of the SS. The SS ran this as a business, so obviously they wanted their workers to be alive, rather than dead, even though they didn't feed them enough. But it didn't matter, because however many people dropped dead from exhaustion or starvation or hunger or whatever it might be, there were thousands, tens of thousands more folks whom they could ship in to take their places.

I think that's the last of the ruins photographs, beautifully taken by Chris Schwartz, I'm sure you would agree. There you have a ruin in the foreground and a very good, healthy-looking brick barrack in the background. Comes the question, do you want me to restore the barrack in the foreground to look like the barrack in the background, or do you want me to keep the barrack in the foreground as a contrast to the barrack in the background so that you can actually tell the story about the passage of time? A question, right, I'm not going to give you the answer to that, but you can see everything, very problematic, very complicated. What are we doing it for anyway?, you might ask. Why not let the whole place fall into the ground. That's a very interesting question, but I want to tackle that in this way.

What does the existence of this site actually mean? I don't know, I sat down and wrote out for you four propositions, very basic propositions. What do these places mean? Number 1: it's important because by going there you get a strong sense that the genocide actually

happened there. Ok, it really was true, it happened, you get there and you get this, very good. Secondly, by the sense of physical place, helps people understand more about the realities. You walk along those railway lines, and you get a sense of the terrified victims being led to their deaths and walking down those steps, I mean, you can develop an empathy for the victims. Fair enough. Thirdly, you can start thinking about how you want to commemorate them, and maybe you prepare a bunch of flowers or you bring along some prayers or a book of songs, or observe a moment of respectful silence, or whatever it might be. You develop perhaps a strategy to remember them, you don't do it in your daily round when you are sitting here in California, but when you're over there, you feel you ought to do something, ok. Fourthly, there are inscriptions, monuments with inscriptions, and somehow maybe the inscriptions could move you and could make a strong impression. Those are four simple propositions, none of them are any good at all. And, because I want to be brief in this lecture, not keep you here till 10 pm, I'm just going to give you very simple reasons why none of them are any good, even though they sound good.

Ok, first proposition, to become awakened to the reality of the Holocaust. Well, problem with that is, sorry, Auschwitz is only a symbol, *only* a symbol, and if you want to get to the historical reality of what happened you're confusing the symbol with the historical reality and you're not going to get very far. If you only come once in a lifetime for one lousy day trip, how much are you going to learn about the Holocaust by coming to Auschwitz? You're going to stare at these visual exotica that I've been talking about, comparing it with Belzec. You are focusing on what is there rather than meditating on what isn't there, and the nothingness which Auschwitz created. Maybe you should focus on the nothingness, maybe Belzec is a better place, maybe, I am asking a question. Maybe you should focus on the nothingness and the incomprehensibility of genocide and the incomprehensibility of the Holocaust. Let's just have this picture back up again. Oh yes, I mean, the nothingness may be helpful, I don't know. I'm only asking a question.

Secondly, developing an empathy for the victims, very nice. But if you focus on Auschwitz, you can't get very far either, because you have to remember all the horrific experiences that the victims went through before they even set foot in Auschwitz. They were humiliated, they were discriminated against, they were ghettoized, there were random shootings, they had to

suffer life in ghettos, whatever it might have been, imprisonment, torture, being rounded up by the SS, watching your parents being hanged before your eyes, death from hunger or disease, even before you get there. You have this dreadful train ride, where they locked you inside with no toilet facilities and you may have been on the train for a week, midsummer without water, midwinter without proper clothing, etc. So if you're coming to Auschwitz and you're getting an empathy, you are again missing, you are confusing the symbol with reality, very problematic.

Thirdly, personal relationship with the past like saying prayers or lighting a candle. Yes, very nice, but actually there are two things which need to be done in Auschwitz and they don't often sit very well together. One is you need to think up commemorations; how am I going to mourn these guys, how am I going to remember them, what am I going to do about the victims; am I seriously focusing on the victims or, which is what you usually get at a museum, you get bombarded with information, bombarded information information information information. People think that's all people want when they come to museums, information. You know, you got your headphones, you got your guidebooks, you got your guide speaking to you, people, information, people saying how many people died in this gas chamber, how many people died in that gas chamber. How long was it? People ask how long, how big, how tall. Information. Ok. That's called education nowadays. Fine. Ok. But how do you do, you absorb all this information and do the other half, which is remembrance. And think about, forget about the information, but the people, like you and me, or those and them, who died and what you have to do to deal with that. Ok.

