ON HONOR

by

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(Under the Direction of EDWARD HALPER)

ABSTRACT

Philosophers have come to no consensus on the role of honor and its relationship to moral philosophy. This dissertation uses the frame of the *Beowulf*, the life of St. Francis, and the history around the Selma Civil Rights march to identify questions about this relationship that suggests it is an important one. The dissertation then breaks out philosophers' views on the questions into typologies, and then works through them to determine which view of honor is most plausible. The dissertation also considers some problems of honor that may be permanent features, why honor is nevertheless indispensable to both ethics and political philosophy, and how best to mitigate the dangers of honor to take advantage of its goods.

INDEX WORDS: Honor, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Ethics, Politics, Death, Beowulf, Martha Nussbaum, Patrick Devlin, Magnanimity

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DEDICATION

To my father.

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CHAPTER 1

Lof-dǣdum sceal
In mǣgþa gehwære
man geþēon.

"Praised deeds must, in any tribe, make one flourish."[1]

-*Beowulf*, Lines 24-25.

Talk of honor has a confusing and archaic sound in some ears. If I say that someone is a "man of honor" I pay him a compliment, which is a kind of honor. In other words, I am *honoring* him for his *honor*, which makes him a *man of honor* who is worthy of *honors* such as this. In addition to this, it may seem as if philosophy has little need of a topic so associated with older social forms like knightly tournaments and duels. Still, many nations have memorial days to honor their war dead. We praise scientists who make great discoveries, and poets who craft subtle insights into the human condition. We issue 'honorary degrees' to those whose life's work shows them to be worthy of it. We write books 'in honor of' those who came before us, mentors or family or valued colleagues. Honor is not an outdated concept.

One of the more common ways to encounter the word today is in the phrase 'honor killings.' In these cases an individual is murdered, often by a family member, for failing to live according to the community's values. Honor can also provoke violence between collectives, and not just tribes or clans but even wars between modern states: "Remember the Maine!" – Also the Alamo, and Pearl Harbor. Mafias appeal to the honor

[1] Translation mine.

code of their members to conceal violent crime. Patriots do the same to uphold national independence and its enabling of liberties. Honor is the more philosophically interesting just because it does not always have a positive value.

Honor is something we need for positive reasons such as motivating the youth towards pursuing science, or defending a space for liberty and dignity in the world. Honoring people in the right ways and for the right reasons is, indeed, an important part of respecting their dignity. Yet honor is also a powerful force that is not guaranteed to lead to moral outcomes. This is puzzling insofar as honor is often connected with virtues: honors are deserved or not because of the presence or absence of some excellence. Someone who rescues a drowning child deserves praise. Moral philosophy thus has some sort of connection with honor because of honor's connection to virtue.

We should be interested in honor's relationship to the moral, then, both because it is central to some significant political concerns, and because it is elusive. Three examples will allow me to articulate three issues. By reflecting on the range of solutions to each issue, we can appreciate how the literature addresses or, at least, can be construed to address each issue. The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on honor. In the course of this review, as we survey the options, the issues will become more refined. I will propose an independent typology for the way that philosophers have wrestled with each of the three problems. The rest of this dissertation will address the issues that the typologies themselves suggest. A chapter is devoted to each.

Example One: The Beowulf

There is no doubt that Anglo-Saxon epic, *Beowulf*, portrays a society in which honor is important. The interpretation I offer here is not put forward as the final word on the poem, nor is it necessary to marshal arguments to support what I sketch here. My aim is to use a plausible reading of the poem to understand the role honor seems to have played in some societies.

The poet presents much of the action of the poem in terms of honor. The quote that opened this dissertation – "Praised deeds, in any tribe, make one flourish" – refers to the son of the exemplary king Scyld Scēfing. The young prince was wisely buying loyalty from other warriors with lavish gifts and victories while his father was still alive.[2] The poet tells us that Scyld was a "good king" because he savages other tribes, wrecks their mead halls, and makes them pay tribute.[3] This is not the *moral* sense of "good," not for the anonymous Christian poet. Yet his son too, the one flourishing by doing things that garner praise such as giving rich gifts and winning battles, is said to be favored by God not because he was a holy man but because he was a *famous* one.[4] After his father's death, he "was well regarded and ruled the Danes for a long time." He flourished because he did the things that made him famous, things that brought him honor among men and bought loyalty from his warriors. His son is Halfdane, whose son was Hrothgar, whose kingdom Beowulf comes to save. Honor is thus treated as being valuable in the *Beowulf*:

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[2] *Beowulf, A New Verse Translation*, trans. Seamus Haney (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), lines 24-5. Hereafter, *Beowulf*.

[3] *Ibid*., lines 4-11.

[4] *Ibid*., lines 12-19.

a good king is a famous king, and a famous king does the things that are praised in a *king* rather than in a priest.

One of the critical moments in the poem comes near the end of Beowulf's life, when he is fighting the dragon that will kill him. His warriors, with one exception, do not go to aid him. They are chided by the one exception, Wiglaf, who reminds them of the duties they agreed to accept:

'Ic ðæt maél geman þaér wé medu þégun
þonne wé gehéton ússum hláforde
in bíorsele ðé ús ðás béagas geaf
þæt wé him ðá gúðgetawa gyldan woldon
gif him þyslicu þearf gelumpe,
helmas ond heard sweord.'[5]

Wiglaf gives this as an honor-based argument: you promised to be true when you were needed, you accepted the goods associated with that pledge, and now you ought to carry out your duty. After Beowulf's death fighting the dragon, the poet shows us a grieving Geat people who understand that they will be reduced to slavery once word of the cowardice of their warriors – and the death of their chief protector, king Beowulf[6] – becomes known. Honor is presented as essential to the world of the *Beowulf* because it is the basis for contractual relations.

We might ask how compatible this is with morality. At first the answer seems to be that it is quite compatible, because of the goods of stability for the state and its political order. One view of the relationship between honor and morality might, then, be that honor is an imperfect substitute for morality. A person motivated by honor keeps

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[5] *Beowulf*, lines 2633-2638. Haney translates these lines, "I remember that time when mead was flowing,/ how we pledged loyalty to our lord in the hall,/ promised our ring-giver we would be worth our price,/ make good the gift of war gear,/ those swords and helmets, as and when/ his need required it."

[6] *Ibid*., 3150-3155.

promises to avoid shame. This is better than not keeping promises, but worse than keeping them because it is morally right to do so. Scyld's ravaging of neighboring tribes may seem harsh, but it protects and enriches his people, an essential function of all political leaders. Scyld's fame comes from his effective leadership. We might criticize the means, but the end is morally good.

If this view were right, honor and moral philosophy would have all and only the same ends. Honor might even prove disposable. Couldn't we protect our 'tribe' through rationally cooperative relationships? Wouldn't a judicial system provide a better ground for the enforcement of contracts than did the honor of *Beowulf*?

Whether or not this is plausible is something we need to explore. One scholar who takes it as a plausible view is Elizabeth A. Howard. She suggests that the scene in which the warriors fail to aid Beowulf and Wiglaf is a criticism of Beowulf's kingship.[7] Beowulf, she argues, was not a 'good king' in the sense Scyld had been because he elevated the wrong kinds of people to positions of honor in his hall. To be a companion of the mead bench came with a pledge of "loyalty to our lord in the hall… [to] make good the gift of war gear,/ those swords and helmets, as and when/ his need required."[8] Because of the centrality of their position to the survival of society, the Geat society ceased to exist when it did not have men who would do what honor demanded in their particular role. *Beowulf* is not the only poem that gives us this vision. The Anglo-Saxon poem called "The Wanderer" speaks of the loss of such a hall, from the perspective of a survivor who remembers the good days and the friends who were killed there. "Joy," says

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[7] Elizabeth A. Howard, "Beowulf Is Not God Cyning," In *Geardagum: Essays on Old and Middle English Language and Literature* 30 (2009): 45 – 68.

[8] *Beowulf*, 2633-2638.

the poem, "has all disappeared!"[9] Howard's view is that the kingly honor that the *Beowulf* speaks of is aimed at these moral philosophical ends, but Beowulf does not do a good job of extracting honorable behavior from his followers. Honor might have worked – apparently it did work for Scyld – but Beowulf was bad at understanding how to use it for some reason. Perhaps he stood so far above his peers that he could not differentiate between them. Perhaps he did not give adequate thought to the world that would come after him. For whatever cause, Howard argues, he failed in this core way.

If Howard's view is right, the poem is not about honor so much as a failure to live up to moral obligations. Beowulf's thanes simply did not live up to their moral obligations. Perhaps they did not fully understand their duties, or the consequences of failing to do their duties. A moral philosophy based on reason can be explained with a degree of perfection unattainable by an honor code. If honor's function was to ensure promise-keeping of the sort that defended these societies against serious dangers, it clearly failed at times. A moral philosophy based on reason can grasp the goods at which honor was aiming, and it might be able to attain them more effectively than an honor-based society. Beowulf is doing what ought to be rational decision making about whom he could trust, in other words, but he is doing it on a partially irrational basis. If this view is correct, a rational moral philosophy could do the same job as honor, only better.

On this view, which I think is attractive to many contemporary philosophers, the goods that the Geats and Anglo-Saxons aspired to through honor can be more fully attained by reason. We can see that the kind of society the builders of mead halls were able to establish in this harsh world, a world filled with predatory enemies as well as

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[9] Anonymous, "The Wanderer," in *Old English: Grammar and Reader*, ed. Robert E. Diamond (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), 153.

natural hazards (and indeed supernatural ones!), required strong bonds of promise-keeping in order to survive. Keeping promises was not *merely* a matter of honor, but rather was a rationally-indicated course of action toward the end of a stable and decent society for the Geats. If so, reason might substitute for honor, and society would only be improved by the substitution.

Howard's reading of the poem fails to capture how central the pursuit of honor is to Beowulf. Beowulf himself is often shown chasing honor in a pure sense, seeking for great things to do just because they would be great deeds. To see the role that honor is performing in setting ends for Beowulf, consider his duel with Grendel. Presumably Beowulf's reason adequately captures the choice to eliminate Grendel as the proper means to those of Beowulf's ends identified by his reason. What a morality based on pure practical reason does not appear to sanction is Beowulf's chosen *method* for eliminating Grendel. Grendel is a monster and not a swordsman, Beowulf reminds the court while stripping out of his arms and armor: "[I]t won't be a cutting edge I'll wield," Seamus Haney translates the relevant lines, "to mow him down, easily as I might. He has no idea of the arts of war, of shield or sword-play, although he does possess a wild strength. No weapons, therefore, for either of us this night[.]"[10]

"Therefore" implies a conclusion of the sort modern readers would expect to find at the end of a syllogism. But this is not any ordinary rational argument, as is clear if we rephrase it: 'My opponent could be easily killed by a sword. He does not understand how to fight against people with shields and swords. He has a powerful strength that can overcome unarmored men. Therefore… I will face him with no weapons, shield, or

[10] *Ibid.*, lines 679-685.

armor.' That does not make any sense at all unless we supply an unstated premise. That premise might be "it would be glorious to beat the monster on his own terms," or "it would be cowardly to take unfair advantage."

Let us examine 'cowardly' first, because there is a ready account of courage available. We can compare Beowulf's reasoning with Aristotle's discussion of courage in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.[11] Beowulf's decision to discard weapons and armor to face a powerful foe looks not like Aristotle's courage but like the vice Aristotle calls *rashness*, or even the nameless vice Aristotle assigns to 'the Celts who fear neither earthquake nor wave.'[12] What Aristotle says about courage and honor is that "while [the brave man] will fear even the things that are not beyond human strength, he will face them as he ought and as the rule directs, for honor's sake; for this is the end of virtue."[13] This is because the brave man, for Aristotle, is like the other men of practical virtue in that the exercise of these virtues is meant for something else: Aristotle says that we work so that we may have leisure, and wage war so that we may have peace.[14] Courage thus is not an end in itself, but implies discretion in the face of even such dangers as are *not* beyond human strength.

Grendel *is* beyond ordinary human strength, although he proves not to be beyond Beowulf's. But Beowulf cannot claim to have reasoned that his strength is superior as he

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[11] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1115a25-6.

[11] *Ibid*., 1115b7-11.

[12] *Ibid*., 1115b25-30.

[13] *Ibid*., 1115b10-13. This quote is from the W. D. Ross translation. Irwin and Fine give it as, "Hence, though [the brave person] will fear even the sorts of things that are not irresistible, he will stand firm against them, in the right way, as prescribed by reason, for the sake of what is fine, since this is the end aimed at by virtue." It is interesting that Ross, born in the 19th century, interprets as explicitly an honor concern what more contemporary philosophers prefer to describe as "fine."

[14] *Ibid*., 1177a32-1177b16.

has no grounds to know that it is. Many strong warriors have been torn apart by Grendel already. For Beowulf's decision to satisfy Aristotle, Beowulf would have to have reason to know that Grendel's strength was not superior to his own in spite of this. Yet Beowulf never met these slain warriors. He has no rational standard for thinking he can win this fight unarmed. It would seem that "the rule" Aristotelian rationality would suggest would direct Beowulf to pursue the most likely path to victory and the attainment of his several rationally-indicated ends. Being torn apart by Grendel will not reinforce his allies nor strengthen his people, and though it may pay off his family debt, it will be marked down as a failure that will bring question upon the strength of Geat warriors. The courage Aristotle speaks of would seem to indicate leveraging Grendel's known weaknesses to ensure his defeat.

Yet to Beowulf, the set of facts that 'Grendel can easily be killed with weapons; he does not understand how to fight against weapons; he can easily kill unarmed men' leads directly to a *therefore* that 'I shall fight him without weapons.' This reasoned courage is not setting peace as the ultimate end of war. Reason is providing the means to an end, and honor is the end. Beowulf will do the thing that will garner the most praise. He will do the thing that will not take unfair advantage of his foe's weaknesses, but rather that exposes him to his foe's greatest advantage. If he still beats his foe on these terms, no one can say any word of blame to Beowulf. I thus argue that it is glory Beowulf is seeking, not merely the avoidance of cowardice nor victory. It is not reason but honor that is his ultimate end, the end that makes the "therefore" plausible.

Nevertheless, this decision includes a terrible risk. The decision to face Grendel without arms could have ended in disaster instead of legend. On the other hand, it had the

chance to end in an extraordinary way – as, in the story, it did. Beowulf's fame as a monster-fighter arguably paved the way for his ascension to kingship and the five decades of peace and flourishing tells us that his people enjoyed.[15]

Does honor have a secondary moral benefit—peace and stability? If so, it was not perfect. Howard argues that at the end of Beowulf's life, when he was fighting the dragon, Beowulf's failure to be adequately rational in his handling of honor is what results in the destruction of his people. A rational war-fighter on Aristotle's model, her argument might imply, could have put together a force capable of defeating the dragon and also of continuing to secure a future for the Geats. the things for which one will be honored are excellences, and excellences often are moral virtues. Thus we return again to the problem raised by the *Beowulf*: just what is the relationship between moral philosophy and honor? It is clear that there is one, and that it is significant. Honor as Beowulf is pursuing it is quite distinct from the pursuit of the ends of moral philosophy. Honor is not merely a less-efficient sort of morality, but has ends of its own that morality does not capture.

[15] *Beowulf*, 2200-2210; 2385-2390.

Typology One: Honor and Moral Philosophy

The *Beowulf* example raises the question of honor's connection with morality. There is one, insofar as virtue is both moral and honorable. We want to know just what this connection is. There are four possible relations:

On the first view, honor has no non-derivative role to play in moral philosophy. This does not necessarily mean honor is not discussed. Some philosophers discuss it a great deal, but they see it as a function of reason. All of honor's content is rightly derived from rational moral philosophy.

On the second view, honor has an independent status but it plays a subordinate role to reason as a helpmate in achieving reason's dictates. Reason determines the good, but honor is useful in various ways – especially rhetorically – in guiding or encouraging people to do what reason determines is right.

On the third view, honor sometimes plays some role in determining what is morally right. Some moral issues may be resolved through reason alone, but others cannot be resolved without an appeal to honor.

On the fourth view, reason is subordinate to honor. On this view, reason still does a lot of work in fitting means to ends. However, the ends of moral action are ultimately set by honor concerns: issues about what a society respects and has taught its members to respect, either society as a whole or a particular social group within the larger society.

This typology of honor's relationship to reason in moral philosophy is meant to be universally inclusive: in setting moral ends honor plays no non-derivative role, honor plays a subordinate role, honor plays an leading role at least sometimes, or honor concerns are in the lead.

The working understanding of honor that I have proposed is so general that many philosophers can be construed as talking about the subject, including some who do not think of themselves as doing so. That means that the literature is broader than it might seem. In this section, I will discuss some of this literature with the aim of determining who belongs in the typology and where.

