

easier to receive than to give. So, with this reality in mind, authority has to remain alert to the task of cultivating Constitutional discipline, rather than undermining it through unrestrained paternalism. As Walter Lippmann once stated, only when men have "learned the grammar of constitutionalism," acquired it as "intuitive habit" and "the normal idiom of . . . behavior," will the full promise of liberty be realized.⁹

Though secular and religious leadership has a major role in nourishing the free society, its efforts are almost entirely dependent on the individual's ability to *sense* his responsibility and *act* to fulfill it. It is a mistake to regard either of these responses as natural or automatic; neither the feeling of obligation nor the execution of duty is naturally convenient or enjoyable.

In a prosperous nation, moral duty can become little more than a hindrance to the pursuit of immediate profit and pleasure — thus, as in the case of leadership, morality is frequently and conveniently

discharged through legislation. Santayana provides a good explanation of this moral-legal conversion by stating that "people always do as they like; but while they are believers, they must confess that they have sinned; whereas by the easy method of discarding their faith, they can have their fun and call themselves virtuous."¹⁰

Taking the Easy Way

Though Santayana refers to religious responsibility, the same psychology applies to the purely moral realm: a person may think that he can discharge moral duty through law, and thereby satisfy his conscience. The beauty of the method is its efficacy in relieving the individual of the physical mechanics of moral duty. The final result, as Santayana points out, will be a complete loss of conscience (faith).

What a person cannot accomplish through self-discipline or moral strength, he may assuredly achieve through law. It is always easier to command than to persuade, whether the object of attention is oneself or another; so, to the individual of conscience living in the modern society, the end (rather than the means) becomes

¹⁰ George Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 153.

of utmost importance. Having satisfied conscience through law, the timesaving instrument of "accomplishment," the shirker goes about reveling in the irresponsible freedom of being free. This attitude represents the new materialistic individualism of this age, a doctrine of self-service that steadily slashes away at the moral fiber binding that impatient devourer of human freedom. What has produced this attitude? How can it be changed? These are difficult questions, but some answers are clear enough.

Man and His Attitudes

Material prosperity has often been blamed for corrupting man's moral character, but this seems quite unbelievable. To say that material objects produce human attitudes is simply to excuse men of responsibility for those attitudes. No, the corrupting influence lies in the individual's inability or unwillingness to evaluate the prevailing ideologies which permeate his social, economic, and political life, particularly the equalitarian ideology of "individual freedom."

The liberal-equalitarian declares that progress follows man's inner urge to free himself from the shackles of exploitation. Always, the emphasis is placed on man as a creature struggling for his "rights" — and never his respon-

sibilities. By its unrestrained, hypnotizing chant of "Rights! Rights! Rights!" the collectivist leadership has, indeed, given impetus to the loosening of human shackles: it has helped snap those fragile chains of moral responsibility which link individual men to civilized humanity. This is the nature of equalitarian "freedom," an ideology of rampant idealism which worships the god of immediate satisfaction. The sole responsibility for evaluating such shortsighted doctrines belongs to the individual. If he is unable to do so, he must strive to educate himself so that he can; if he is unwilling, . . .

Responsibility, unlike instinctive pursuit of pleasure, proceeds from inner conflict, fought on a battleground stretching from man's brain to his soul. From this individual struggle emerges a sense of values expressed through physical activity. To the spiritually motivated person, the source of values is, as Bonhoeffer expressed it so well, the Christian manifestation, a timeless example of men rising above instinct and taking up their crosses of spiritual and earthly responsibility.

The individual lacking spiritual impulse toward moral duty must, it seems, derive his values through human reason. Only as he does this can he call himself a free man,

⁹ Walter Lippmann, *An Inquiry into the Principles of the Good Society* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1943), p. 343. Lippmann emphasizes throughout his work the vital importance of moral responsibility in social organization. *The Good Society* and a later work, *The Public Philosophy* (1955), are strongly recommended for those interested in a depth study of the problem.