Fourth proposition: monuments. Not true that people will get a lot out of the inscriptions. Why, why is it not true? Because it depends on what kind of person you are. You see, as I've already said, nice to have that in church, but there was all these Poles and Roman Catholics. How are you going to have an inscription that's going to appeal to those guys, and what kind of inscription are you going to put on your monument that's going to be meaningful to a young German? After all, an awful lot of Germans come there too, rightly so. So you've got to have an inscription that's meaningful to Jews and to Germans and to Poles and to Jehovah's Witnesses and to Gypsies, you have to have one inscription, what are you going to do? It's not very easy. Then you're going to have people who know a lot about the subject,

then you're going to have people who know nothing about the subject. You've got Christian pilgrims who are interested in the death of God, or whether God exists after Auschwitz. You've got religious Jews wondering whether God exists for them after Auschwitz. You've got Israeli groups coming and saying "We, from Israel, you see, we have now got a Jewish state." It's a whole kind of different, how are you going to get an inscription that is going to appeal to all these people and the answer is some people will be simply turned off by what you tell them; others are going to be indifferent at the very least.

Who is responsible for this Holocaust, was it God? Was it others? Are we also responsible? Was it them? Was Christianity at fault here? Or maybe Christianity was the victim. Maybe the real cause was the secularization of society, because only, because when society is secularized, is it possible to treat people not in the image of God, which is how religious people are supposed to look at other people, but simply as cogs, as numbers, as units, as "*Stueck*," as they called them in German, "pieces," human beings were known as pieces and, of course, they had lost their names, got their number tattooed on their arm, right? Secularization was the cause of it, and Christianity was the victim, not the perpetrator, the victim. Very complicated subject, this. So, how much of all this should the Museum tell people, and deal with it? Very interesting question.

Let me just put the question to you this way: if you're going to spend one day of your life visiting Auschwitz, how much time do you think you ought to spend listening to information, which you can get on the Internet anyway, or from an encyclopedia or from an instructor in a class, and how much time do you think you should spend sitting on the ground and meditating and being mournful and praying, to use the Jewish expression, to pray for the souls who hover there, who were murdered there? Normally, if you are a religious Jew and you go to a grave, let's say on the anniversary of the death, your job is to say a prayer for the soul of that person, it's your parent, let's say, your grandparent, say a prayer because you believe somehow that soul somehow hovers at the place where buried, or where went to die. So how much time should you do that, doing that? Most people spend zero, some people will spend two percent, at the very most of the time. I think, me, so I'm going to give you, for once, an opinion. I think that you should spend 80% of the time there. If you went to Auschwitz and you spend 80% of the time just sitting on the ground

meditating, I think you'd come away from that place rather differently, that's my personal view, but I'll leave it at that, you may disagree and that's fine, I'm just expressing a point of view. Right, wartime history at Auschwitz Part I is finished, post-war history of Auschwitz, I'll be very brief and I've still got some conclusions so I've got to rattle through all this lot.

Post-war history, I've already said, sorry Shana's already said, 1.4 million visitors per year, this is unbelievable, this is simply unbelievable, one of the most visited sites, and the figures are totally wacky. Now you've got tens of thousands of Japanese, Chinese, South Koreans, the newly wealthy East European Pacific rim people who've got no idea, why were the Jews murdered, what was wrong with the Jews, you've got to start from the, how do you explain to all these people. Half of all the visitors are young people, which is very interesting, they are interested in all of this. But there are so many people in Auschwitz, we count 500 people every 15 minutes in the middle of August, so it's very crowded and this is causing major problems for the organization of the place. We've got to deal with VIPs, you know Bush came, and the President of France came, every Chancellor of Germany comes, Prime Minister of England, so many people come, you've got to look after them and give them a story. Finance very complicated; can't charge. This is a cemetery. Can't charge people to get in; yes, if you want to take a guide, then you should pay for a guide, but otherwise you can't charge. We've got to modernize the exhibitions; the exhibitions have been there for fifty years and they relate to a Communist period and technology was very different, etc.