Type One: Honor as a Function of Reason

In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant has two kinds of duties for us, and honor plays a role in both kinds. We have a narrow and perfect duty of right that Kant calls "*Rightful honor (honestas iuridica)*."[16]

> *Rightful honor (honestas iuridica)* consists in asserting one's worth as a human being in relation to others, a duty expressed by the saying, "Do not make yourself a mere means for others but be at the same time an end for them." This duty will be explained later as an obligation from the right of humanity in our own person.[17]

Because this is a juridical duty rather than an imperfect duty it is universally binding in the sense of being incumbent upon all persons at all times in all of their actions. We are obligated to insist on this respect always and in everything we do, and so is everyone else. On the other hand, notice that it is a duty to insist upon our worth as a human being "in relation to others," meaning that the duty is not a duty to aspire to be treated as better than others. It is a duty to insist upon being treated exactly as well as one has a duty to treat others.

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[16] Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6:236. Hereafter, *Metaphysics*. I am indebted to correspondence with Melissa Fahmy for parts of this section.

[17] *Ibid*.

That is nothing other than an inward-pointed version of the second formulation of the Categorical Imperative,[18] which requires us to treat all rational beings as ends in themselves rather than as mere means. Our duty to insist on this treatment from others is logical given that others have a right to such treatment from us, and we are of the same type, i.e., rational beings. Kant's honor is just rational morality traveling under another name.

In saying that this duty arises from the humanity in my own person, Kant means the capacity for reason in a human being gives them an autonomy that is always worthy of being treated as an end in itself. What is called "honor" here arises wholly from reason and has no independent content apart from what reason gives to it. When honor is a duty of right, rather than a duty of love, it functions according to this logic. You have a *right* to demand honorable treatment from me, and I from you, according to precisely the same deduction that gives me the *duty* to treat you as an end and not a mere means, and you the duty to treat me as an end in myself also.

Kant also talks about honor when he speaks of duties of virtue, rather than duties of right. He talks about "love of honor" as a virtue opposing several powerful and deadly vices:

> [A] human being's duty to himself as a moral being *only* (without taking his animality into consideration) consists in what is *formal* in the consistency of the maxims of his will with the *dignity* of humanity in his person.… The vices contrary to this duty are **lying, avarice, and false humility** (servility). These adopt principles that are directly contrary to his character as a moral being (in terms of its very form), that is, to inner freedom, the innate dignity of a human being, which is tantamount to saying that they make it one's basic principle to have no basic principle and hence no character, that is, to throw oneself away and make oneself an object of contempt. – The virtue that is opposed to all of these

[18] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4:433. Hereafter, *Groundwork*.

> vices could be called *love of honor (honestas interna, iustum sui aestimium)*, a cast of mind far removed from *ambition* (*ambitio*) (which can be quite mean). [19] [All emphasis in the original.]

Kant says that virtue is one's strength of will in holding to one's maxims.[20] So this *love* can be a virtue insofar as it inclines us to do the things that reason tells us is right. However, this sort of virtue is different from Aristotle's virtue. For Aristotle, a virtue is a disposition to behave in the most successful way when engaging challenges common to human life.[21] For Kant, although reason considers abstractly the reality of the world, it cannot endorse a maxim that violates reason's basic structure just because it is likely to prove effective. The 'love of honor' is only a *virtue* for Kant because it strengthens our will in holding to the maxim to do the rationally correct thing. The honor we love is precisely being a rational being, someone able to arrive at and act upon a moral imperative through his own reason.

It would be possible to object to this account and suggest that Kant takes honor seriously on its own terms at least sometimes. For example, there are two exceptions to his stance on capital punishment for murder, both of which turn on questions of honor. In both of these cases, "the feeling of honor" motivates a killing that is still morally wrong, but cannot be legislated against.[22] The two cases are infanticide of an illegitimate child, and the killing of a fellow military officer in a duel. The illegitimate child is clearly depicted as being outside of the moral community: killing her is wrong, and ought to be

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[19] Kant, *Metaphysics*, 6:420.

[20] *Ibid*., 6:394.

[21] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106a10-28, helpfully read with his description of the goods of actions at 1097a15-23.

[22] *Ibid*., 6:336.

punished by death, but the community can't legislate that punishment because the child has no standing as a member of the polity due to her illegitimacy. The morality of this case is determined rationally even if K recognizes that the subject will have a strong motivation to transgress morality The officer, meanwhile, has an office that is of critical importance to the survival of the polity – but he cannot fulfill that office if his honor is in question. The duel is justified because it was the only way to clear his name so that he could perform his necessary office. I will return to these cases in the final part of this chapter, on the dangers of honor, as finding exceptions in a philosopher as thoroughgoing as Kant strikes me as highly important.

Another philosopher I understand to be a type one thinker is Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas follows Aristotle quite closely, but he is distinct from Aristotle in his monotheism. Aquinas' God is not only the first principle of existence, but also defines goodness itself.[23] This is true of moral goodness as well as all other senses of 'to be good.'[24] Honor for Aquinas becomes important when he discusses the Aristotelian virtue of magnanimity, which is "not only… concerned with honor (the aspect unilaterally stressed by Albert [the Great]), but also with greatness," writes Tobias Hoffmann.[25] He goes on:

> In the *Summa*, Thomas captures the two aspects in a concise formula: 'magnanimity regards two things: it has honor as its object, and doing something great as its end.' By correlating these two aspects in this original way, Thomas is able to provide an ingenious interpretation which gives unity to a number of seemingly unrelated themes in Aristotle's account.... when addressing the question of what makes magnanimity a

[23] Thomas Aquinas, *ST I* 5.1c; 6.1c.

[24] Thomas Aquinas, *ST II* I.18.1c.

[25] Tobais Hoffmann, "Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas on Magnanimity," in *Virtue Ethics in the Middle Ages: Commentaries on Aristotle's Ethics (1200–1500)*, edited by István Bejczy (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 119-20.

> specific virtue, Thomas puts to work the *Summa*'s distinction between the object and the end of magnanimity.... To deserve great honor, one must do great acts of virtue. Now each of the other virtues leads one to do what is proper to that particular virtue, for example, fortitude aims at acting bravely. Magnanimity, however, aims at doing something great when acting bravely. Hence the ends of magnanimity and fortitude -- or any other virtue, for that matter -- are different. Consequently, these virtues are also different in kind.[26]

Since for Aquinas 'great acts of virtue' are going to be morally great according to the standard set by God, when magnanimity seeks greatness in a virtue it is seeking greatness in morality. Thus, for Aquinas, an inquiry into what is most honorable is also an inquiry into what is most moral.

Thomas avoids the problem Aristotle sets up for honor -- i.e., that it cannot be the end of ethics because it is depends on something given by others -- in this way: "[M]agnanimity is concerned with honor, namely insofar as the magnanimous man strives after doing what is worthy of honor, but not in the sense that he considers human honor a great thing."[27] Thus, Aquinas' magnanimous man is not concerned with what any living person thinks is honorable, or whether he will or will not receive honors from those people. He is looking to receive honors from God, and thus seeking to do great acts of virtue – worthy of great honors – whose morality is secured by divine warrant.

Reason nevertheless determines all of honors content because God, being fully active and immaterial, is completely intelligible.[28] Human intellect is not adequate to fully grasp God, but reason is the primary mode of approaching Him. Reflecting on what is most honorable is a secure way of determining what is most genuinely moral, but honor derives its goodness from adherence to the will of this intelligible principle. It is

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[26] *Ibid*.

[27] Thomas Aquinas, *ST II* II.129.1 ad 3

[28] Thomas Aquinas, *ST I* 12.1c.

rationality that sets the standards, and therefore the virtue that aims at great honor is a perfectly reliable guide.

Type Two: Honor as Helpmate to Reason

Plato's view of honor expressed in the *Republic* is an example of my Type Two. One conclusion drawn in the *Republic* is that rationality should rule the other parts of the soul and it follows from this conclusion that individuals with greater capacities for reason should rule over the ideal city.[29] Those citizens who are not as inclined to reason should be taught to accept being ruled.[30] While the higher classes of citizens are initially selected for several qualities – love of wisdom, bravery, high-spiritedness[31] – there is to be a further division in which the most rational are placed above the most spirited.[32] Thus, the primacy of reason in making moral decisions – both ethical and political – is quite clear.

It follows that the other two classes lack reason and must be motivated in some other way. Hence, honor has a necessary role to play in the creation and maintenance of the ideal state. The other two classes cannot appreciate the reasons motivating the guardians; but they must honor the guardians and follow their laws. This is not always easy because one class is directly concerned with honor for itself and hence should be in competition with the guardian. To undermine this competition, the tripartite division is to be explained and reinforced by a myth that gives divine warrant for the division. Paying honor to the gods will thus reinforce the society's elevation of some citizens as being

[29] Plato, *Republic*, 415a-c, 429d-430b. I am using the Paul Shorey translation.

[30] *Ibid*., 415a-c.

[31] *Ibid*., 375a, 375b, 375c, 375e, 376c.

[32] *Ibid*., 413c-d.

more worthy to rule.[33] Plato is quite clear that he believes that the mythic structure of tales and stories needs to reinforce the rational argument – the importance of the praise-stories praising the right things is a major subject of books two and three of the *Republic*.

Unlike Kant, for Plato reason alone cannot do the work. This is because Plato believes that everyone is not equally endowed with access to reason. The myth is supposed to support a structure of valuing especially rational people more than less rational ones. It justifies a social structure in which those people are entrusted with the positions of power and authority. Thus, for Plato, honor and reason align: the most-reasonable are the ones honored with the highest positions, and with myths suggesting that the gods themselves endorse the leadership of this class. In spite of that alignment, reason is clearly in the lead role for Plato. Honor's alignment with reason occurs because the wise take steps to align honor with what reason has determined is best. The most rational can make the best decisions for all, but those lacking in reason cannot appreciate these decisions. Hence, they need a substitute for reason. For Plato this is honor.

Nevertheless, there is a problem. The Guardians can make the best decisions, but the artisan class can't understand *why* it is the best decision. Thus, there is the need for a class of Auxiliaries, who are motivated by honor but are less fully rational than the Guardians. They act to enforce the will of the Guardians – which is the best thing for everyone – on those who do not understand it. In order to accept this, the artisans can be motivated by both profit and fear. Since the Guardians are wise, they will produce rulings that prove to benefit the artisans, who might come to trust their judgment in time because it proves reliably profitable. Likewise, they have the fear of the Auxiliaries to motivate

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[33] *Ibid*., 415a-c.

them. The Auxiliaries, however, are motivated by the spirited part of the soul. They have to honor the Guardians enough to enforce their will. Yet the Guardians don't pursue honor as an end in itself, and thus will have fewer honorable deeds. There is a peril that the Auxiliaries might choose to honor each other, placing their own class atop the Republic. Rhetorical honor has to be employed to keep the Guardians on top. Poets and other rhetorical actors must praise the wise, and must treat as honorable submission to wisdom. Honor thus plays a critical role in the stability of Plato's imaginary ideal state.

Aristotle also has a type two position. He speaks of honor repeatedly in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and again in the *Politics* and the *Rhetoric*. He gives a clear account of why honor is subordinate to virtue in the early pages of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.[34] The subordination of honor to virtue for Aristotle is proven by the fact that he describes honors are properly the reward of virtue. Thus, the virtues have priority.[35] Honors are not unimportant, however. Aristotle clearly intends that honors should accompany and reward virtuous people.[36] Likewise, among the virtuous engaged in political rhetoric, talk about what is most honorable can serve as a standard of value for ironing out thorny questions when different things are valued by different people.[37]

Honor here is subordinate to reason in two ways. First, only the virtuous will honor the right things, and virtue is rational. Second, by honoring the right things, we can incline people to behave as if they were virtuous even though they are not perfectly so.

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[34] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1095b22-30; 1098a7-21.

[35] *Ibid*.

[36] *Ibid*., 1131a20-30, 1130b30-5.

[37] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1365a6-8.

Thus, reason properly sets the terms of what ought to be honored both for the virtuous and for those who are not.

In contemporary philosophy, I also find a clear exponent of a type two vision in Kwame Anthony Appiah. He has put together a series of what he calls "moral revolutions" that were enacted by appeals to codes of honor. These include the end of dueling, the end of trans-Atlantic slave trading, and the end of foot-binding in China.[38] He argues that honor did not do the philosophical work, the work of proving to members of these societies that their old, long-standing social system was wrong. Honor does the rhetorical work that follows philosophical moral conviction of the wrongness of an entrenched social system. Once the moral argument against slavery had been won in Britain by the Quakers, it was a sense of national honor inflamed by war with France that brought about their expensive and difficult efforts to end the slave trade on the high seas.[39] In the case of foot-binding, Appiah shows that an appeal to national reputation was the deciding factor in motivating the Chinese to stop the practice.[40] Morality has done its work independently of honor claims, so that the reason that slave-trading is wrong is independent of the honor claim that *you, personally*, should take a share in stopping it. Honor has the essentially rhetorical role of bringing about the changes that reason sanctions.

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[38] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (New York: Norton Paperbacks, 2011), *xii*. Hereafter, *Honor*.

[39] *Ibid*., 110.

[40] Appiah, *Honor*, 60.

Nevertheless, Appiah remarks that "many contemporary people dislike talk of 'honor' and think we would be better off without it."[41] The role of honor in maintaining genuinely wicked communities is so obvious and prominent, he argues, that we forget its necessity to even the best and most wholesome communities. Is he right that morally involved people will often not do the right thing if they are not somehow motivated to do it? Appiah's historical arguments make the case at least plausible. Appiah's argument is empirical and historical: he claims that it *often has* performed that role successfully, not that *it always can*. Historical arguments can be as contentious as philosophical ones, but there is no obvious reason to reject his historical claims as implausible.

John Rawls clearly favors reason as doing the most important work in moral philosophy. His 'veil of ignorance' test is designed to help us think past factors that tend to cloud reason in order to come to conclusions that are more perfectly universal.[42] It is a rational test, and it is supposed to do the heavy lifting both in identifying unjust social systems, and in determining a just resolution to the existing unfairness. However, in the last chapters of *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls explains that he intends for his system to encourage the development of moral virtues in individual citizens.[43] Now, the encouragement of virtues is of benefit to everyone, and especially to the least advantaged. The least advantaged will have fewer resources to use, for example, and thus will benefit even more than most from the development of virtues like moderation. Thus the 'difference principle' would seem to license the use of special honors for encouraging

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[41] Appiah, *Honor, xix*.

[42] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 17-22.

[43] *Ibid*., 396-8.

virtue development. Rawls also speaks of moral shame, which is on the spectrum of honor, as a potential good insofar as it encourages people to strive toward the "excellences" that their rationally-derived life-plan requires.[44] So it seems as if both honor and shame can be used rhetorically for this purpose. This would be a type-two position.

Type Three: Honor and Reason as Independent

Contemporary philosopher Martha Nussbaum is of my third type. I want to acknowledge that Nussbaum herself would almost certainly reject the formulation that she has a central role for honor in her moral philosophy. In attributing one to her, I am going to be doing something that I acknowledge to be controversial. I argue that it is appropriate because she has a test for the attainment of justice in society that falls on the spectrum of honor concerns. Nussbaum positions herself as opposed to Kant's conclusions on both human sexuality and the absolute centrality of pure practical reason to morality, but starts from his idea of respect for other people. For Kant, respect for others *is* a respect of their rationality.[45] Nussbaum advocates a respect for a quality that is not always rational, but that includes emotion as well:

> [W]e are unlikely to achieve full respect for one another unless we can do something else first – see the other as a center of perception, emotion, and reason, rather than an inert object…. the capacity for imaginative and emotional participation in the lives of others is an essential ingredient of any respect worthy of the name.[46]

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[44] *Ibid*., 444.

[45] Kant, *Metaphysics*, 6:402-3.

[46] Martha Nussbaum, *From Disgust to Humanity* (Oxford University Press, 2010), *xix*. Hereafter, *Disgust.*

We can see why this is an honor concern if we read it in conjunction with her account of the faculty she calls *conscience*. *Conscience* is the faculty that allows us to act as morally autonomous beings in Nussbaum's philosophy. Nussbaum's *conscience* is, in other words, her analog to the reason that enables autonomous causality in Kant's account.

> [A]ll human beings have a capacity for searching for life's ultimate significance and moral basis – for the meaning of life, we might say. This capacity is a key part of what constitutes our dignity as human beings. Indeed, it is the major source of our equality, and this equality must be recognized, and respected, by any decent political order. Conscience often goes astray: indeed most of the time it does. But the fact that someone goes astray does not imply that this person does not have the power of conscience in equal measure with others. It is this capacity we ought to respect, not this or that mode of its exercise, and that means giving equal respect to all human beings.[47]

"Respect" is a significant term. It is, I suggest, a type of honor. Both Kant and Nussbaum speak of a duty to respect, although the thing to be respected differs. For Kant, respect is forced from us by our reason's realization of the moral law and the recognition that other rational agents have the capacity to act in accordance with it.[48] For Nussbaum, what is to be respected is the person as a center of experience and conscience.[49] For Kant, any political order must respect our right – he is clear that there is only one political right – and that right is the right to act autonomously insofar as those actions are do not deny other rational beings an equal entitlement to such independent action.[50] For Nussbaum, a decent political order must recognize "and respect" acts of *conscience*, which need not be rational in Kant's sense.[51] Kant's analysis of what the political right entails cannot rule a

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[47] Nussbaum, *Disgust*, 37.

