

how, on many occasions, we only wish that the moral dilemma would go away and allow us to remain comfortable in our ordinary pursuits. Instead, on occasion, we find ourselves driven by what we regard as our sense of duty to take a particular course that involves cost, embarrassment, and pain. The fact that we have the opportunity to pursue that painful moral choice is a manifestation of freedom. Yet, it is paradoxical that this unremitting call to duty, this moral act performed perhaps reluctantly in order to quiet that nagging conscience, in order to enable us to live with ourselves, constitutes the essence of individual freedom. Moral compulsion is a reflection of individual freedom. Yet, how can compulsion reflect freedom? How do we resolve this apparent contradiction?

We must start by recognizing that freedom means the right and the full opportunity to exercise our will. At the same time, we must live with our moral imperatives, which we cannot ignore, and our moral values, which we cannot repudiate. We carry within us responsibilities that flow from our moral values. Freedom means only the opportunity to translate into action these fundamental convictions. The opportunity "to do one's own thing" is crowded and restricted by our sense of responsibility. The moral man or woman finds that he or she is not free to act without regard to his or her moral values. We are free to choose, but we find that our moral values compel us to exercise our choice in a particular way. Freedom is subject to internal restraints. Freedom is not freedom to act in any way we may choose but the opportunity to respond to the responsibilities imposed by our moral imperatives.

Our Responsibilities

Now what of our responsibilities? When we recognize these and when they speak with one voice, our problem is relatively minor. The problem of choice is then a struggle against moral sloth, inertia, perhaps embarrassment, perhaps the uncomfortable position of being a non-conformist. Such a price is relatively minor. At times, we may not be ready to pay even this modest price; after all, we are all imperfect and fallible. In such cases, however, we know that we have failed. What makes life difficult is that serious problems present greater difficulties than combatting sloth and inertia. They may involve a clash in values, a clash in loyalties, a clash of responsibilities. We may be forced to choose between very real, but unfortunately inconsistent, moral claims. We may be forced to order our priorities, and to recognize that we must repudiate a very real claim that an individual, or an institution, or one's constituents may have upon us in order to give recognition to what we must regard as a superior moral claim.

If one turns to some recent events one has a very good example of this in Mr. Ruckleshaus. Mr. Ruckleshaus was a person lifted from the ranks of obscurity and made one of the most prominent men of the nation as a result of a succession of major appointments from the President. If any man owed his prominence in public life and his career to another man's favor, it was Mr. Ruckleshaus, by reason of the bounty of President Nixon. When the President in his hour of need called upon Mr. Ruckleshaus to carry out a lawful presidential decision, what an act of disloyalty it was for Mr. Ruckleshaus to refuse! What an act of the basest ingratitude it was for him not to respond! Yet, we hold Mr. Ruckleshaus in honor. Citizens throughout the country are grateful to Mr. Ruckleshaus for sustaining their faith in free institutions. Mr. Ruckleshaus put loyalty to the supremacy of law ahead of the compelling claims of personal loyalty owed to the chief executive, and the claims of gratitude that he owed to the man who had taken him from obscurity and placed him among the leaders of the nation.

There are many examples of such conflict of loyalties. In the church, for example, we have clergy and lay people who are concerned about the church's role in the society. They are convinced that the church should pursue roles of social action, although recognizing that the pursuit of social goals in a telling and effective manner will bring severe strain and divisiveness within the church. What price is one prepared to pay to follow moral claims? In the answer to such a question we must inquire into the nature of responsibility. We must struggle with the decision whether our fundamental loyalties must be to an institution of which we may be a part, or to our own sense of what we are, or would like to be, as individuals. In the last analysis, we have to live with ourselves. In our private heart of hearts, we must appraise for ourselves the value of the life which we are leading. We must do so according to that inner standard that we recognize for better or worse as the standard that we would like to obey. Although we recognize flesh is weak, and although our ability to respond to moral imperatives may be limited and imperfect, we must try to act in keeping with our individual values. We must do so although it may contribute to friction, or even fragmentation, within the institution. Compromise has its appeal. However, compromise of moral values is at the very least dangerous and corrupting, and as a practical matter its advantages will probably prove illusory. Can moral man survive as a political creature?