Conservation I've spoken about a lot, so let me whiz through these pictures now; what's been happening to the place since 1945, an awful lot, so there's really, really, really just a tiny little view. I should just mention here now coming back to this. When they conserved this gas chamber they did it very clumsily; it was done in the 1950s and without any sort of attention to detail you'd now expect as normal and the Auschwitz Museum now today finally admits it. I ran the first conservation conference in Auschwitz in 1993 and they were extremely embarrassed by all the questions we asked. Is that redone, etc., and we finally got them, I got them to put a sign outside this crematorium to admit that it doesn't look quite the way it did, almost similar to the way it did, in the war. But it's complicated, nothing in Auschwitz is simple. This was not built as a gas chamber, it was built as an ammunition dump, and it was converted into a gas chamber. And after the gas chambers in Birkenau

were brought into service in 1943, this was then towards the end of the war not used any more and so what they used it for was as an air-raid shelter, so to which level of reality, past reality, do you restore it back to? Former barracks have been converted, a lot of the former barracks have been converted into Museum spaces, here's a collection of suitcases, these guys were deported there with suitcases and were told to bring their possessions, very problematic because nowadays you get some tourist in there who says, "Hey that's my grandfather's suitcase, I want it." That raises all kinds of problems, I'll tell you more about that if you're interested.

Shoes. It takes roughly, the Auschwitz Museum's got the best conservation laboratory now, one of the very best in Europe. It's been paid for by the Germans, brilliant idea to ask Germans to put in a very, very modern conservation lab and indeed they're conserving shoes at the rate of about three pairs a week. You realize they've got 150,000 pairs of shoes, they'll be at it another 200 years or something, I don't know the math, but it's going to take them a long time. What are you going to do with these, how many shoes? What's your target once again, do you want to conserve all the shoes, some of the shoes, which shoes, women's shoes, children's shoes, men's shoes, bourgeois shoes, workmen's shoes, all of the above, and which numbers, which proportions? Ok, you get the picture. Complicated.

This is a restored crematorium and that's called a cremator, in English, I don't know what you'd call it here. The thing that pushes the body into the oven. The cremator of course is not original in the sense that it was never used in Auschwitz it came from another German camp, what do we do with that? Can they leave it there? We say, "Well, it's just to give you folks an idea of what a cremator might look like." Ok, but they put it there to show the visitors. Webber comes along and says, "Listen, you really do need to develop more of the cemetery of this place, you've got far too much information." So this is one of the destroyed gas chambers and crematoria in Birkenau and they've got all the information on one side and they finally agreed to put up four tombstones. Oh, success, just in honor and memory of the victims. The trouble is, there's no path to get there but there are these four, looks a bit like Stanley Kubrick's film, what's it, 2004, there it is, these four tombstones. What are they, these are tombstone-shaped objects and when you get close to them, all it says is, "In memory of the men and women and children who were murdered here by the Germans in



1943” or whatever it is, and why are there four of them, you’ve got one in Polish, one in Hebrew, one in Yiddish, and one in English.

Ok, this is the only thing in the whole museum at the moment for the last fifty years to show anything about Jewish identity, Jewish prayer shawls, a collection of *talleisim*. Ok, but if you’re Japanese or South Korean you, well even if you’re an American you wouldn’t know what a Jewish prayer shawl is, I mean, it wouldn’t mean anything to you, but that’s all they’ve got to show the kind of people who came there. So the ladies don’t like it because it’s too male; prayer shawls are normally, historically, worn only by men, not by women, etc. They found some photographs, most photographs were pitched when they arrived there, they were searched for all their personal possessions and all their photos were thrown into the fire. They found a few and they put them out on display in Birkenau, and they’ve got brief descriptions, they’ve found out the names and who they are, civil photographs, religious photographs, going to the seaside before the war, uncle Moishe in a wheelchair, I mean, whatever it might be, it’s very moving and they’ve actually got an exhibition of ordinary, vernacular photographs to give back the identity of the people who were stripped of their identity and murdered in Auschwitz; it’s a very interesting modern new exhibition in Auschwitz, so I have to say I’m very proud of that exhibition.

Plaques. Nightmare. I don’t know, Jewish community in Oakland, California decides, “we would like,” maybe not Oakland, California, maybe we will say, Dijon, France, or Szombathelyi in Hungary, or wherever it might be. “We would like to have a plaque in Auschwitz to commemorate our people who were murdered there.” So they have committee meetings, what should the text say, which language should it be in, and then finally they get the present of the local Jewish community together and they all go in a group to Auschwitz and say, “We would like to present you with this plaque in memory of the Jews of our community who were murdered in Auschwitz.” So the director of Auschwitz comes out, offers them all a cup of tea, “Thank you very much for coming.” Where are we going to put this plaque, don’t know, where to put it, where do you want us to put it? They hadn’t thought about it, the Jews hadn’t thought about it. “We made a plaque, we thought it was our duty to make a plaque.” So they’ve got barracks, thousands of these plaques, no idea

what to do with them, no idea where to put them. Very interesting problem. I'm just mentioning problems, not...