[48] Kant, *Groundwork*, 6:402-3.

[49] Nussbaum, *Disgust*, x.

[50] Kant, *Metaphysics*, 6:237-8.

[51] Nussbaum, *Disgust*, 37.

decent political order for Nussbaum: to satisfy her, an order must respect at least some disagreements that are founded otherwise than on reason.

At least, that seems to be what Nussbaum's position ought to require given the way she has constructed it. However, in her argument on what a decent political order should require, she takes a position that is strongly in favor of reason overriding other human faculties of *conscience*. Indeed, she goes so far as to suggest that these other faculties "lie beneath" reason and are in need of control by it.[52] This apparent inconsistency needs to be explored in light of her overarching view of justice, that view that includes not only the exercise of our rational faculties, but a duty to other human beings of feeling the right way about them. She calls this a "combination of equal respect for one's fellow citizens with a serious and sympathetic effort to imagine what interests they are pursuing[.]"[53] Feeling an emotion – sympathy – is a part of the duty. Nussbaum has a rational argument sanctioning the existence of this duty to feel the right way, but we cannot have done our duty to others without feeling as well as reasoning correctly. We seem to owe others the honor of being sympathetic toward their interests.

If so, honor and reason are performing parallel but independent roles in determining what is right. We have a duty to make a 'serious and sympathetic' effort in imagining other beings' projects. Kant had actually made a *serious* effort to imagine what sexual minorities were pursuing. He gives his account of what he takes their motives to be near the beginning of his *Doctrine of Virtue*. The problem, for Nussbaum, is that Kant's reading is highly unsympathetic. The business of imagining what must be going

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[52] *Ibid*., 13.

[53] *Ibid*., 50.

on in the minds of people who elect non-procreative sex provoked a declaration that persons who would choose it were "loathsome."[54] Specifically, he imagines that the only reason anyone could elect such a choice is that they are intentionally rejecting the laws of reason in favor of bestial pleasures. Anyone who does this is unworthy of the respect due a rational being just because – and insofar as – they are rejecting rational nature in favor of animal nature.

Kant's rational account won't do for Nussbaum. Respect for Kant is *provoked* by reason, but while Nussbaum's sympathy is *endorsed* by reason, it has the capacity to veto reason's rulings in at least some cases. Our sympathy for the feelings of other human beings ought to show us that Kant's ban on non-reproductive sexuality is unacceptable. Kant's rational account of sexuality must fail because of just such a veto of sympathy. It is not because his arguments are found irrational, but because his conclusions are *hideous*,[55] that he is to be rejected.

Type Four: Honor as Dominant

Type four views are at least as old as Protagoras' claim that "man is the measure of all things."[56] In the dialogue that bears his name, Plato has him give a speech in which he claims that the foundation of politics is the ability of men to craft a consensus about

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[54] Kant, *Metaphysics*, 6:425.

[55] Nussbaum, *Disgust*, 50-1, 65. "Hideous" is Charles Fried's word, which she quotes approvingly. He describes the only alternative to her "imaginative" approach to sexuality, a category which must include Kant, as one that "[denies] their humanity, which would be hideous[.]" It is indeed Kant's argument that people who engage in non-procreative sex are denying their own humanity, which he agrees is hideous. He differs on who is denying the actor's humanity: for Kant, they're electing to deny it to themselves by making these choices. For Fried, the problem lies with people like Kant, who are the ones denying humanity to others.

[56] Plato, *Theaetetus*, 152a.

right and wrong.[57] This consensus about what is right and wrong serves as the basis for political communities.[58] On this view, moral philosophy – ethics and politics – is based upon accepting the political leader's speeches as a model around which to build a society. The leader is thus placed in a position of high honor by the members of the society: their thoughts are the model for their lives and their community. Insofar as honor is the showing of respect through action, here the society will have ordered all of their actions as a show of respect for the leader's wisdom. No greater honor is easy to conceive.

If Protagoras is right that he can teach speakers to make weaker arguments appear stronger,[59] then the strength of the leader's position lies not in having rationally better principles. Rather, any principles would do provided they were able to capture the honor of the community. Protagoras claims he teaches leaders to do this through speeches. Of course, the great irony of the dialogue is that Protagoras himself is unable to capture consensus from his audience on any point, not on whether knowledge is or is not virtue,[60] nor even the correct interpretation of a particular poem.[61] Still, this is the prototypical fourth view of honor's relationship to moral philosophy. Protagoras wants to create a rational consensus to guide society, but he denies the independence of reason as a moral standard. Thus, 'the stronger' argument can seem 'the weaker' argument given a strong rhetorical performance by the leader. Nevertheless, the leader will still give arguments, even if they are the weaker arguments. This means that there is a kind of rational

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[57] Plato, *Protagoras,* 320d-322e.

[58] *Ibid*., 319a.

[59] DK80b6.

[60] Plato, *Protagoras*., 349a-362a.

[61] *Ibid*., 338e-347a.

consensus at work. However, the reasons are grounded in a decision by the leader to craft a performance that leads to certain conclusions. The only way the consensus can be maintained is if rationality remains subordinated to understanding the consequences of the leader's arguments, rather than questioning whether the basic set of assumptions is valid. The irony of the *Protagoras* lies partly in the fact that, in trying to explain this to a room of philosophers and Sophists, that basic act of setting unquestioned assumptions proves impossible.

Iakovos Vasiliou imagines an Aristotelian ethics that can survive being unmoored from its teleology in his 1996 paper. [62] He begins with the problem given by Bernard Williams and Alasdair MacIntyre's that ethics have become unrooted by modern science. Williams argued that the loss of Aristotle's *telos* leaves Aristole's ethics "fatally unsupported."[63] MacIntyre claimed, according to Vasiliou, that "the enlightenment project of justifying morality had to fail" for much the same reason: the loss of a biologically-rooted view of a natural essence that can define our purpose.[64] MacIntyre is arguing, according to Vasiliou, that *no* rational justification of *any* morality can succeed. Vasiliou attempts to provide a non-rational justification that would still allow us to engage in ethics in a sensible way.

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[62] Iakovos Vasiliou, "The Role of Good Upbringing in Aristotle's Ethics," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 56 no. 4 (Dec. 1996): 771-2.

[63] *Ibid*.

[64] *Ibid*.

Vasiliou wants to give us a new ground for ethics in Aristotle's claim that being well-brought up is a necessary condition for ethical students.[65] He cites two sections of the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

> Now each man judges well the things he knows, and of these he is a good judge. And so the man who has been educated in a subject is a good judge of that subject, and the man who has received an all-round education is a good judge in general. Hence a young man is not a proper hearer of lectures on political science; for he is inexperienced in the actions that occur in life, but its discussions start from these and are about these; and, further, since he tends to follow his passions, his study will be vain and unprofitable, because the end aimed at is not knowledge but action. (1094b28-1095a6).

> Hence anyone who is to listen intelligently to lectures about what is noble and just and, generally, about the subjects of political science must have been brought up in good habits. For "the that" is the starting-point, and if this is sufficiently apparent, he will not need "the because" as well; and the man who has been well brought up has or can easily get starting-points. (1095b3-8)[66]

Vasiliou's argument is that providing these social foundations for stories about what is noble and just will provide the grounding lost with *telos*.

This is a major alteration of Aristotle's project that makes it honor-based. For Aristotle, understanding the purpose of human life meant that we could speak securely about the good for human beings.[67] Honor still had its rhetorical role to play, but reason could be the dominant force in ethics because we had a guiding end-principle from which to reason.

In Vasiliou's telling, the loss of a human *telos* does not require us to abandon the ethics. Honor thus makes ethical decisions possible for the student – it enables the moral work by grounding it with a *telos* not given by nature. It is honor that does this because

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[65] *Ibid*., 773.

[66] *Ibid*.

[67] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b23-1098a18.

the grounding is done in terms of "good examples" – a preparation to hear stories of the noble and just from our heritage. Now what qualifies as "noble and just" is exactly the matter Aristotle thought reason would help us resolve. Here, instead, what we are taught to take as examples of nobility or justice are the ground from which we reason about what would be noble or just in the future. In taking these things as our examples from which to reason, we are honoring particular persons and acts from our heritage in much the same way as Protagoras intended the leader's rhetoric to be honored. The reason that an act is noble and just is that we were taught to agree that it was, and we were taught to agree that it was because of a consensus in the previous generation that it was. Without a *telos* to ground our reasoning, we are left reasoning from consensus.

That means we are going to honor and respect our ancestors, and defend their conclusions and their models for nobility and justice. Aristotle's rational ethics is then limited to the role of helping us find the best way to do that. Reason is means/ends reasoning about how to attain the goods established by our upbringing; or, at most, it is reasoning about what we might also value given that we value these things our upbringing taught us to value. The point is that what Vasiliou takes to be reason is really an observation of community standards – in other words, a doing of what is praised.

Robert L. Oprisko's *Honor: A Phenomenology* argues for acceptance of the complete social grounding of morality. He is writing to defuse the traditional criticism of tyranny of the majority. Oprisko calls honor "the axiological total social fact," and says that there just *is no alternative* to a tyranny of the majority on moral questions. There is no system, he argues, under which limits upon honor can be placed. "The processes that make up the multi-phenomenal concept of honor interpenetrate one another to tie

individuals and groups together, such that hierarchy and peerage determine positions of value within and between societies."[68]

Oprisko builds a system in which nested social systems – including internal controls similar to Vasiliou's 'proper upbringing' – overwhelm reasoned or rational argument so completely that what appears to be rational argument turns out only to be rationalizations of the will of the group. We may believe that rationality is persuading judges or technocratic officials but, Oprisko argues, they are really driven by honor and the honor codes of the nested groups to which they belong.[69]

Oprisko argues that while we can say some objective things about what a good or a bad honor code looks like,[70] ultimately all our moral thinking is going to be subject to the demands of honor. There thus is no "outside" to which reason can appeal for independent judgment. Honor is the total social fact, which reduces all apparent autonomy to heteronomy. People who talk about reason as 'what we think,' then, are appealing to honor—whether or not they know it. Once again, Protagoras' view proves to be prototypical.

There is another type four view I want to mention, that of Lord Patrick Devlin, whom Nussbaum took as one of her opponents. Devlin argues a type four view in terms of grounding moral laws from the success of the jury function in British political philosophy. Devlin believes that all citizens should be equals in the sense that the citizens should be equally consulted on questions of public morality. This grounding of morality

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[68] Robert L. Oprisko, *Honor: A Phenomenology* (Routledge Innovations in Political Theory, 2012), 156.

[69] Oprisko, *Honor*, 99.

[70] *Ibid*. He gives the example of transparency as an objectively positive feature.

in democracy – such that the majority should rule on moral questions, *whatever* it rules – is a serious contemporary formulation from Protagoras' ground. It is prepared to take the majority as guiding, as a way of equally respecting everyone by giving them all an equal vote.

Devlin argues that the British system depends on widespread public agreement with any moral laws. Jurors simply won't enforce laws with which they disagree, and courts can't enforce them if the juries won't go along with it. Thus, the law should take seriously the question of whether the community at large finds something moral or immoral.[71] That is valid in a democracy, Devlin argues, because the refusal of juries to enforce a law demonstrates that the law is out of order with the actual values of the people. The purpose of a democratic system of government is to rule according to the values of the people, so it should be considered a good thing that the law reflects popular morality. Even if it is not considered a good thing, his pragmatic argument is that the juries won't enforce any other morality anyway.[72] If one concedes the value of the jury in a constitutional system of government, then, one ought to concede that the law should reflect popular morality in the first place.

I will have more to say about Nussbaum and Devlin in the last section of this chapter. First, however, it is time for my second example: St. Francis of Assisi.

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[71] Patrick Devlin, *The Enforcement of Morals* (London & New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 91. Hereafter, *Morals.*

[72] *Ibid*., 89-92

Example Two: St. Francis of Assisi

My second example is from history. History can be as contentious in its interpretation as literature, so I will give the same sort of qualifications for St. Francis as for the *Beowulf*. Here also I intend to discuss the case according to what I take to be a plausible but not definitive interpretation of the facts. It is most important to me to bring out the problems and questions about honor posed by the case.

Few in history have done more than Francis of Assisi to walk away from glory and the honors of the world. Though he had sought such glories as a young lancer,[73] while still a young man he rejected them. Unlike Beowulf's warriors who ate well and received fine armor, Francis threw away fine clothing and social position. He abandoned his clothes in his father's house, literally going naked out into the world.[74] He dressed himself in a robe that was apparently so worn that a peasant was ready to cast it off.

What happened with Francis' attempted rejection of honor? "Ten years later that make-shift costume was the uniform of five thousand men," writes one of his biographers, "and a hundred years later, in that, for a pontifical panoply, they laid great Dante in the grave."[75] The worn-out peasant robe became a costume of the highest honor, one fit to bury an admired poet in the presence of the Pope. Similar robes are worn still today, hundreds of years later, by men who devote their lives to honoring Francis' example by following it.

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[73] G. K. Chesterton, *St. Francis of Assisi* (New York: Image Books, 1957), 35-6.

[74] *Ibid*., 50ff.

[75] *Ibid*., 65.

Francis' story raises multiple questions. One is the question of who gets honored. Francis was honored, as a youth of noble birth, for living more like a peasant. An actual peasant would not have been honored for living as a peasant. More, a peasant who tried to walk away from his social responsibilities as Francis did might have been punished at law for not fulfilling the duties of his station. Somehow the honor of 'good birth' that Francis tried to reject came back to him in a different form. Only because he was the son of a rich man was his living in poverty thought so worthy of honor. Thus, the first question raised by his example is: who is worthy of honor?

Francis' goal wasn't to compete for a position in society, but to walk away from position *and* society in the service of God. It turns out that a new society grew up around him, and that the existing society ended up accommodating it by creating a whole new kind of position for him and his followers.[76] Francis wanted to walk away from worldly honor, and his society responded by bestowing upon him all new degrees of worldly honor. Francis wanted to walk away from wealth, and the orders that bear his name are flush with worldly resources even hundreds of years later. People still honor him by bestowing portions of their worldly wealth on him through his Orders. This is two different ways of honoring: by emulation, or by contribution. People who cannot do the former often do the latter. It is not as complete a kind of honoring, merely giving a portion of wealth instead of transforming one's life. But it is also not a failure to show honor. It is a sacrifice made to show respect for another. So that's another question: how should you honor those who are worthy of honor?

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[76] Indeed, the standard history says that the Church created three Orders according to Francis' rules. Livarius Oliger, "Rule of Saint Francis," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 6. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909), retrieved 29 June 2016, from New Advent: http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06208a.htm.

I want to say more about this second question, in order to sharpen the point. Filial piety is a very common human value, one also with significant Judeo-Christian warrant,[77] and it is one Francis completely neglected. On the other hand, when a disciple asked for leave to bury his father before following Jesus, Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury the dead."[78] Jesus likewise instructed his disciples that great rewards awaited those who left home and fields and family to follow him, as Francis did.[79] The last question is a question about reflexivity. We take care of our parents in their age and death reflexively, because they took care of us in our birth and youth. It makes sense to honor them in this particular way, given what we are honoring them for having done. Francis, like Jesus, challenges that view. They point to things beyond the world that are really the things to honor. We cannot, then, be reflexive: what things of this world would be a worthy tribute to the spiritual realm? It is really ironic that people give money to the Franciscan orders in order to honor Francis. It is heaping on him what he rejected, in order to show respect for his rejection of it. The sacred cannot be adequately honored by the profane, but the problem is bigger than that. Many people in society, such as celebrities, receive honors and respect that lacks any clear relationship to their actual accomplishments. A more refined way of phrasing the second question is: What is the right relationship of honors received to the thing for which one is being honored?

The third question has to do with the spectrum of honor. It could be that honor is a two-place relationship. Most people never do what Francis did. On that model, it would

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[77] Ex. 20:12.

[78] Mt. 8:21-22.

[79] Mk. 10:29-30.

seem that only Francis is honorable, and other people are not. But what about compared to more obviously dishonorable people, such as thieves or poisoners? Shouldn't the spectrum of honor be able to illuminate the ordinary respect that every decent person deserves, as well as the special respect due to saints and the special shame due to the vicious? Then it seems as if we should have at least a three-place relation, with the ordinary between the honorable and the shameful. So the third question is: what does the honor spectrum look like? It might be binary, or trinary, or otherwise, and that seems like an important inquiry.

