

from

Was Grandpa Really a Moron?
Critical Inquiries for a New American Century

by

Peter E. Hendrickson

**Individual Virtue Is The Most Powerful Weapon (Against
A Corrupt State)**



EVER WONDER WHAT LIES BEHIND the studious institutional enmity toward moral consciousness we see all around us in America (and elsewhere) today? It is an institutional recognition that the greatest stumbling-block to the core ambition of the unbridled state (the unhindered exercise of power on behalf of its clients) is the stature of individual morality as a popular value. This is because while all the mundane costs of compliance with the state can be manipulated in the state's favor, the moral cost of compliance with illegitimate state behavior cannot be. The only tool the state has in that regard is the undermining of morality in general.

I will offer taxation as a convenient model: It is easy to see that merely by manipulating the rate of any given tax, the state can make the cost of resistance-- either resistance as a matter of political opposition, or even as legal resistance to the misapplication of the tax-- greater than the cost of compliance, if the only considerations are out-of-pocket expenses and expenditures of effort. If these were the only considerations,

and everything else about it remained the same, would anyone invest much in opposition to, for example, an actual aggregated net "income" tax burden of, say, 5%? Or 10%? Even when the tax was being misapplied in defiance of the law, resistance wouldn't be worth it. Indeed, at the right rate, even the trouble of saving receipts and calculating deductions wouldn't be worth bothering with.

However, when the cost of compliance with any policy or demand involves the violation of moral principles, the calculation is quite different. In that case, a moral person will find no price of resistance too high.

CONTINUING WITH THE "INCOME" TAX EXAMPLE:

When compliance with the state's ambition requires false testimony about ones own earnings and/or payments made to others, and/or cooperation with, or acquiescence to, the illegitimate use of force against others, a moral individual simply cannot comply, regardless of the cost of refusal, and regardless of how inexpensive any other cost of compliance is made to be. The two positions-- respect for, and embrace of, morality; and cooperation with, and participation in, institutionalized immorality-- simply cannot co-exist. A moral person will choose the course illuminated by the instruction, *"Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, and unto God that which is God's"*, understanding that while Caesar is entitled to look after his legitimate interests, he is entitled to the cooperation of others in doing so only insofar as that cooperation is compatible with God's requirement's.

Thus, the subversion of morality is necessary to the state's purpose, and is cunningly and relentlessly practiced. This subversion is often highly specialized, as in this "income" tax-related example excerpted from 'Why It Matters' in CtC:

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Effectively presented as an involuntary requirement, the scheme corrupts our fundamental principle of equal treatment under the law with a progressive structure under which some citizens are able to force a benefit for themselves out of the pockets of their neighbors. This callous design, intended to maximize the protective political support for the scheme by invoking Shaw's principle that, "A government which robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul", engenders institutional endorsement of the proposition that a form of slavery is a fundamental element of social justice. (Where the tax lawfully applies, of course-- as an expected cost of voluntarily enjoying the benefit of federal privilege-- unequal treatment is no more unfair than is having to pay more for good seats at the show).

This is a particularly noxious perversion, in that under this "justice" a heavier burden is extracted from some Americans precisely because they have already made a greater contribution to the common weal than others. After all, one earns one's unprivileged receipts solely by serving the interests of one's neighbors.

Furthermore, contrary to the many false intellections marshaled to support this aspect of the scheme, the more such receipts that one's good service brings in, the less demand one places on, and the less benefit one has from the community resources-- making the progressive structure of the tax even more obscene. The reality is that a successful wealth-producer has typically been more adamant and persistent than others in defying and surmounting the public infrastructure and its typically sclerotic defense of the status quo. (The exception is those who have used government to their advantage; their gains, of course,

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are the lawful objects of the "income" tax as properly applied).

As to public services, the well-to-do place far less demand on such expenses than others-- they draw no public welfare, they are privately insured, they live where the local services are equitably paid for out of (typically) high local tax rates. In other words, they pay their own way. The vigorous efforts of many in positions of authority and respect to seduce Americans into accepting the standing of these truths on their heads, in order to ensure that the gravy-train of professional fees, bureaucratic power, and re-election will continue, is a national scandal. That these efforts have largely been successful is a national shame.

Similar efforts are focused upon many other areas in which the ambitions of the state and its clients are hindered or inconvenienced by an upright citizenry insistent on lawful, limited government. Paralleling such targeted efforts is a general pressure against morality, in service to the understanding that once any corrupt practice is excused, forgiven, or rationalized, the rot will soon spread.

John Adams once observed that, *"Public virtue cannot exist in a nation without private, and public virtue is the only foundation of republics"*, and he and the other Founders wisely equipped us with a fundamental law which is fully supportive of our private virtue. Enjoying the benefits of that virtuous fundamental law simply depends on the firm embrace of that same private virtue by each of us-- one by one.