Here were some wartime photographs taken by the SS, which are now mounted in the Museum on weather boards to give visitors an idea of what the place looked like. You can see, this is taken at the very spot where these weather boards are, and you can see that here is one picture taken in this very place of Jews waiting to be murdered. It very often happened that the gas chamber was full and sometimes Jews had to wait three or four days for their turn to be murdered and they just had to wait, in this very wood because there was a gas chamber in this very wood, and there they are standing around looking completely confused. To me, that picture symbolizes the meaninglessness and the incomprehensibility of genocide put together. And I like that picture, if I can use that word. You'll notice that the inscriptions below are in three languages, in three blocks, you can see, on the left is in Polish, on the middle is in English, and on the right is in Hebrew. You will never find, even your friend who wrote this article in the front page of the *New York Times*, couldn't bring himself to say, none of these Jews can ever bring themselves to say, thank the Polish authorities for making sure that there are Hebrew inscriptions the length and breadth of Birkenau to confirm and reaffirm the Jewish identity of 92% of the victims. Never found, not even this guy, I have to say, terrible. But I'm very proud of that, because Marek and I wrote these Hebrew inscriptions and the Museum very happy to put them up.

These pictures are terribly important, taken by prisoners themselves. The only prison, the only photographs known to be taken by prisoners of the German concentration camp system. They smuggled the film in, they took the pictures surreptitiously. They are pictures of burning the bodies in the open air. Why are they burning bodies in the open air? Because the crematoria were full, the gas chambers had enough space that day, but the crematoria were full; they could only work so many bodies per hour. So they're burning the bodies in the open air, and on the left-hand picture naked women being pushed into the next gas chamber, the nearest gas chamber here. Then the film, they took the pictures surreptitiously, a very dangerous thing to do, and smuggled the film out of the camp and got it developed and then found it again after the war. Amazing pictures and we've got them on display here. Very good.

Oh, and then you get the President of the State of Israel, and you see, he comes along with his great monument, saying “My sorrow is constantly before me” written in small letters, and in big letters, you can’t miss it, it says “Chaim Herzog, President of the State of Israel,” very nice. Well, Poland is very worried about being accused of anti-Semitic or not being nice enough to the Israelis, so they had to put that plaque up. It is the only plaque which is donated by a foreign group, which is up there, and it’s outside block 27 in Auschwitz I, because there is an exhibition in there, of specifically Jewish victimhood in Auschwitz. Very problematic, all this stuff. Railway lines have been restored. Mr. Spielberg wanted to film in there and the whole story, I never had time. I’m going to dash these, because I want to get to my conclusions. I am now, I think, on fifty-two minutes.

Problem of visitors leaving candles behind. They, like visitors everywhere, “We came all the way from Australia, and we want to light a candle for our grandpa Moishe, who we think was murdered in this barrack, so we light a candle, we’ll say a psalm, we’ll say a kaddish, or whatever, and we leave it there.” It’s a wooden barrack, right. I’m a smoker, I’m not allowed to smoke anywhere, but these Americans come along and leave candles in these wooden barracks, can you imagine. Do you know how much money it costs to conserve that barrack, and they leave these candles there. So you’ve got to pay guards to walk around every twenty minutes and take these damn things away and put the candles out; you get the picture, all right? And then we’ve got film crews. Film crews came along and said, “Oh, we want to do a film, we’re very important film directors and we want to do films.” So they came, this is the latrine barrack, or one of the latrine barracks, this is where you have your thirty seconds in the morning and thirty seconds in the evening, don’t ask about toilet paper or anything like that, forget it. The sign up says “Verhalte dich ruehig, keep quiet.” Not in very polite German, but it just says, “keep quiet.” So the film crew “restored” it, only they got it wrong and it’s not right, it looks too sanitized. They got permission to film inside that barrack so they got inside that barrack and got their paintbrush out and did that. Goodness, what do you do? How do you scrape that off and restore it to what it was before? I mean, the whole thing’s a nightmare.