Typology Two: Relations of Honor

I am going to suggest that the first two of the above questions are very tightly related. The way in which you answer "who should be honored?" has a lot to do with the question of whether honor is reflexive. For Francis and Jesus, honor properly belonged to God, and no genuinely reflexive relationship is possible there. Yet wealth and birth are the traditional things for which people were commonly honored in Aristotle's day,[80] were in Francis' day, and plausibly they are still very often are. Wealth and birth do admit of reflexive relations: one can honor the wealthy for the use of wealth in praiseworthy ways, or the well-born for living up to duties they did not fully choose for themselves (which is the reflection of the privilege of holding a social position one didn't fully earn). In his own analysis of the question of who should be honored, Aristotle suggests that neither wealth nor birth are the right standard, but virtue:

[80] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1280a11-28.

> [P]olitical society exists for the sake of noble actions…. Hence, they who contribute most to such a society have a greater share in it than those who have the same or a greater freedom or nobility of birth but are inferior to them in political virtue; or those who exceed them in wealth but are surpassed by them in virtue.[81]

What Aristotle has in mind is a kind of reflexivity between just what makes you worthy of honor and the honors you receive. That answers two of our question: both 'who is worthy of honor?' and 'how should you honor them?' are answered by this model.

You can think of a police officer as a paradigm. Someone has to do the job. Some kinds of people are better suited for it than others. You'd want someone who was fairly courageous, for example, in order to better deal with bank robbers. But you'd also want someone who was really concerned with justice, and who was good at creating outcomes that people felt were just. You'd probably want someone who was in good self-control, so that they weren't inclined to lash out with the extra power and force that is invested in a police officer. Now all these things are virtues – courage, justice, temperance – and for Aristotle, virtue is what makes you worth of honor. So it's not just that you're worthy of respect, even special respect over and above the ordinary respect we have for human beings. It's that your virtue makes you worthy of one of the honors the state has to bestow, specifically, the job of police officer.

This is an ideal case, and we can't expect reality to always work out perfectly. Still, the idea is easy to understand. There are positions that are honors, and we should want them to go to the right people. What makes you the right person is the possession of the right qualities to excel in this job. Those excellences are virtues. It's better for all of us if the right people exercise these powers that are also honors. Thus, honor rewards virtue because it is best. It is also most just, and in two ways: it is just that the virtuous

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[81] *Ibid*., 1281a2-9.

should receive the positions that they are entitled to because they are the best person to do that job. That is a kind of acknowledgement of their worth, and it is only fair to acknowledge their worth. The practice is also just because the society will experience the most just outcomes for everyone if it can put the best people in these powerful positions.

It is also possible to talk about virtue and honors as being reflexive in a different way. For Kant, moral behavior is about reason. Everyone has access to reason. Everyone thus deserves some respect, just because everyone has this capacity to reason to the good. Some people, however, actually do what they ought to do more reliably. Those people deserve a different and higher order of respect. Others sometimes don't do what reason tells them is the right thing to do. These people are still capable of moral agency, and in that regard they are worthy of some respect. However, they are not worthy of as much respect as those who do the right thing according to reason. Virtue for Kant is the strength of holding to your rationally-tested maxims. Virtue still ends up being bound up with the question of how much respect you deserve, but in a less direct way. What is to be respected is moral behavior, which is rational behavior. The potential for moral behavior entitles you to a basic respect, but it is actual moral behavior that entitles you to the highest respect.

In other words, for Kant, you are respected for having a certain capacity, autonomy, which comes from access to the order of reason. Everyone is entitled to the same basic respect for this capacity alone, and to the higher order of respect insofar as they actualize the capacity. For Aristotle, not everyone had the same capacities to excel. Honors were properly assigned to those with greater excellences, i.e., greater virtues. Both Kant and Aristotle have thus answered the first two questions, in similar but

significantly different ways. For both, the answer to "who is worthy of honor?" is "the virtuous." However, Kant extends a kind of honor to everyone for an equal capacity for virtue that Aristotle does not recognize. The answer to the second question, "how should we honor them?" is that we should align honors received with actualized virtue. For Kant, the only distinction between those who are due the higher order of respect as well as the basic respect is that the higher order follows actualized virtue. For Aristotle, we should align the honors bestowed with the particular virtues displayed. Aristotle thus has a much more complex picture, even though there is a formal sense in which their answers are aligned: honors should be aligned with virtue.

That discussion should clarify the relationship between the first and second questions about St. Francis. If the answer to "who should be honored?" is "the virtuous," then the answer to the question "how should we honor them?" becomes reflexive. Other answers to the first question do not necessarily imply any sort of reflexive relationship, and may – as for Francis himself – make such an answer impossible. Since the question of just how honor and moral virtue are related was the problem raised by the *Beowulf*, a quick glance at the earlier typology could be helpful. Type one views are reflexive,[82] as virtue and honor are both fully aligned by reason. Type two views will be as well, as reason governs the use of honor in rhetoric to align conduct with moral virtue.

The other views, in which honor is not always aligned with virtue, lose that necessary relationship. Oprisko's theory in particular ascribes honors as being granted

[82] The obvious problematic case is Aquinas, for whom the sacred comes into play in a way that it does not for Kant or Aristotle. Profane things cannot adequately honor the sacred, as discussed above. The answer his church gave, to him as well as Francis, was the creation of a sort-of spiritual honor for the spiritually honorable: sainthood. In theory canonization is a genuinely sacred honor given by God, and the church is merely recognizing the sacred honor bestowed by the sacred actor. Thus, reflexivity is restored because, though human beings cannot adequately honor sacred things, God can.

based on whatever people in given social groups happen to value. If social prestige is the defining factor, and reason serves a merely *rationalizing* function, then we should not expect there to be a uniformly rational relationship between what capacities or excellences one has, and the particular honors one receives. Sometimes there might be. The best baseball players might receive the honor and respect due to celebrities, because of their physical virtues as athletes. Other times there might not be, and someone might rise to celebrity status due to some act of infamy. Society just honors whatever it does, and it does so however people acting in groups feel inclined to do it. We can't say that they are wrong to do it that way, because 'what they do' is itself the standard for both 'who should be honored?' and 'how should they be honored?'.

Other philosophers assign some honors reflexively according to virtue or reason, and not others. Nussbaum, as discussed in the section on the previous typology, wants to extend a degree of respect to anyone possessed of *conscience* regardless of how they employ it. However, she also wants to ensure that certain political functions – honors, on Aristotle's or Plato's terms – are exercised only by those who privilege reason. Every citizen gets to vote, but some issues are to be decided not by democratic forms but by judicial ones. That is, only some with special training in rational thought and argument are fit to resolve those questions. It might even be that not everyone has the capacity to succeed at such training, which would lead us to a view harkening back to Aristotle's approach. If people are unequal in their capacities, these unequally distributed political honors are rational. For Nussbaum, though, there is also a way in which everyone is equal – her *conscience*. Thus, you have some honors that follow from *conscience* and are for

everyone equally, and other honors that are for the especially virtuous (and especially rational) among us.

Nussbaum has some support from the popular view of assigning honors. Outside of the realm of philosophers, common practice is also to worry a lot about the qualifications of candidates for President. People may or may not be good at doing it, but they take it to be a serious consideration. Like Nussbaum, there are offices in which common people worry a lot about honors being properly aligned with the virtues or capacities for which one is being honored. There are other cases in which they do not take it to be a matter of justice that there should be a rational, reflexive connection between honor and honors. They are willing to leave the fame of celebrities somewhat to chance. Some of them may become famous for excellences, and others for outrages, and yet they all enjoy fame and its advantages in our society. This popularly held view will be important in the next section, when I introduce the dispute between Nussbaum and Lord Patrick Devlin.

There is one remaining question: "What does the spectrum of honor look like?" It might be binary, trinary, or otherwise. The honor spectrum is binary if and only if it is enough to say that some people are worthy of the kind of respect we call honor, and others are not. When Kant talks about honor as a duty – which, for the purpose of this dissertation, we are taking to be just a way of speaking about morality – this is the way he talks. Kwame Appapiah's theory of honor is that honor is also binary. One is entitled to the full honor due a "good will" until, by not willing well, you prove that you are not:

> It's important to understand that while honor is an entitlement to respect – and shame comes when you lose that title – a person of honor cares first of all not about being respected but about being worthy of respect.[83]

[83] Appiah, *Honor*, 16.

Shame, according to Appiah, is the proper reward for those who choose in such a way as to fall away from being entitled to respect. Honor, then, has a kind of equality for the honorable: it is only the shameful who are unequal to the honorable. All of the honorable are equal to each other as if they were members of a club, and – perhaps surprisingly – all of the shameful are also equal to each other in being dismissed from the club of the worthy.

The view is more plausible for Kant than for Appiah, however, because Appiah wants honor to perform a rhetorical function of persuading people to do what is right. When using honor rhetorically, one usually appeals to people who are facing a choice they have not yet made. Those to whom you appeal stand in the third position: one who is facing an honorable and a dishonorable choice, either of which will affect their status. The person who has not chosen cannot be as honorable as the one who has chosen the right thing, or else there is no rhetorical motivation to make the choice. One could remain as honorable, then, by putting off choosing – in principle forever. One who has not yet chosen must also not be as bad as the one who has chosen the evil path, or one would lose the sense that to choose the dishonorable entailed the fall of which Appiah speaks.

It seems that the three place structure might even be more complicated by our need to distinguish between cases within the grades. Kant has an example that he talks about as a question of honor in which two men he paints as both worthy of execution are distinguished in virtue. One is better than the other, and better just because he loves honor more than life. His example is from what was, for him, a recent Jacobite rebellion in Scotland. The Jacobite who was a man of honor would prefer death, because he is "acquainted with something that he values more highly than life, namely *honor*, while the

scoundrel considers it better to live in shame than not at all."[84] (Emphasis in the original.) The right thing is to execute both, Kant says, because the moral difference between them makes it right to give the man of honor what he prefers, and the scoundrel what he hates.[85] This distinction only makes sense within the realm of the dishonorable, however, as it is not proper to execute just ordinary human beings: our respect for ordinary people entails respecting their right to life.

That being the case, it may be that the honor spectrum is really a continuum. We can see that the good Jacobite is still worthy of less respect than the perfectly ordinary shoemaker, as the shoemaker is not treated as a criminal worthy of execution. Yet the good Jacobite is still worthy of more respect than the bad Jacobite. Kant's use of the Jacobite example suggests that even he has a more complicated view of the honor spectrum than he often seems to allow.

Since it is possible to make better/worse comparisons within a region of the honor spectrum, it would seem that it must not be a simple three-place relation. Of two bad people, one can be worse. Neither is as good as an ordinary person. Of two ordinary people, one can be a little better or worse without falling into dishonor or rising into glory. Among the greatest of people by any standard of measure, it is possible to debate which of any two is truly the most exemplary.

Thus, the honor spectrum appears to be a conceptually divided continuum. I say that it is conceptually divided because a continuum is distinguished by being undivided. Yet temperature is a continuum, and conceptually no one has trouble declaring that a day is sometimes cold, and sometimes warm, and sometimes hot. The honor spectrum is like

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[84] Kant, *Metaphysics*, 6:334.

[85] *Ibid*.

that, I shall stipulate for now, leaving further exploration to the third chapter of this dissertation. It has the regions of honorable, ordinary, and dishonorable. Within each conceptual region, there are many possible places for someone to occupy.

Example Three: Selma

Kant's Jacobite example is also concerned with the question of how to align honor with justice. The good Jacobite deserves better, in terms of having his will honored by the court, than the bad Jacobite – even though they receive exactly equal punishments in purely practical terms. Honor issues seem to have a powerful connection to issues of justice and injustice, and yet many behaviors we might rationally identify as honorable are employed in both ways. The third, final example of Selma brings that into the light.

It happens that the writing of this dissertation coincides with the 50th anniversary of the famous march on Selma, Alabama. In order to mark this occasion, the President of the United States and many dignitaries went back to Selma in order to praise the original marchers.[86] One of these was Georgia's own John Lewis, himself a congressman of many years' standing, but who in his youth had his skull broken on that bridge by one of the policemen or deputized white citizens who had been sent to force the marchers to disperse. President Barack Obama gave a speech outlining how what they had done there, in defiance of tyranny, was in line with America's core values and something that all Americans should know about and praise. The speech drew applause from across the

[86] Alan Rappeport, "Democratic Speechwriters See Obama's Selma Address as 'Among His Very Best,'" *The New York Times*, 9 March 2015.

political spectrum,[87] the unity itself an unusual event at this particular moment in American history.

The event showed that the President thought that these marchers were worthy of the high honor of a Presidential speech attended by many dignitaries. What the Selma marchers had been marching for, however, was not 'high honor' but *equality*. They weren't marching for special respect over and above what everyone else got. They were marching in the hope of being treated the same as everyone else.

In doing so, however, they faced substantial physical danger. Their courage seemed to the President, and to those reacting to the speech from across the political spectrum, to be due not ordinary but especial respect. If virtue aligns with honor at all, extraordinary virtue commands extraordinary honors. Given the widespread consensus that the Selma marchers showed extraordinary virtue, widespread agreement with the President is explicable even in a context in which such widespread agreement is quite rare. There is an apparent consensus that the President's honoring of them was just and proper. Was it possible for them to achieve *equality* of respect without a fruitful *inequality* of respect? Doesn't justice require this inequality of respect for virtue if a society is to be guided by good examples?

That question raises another, which is whether it is possible for a society to correct itself through the power of good examples – or if, instead, a solution must be imposed from above and outside. Unlike the *Beowulf* and St. Francis examples, this one is too close to us for a fully detached philosophical analysis. I'm going to discuss the issues I think it raises in somewhat personal terms, as will make clear the attachments I have given the closeness of the event. For me, as will become clear shortly, this is a story

[87] *Ibid*.

that touches on my father and my own upbringing. In cases like these, where we are still emotionally invested in what happened, talking about what we honor can help to identify what if any values we share. It can help us find a way forward in difficult cases in a humane way. I mean by "humane" a way that takes into account that human beings are partly emotional creatures with attachments to things like family and upbringing.

In this case, the humane talk is important because there are quite complex philosophical issues with which to wrestle. I think it would be unjust to say that the protest marchers were not in an important sense the moral equals of the white militia. They were human beings marching on the principle of human equality, and therefore equality was their aim. It would be unjust also to say that they were *merely* the equals of the militia because the marchers behaved courageously – virtuously – and the militia engaged in behavior that was vicious and tyrannical. My sense is that justice requires us to say both things, somehow: that they were equals, and that they were not equals. I am also committed to an answer to the question that *if* it is possible for a society to reform itself through philosophy and rhetoric, necessarily there are cases of what I am calling "fruitful inequality." That is, we have to be able to recognize this sense in which otherwise equal people are morally unequal, because some are fit to be morally guiding examples for us and others are not. Those are my commitments, which I am not free to escape given my particular upbringing and history.

That leaves unanswered the question of whether it is possible for a society to reform itself by honoring the right people. I think this is a serious question. Honor does not provide a reliable standard by itself. The militia saw itself as honorable. White Alabama society of that era saw the militia as honorable. Members of that society thought

they were defending the honor of the state, as well as the law. The 1965 government's call for white male citizens to show up and be deputized to resist the march was answered dutifully because it was in line with the white community's values. The governor's order to stop the march was obeyed by the state and local officials. Reports from the day suggest that there was significant violence fielded by both sides.[88] This included what had apparently become a standing "posse" of mounted deputies who were armed with whips and clubs.[89] Belonging to these militias and this posse was apparently considered honorable duty.

Obviously I am not defending the actions of the police or Klan when I say that they too were motivated by honor. This is a clash of values. Even if we can answer the previous set of questions, what things are worthy of honor and how to honor, there are people who have arrived at opposite conclusions and are motived by their own sense of honor. Hence, the fact that honor is the motive force is an unreliable guide to justice.

On the other hand, we can overstate this if we focus on the dangers of honor so much that we lose sight of the goods. Let me offer a second example of a similar Southern militia at work. Another of the Selma marchers was the Reverend Hosea Williams. When I was a child, almost twenty years after Selma, he led a similar civil rights march in Forsyth County, Georgia, where my family lived. The march was attacked by the Ku Klux Klan. As at Selma, there was a second march after the violent end to the first one. Now Forsyth County in those days was an all-white county, and had been since an ethnic cleansing incident in 1912. The sheriff was a friend of our family as

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[88] Roy Reed, "Alabama Police Use Gas and Clubs to Rout Negroes," *The New York Times*, 7 March 1965.

[89] Margalit Fox, "Jim Clark, Sheriff Who Enforced Segregation, Dies at 84," *The New York Times*, 7 June 2007.

my father was part of the (then quite small) volunteer fire department, and they worked closely together in responding to accidents on the road or arsons. When the second march was to take place, the sheriff asked the volunteers to report for duty – but this time, these white Southern male volunteers were *protecting* the marchers from violence. My father was one of the volunteers who manned the roads to ensure the safety of the marchers.

