A single professor doing his research. For one thing, it has a diffuse conscience—as an organization it cannot and hence does not continually consider the ethical or political implications of what it does. Its work—designing an inner belt, a bomb, or a guidance system—may affect hundreds or hundreds of millions of people. Its work, as Prof. Chomsky has said, is often political in nature. But an organization, unlike a linguist, cannot collectively decide to do anything.

How about the leaders of this moral jelly which is any large organization? Can’t the leaders of the lab make the decision for the group—after all, the ethics are universal.

It would be nice to think that a leader could make such a decision for a large lab, for a lab here or anywhere else. But the decision is a political one, and the kind of top-flight engineer who should run the lab if it is to do its job is not a statesman. He may be the expert on what the piece of technology his group is working on can do. But should he, can he make a good decision when the problem is political in nature?

Thus the dilemma, or part of it. An engineering school, unlike other parts of a university, must face both ways at once. Inward, toward the students and the sciences and outward, toward the problems which are there waiting to be solved. It can best solve the problems by the application of group effort. It can only keep ethically within the limits of academic freedom.