The problem of religion, this belongs to my conclusions and I do want to say something about conclusions. The problem of religion. This is a building which was built for the Commandant at Birkenau, never actually used, but it was empty after the war, so the people of Birkenau...Yes, Birkenau's a village, that's why it's called Birkenau, incidentally, they owned all the land on which the camp was built and the land was requisitioned from them by the Germans, and after the war was over when the Germans were driven out, obviously they didn't get their land back, because there was this damn Birkenau camp built all over their land. And then came a Communist government that says, "We don't believe in doing any of that, we're now Communists, you see." And then came the Museum, which says, "Actually this is a historical place." So, until now, which is 2011, they still don't have their land back. And the villagers who live in Birkenau come regularly to our council, and start saying, "What are we going to do about all these visitors and all their tour buses? And we still don't have our land. And we want a place to exercise our dogs, at the very least we want to have a church." Ok, we gave them a church, they're religious Catholics, why not give them a church? So along come the Jews and say, "You can't have a church here." You can't have a church here, why not? "Because this is a Jewish place." A Jewish place? But what about the people of Birkenau? "Well, we don't know about them, we couldn't care about them, and moreover," they say, "the Poles helped the Germans to murder the Jews," which is, of course, complete rubbish. The Poles themselves were being imprisoned in Birkenau and, moreover, any Pole who was living within a certain radius of the camp was ordered to leave anyway, because the whole zone, 40 sq. km zone, special zone, nobody was allowed to live there. Very problematic.

Then along comes your friend Elie Wiesel. Now, Elie Wiesel was invited to the commemoration in 1996, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the pogrom in Kielce. Kielce is a town in Poland where, after the war, 40 Jews or so were killed by an angry mob. Obviously, no time for me to comment in any detail, I'm just telling you that baseline fact. So, they have a service to commemorate these 42 Jews killed by an angry Polish mob after the war. So, they asked Wiesel, what does he think. And he says, "Well it's a funny thing you should mention it, but there are all these crosses in Auschwitz, and you can't have crosses in Auschwitz." You can see them here in the distance there, Chris took it in such a way that the Star of David is prominent, but at the left-hand side there's a cross and further back there are

several crosses. They've been put there by students who wanted to commemorate, this is a field of ashes, which is one place where the ashes were strewn. He said, "You have to remove the crosses, you cannot have crosses in Auschwitz." Why not? He says, "It's because it's a Jewish place." So the Polish government got into a panic and they asked advice from the International Auschwitz Council. I'll never forget that day as long as I live, Webber stands up and delivers a long, impassioned speech, saying, "You've got to respect the Christian dead of Auschwitz." I'm the only independent person on the Board, it's a 25-man Board, of whom twelve are Polish, twelve are foreigners, and one German. The foreigners concluded, the head of Yad Vashem, who said, "We don't have crosses in Yad Vashem, you can't have crosses in Auschwitz." All the foreigners said, "You can't have crosses in Auschwitz because you can't have a Carmelite Convent in Auschwitz," as you know there was a lot of fuss over that, "It's a Jewish place." Webber says, "Terribly sorry, but it's not true that it's a Jewish place, there were Gypsies there, there were homosexuals there, there were criminals there, there were 75,000 Poles there, 12,000 Russian prisoners of war, and I rattle these off." They weren't the slightest bit interested. And I said, "Well, how many Poles do you have to have before you can let them have one lousy cross?" "Go on," I asked the Director of Yad Vashem, "Tell me please, how many Poles do you have to have before you will agree to let them put up one cross?" I was in the minority of one. They said, "We're going to remove the crosses." What was never reported, because I had all the press cuttings, and New York Times and all that lot, they never reported that as a consequence of Elie Wiesel's intervention in this matter, they had to remove all the Stars of David as well. Consequence of Elie Wiesel, all the Stars of David were taken down from the field of ashes, it was never mentioned, but of course they had to remove everything. You can't just take the crosses out, and leave the Stars of David, they had no religious symbols at all.

I must get to my conclusions, because now I have spoken for 57 minutes. I asked Chris, "Please take a picture of grief." He turned up with this, I thought, "That's great." I wanted one picture to symbolize grief, I don't want to see the face of the girl, it's ok, it's good, strong, to the point, concise, good photograph. Polish memory has got a P-triangle here, these are Poles who come back every year on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January to remember their brethren and their friends. Children. A children's exhibition, visited by children in Auschwitz, terrific, absolutely terrific photo. Children have a lot of, after, in the book it tells you, I think they

have 35,000 prams or what you would now call buggies, you know, for children. People turned up in Auschwitz with their children's buggies.