Just before this second march took place, the Nobel Prize winning author V. S. Naipaul interviewed the sheriff, Wesley Walraven. "He was impressive, Sheriff Walraven," Naipaul writes. "He was an elected official, and he saw himself representing the will of the American people – who had turned their face against violence…. To meet this educated man with an almost philosophical idea of his duties was to see how far away from the center the Ku Klux Klan groups of Forsyth were."[90] Naipaul says that he seemed motivated by "Christian duty," but points out that this strong sense of duty had meant something else in the context of the South when the Klan was stronger. The Klan also used Christian symbolism and spoke in terms of Christian duty.[91] Doing one's duty as an elected official representing the will of the majority of citizens had been the enemy of the civil rights movement. So had at least one widely-believed version of doing one's duty to God. Later, those duties became the protectors and guarantors of civil rights. If these duties could be invoked by both sides, they were highly ambiguous.

Honor is powerful for good and evil. It can lead to vicious oppression, but also can be the answer to vicious oppression. It is necessary that we honor agents of change for the moral revolutions they helped to effect if we are to cement their values. In doing

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[90] V. S. Naipaul, *A Turn in the South*, First Vintage Reprint Ed., (New York: Random House, 1990), 54.

[91] *Ibid*.

so, though, we draw upon the same dangerous force that drove their opponents to resist them in order to maintain traditions and values cemented by other exemplars.

What made Selma unjust was the treatment of human beings as unworthy of respect. In fighting for a kind of equal respect, they showed themselves worthy of both that equality and also, via their courage and grace, special honor. It seems as if justice requires us to somehow say *both* that the marchers were the equals of the militia who beat them in being due equal rights, and *also* that the marchers were worthy of far greater respect than the militia who beat them. If we find the right way to say that as a society, then exercising the same universals of militia service – a service rooted in the same kinds of arguments about duty, whether to the state or to God – is transformed from injustice to justice. The honor concern thus seems to be *central* to the question of justice.

Philosophers, though, differ widely on just how honor relates to justice, or indeed to moral philosophy more broadly. In terms of ethics and politics, there are several quite different approaches to honor.

Typology Three: Honor and Force

The simplest way to show the difference in how philosophers fall out on this question is to engage a dispute between Nussbaum and British Law Lord Patrick Devlin. Devlin argued that Britain should allow for legislation on moral questions grounded in popular opinion of what is right and wrong. The basic argument is that juries would not convict someone for violating a law that lacked public support, which shows that laws should be the kinds of laws that juries would enforce. Since the laws juries will enforce

are laws that agree with their morality, laws should be grounded in just that popular morality. [92]

Having said that, Devlin points out that the argument is highly unpopular with the educated and legal elite.

> This gives the common man, when sitting in the jury box, a sort of veto upon the enforcement of morals…. it makes the jury a constitutional organ for determining what amounts to immorality and when the law should be enforced…. What I want to discuss immediately is the reaction that many philosophers and academic lawyers have to the doctrine I have just outlined. They dislike it very much…. the rational judgment of men who have studied moral questions and pondered long on what the answers ought to be, will be blown aside as by a gust of popular morality compounded of all the irrational prejudices and emotions of the street. [93]

Indeed Nussbaum clearly agrees that she dislikes Devlin's suggestion very much, and she goes on to describe it in harsh terms. She says explicitly that an appeal to the morality of the common citizen is an appeal to irrationality. [94] Devlin doesn't *seem* to think he is appealing to the irrational. He is looking for a legitimate place to ground contemporary British moral standards after the government formally set aside religion as a suitable ground for laws. [95] He accepts that granting freedom of conscience as the law of the land means that the state has surrendered the right to enforce Christian (or any other religiously-grounded) morality. This is because the state accepts the right of individuals not to be Christian nor to accept Christian morality as one's practical guide. Devlin thinks he is presenting an alternative to abandoning moral legislation entirely, which he argues

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[92] Devlin, *Morals*, 91.

[93] *Ibid*.

[94] Nussbaum, *Disgust*, 13.

[95] Devlin, *Morals*, 20.

would be much more harmful than enforcing popular morals.[96] Religion, and tradition, fails for Devlin as soon as one accepts freedom of religion. No law can properly be built on any religious tradition or rule, because everyone has a political right to reject any religious tradition or rule. Devlin's proposal is that we trust each other to collectively ground our moral systems, and that democracy is the way to do this.

In other words, on the question of "who can get it right?" Devlin is arguing that the people can be relied upon to do so – perhaps not every time, and perhaps not right away, but eventually and through ordinary democracy. No elite should stand over them, and no one should force them to revise their opinions. They should be trusted to work it out as a populace. Now trusting the people that much is showing a very high degree of respect for them. It is a kind of honor, in the sense of honor as especially high orders of respect. It is another kind of honor, too, which is the sense of honor the way Aristotle and Plato were discussing the holding of political offices. Holding the political office of 'police officer' means holding a kind of honor, in that you are trusted to exercise a particular political function. Here is a much more powerful political function, indeed the *sovereign* function of determining what the valid content of the laws might include. Devlin is suggesting that ordinary people deserve to hold this function collectively, though none of them might be worthy individually.

Nussbaum describes Devlin's move here as "explicitly claim[ing] that we should turn lawmaking over to forces that lie beneath rational argument."[97] Devlin's project strikes her as dangerous because it invests power in a class of people whom she thinks

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[96] *Ibid*.

[97] Nussbaum, *Disgust*, 13.

aren't ready for it, and who may not be capable of it. She is clearly thinking of examples like Selma, in which ordinary people were swayed by majority prejudice into very harsh laws on moral questions. I take this to be because ordinary citizens are not trained lawyers and judges, to whose judgment she appeals throughout her work *From Disgust to Humanity*. Many citizens will lack the proper education to appreciate the legal traditions out of which our political systems are built. Others may like to 'follow their gut' and do what 'feels' right when deciding moral questions – I think she must mean something like this when she writes of trusting citizens as "turn[ing] lawmaking over to forces that lie beneath rational argument."[98]

The claim, then, is that the honor of exercising the sovereign function should *not* belong to the people, but to some elite. Nussbaum argues that a "decent political order" will be based on a feeling of sympathy.[99] Presumably ordinary people can feel sympathy in the right way. Here, though, she isn't prepared to surrender to just anyone the authority to decide whether the law expresses proper sympathy. The judge of whether the system is decent must be, well, a judge: someone with the understanding and developed capacities to show respect and sympathize in the right way. Much as for Aristotle it was the virtuous man and not just any man who is the standard for ethics, for Nussbaum it is the properly trained justice who is the right ground for society's moral laws.[100]

I do not think Nussbaum is being fully just to Devlin's view. Does Devlin want a society in which irrational actors brutalize their fellow citizens? There is nothing in his work that suggests it. He is really motivated by a kind of respect for his fellow Britons.

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[98] *Ibid*.

[99] *Ibid*., 37.

[100] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1099a7-30.

He seems to believe that the British tradition's increasing trust in the judgment of ordinary Britons, the democratic leveling of power that raised the House of Commons above the House of Lords and eventually above the monarch herself, has been beneficial for the rights of everyone by and large. His argument is that we ought to continue this tradition of ever-more trust in ordinary people by investing them with this power of deciding moral questions. I don't think he believes they will come to wicked conclusions, certainly not *permanently*. He thinks the evidence of the British tradition shows the degree to which this faith in ordinary people is justified. In other words, he respects the British people enough to trust them with the political office of determining public morality laws.

If we were to accept the proposal, we would be showing honor to the judgment of our fellow citizens as a whole. This would be true even when we disagree, as we often do: rarely are democracies unanimous in their decisions. Our political philosophy would thus be based on honor. We would be free to make arguments, and as rational arguments as we like, but they would either persuade or not persuade. The final standard would not be reason, but honor: if the majority of the community came to accept a position, we would go along with it.

This is potentially the tyranny of the majority that Oprisko says is inevitable. Nussbaum is clearly worried about it. Devlin is not. His point is that, if all are involved in the decision, the decision will reflect that. His invocation of the jury as a model suggests how strong he thinks this is: a jury's decision must be unanimous. To say that a moral law that is just is a law that juries will enforce is to say that *no* moral law is just if any minority large enough to regularly turn up on juries opposes it. If they will regularly

overturn attempts to enforce the law at the jury box, they will effectively void the law in any case. Devlin thinks that his system has adequate protections for ensuring that minority views are not discarded from the debate.

Nussbaum is still quite right that, historically, that approach is how we got to cases like the deployment of honor at Selma by the Jim Crow state to form its militia. She may well also be right to question whether the people would *ever* have overcome such deeply ingrained prejudices through ordinary democracy. Certainly in the event they did not: it took the 101st Airborne, acting on the orders of the Federal judicial elite she favors, to desegregate Little Rock.

However, there is an irony in Nussbaum's debate with Devlin: she is taking the elitist position while also being the thinker more concerned that we should see each other as equals. Devlin, himself a lord, claims that talk of equality of respect for ordinary people cannot even get off the ground if philosophers hold that entrusting ordinary people with these decisions is to invoke "all the irrational prejudices and emotions of the street."[101] And it seems that Nussbaum does feel that way, for she says that his approach is an appeal to the forces that "lie beneath" reason.[102]

How elitist is Nussbaum's striving for equality? Again, Nussbaum's objection against Devlin's approach is that the ordinary citizen is likely to judge based on something "beneath" reason. That is a very strange thing for her to say, given her description of the faculty she calls *conscience* as the "major source of our equality."[103]

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[101] Devlin, *Morals*, 91.

[102] Nussbaum, *Disgust*, 37.

[103] *Ibid*.

Conscience was supposed to include not just reason but all the modes by which we might struggle with moral decisions. We were supposed to respect, she said, conscience itself and not "this or that mode" of its exercise.[104] I have said that Nussbaum has honor concerns she does not recognize, and I think we see one here. Honor and reason are supposed to agree, on this picture, if an action (in this case, an act of legislation) is fully morally correct. It should be properly reasoned, and it should be written in a spirit of human sympathy as well. We are only just to people if we 'do them the honor' of considering their perspective seriously and sympathetically.

The Devlin/Nussbaum debate gives us enough ground to see the typology. The question is about who can be trusted with the honor of wielding this sovereign function. Being thought worthy to exercise this great power is an honor not only in Aristotle's sense, but in Plato's sense. This is the "honor" that Plato is concerned about in the *Laws*, for example. There he states that properly political 'equality' lies in applying a test to everyone in the same way, and assigning the offices to the ones who best satisfy that test.

> 'Tis the very award of Zeus. Limited as is its scope in human life, wherever it has scope, in public affairs or private, it works nothing but blessings. For it assigns more to the greater and less to the lesser, adapting its gifts to the real character of either. In this matter of honors, in particular, it deals proportionately with either party, ever awarding a greater share to those of greater worth, and to their opposites in trained goodness such a share as is fit. For we shall in truth say that this sheer justice is always also the statesmanlike policy. It is this, Clinias, at which we must aim, this equality on which we must fix our gaze, in the establishment of our nascent city. And if others would found other such societies, they should shape their legislation with a view to the same end… always to justice, the justice we explained to be a true and real equality, meted out to various unequals.[105]

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[104] *Ibid*.

[105] *Ibid*., 757b-d.

It's an honor to exercise this function, but we also honor whomever we assign to it. Assigning them to it shows that we believe they are capable of executing it well. For Plato, clearly it would be a mistake to assign this function randomly. He warns us, just after the quoted passage, of the perils of assigning powerful offices by lot. As Nussbaum, he believed that there was a great good to be captured (and a terrible harm to be avoided) by ensuring that only the right people received such honors.

Devlin's type also includes John Stuart Mill, who argued that representative democracy was necessary for a kind of human flourishing.[106] While Mill articulates rational principles meant to be persuasive to his fellows,[107] he does not intend to exclude anyone from legislation. To deny everyone full participation in this democracy was to do harm to their ability to realize their full potential. While Mill was suspicious of the kinds of concerns that Nussbaum raises – he argues especially forcefully against unreasonable limitations on women[108] – he clearly trusted that someone would eventually be able to persuade his fellow Britons to do the right thing. [109] Mill was not blind to injustice, but believed in entrusting its resolution to democracy and persuasion.

Appiah's work, with its faith that honor can be leveraged to persuade ordinary people to do the work to make real a justice found by reason, is also of this type. Appiah doesn't obviously think that everyone can do the philosophical work of determining what is right. He does think that the people can be persuaded by philosophical arguments,

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[106] John Stuart Mill, "Considerations On Representative Government," in *On Liberty and Other Essays*, ed. John Gray (Oxford World Classics, 2008), 239-240.

[107] John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," in *On Liberty and Other Essays*, ed. John Gray (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 14.

[108] John Stuart Mill, "On the Subjugation of Women," in *On Liberty and Other Essays*, ed. John Gray (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 581, *passim*.

[109] *Ibid*., 498.

however, even if they may not come to the philosophical conclusions independently. Once that has been done, on Appiah's model, honor plays an indispensable role in motivating those ordinary people to do the work of realizing what they have come to believe is morally necessary. The sovereign function can be trusted to the people, in spite of their potential weaknesses as philosophers, because they are persuadable.

Nussbaum is the exemplar of the other side of this typology, in which some sort of external actor is necessary to restrain democracy's penchant for irrational injustices. It is reasonable to doubt whether the entrenched racial injustice of Jim Crow would have resolved itself without external force. As mentioned, Aristotle and Plato belong also to this type: both of them want to structure societies in such a way that there is a specialized and trusted class of elites who can act to ensure that justice reigns. For Aristotle, the most trustworthy group is not philosophers but the middle class: he thinks they will be so interested in getting back to their own affairs that they will not use government to enrich or empower themselves.[110] For Plato, famously, it is the philosopher who is uniquely driven by reason and therefore able to know the good.[111]

Kant is also of this second type. He has a democratic conception of our capacity for reason, believing far more than Aristotle that everyone can see what is right and wrong by applying the tests of the several formulations of the Categorical Imperative. He likewise argues that, in legislation, it is impossible to do wrong to fellow citizens because we all consent to be bound by our legislature and *volenti non fit iniuria*, that is, no one is

[110] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1295b25-1296a2.

[111] Plato, *Republic*, 473c-e.

harmed who consents.[112] He affirms that this means that no one subject to the authority of a legislature has any right to sedition or rebellion.[113] However, he is at great pains to design a specific society that will ensure that *what everyone should know to be right* is actually done. This includes the political institution of a "sovereign," which he claims all governments need. For Kant, only this individual can be trusted with the sovereign function. It is the sovereign's job is to veto legislation that is out of order with the state's constitution, or to remove the executive from power as necessary.[114] Such a sovereign is not bound by the law (Kant argues he cannot be bound by it and still be sovereign), and is disinterested in governance (in part because he is not allowed to own any property).[115] Nevertheless, he acts as an outside force to restrain legislation that is improper to the kind of state of which he is sovereign. Since the field of appropriate legislation is determined by reason alone, and Kant argues that there is only one political right,[116] the only reason to veto legislation would be if it were irrational. Thus, I reason that Kant believed that this outside force was necessary because – even though everyone has access to the order of reason – he did not trust ordinary people with the full power of the legislative function.

This question about when we can rely upon honor, if produced democratically or only if it is restrained by some sort of elite class, touches on a number of dangers to justice. The problem of honor killings, for example, raises questions of when a

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[112] Kant, *Metaphysics*, 6:314.

[113] *Ibid*., 6:320-6.323.

[114] *Ibid*., 6:317, 6:323-6.

[115] *Ibid*., 6:323-4. Kant here also suggests this no-personal-property rule should apply to "military honors" such as orders of knighthood, which he describes here as having a rhetorical function: "a means for safeguarding the state against indifference in defending it."

[116] *Ibid*., 6:237-8.

populace's common understanding of what honor requires is consistent with justice – but also a question about how to change it if it is not. There is also a question of which groups motivated by honor deserve to be respected: much that a nation does a mafia also does, often with a stronger degree of consent from its membership. If Protagoras were right that consensus is everything, it would be difficult to say why a democratically divided nation was more legitimate than a tightly-knight mafia.

Indeed neither Devlin nor Nussbaum considers what we would do in the face of a system in which injustice was entrenched by an *elite* that was like a mafia. Nussbaum particularly is in some peril in that her elitism offers no counter to an elite that goes wrong. Her examples may be nothing more than historical accidents: for example, that the elite of the mid-20th century United States just happened to be interested in overturning Jim Crow, and just happened to have access to a large and veteran army of non-Southerners who were prepared to enforce their rulings. What if the elite had been on the other side, as the Southern elite was aligned with Jim Crow?

The defense of her position would be that reason includes some guarantees against the oppression of minorities. That is not obviously true: many elites,[117] and indeed the Supreme Court led by no less than Oliver Wendell Holmes, [118] ruled that the forced sterilization of eugenically disfavored minorities was no violation of American rights. A compliant military might have just as well been involved in rounding people up for sterilization in elite interests – just as the elites of Communist China involved armed agents of the state in forced implementation of the One Child policy.

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[117] Bill McMorriss, "An Elite Faith," *Washington Free Beacon* 1 May 2016.

