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PAUL L. POIROT

*I'll respect  
your life*

*— if you'll  
respect mine*

IF A PERSON were to say to you, "I'll respect your life, if you'll respect mine," you might hastily react with, "Fair enough," and let it go. But the chances are that, after a moment's reflection, you'd begin to wonder what kind of a nut he is or just what he had in mind. Did he think you were about to attack him? Doesn't he trust you? Or, had he been thinking about attacking you? Perhaps he was trying to throw you off guard before launching his attack? That he would even think of offering such a proposition certainly places him under a cloud of suspicion! You might expect a child to thus bargain over whether to be good or not, but an adult . . . ?

What you really would be saying to yourself, through such reflections, is that respect for life doesn't begin that way, as a deal between persons involved. Some-

one has to begin, and the beginning consists of the unconditional, unilateral decision: "I'll respect your life, and all life." This is an act of faith, faith that others will respond in kind to one's conduct toward them.

Respect for private property had its beginning in that same way, when someone decided: "I'll not steal." The idea never could have come to fruition had the proposition been: "If you'll not steal from me, I'll not steal from you." Someone, all by himself, had to begin not stealing, as an act of respect for his fellow man and an act of self-respect, self-confidence, self-responsibility.

Yes, the personal practice of freedom begins at home, with the individual. It begins with the unilateral, unconditional behavior of a person with a highly developed sense of moral responsibility, a