Israelis. Don't ask me if I can justify to you what a terror squad is doing there. I'm not a rabbi, and I'm not the son of a rabbi, and I have no idea. This is religion in the service of politics, is what we would say, that's how I would caption that photograph, but I didn't do that in the book, because my wife, who published it, said, "You don't want to upset the Israelis who might want to buy the book." Religion in service of politics. Absolutely dreadful picture, but it's part of the realities, and so I have to show the realities, and that's what I want you to see. Last two photos. One of these people who come from that group, the so-called "March of the Living" group, all dressed up, is writing here a little wooden marker, putting a candle, as you can see, yes, wooden marker. And here is, this is the last picture, one person puts a wooden marker "6 million of my people died!!" Next one says, "In Loving Memory of my Grandparents, Ketty nee Felsenstein and David Goldschmidt, who were murdered here at Auschwitz," and behind it on the top-left it says in Hebrew, "In Memory of the 1.5 million children who were murdered during the Holocaust by the Nazis."

I've got three points I want to make, first of all some introduction. Number one: we all know that Auschwitz has to move with the times, that we've got to have new exhibitions. What we've got there so far definitely, desperately needs updating. What I want to see, I think this picture shows a demand for having proper tombstones. We cannot have this. The guards come around and remove all these things and throw them in the bin, just like they take these candles out and blow them out and throw them in the bin the next day. I think there should be at Auschwitz a cemetery, like you have an Arlington national cemetery, military cemeteries. People put up, like in a military cemetery, put up the names, one called Moishe, and if he was Jewish he has a Star of David, and if he was Christian he has a cross, and if he has nothing or his family don't want anything so there's no religious symbol, fine. Let people see a million tombstones, and we don't have to have this ridiculous makeshift nonsense, this is Auschwitz, after all. This makeshift nonsense of wooden markers that just get tossed in the bin, that is not a honorable or dignified way to remember the appalling atrocities, etc. Well, the unspeakable and incomprehensible tragedies that Auschwitz embodied.

Second, we need new educational goals, got to move with the times, and we've got to get beyond this simple information business. We have to think about the causes of genocide, the meanings of genocide. We need to know more about those people who decided to help Jews and protect Jews at the risk of their own lives. Empathy is really not enough for something like this. In the kingdom of death, you have to find the meaning of life, otherwise a visit to Auschwitz is meaningless. Maybe we should have exhibitions or things which emphasize that in Auschwitz in all places, let us stick our head above the parapet and talk to people about the importance of peace, brotherhood, reconciliation, brotherly love, peace in the world, charity, and ethics. That's what Auschwitz means, or should mean, in the name of those people who were murdered there, that's the message I think we should be giving out. We should introduce more art, more poetry, more music; things which speak to the soul and can reach out to future generations of visitors and we should cover the post-Auschwitz genocides: Yugoslavia, Cambodia, Darfur, whatever.

How to identify the causes of the Holocaust is still a challenge for our historians. I have asked the senior historians in Germany, I've read their books, and I've been to their conferences, and there is no question about it. The Holocaust poses insuperable problems for the writing of history. It is a rare case of an event which they've got no idea how to account for. Anti-semitism is obviously a necessary condition but it's not enough. You cannot jump from anti-semitism to genocide and say the two things go together. People, you may not like this guy down the road, but you don't go around and brutally murder him and his children and his grandchildren and anyone who comes from his family. It is something much more serious and it's not clear where this all comes from. So, the incomprehensibility of it has got to be built into the model. How do we have a Museum which is neither too banal, nor too theoretical. Not too preoccupied with the methods of the perpetrators, nor too sentimental in the representation of the agony of the victims. Much of which ought to be, surely be private.

Second point, complexity of the memory. There never will be, there isn't and there never will be a single history of Auschwitz. Nor can the memory of Auschwitz, or the remembrance of what happened there ever be a unified phenomenon. Just like there was a mosaic of victims,

Jews, Poles, gypsies, etc., so too there is a mosaic of memories. I think that Jews are still largely ignorant of other people who were killed in the Holocaust, don't know enough about it, and that's not good enough, not for me. Each group tends to see its own experience and the Poles are the same, or they had been the same until very recently; each group tends to see its own experience as unique to itself and to its own history, whereas what Auschwitz should be teaching is the importance of reaching out to others and understanding that there are plenty of other people who shared your destiny too.