[118] *Buck v. Bell,* 274 U.S. 200 (1927).

A governing elite is quite likely to pursue its own interests rather than the interests of the common good. Indeed, it is Aristotle's claim that there is a danger of *either* elite or majority sovereignties devolving into despotic governments.[119] If a majority form does, perhaps it makes sense to appeal to an elite – as Nussbaum does – to set things right. But if the elite is despotic to whom would one look *except* the oppressed majority to restore the minority's rights? There might be some external force interested in justice, but there is no necessary guarantee of one. There *is* a necessary guarantee of an oppressed majority given an oligarchic elite. They will definitely be present, and definitely be interested. Yet can we honor the majority of citizens with the sovereign function without risking creating a different oppressed minority, insofar as the majority are often motivated by forces 'beneath reason' as Nussbaum fears? It does not seem so. Indeed, it seems both types in this typology fail: neither Nussbaum or Devlin's approach can be relied upon. Other ways of correcting honor are needed.

Conclusion to the First Chapter

The three examples of Beowulf, St. Francis, and Selma have raised three specific questions about honor. The *Beowulf* raises a question about honor's relationship to moral philosophy. There are four typical kinds of views among philosophers on this subject. The next chapter will explore that problem more fully.

The example of St. Francis raises questions about the honor spectrum. This includes a question of what the spectrum looks like – for example, is it binary or trinary, or more complex yet. It also raises a question about reflexivity in honor and honors.

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[119] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1279a17–21.

Should the honors received reflect the quality for which one is being honored? The third chapter will consider questions about the honor spectrum.

Selma, meanwhile, raises a problem of how dangerous honor can be. Honor relationships enable significant injustice, although they are also often the means for establishing or defending justice. It seems as if both the democratic and the elitist approaches to correcting honor are not adequately reliable. A further exploration of the dangers of honor and how to correct it where it goes wrong will be the work of chapter four.

CHAPTER 2

þa ymbe hlæw riodan hildediore,
æþelinga bearn, ealra twelfe,
woldon ceare cwiðan ond kyning mænan,
wordgyd wrecan ond ymb wer sprecan;
eahtodan eorlscipe ond his ellenweorc
duguðum demdon, swa hit gedefe bið
þæt mon his winedryhten wordum herge,
ferhðum freoge, þonne he forð scile
of lichaman læded weorðan.

"Then twelve warriors rode around the tomb, chieftain's sons, champions in battle, all of them distraught, chanting in dirges, mourning his loss as a man and a king. They extolled his heroic nature and exploits and gave thanks for his greatness; which was the proper thing, for a man should praise a prince whom he holds dear and cherish his memory when that moment comes when he has to be convoyed from his bodily home."[120]

-*Beowulf*, lines 3168-3177.

In the first chapter of this dissertation I laid out a four-fold typology of views on the relationship between reason and honor in moral philosophy. Types one and four are extreme views, so let us dispose of them first.

In the first type, reason does all moral work. Talk of honor is possible, but it ends up being just a way of speaking about reason's work. It is honorable to do the right thing, and the right thing is determined by reason. A virtuous person should be treated with honor, but not because one needs to have some 'sense of honor' independent of reason. Rather, justice tells us that the virtuous should be treated honorably, and the content of justice is determined by reason. That means that while one can talk about honor in the

[120] Seamus Heaney, *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation*, Bilingual edition (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 213.

first type, it is ultimately not necessary. If we could all behave justly – rationally – towards one another, no separate 'sense of honor' would be needed.

It would suffice to show that the first type is wrong if any necessary role for honor can be shown. I believe that can be shown. At least one class of human beings needs honor in addition to reason in order to come to moral conclusions: the class of children. Children don't just need adults to reason for them until they can do it properly themselves. Children only become capable of using moral reason because they are taught the mechanisms of honor. This happens in several ways.

First, children will not learn unless they are taught to honor their parents and teachers enough to sit still and listen to them. Children first experience education as doing what they are told to avoid getting into trouble. Their interest is not in learning itself, but rather in avoiding punishments imposed upon them by a system of authority. Every position of authority is a position of honor, in that entails a demand for special respect beyond what is due to an ordinary human being *qua* human being. Children are expected to show parents and teachers the respect their position deserves, and the teachers and administrators are empowered to punish as necessary to compel that respect.

The end being served here is a very rational one indeed: it is the education of adults who are capable of employing reason as independent actors. This is a point made by Protagoras in his dispute with Socrates over whether virtue can be taught. Protagoras asserts that it can be taught, and goes on to show how much trouble people take to try and teach it. The mechanisms are what I want to emphasize here. Teachers are empowered by parents to instruct the child in "everything he does or says," in order to impose standards the child is supposed to accept. They are given the authority, too, to impose order on

those who are defiant.[121] In this way, Protagoras emphasizes, students are first taught good behavior – and then can be taught their letters, or music, or poetry, to take several of his examples.[122]

This mechanism isn't wholly rational, even though it aims at such a rational end. It is imposed on the disobedient, Protagoras says, by "threats and beatings" as necessary[123] – a system mimicked in his account by the punitive system used to educate adults tempted to crime.[124] 'Fear of punishment' is of course 'fear,' and while it may be instilled for rational reasons, it is not itself rational. Many children, lacking fear of punishment, would reject these systems of authority and therefore never learn the lessons that would enable them to reason properly in adulthood. The offices of teacher or administrator of education, offices that it is an honor to be chosen to occupy, need authority in order to educate the young.

That is only the first mechanism of honor required for creating a person capable of moral reason. Another lies in the use of exemplars in the lessons themselves. Protagoras, who believes that morality is conventional – more on that in the next section – thinks that children are taught morality by being taught the conventions, "poems containing much admonition and many stories, eulogies, and panegyrics of the good men of old, so that the child may be inspired to imitate them and long to be like them."[125] It is an honor to be selected as a good example for a child to model his or her life upon.

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[121] Plato, *Protagoras*, 325c-d.

[122] *Ibid*., 325e-326c.

[123] *Ibid*., 325d.

[124] *Ibid*., 326c-e.

[125] *Ibid*., 326a.

But Protagoras is not a type one thinker, so it is no wonder that his arguments point against type one. What is interesting is that Kant's remarks on education also make use of exemplars, though Kant is the paradigmatic type one thinker. A highly-experienced teacher as well as a philosopher, Kant suggests that he finds in the young not the developed faculties but the material for their development, which must be cultivated in a certain way. Such cultivation:

> …really deals with the superior faculties. The inferior faculties must be cultivated along with them, but only with a view to the superior; for instance, the intelligence with a view to the understanding.… Understanding is the knowledge of the general. Judgment is the application of the general to the particular. Reason is the power of understanding the connection between the general and the particular. This free culture runs its course from childhood onwards till the time that the young man is released from all education. When a young man, for instance, quotes a general rule, we may make him quote examples drawn from history or fable in which this rule is disguised, passages from the poets where it is expressed, and thus encourage him to exercise both his intelligence and his memory, etc.[126]

It is important to note that Kant is doing something more with this educational method than was Protagoras. Protagoras was teaching the conventions so that students could learn to reason by analogy to the exemplars. If example X is good and Y is bad, then another thing is good insofar as it is like X and unlike Y. Kant wants not an analogical moral reasoning, but a firm moral law that is to be legislated by our reason. Kant wants the student to learn not to make analogies, but to discover and elucidate rational principles. Nevertheless, he has *no choice* but to fall back on exemplary cases of goodness (or badness) in moral education. This is because the faculties that the student will need to engage in legislating the moral law for himself or herself are developed in this way. To reason about the underlying principle, you first need examples of the good from which to

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[126] Immanuel Kant, *Education* (Ann Arbor Books: 1960, 2010), §68, 70-1.

search out the principle. Yet being chosen as a good example is an honor: students are, that is to say, being taught to honor the exemplars.

There is another issue for the type one thinker hidden here. The preference for reasoning to an abstract moral law, instead of reasoning analogically from exemplars, is at first not going to be evident to the child either. The student doesn't only need to sit down and listen. The student doesn't only need to be presented with good exemplars on which to cut his or her rational 'teeth.' The student also needs to honor the teacher enough to take the teacher's word that the whole business of learning abstract reasoning is worthwhile. It will not be obvious to the child that it is.

For a type one thinker, reason should be able to come to all the proper moral conclusions without the use of honor. For Kant, certainly practical reason can do that in a fully trained adult. In order to create such an adult, however, it is necessary to start with a child. The mechanisms of honor turn out to be fundamental to the process of crafting a rational being of the sort Kant aims to educate.

Ultimately, the fact that even Kant cannot pragmatically avoid this use of honor modes in his moral education shows that type one is not sustainable. Further, all of us start as children, which means that all of us needed to be taught honor in order to become rational moral actors. Reason alone cannot get us to morality. Some role for honor is necessary.

Against Type Four

Type one views held that honor was not necessary to moral philosophy because reason could do it all. Type four views take the opposite extreme. Of course we need

honor to do moral reasoning, they say, but really that is all that we need. As Protagoras suggested above, perhaps all we need is to honor the good examples and try to be like them. There is no real need for rational principles, just agreement about what is good. In other words, the advocate of this view holds that the way that human beings come to values is by consensus: whatever a group chooses to honor becomes the moral right from the perspective of that group.

Protagoras' grand speech in the dialogue that bears his name offers a model for this, at least at first glance.[127] In the first part of the speech, he delivers a myth in which humankind is in danger of extinction due to lacking the kinds of gifts that animals have for protecting themselves or gaining food.[128] Prometheus' attempt to save them by stealing fire from the gods leaves them vulnerable to wild beasts, as they cannot organize a common defense nor work together in friendship.[129] In pity, Zeus gives them the art of politics,[130] an ability to come to a consensus about what is right and thus pursue joint ends.

This ability to construct consensus – Protagoras claims to teach it, through artful rhetoric – is itself the determinant of virtue. This is why virtue is teachable on Protagoras' model: what is being taught is how to behave in accord with the consensus about what is good. What is to be taught is "this is right and that is wrong, this honorable and that disgraceful, this holy, that impious."[131] It is not principles of rightness or justice or

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[127] Plato, *Protagoras*, 320c-328d.

[128] *Ibid*., 321b-d.

[129] *Ibid*., 321e-322b.

[130] *Ibid*., 322c-d.

[131] *Ibid*., 325d.

honorability being taught. As mentioned above, this vision of education is like the one proffered by Kant and Aristotle, except that instead of trying to identify the rational principles underlying the good examples, the content is merely conventional. Any consensus will do, or so it would seem.

Yet there is a rational end being smuggled into this argument that man is the measure of all things. The end is Zeus' end: survival. That was why Zeus gave the gift, in the myth: otherwise, humans would be subject to destruction by the dangers of the world. This rational end turns out to have consequences for what kinds of things will really count as virtuous on any particular consensus.

Probably Protagoras would reject that formulation. He is free to say that consensus alone determines the content of virtue, and it just happens to be that "let's survive, rather than not" is a pretty persuasive rhetorical argument. His myth of Zeus's intention doesn't need to imply that a real Zeus is the source of the political art in any case. He would be free to continue to argue that *of course* consensus is the only standard of value, and *of course* people will tend to consent to pursuit of survival.

However, any alternative consensus works against the survival of the people and their socially-agreed-upon way of life, ethics, morals, call it what you like. Since such a consensus won't pass on, logically the field of available consensus positions is limited. You will receive an upbringing that values survival, because in order to have survived to pass it on to you, your predecessors had to value survival. Even if we accept that morality is determined by social convention, there is a rationality to it that comes from the dangers of the world.

By the same token, you will receive an upbringing that values courage. If someone is going to be ethical, whatever that might entail, he or she will need to be able to adhere to ethics in difficult or dangerous circumstances. The quality of being able to adhere to ethics in the face of danger is called courage, a term that is often also applied to adherence in the face of some serious kinds of difficulty.

Valuing courage is therefore fundamental to the character of any ethics. Different ethics may well differ on what the right thing to do, but they all agree that it is praiseworthy to do the right thing in the face of danger. Otherwise, 'the right thing' becomes whatever someone else decides to make it dangerous *not* to do. A person adopting such an ethics would really be consenting to being brought under this other party's consensus – and *they* value courage, because they are willing to face danger to impose their sense of what is right.

Protagoras' scheme is not just smuggling in a rational principle under the name of social consensus, in fact it turns out that there are some things that limit the field for human consensus. Thus, it is not merely a matter of convention what a given society happens to honor. Reason can show us some principles that are necessary. Those things – things like courage – are inherently honorable. Protagoras has assumed sorts of outcomes from his consensus model that would be rationally justifiable, although he doesn't want rationality as a criteria for their justification. Nevertheless, he is relying on that rationality even in his mythic assumption that Zeus would give humans the capacity to form a consensus through politics *in order to* ensure their survival.

That being the case, honor alone cannot come to a workable morality either. To come to a sustainable morality, whatever that looks like, both honor and reason have a

role. Type four fails because it thinks honor can do it all; type one failed because it thought reason could. Types two and three remain, and the rest of this chapter must be aimed at choosing between them.

An Argument from the Beowulf

Let us return to the problem of Beowulf electing to fight Grendel without armor or weapons. Aristotle's view of courage, I said in the previous chapter, suggests this choice is not proper courage but a sort of rashness. The end authorized by reason was the protection of the just state represented by the Danish kingdom at Hereot. The courageous act was pointed toward defeating a danger to that state and ensuring its stability. The courageous thing on the Aristotelian picture would be for Beowulf, as commander of his men, to have set up an ambush to eliminate the threat posed by Grendel. That would have been a brave act that would have eliminated the threat of Grendel, thus in a way attaining the end at which the courageous act was pointed.

Had Beowulf conducted an ambush by armed men, however, the Danes would not have attained the good that Beowulf won them through his heroic combat. Consider an alternative story in which Beowulf snuck out with a few close friends, armed in mail and with their swords, and killed Grendel as he was coming off the moor. Then, the Geats hid his body and crept back to Hereot, telling no one of their deed. Hereot would be safer because Grendel would no longer raid it. The Danes would not obtain the same degree of safety, though, because the story of their friendship with a heroic ally would never have spread. The Geats, meanwhile, would obtain no degree of additional safety from the reputation of their chief warrior (and future king).

All of that additional security comes from the public character of the act. Once the story of Beowulf's heroic battles went abroad, other nations knew that the Danish kingdom had a truly powerful ally. The Geats, too, benefitted from the honor due to Beowulf's heroism for as long as he lived.

A close variation of the alternative story I proposed above actually occurs in the Norse version of the Beowulf story, *The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki*. Here Beowulf – or Bodvar, as he is known in this version – does sneak out with a young man, against the king's orders, and kills the monster without anyone knowing he did it. On the morrow, Bodvar arranges for the body of the beast to seem to be attacking, so that his young friend can "kill" it in front of everyone.[132] The young man in the story had been suffering mockery in the hall from the other warriors as he was thought to lack spirit and courage. Here the good that is gained is also an effect of the public character of the act: not the defense of the Danes or the Geats, in this story, but the redemption of a young man who proves to be worthwhile but that no one was giving much of a chance. He turns out to be "another champion," and the Danish king proclaims this transformation of the young man to be Bodvar's greatest accomplishment.[133]

In other words, there are actions that are moral actions but that cannot be attained without a sense of honor. By "a sense of honor," I mean a sense like the sense of sight. It may be that some color combinations are better than others because of some rational proportion, as for example in the wavelengths of the light waves that our minds represent as color. It may be that some color combinations are merely thought to be better as a

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[132] Jesse L. Byock, trans., *The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki* (London & New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 44-52.

[133] *Ibid*., 52.

matter of convention. Perhaps both things are true, but whichever: no one can rightly judge which color combinations are best if he or she cannot see colors.

The sense of honor works like that. It may be, as I have argued in the section above, that there are some inherently honorable things like courage. It may be that other things, like the ability to perform well at baseball or on the violin, are largely a matter of convention. Whichever, one must have a sense for these things in order to make judgments about what would be best in public actions. Beowulf could make use of honor to create the strongest possible defense for the Geats and Danes because of what I am calling his *sense of honor*.

The ends Beowulf pursued are not irrational in the sense that reason would reject them. Rather, a not-completely-rational sense of honor must be intrinsic to the actions, because this honor is an essential component of the rational end. In general, some virtuous acts are necessarily public and depend on a public recognition in this way. A sense of honor thus looks not like a mere rhetorical spur to action, but a necessary part of knowing what is best in a subset of moral cases that have an intrinsic public character.

This contrasts with the view that virtue is principally private. For Kant, as we saw in the previous chapter, virtue is the strength of holding to one's maxims. Kant famously says in the *Groundwork* that the clearest case of moral behavior is in doing something from duty that you have no desire to do.[134] Virtue, then, is whatever goes on inside of yourself that helps you to do the dutiful thing. Honor, where it has a role for Kant, is also internal in this way: it is something like a sense of proper pride for having done right even where you didn't really want to do so. Ethics is a private matter, and consists of activities that need no public recognition. Nor is this view limited to Kantians.

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[134] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:397-398.

Utilitarians conceive of morality in terms of pleasure and pain, which are both internally experienced and therefore private. Even virtue ethics often speaks of things like courage in terms of facing and overcoming fear, an internal and private experience. These honor acts are less like that and more like Aristotle's magnanimity, in that they require a reflection on *what is most worthy of honor* – a question that requires thinking publicly, and considering the perspectives of others outside the self.

I do not mean to suggest by the use of my ancient example that this role for honor is a feature of a previous world. Not long ago, a team of our fellow contemporaries landed a space probe on a comet. That was a glorious thing to do. It was also an improbable thing to which to devote resources. The math involved would have seemed daunting, the expense of developing the probe extreme, and it might have seemed like a wiser investment of time and energy to do something easier and closer to home. Certainly, there are many things closer to home that are also goods, that would be easier to obtain, and that would have benefitted from the resources spent on this space probe. The end of scientific knowledge is one that reason can approve as morally valid, but the money could have been spent elsewhere on pressing concerns like hunger or disease. To have landed this probe, though, is a magnificent accomplishment that shows a degree of fullness in human mastery of math and science. The public doing of something so glorious will inspire and encourage the young to pursue their own capacities in math and science in a fuller way than pedestrian public spending was likely to do. It is the sort of act that turns people's eyes away from their experience of poverty or powerlessness, and gives them a sense of what they could possibly accomplish. The glory of the act reshapes not just lives but the course of civilizations, as Prince Henry the Navigator's glorification

of his avocation reshaped Portugal but also established much of the future history of Brazil.

One possible criticism against doing *glorious things* instead of *rationally-indicated things* is that it runs larger risks. Rashness is a vice, for example, because it is far less likely to succeed than the mean that Aristotle's courage seeks. Honor can go beyond the means reason would endorse, in order to attain magnificent things as well as difficult or risky things.

Two Arguments from Death

Here are two more arguments built around acts with an intrinsically public character, both of which have to do with our grappling with death. These arguments should give further reason to accept that one must reflect on the right way to honor others in order to be fully moral. The first argument I am going to forward here is that a sense of honor can contribute information necessary to judging which one of many possible ethically-sound actions is best.

Consider a funeral for someone you knew. Practical reason tells you that you have a duty to go to the funeral to show respect for the family and provide whatever comfort you can during their time of grief. There is nothing wrong with simply going to the funeral. However, you might also elect to serve in the honor guard at the funeral. That would be an additional honor paid to the dead. You might offer to play taps, if you own a bugle and know how. You might ask to say a few words. All of these acts are public displays of honor.

Presumably Kantian ethics would approve any one of these actions under the same maxim, "I should show respect for the dead in order to help his family in a time of grief." It is not enough to know that all these actions are permissible. One must choose a particular action to take. What lets one know which of these actions is best and most appropriate depends on something beyond gaining approval for that maxim. One needs to take into account one's relationship to the dead and to the family, which might include particular reasons to go further and do more for the honor of the dead or the comfort of the family. Alternatively, it might be felt that the relationship with the dead wasn't really close enough to merit these extraordinary demonstrations, which would instead seem intrusive to the family coming from someone who wasn't really that close. This feeling for the right way to show respect for the dead is part of the sense of honor I am describing. All of these demonstrations of respect are ways of honoring the dead. One must have a sense for these things in order to make a judgment about which of the several possible actions is really the best one.

That is an argument for how honor can help you select which is the best among several ways of expressing an ethical duty. The second argument from the dead is about how honor can show you it is best to do something you cannot have a purely ethical duty to do.

Say you are passing through a strange town, and as you are walking by a church someone approaches you from within and asks you to participate in a funeral for a pauper. They want to move the body to the gravesite, but the dead did not have any friends or family to carry a coffin so they are seeking passersby to perform the task. They ask you to participate in the funeral even though you didn't know the dead man at all.

Presumably you can't have a duty to attend the funeral of someone you've never met, let alone to participate in it as a pallbearer. Kantian duties are to rational beings, and the dead man is no longer a rational being. He cannot be offended or insulted by a lack of respect should you pass on the request to participate, and nor are there friends or family to be offended or insulted in his place. Nor did you know him while he was a rational being. If you had made a promise to him while he was still alive, there is a clear case for a duty to carry out that promise after his death; but that is not the case here. Here you are being asked not only to attend, but to play one of those roles that would normally show special honor to the dead.

In showing honor to someone who could never give anything in return, you show the fullness also of your own sense of honor. This public demonstration of respect for a stranger, and one who had no cause to merit special respect from anyone else, displays a sense that humanity itself has a high degree of worth. To avoid participating, without strong reasons, would show dishonor to the dead, but also your own lack of a sense of honor. Lacking that sense of honor, you would behave less well than someone who had such a sense – even though there is no *duty* to do this thing.

I've framed this in terms of Kantian ethics, but I think the point holds not only for deontology but also for both utilitarian or virtue ethics. The reason deontological duty does not compel you in this case is that the dead man is not a rational being any more. Reason can see the validity of the end by extension, in the way that a flag – itself just a piece of cloth, to which one could have no duty – might command a degree of respect because it symbolizes the common good for which many may have fought and died. Yet there can be no duty to the flag itself, and indeed there may be a duty to the law not to

interfere with the desecration of the flag. The real thing to be respected is the agent, and the agent might be a soldier or a flag-burner (or both, at different times in life). Making that decision is a choice all about the public character of the display of respect, or disrespect, for the institutions and people the flag represents.

Utilitarian ethics runs into the fact that the dead pauper is not a sufferer of pain or an enjoyer of pleasure. There is thus no utilitarian argument aimed at him, nor the non-existent family or friends, that would serve as grounds to explain why it would be best to serve as his pallbearer. It is something that needs to be done, not out of pleasure or pain, but out of respect.

As for virtue ethics, it aims at flourishing – and flourishing ends at death, at least in the ordinary sense for virtue ethics. Catholics, for example, honor the dead with prayers in the hope of helping their souls flourish by passing out of Purgatory more quickly: but this is an honor function, and not a rational function, given rational doubts about the existence of Purgatory (or even the efficacy of prayer). Aristotle spoke of the flourishing of the dead, and allows there is some sort of effect upon the dead from the good or bad fortunes of the living, but that it must be "something weak and negligible," and that "effects of such a kind and degree as neither to make the happy unhappy nor to produce any other change of the kind."[135] So the flourishing of the dead may be rationally questioned, and even where it is accepted to exist, we cannot be sure that we have any ability to create great effects on the happiness of those who are gone. A virtue ethicist could say that participating in the funeral assists in the flourishing of the pallbearer

[135] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1101b2-7.

himself, but if it does so, it does so just because it is an act of honoring another that proves one's own commitment to honor.

Honor does not end at death. Honor in this role arguably aims at something beyond virtue ethics, if such ethics is about living well. Honor is concerned not only with living well but with *dying* well. Honor thus aims at more than *eudaimonia*, at more than a life of flourishing. Flourishing stops at death. Honor in this aspect aims to transcend death, even to defy it as the old Viking poet of the *Havamal* says:

> Cattle die, kinsmen die,
> The self also must die;
> But glory never dies,
> For the man who is able to achieve it.
>
> Cattle die, kinsmen die,
> The self must also die;
> I know one thing which never dies:
> The reputation of each dead man.[136]

Plato has Socrates saying that philosophy was a kind of preparation for death,[137] but the two most popular ethical models – utilitarianism and deontology – both have real issues in considering the dead. Utilitarianism roots its notion of the good on pleasure and pain, and the dead can neither receive pleasure nor suffer pain. They would seem, then, to be outside of ethical practice at best. Even virtue ethics has difficulty insofar as it grounds the good on a sense of flourishing that is a living activity. Nor can virtue ethics explain why honor might be due to those who never flourished, and thus never earned any special celebration of their lives.

Yet every society speaks of right and wrong ways to act towards the dead. The respect that we owe those who came before seems to be owed for reasons that fall outside

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[136] "Havamal," in *The Poetic Edda*, trans. Carolyne Larrington (Oxford University Press, 1996), 24.

[137] Plato, *Phaedo*, 64a.

of these ethical models. Even when ethics shows us no duty to do so, reason does not reject the action as improper. However, it is honor that endorses these actions in the strongest terms, because it recognizes the importance of such public displays of respect to being the best kind of person.

An Argument from Thanksgiving

The first argument from death was about something you had a duty to do, but where a sense of honor was needed to know how to do it best. The second argument from death was about doing what is best where there is no duty. I'm going to propose one more argument, about a sense of honor suggesting the best course of action in spite of the fact that there is arguably a rational duty to do otherwise.

The argument I am going to propose might apply to many public holidays, but I am going to talk about the American holiday of Thanksgiving. I am choosing it precisely because it is a secular holiday with political[138] ties to American history. It brings together families, but it is not about the family *qua* family: it is about being part of a particular, political tradition. The holiday carries with it a certain political *mythos* about the origin story of the nation, but also a verifiable political history of support from various presidents at various times when the nation needed to be brought together. It also enjoys formal support from the Federal government as an official holiday, which enables many Americans to have the day off for coming together.

It is permissible to dissent from aspects of the holiday for ethical reasons. Challenges to the historical validity of the underlying *mythos* are ubiquitous as it masks

[138] The Thanksgiving holiday is about an American origin story, which is a key part of the *mythos* that underlies American politics; in addition, presidents including Washington, Lincoln, and Franklin Roosevelt have issued proclamations establishing, reasserting, or moving the holiday for various political purposes.

an ugly history. Though the turkey is traditional many families eat other things due to ethical commitments to vegetarianism.

Nevertheless, there are areas in which moral philosophy is unwelcome. Thanksgiving is not just a holiday with a political character, every two years it closely follows major national elections. Family members who came together to eat (and honor each other by spending some of their time reconnecting with each other) are at risk of quarreling over the politics.

One could see an argument for a moral duty to confront these differences at the Thanksgiving table. They are certainly important differences, and the feast is a chance to persuade those with whom you disagree in a context in which they cannot avoid hearing you out. Certainly there must be a duty to try to uphold what one thinks is right, especially if it is in danger. Insofar as you are rationally convinced of the soundness of your principles – and especially to the degree that you think those who disagree are motivated by irrational concerns – it would seem you have a duty to try to instruct them. Thanksgiving provides the opportunity to do so. Is there not, then, a duty to seize that opportunity out of a devotion to the greater common good?

Yet, the image of that one aunt or uncle who cannot shut up about politics at Thanksgiving is not one of respect. Just the opposite, such a figure is an object of mockery to such a degree as to show that the common opinion of such a person is disrespectful. To say that such a person is held to be worthy of mockery is to say that they are shameful. Being exposed to mockery is a kind of shaming, and if it is held that one is worthy of mockery, then it is also held that it is proper to shame someone for that kind of behavior. A sense of honor includes a sense for shame, and presumably it is this

sense – rather than a lack of competing convictions – that keeps the peace at the Thanksgiving table.

At first that looks like a dangerous conclusion. If one's sense of honor can override ethical duties, then it could in principle justify anything unethical or immoral. However, the case is not that strong. There is an ethical argument for preserving the peace at these sorts of feasts as an exercise in friendship. Friendship is an ethical matter, as Aristotle reminds us, and furthering political friendship is a key aspect of the good life:

> It is clear then that a state is not a mere society, having a common place, established for the prevention of mutual crime and for the sake of exchange…. Hence arise in cities family connexions, brotherhoods, common sacrifices, amusements which draw men together. But these are created by friendship, for the will to live together is friendship. The end of the state is the good life, and these are the means towards it. And the state is the union of families and villages in a perfect and self-sufficing life, by which we mean a happy and honorable life.[139]

"Happy and honorable" are an important part of this equation. The duty to advocate for your rational ideas on right and justice is in tension with the duty to keep the peace by treating family or friends who disagree with a degree of respect. Thus, the case is not that a sense of honor would rightfully override an ethical or moral duty, which would be perilous. What we do see in this case is how the sense of honor can inform a person on the question of balancing two different duties that are in tension. Both the duties have the inherently public character at which the sense of honor points: both the duty to advocate for political views one takes to be right, and also the duty to show respect to friends and family at a feast. The sense of honor is necessary to find the right balance between these two different things that are both morally obligatory.

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[139] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1280b30-1281a2.

A Paradox About Virtuous Acts and Public Recognition

A critic of the view I have been arguing here might say, "But isn't it the case that seeking public recognition demeans an ethical act? Consider the case of a wealthy person who donates a million dollars to a charity that does good work. That is rightly said to be virtuous, or ethical, or moral. But now consider that this wealthy person will only donate the money to the charity that does good work if that charity agrees to rename itself after her. Does that seeking after recognition not make the action *less good*?"

There are two things to be said about this. The less important is that it is not really a counterargument to me, as it is the sense of honor that would tell you whether or not a given mode of seeking honor is appropriate or not. I said above that one's sense of honor would help one know if one is intruding on a family's grief by improperly inserting one's self at the center of a funeral for someone to whom one was not that close. This is another example of that type.

Nevertheless, there is a kind of paradox here. For actions with an intrinsic public character, sometimes it is necessary to pursue an honorable action that will bring glory to one's own name. Beowulf's fight with Grendel could only be maximally effective at deterring other enemies if Beowulf pursued the most glorious victory. Pursing the most glorious victory means setting as a goal doing the most glorious thing. Yet insofar as we do something because it is glorious, we are not doing the right thing purely because it is right. That seems to diminish the goodness of the action. If so, then the only way to pursue a good like Beowulf's is not to pursue the good for its own sake, which cannot be as good as pursuing the good for its own sake; yet Beowulf's action creates benefits over and above those that could be pursued without glory.

Ultimately this intuition that glory-chasing is less good than secret acts of virtue could lead one to prefer Bodvar to Beowulf. In secretly killing the monster and letting someone else have the glory, Bodvar avoids the paradox. He does so at the cost of a kind of injustice, though: the praise everyone ends up heaping on Hjalti is in a strict sense unearned, and indeed those who have been fooled into thinking Hjalti killed the beast would have cause for complaint about being deceived. This does not seem like the right answer.

Neither is it the right answer to reject the effectiveness of Beowulf's success. There was a great deal of good that came out of his action, which not only saved the Danes but helped to bring about a long and peaceful reign of his own. Many people flourished for many years, in other words, in part because Beowulf was able to make judgments to pursue honorable actions.

Honor is an intrinsic part of the goodness to be sought on some occasions. In recognizing that fact, the paradox dissolves. The example of the donor turns out to be a poor example, because all of the goodness from the donation comes about whether or not the donor is honored in public. In order for the goodness of Beowulf's actions to be realized, by contrast, he had to be known to have done this glorious act. The seeking of personal glory diminishes the one action because it adds a less-pure motive than doing right for its own sake. The seeking of personal glory does not diminish Beowulf's action because the honorableness of the action is an intrinsic aspect of the good being sought. You cannot gain the good without gaining the honor, and thus pursuing the good requires pursuing the honor. It is doing the right thing to seek the honor, in other words, because seeking the honor is intrinsic to obtaining the good.

This explains why Aristotle says that magnanimity is both concerned with great honors, and the crown of the virtues.[140] Someone who was only concerned with achieving great honors for themselves would normally not be a very good person. When the virtuous person does the same thing, however, their virtue makes them pursue *good* things in *great* ways. I submit that what counts as *goodness* is information contributed by reason, but what counts as *greatness* is contributed by honor. It is good for everyone that the magnanimous acts in this way. Indeed, it is important to everyone that the magnanimous be assigned the honors that Aristotle talks about – honors like political position – so that the magnanimous can better do these great, good things.

Conclusion to the Second Chapter

I believe the arguments in this chapter establish that the third view of honor is the correct one. Honor does not reduce to practical reason alone, as honor mechanisms are necessary to developing the very capacity for practical reason. This is not true just for some of us, but for all of us, as we all begin as children who must be taught to honor as a means to the end of learning to reason.

Neither can we eliminate reason in favor of honor alone. Those who claim that morality reduces to a consensus about what to honor are ignoring the fact that there are practical limits on our freedom to choose our values. The consensus model ends up smuggling in rational principles like courage, or a commitment to survival, that any society would need. The claim is that consensus is at the bottom of these goods too, and it is merely the case that people consent to valuing courage or survival. In fact, logic shows us that these values are the only values that could be passed on successfully in the form

[140] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1124a1-3.

of a stable society. While some of society's values may be based on a convention or a consensus, at least some are rational values. These rational values are absolutely necessary to the success of the society.

Since both reason and honor have a role to play in moral philosophy, then, the question becomes whether honor is purely rhetorical, or whether it plays a necessary role in determining right action. I have identified several cases in which I think 'a sense of honor,' similar to a sense of sight, is necessary to knowing the best thing to do. One can only make judgments, even rational judgments, in these cases by being possessed of a sense of honor.