Can I give you one story, it's a bit too self-indulgent. Jan Roesen, professor of historiography at Bochum. Wonderful fellow, tells a story about a group of Jews from Germany together with a group of non-Jews from Germany who went on an pilgrimage to Auschwitz, and they wanted to have a ceremony when they got there. So they wanted to...they brought along a wreath of flowers to lay, *Kranzniederlegung*, you know, a wreath, to lay a wreath, in memory of the victims. The question was, should they have one wreath, or should they have two wreaths? After all, there were Jews amongst them and non-Jews amongst them. Fantastic discussion, was it one wreath or two wreaths? Was the whole group action together or should the Jewish participants have their own wreath? Were they sharing the tragedies of the past, were they wanting to emphasize a difference in the way they were relating to that past or were they trying to brush aside that difference in trying to deal with the past, a very good question. I just put that, again, as a question. The question is more interesting than the answer that they found.

Auschwitz belonged to many different ethnic histories, national histories, political histories, and theological histories, and it does so unevenly and controversially. Let me just, thirty seconds, tell you about the Jewish responses of the Holocaust. Is man to blame? Is God to blame? Was it evidence of the pre-Messianic Gorgon-Magog before the establishment of the state of Israel? Were the Jews martyrs, or were they just pushed into this against their will, how do you understand this? Was it a punishment for sin, as some people think? The sin of Zionism? The sin of assimilation? Did God just hide his face? Should the museum be saying any of the above, or keeping silent about it? So, the point is that what people bring with them, or what the Museum might say about them, might be full of contradictions, paradoxes, and conflicting ideas. Should the Museum stress the Jewish 92% or should it



really be putting the emphasis on the universal significance of Auschwitz, I mean so many Holocaust survivors say, “We want the world to know about our suffering,” but they also say, “We want the *world* to know about our suffering,” well the people turn around and say, “What is the world interested in *your* suffering for?”

So, we need to do these balancing acts; we need to stress the universal side, but we also need to acknowledge that this place belongs to your history too. The existence of such multiple approaches and elements point to the fundamentally subversive character of the historical Auschwitz. The Auschwitz memory needs to address so many different things at once, both the local and the universal, both the specific, and the more general, both one’s neighbor and those who are far away. Both the names of the individuals who are known to have perished, but also an understanding of the wider historical processes, which somehow were associated, were brought on the catastrophe, both the empirical facts and the philosophical attempt to make sense of the fundamental incomprehensibility and meaninglessness of Auschwitz.

What do we do with religion in Auschwitz? Religion, one might have thought, is best suited to convey a sense of the mystery of the place, and the dilemmas, the moral and ethical dilemmas, that people who lived there had to deal with every day. And all categories of populations, the perpetrators, the bystanders, the victims, the rescuers; let it speak to these moral issues in terms of remembrance. Religion ought to take a much higher profile but what did religion do? It backed away. We agreed, the bishops agreed, and the rabbis agreed to have no religious symbols in Auschwitz; that is appalling. Religion has backed away. For we still don’t know how far people actually turned to religion for comfort and hope, or how far religion was simply abandoned. And if anything, that question is really interesting and really important and can really be helpful for anyone interested in religion to deal with. So, my last paragraph.

My own view of these problems, the intellectual confusion, museological tension, and challenges of Auschwitz, is that one should look at all these things positively, as a form of organic tension. Think of it the other way around. Surely we would object, that if at Auschwitz of all places, we were presented with one official history, one set of memories to take home with us. Far better to have, I think, the entanglement of voices, a series of

paradoxes, ambiguities, a prospective of something which is unfinished, a feeling that we must continue to remain challenged by what Auschwitz was, and what Auschwitz means for us today. Visitors, I think, should internalize a profound sense of unease about genocide and its utter abnormality. They need to be disoriented about the basic fact Auschwitz ever existed at all. It means that they must be encouraged to ask open-ended questions and not just walk out of the place thinking they ticked the box, been there, done that, and now they know everything there is to know about Auschwitz. It's got to be a life-changing experience. So, we in our generation need to constantly rethink the strategy, the exhibitions, the presentation of the site, the conservation, the overall policy, and it's likely that there will be many changes in the future, especially in the area of promoting peace and reconciliation between different religions and between different nations. The work of making sense of Auschwitz will be with us for a long time to come. There is no final solution. The work will never be finished. Thank you.