Thus, the third view of honor must be the correct one. Honor has a necessary role to play in at least some moral matters over and above reason. It is not merely rhetorical, nor merely persuasive, but an intrinsic constituent of some moral decisions.

CHAPTER 3

Nō ic with fram þe
swylcra searo-nīða secgan hȳrde,
billa brōgan.

"Not a word has been told to me of *your* great deeds, and neither of your sword's."[141]

-*Beowulf*, lines 582-584

In the discussion of the honor spectrum in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, I argued that the spectrum of honor requires three places: a place for ordinary respect, but also a place for special respect, and a third place for special disrespect. There remains an apparent conflict between the honor that is due to all – ordinary respect – and the special honor due to the extraordinary. To the extent certain people are honored for their expertise, non-experts are diminished, which cuts against equality. To the extent that expertise is ignored in favor of an equality of respect for all, expert voices are denied the honor of being heeded in decision-making.

A democracy eases this tension by allowing all citizens to vote. Voting involves two modes of honoring. First, the victor of the election is honored by receiving public approbation as well as political power that places them in positions of authority above other citizens. Second, those who are allowed to vote receive the honor of being trusted

[141] Translation mine.

to share in important decisions. The act of voting is a matter of ordinary respect; being elected reflects a special respect.

The democratic solution is not without serious critics. If political expertise is a kind of knowledge, as Plato and Aristotle suppose, only those who possess this knowledge have the ability to recognize it in others. Judgments of ordinary citizens who lack that knowledge then should not be respected, but rather, the expert should rule. This model requires that the state's leaders have this special knowledge.

If, on the other hand, ordinary citizens do have the ability to choose well, they should be qualified to hold office and make decisions about the right path for the state. So it was that the ancient democracy of Athens chose some of its officials by lot, a system Plato criticized as incredibly dangerous as a mode of government.[142] Yet it is a system that would make sense if expertise was not rightly favored over equality of respect for all.

There is a third, intermediate position: ordinary people can have the ability to recognize talent in others, even if they themselves are not sufficiently qualified to serve in office. This differential honor would seem to be the assumption of modern democracies. One obvious issue is whether voters have the capacity to choose between candidates who claim to have an ability that the voters do not share. Can people who themselves merit ordinary honor accurately determine who is worth of honor or, inasmuch as complex subjects require expertise to judge expertise, can honor only be bestowed by those who are themselves worthy of the same or higher honor?

This issue is not generally posed as a problem of honor. Insofar as bestowing honor on those who do not deserve it is the problem, we might suppose that the first step

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[142] Plato, *Laws*, 757b-d.

toward a solution is to take honor out of the picture and rely solely on merit. However, this requires either (a) ways of making objective determinations of merit or (b) a ruler with the knowledge to judge individual abilities. Neither of these are available. Instead, I propose that the solution depends on properly appreciating honor and the spectrum of differential honors. All human beings deserve to be honored as rationally autonomous; Kant was right about this. Some human being have usual abilities that make them essential to the functioning of the state and, thus, deserve the special honors bestowed on leaders; Aristotle was right about this. Can both positions on the honor spectrum be affirmed without diminishing either?

In the first section of this chapter I will examine the apparent conflict using Aristotle and Kant as exemplars of the two views. In the next section I justify a position that Aristotle is taking: that political offices should be treated as a sort of honor, i.e., that the offices that are necessary to govern a state are at once (1) honors that are bestowed upon office-holders in virtue of their ability to perform the requisite tasks of office and (2) jobs whose successful performance depends upon being honored by the populace. Once that assumption is justified, I will show in the third section of this chapter that while Kant does exemplify the more democratic view of honors, the logic of political offices requires him to accept a view compatible with the ancient Greek approach exemplified by Aristotle when talking of political offices. Indeed, Kant treats these political offices both as requiring different degrees of honor and as being necessary to the practical realization of his equality of respect for all. The apparent conflict between the views exemplified by Kant and Aristotle dissolves in practical politics.

Dissolving the apparent conflict still leaves a set of problems about choosing political officers. Discussing that set of problems will be the work of the final three sections of this chapter. I will draw out these problems, and then show how honor in the form of reputation is basic to democratic attempts to address them. Good reputation is a kind of honoring (and bad reputation a kind of shaming), and that serves to provide the information that non-expert citizens need as a substitute for their own lack of expertise as voters on important questions. This approach mitigates the problems of expertise in democracy.

Aristotle and Kant as Exemplars of the Different Treatments

The apparent conflict between democracy and expertise can be explicated with a review of how Aristotle and Kant differ.[143] For Aristotle, the people exercising a given function in a state would, ideally, be the people best fitted by their virtues for that function. Aristotle takes *virtue* to be a capacity for activity that is its own end; often this is simply an extraordinary ability. Thus, someone who is courageous, in the most proper sense, is best able to succeed in battle.[144] Someone who is most properly just is able to

[143] Choosing these two may strike readers as needing a defense inasmuch as Plato differs from Aristotle in certain ways but might as easily be the exemplar of Greek views, and Kant is idiosyncratic in certain ways, though also the model for many who came after him. To this I reply that Plato and Aristotle do not differ in treating political offices as honors, or political expertise as a form of knowledge; and while Kant's system may be idiosyncratic, as the discussion will show, the logic of political office compels the conclusion that political office both is and depends upon a kind of honor for any system of authority save raw force.

[144] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1116a15-1116b3, 1116b18-23, and 1117b10-20 argue that actual courage is more likely to succeed than several things (such as experience) that look like courage because they produce confidence. We get a fuller account of why in book six of the *EN* (1144a7-12; 1144a21-23). Virtue combined with practical wisdom attains the end of the right action. An obvious question: what happens when two courageous warriors come into conflict, if both are choosing the right action to be successful? The answer was given at the beginning of the EN (1094b12-28), when Aristotle explains that ethics does not admit of certainties like strict logic, but only probabilities. Making the right choice cannot *guarantee* success in ethics or politics as it does in logic, but the courageous do choose rightly.

distribute offices of the state to those capable of fulfilling them[145] or to judge between litigants and restore justice.[146] What is the most appropriate way to honor the courageous? What is the most appropriate way to honor the just? In general, what is the appropriate way to honor the virtuous?

Aristotle's answer is to allow those whose virtue makes them capable of excellent action to exercise their virtue in performing such action. This honor is reflexive: virtue is honored by being exercised. The exercise of virtue is its own reward. Honor is reflexive in the sense that activity that is worthy of honor is honored by the very activity that is worthy of honor. For example, extraordinary athletes might be honored most properly by supporting a competition in which they can engage in excellent performances. That would be reflexive. There are other modes of honoring the athlete that are not reflexive, and thus, not appropriate on Aristotle's view. An extraordinary athlete should hardly be honored with political office. Nor would wealth seem to be the appropriate way to honor athletic ability unless it were somehow tied to the exercise of that ability.

Another way of saying this is that, for Aristotle, the virtues one has are what entitle one to perform precisely those roles in society in which one can exercise those virtues. Thus, in choosing someone for the honor of military command, one should look for courage. In choosing a judge, one should look for justice—not the ordinary level of justice exhibited by someone who merely obeys the laws, but a level of justice that enables one to resolve disputes justly.

Kant is in apparent conflict with this approach because he respects the *capacity* for morality, not the actual demonstration of virtue that Aristotle is demanding. Kant

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[145] *Ibid*., 1131a24-30.

[146] *Ibid*., 1132a1-7.

declares that having a will *capable* of rational, autonomous action is what makes someone worthy of respect, regardless of whether one uses it autonomously. Will is reason giving laws to itself and obeying its own laws. In doing that, the will serves as its own cause. This capacity of reason is unique, as other things are caused to change only when outside forces act upon them in some way. The rational will apparently has the dignity of self-determination.[147] The dignity of autonomy thus belongs to all rational beings as such, and this is why Kant says ("Kingdom of Ends," his sketch of an ideal society) that although everything has 'either a price or a dignity'[148] rational beings, only, have dignity. They have this dignity because they have autonomy.

For Kant, unlike Aristotle, honor means respect of the use of rational agency. You respect the agent by respecting his or her will. Wills might come into conflict, but as far as possible they should be respected. Thus Kant arrives at his universal principle of right, which he gives as: "Any action is right if it can coexist with everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law, or if on its maxim the freedom of choice of each can coexist with everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law."[149]

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[147] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:442-444.

[148] *Ibid*., 4:434-435.

[149] Kant, *Metaphysics*, 6:230. Kant reserves the fullness of his respect for rational beings who *obey* the laws reason gives itself, as demonstrated by his use of the language of shame for autonomous beings who make what he regards as immoral sexual decisions (*Ibid*., 6:425), or for the Jacobite who chooses slavery over death (*Ibid*., 6:334). However, his universal principle of right commands that all accept – as we often say, "respect" – actions that merely do not violate the rights of others.

That may seem odd, given that Kant has a thoroughly considered and higher standard for goodness in willing that he defends throughout the *Groundwork*. Many rational beings, if not most, do not exercise rational moral agency in their choices. The reason this lesser standard is appropriate is that, generally, a person's motives are not clearly discernible by others. Indeed, true motives are not clear even to the agent. Hence, for practical purposes Kant's principle of right relies on the lesser standard of endorsing a person's freely-chosen actions unless they violate someone else's rights.

Kant's view and Aristotle's are the two exemplary views, and they appear to be in conflict over whether *moral capacity* or *actual virtue* is worthy of honor. That apparent conflict appears in turn to produce a conflict on the right way to honor people. I believe the conflict can be resolved, but first, I need to justify the ancient Greek idea that political offices should be treated as a kind of honor.

Why Political Offices Should Be Treated As Honors

Consider the judge. When litigants appear before a judge, they call the judge, "Your Honor." Only someone whom the litigants respect could impose a settlement that would be accepted or, as we often say, "respected," even if it goes against the interests of one or both. Only if litigants respect the judge or at least the process of justice will they be willing to accept the ruling. Failing such acceptance, a government has only raw power to fall back upon to enforce its laws, its rules, or its norms.

The position of judge, a necessary position for any society in order to resolve difficulties without recourse to violence, depends on honor. Societies empower their judges to hold litigants in contempt of court for a reason. The reason is that the judges need to be respected in order to obtain the society's end, in this case, nonviolent conflict resolution. The power to demand respect and punish contempt compels litigants to honor the judge.

This is not to say that the office is based on honor *rather than* ethics, or that there are no grounds for honor apart from power. The office certainly is ethical in that having judges enables this nonviolent conflict resolution. What could be more ethical that an objective resolution of competing claims of justice? The point is that the logic of creating

a position that can rule in a way that will be accepted by all parties requires honor *as well as* ethics. Being granted the power to compel respect by holding people in contempt is itself an honor. What I have called 'the honor spectrum' is clearly at work: the litigants must show equal respect for each other, but the judge is in a special position that receives a greater degree of honor than they give each other.

Honor plays another role in the courtroom. The process of litigation in general depends upon an atmosphere that is less emotional and more rational. The formalized honors and courtesies of the process reduce the emotional friction somewhat, which is important because litigation is often already emotionally tense. Rendering formal honors helps contribute to an atmosphere that allows the parties to have a fair hearing and that is more likely to result in a just ruling.

In the best case of all, the litigants would themselves come to an agreement about how to resolve their dispute that the judge can simply endorse. A fully consensual agreement between the parties would respect both of their interests to a degree that each finds acceptable. The mutual respect that is enforced in the courtroom allows the parties to negotiate in a manner that can sometimes reach an agreement that they apparently were not able to negotiate outside of court.[150]

Just as honor is necessary for the judicial process, the same basic honors enable the functions of the legislature, and meaningful debates about politics among citizens too. Reasoning about what the laws should be needs to be done in an atmosphere of mutual respect, which allows the formation of bonds of trust. Those bonds of trust make

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[150] Of course, the power of the court can also persuade someone who has resisted a settlement before coming to court to accept it, rather than to risk a judgment that might be worse. I am thinking instead of that subset of cases in which citizens who are too angry with one another to discuss things rationally find that they can agree on terms, however grudgingly, once the matter is brought up in a controlled and formalized environment.

negotiation possible. Where mutual respect and trust are absent, the formal courtesies of diplomacy provide the only entry to building (or rebuilding) them. The same principle holds in diplomacy, where formal honors are of first importance especially in trying to bring peace between warring factions. Until everyone stops screaming and cursing at each other, no progress can be made.

Finally, in democracy, the peaceful transfer of power depends on special respect for the will of the winning side. Honor is essential to the political process. All sides' opinions are due an equality of respect, but the side that puts together a victorious coalition gains the special respect of being allowed to govern. If the losing side will not grant that special respect, democracy is in danger of collapsing into war.

Yet democratic disputes are often over basic differences on moral questions. When someone is wedded to acting in a way one thinks immoral, that implies that this other person is contemptible. When a faction loses to another faction it holds in contempt, that special respect due to the victor is likely to be withheld. Finding the capacity to show that respect even where one differs on deep moral questions is therefore necessary to the survival of any democratic system. So is ensuring that those who come to hold these offices are respectable *enough* that it is not impossible to show them that respect. The existence of democratic government depends upon unsuccessful candidates' willingness to respect the judgment of the electors, however unworthy and immoral they judge their successful opponents. All parties rely on the capacity of the electorate to recognize when their elected officials have failed them and, thus, to vote them out of office. Respect for the judgment of the electorate is necessary to sustain democratic government. There is, as it were, an honor circle: inasmuch someone elected to office owes his position to the

electorate, he can only respect his achievement if he honors the electorate that has so honored him. And the electorate, in turn, is willing to honor someone who they believe will not betray their trust but serve the public good and, thereby, honor them in turn.

Thus, it is not just that some offices cannot function without honor. Judges depend on honor, yes. Diplomacy depends upon honor. The ability to resolve conflicts without violence depends upon honor. The very survival of democratic government depends upon honor. It is therefore proper to distinguish the respect due to fellow citizens from the increased degrees of respect due to officeholders. This is to say, recognizing the honor spectrum and the consequent respect for the collective decisions of ordinary voters as well as respect for the offices of government is essential for the existence of democratic government.

Because positions on the honor spectrum are necessary features of these offices, it is appropriate to consider them "honors," as Aristotle and Plato do. The offices not only require special respect to function, but they also should be awarded to those who merit such respect. This is because the collapse of respect for the office imperils the essential functions of the role. Treating these offices as honors that should be assigned reflexively, that is, to those capable of fulfilling them, addresses both the fact that special respect will have to come with the office, and also the importance of ensuring those who are put in a position to command that respect do not undermine the office by behaving in a manner that is not respectable.

How Kant's Political Dignities Protect his Ideal of Equal Innate Respect

To reiterate, the apparent conflict between Kant and Aristotle came from the fact that Aristotle talks of honor as being the reward for a special few who do especially well, while Kant views a kind of honor, respect, as a general entitlement for rational beings. For him, the capacity of all for rationality is good enough to make all respectable, provided only they do not violate the rights of others. Yet Kant is not thinking of government when he talks of this equality of respect for human beings. This equality is pre-political, or "innate."[151]

When wills do come into conflict and need a mode of resolution, unequal political offices prove necessary to orderly conflict resolution. Kant agrees that we are going to need judges and sovereigns[152] and that these offices are going to require different degrees of "dignity."[153] Kant says specifically that it is "beneath the dignity" of a sovereign to be a judge,[154] but that both offices are "dignities" over and above what ordinary people have.[155] I suggest that these different *degrees of dignity* are rightly thought of as different places on what I have called "the honor spectrum." Exactly as defended in the previous section, the special honors of political office follow necessarily from the nature of the offices.

Respect for someone as a moral agent is not the respect that is due someone for a special expertise. An office like sovereign requires special respect, as all political offices

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[151] *Ibid*., 6:331.

[152] *Ibid*., 6:313.

[153] *Ibid*., 6:317-318.

[154] *Ibid*.

[155] *Ibid*., 6:315.

do. This is because of the logic inherent in a process of government. In order to be a sovereign, one has to be able to impose one's will on others. If everyone was equally entitled to do that, no one could do it: every act of will would be overruled by other wills. The same applies in a smaller way to judges, which explains why the judge's dignity is of a lesser degree than a sovereign's: a judge could be overruled on appeal if he ruled badly, but a sovereign (on the model Kant is defending in the passages cited in the paragraph above) cannot be appealed to anyone. These degrees of dignity are the honor spectrum, with different places for sovereign, judge, and citizen.

That does not mean that ordinary citizens cease to have 'a dignity' in the sense Kant meant in the *Groundwork*. Kant explicitly defends the inability to lose that status in the *Metaphysics of Morals*.[156] However, when conflicts between autonomous individuals require a political solution, someone has to decide on that solution. This power cannot be shared equally among all autonomous beings. The power can only be exercised by someone placed in a position of authority with the capacity to make the determination that is imposed on the others. The need for authority imposes a consequent need for a special respect.

It is possible to question Kant further on this. When thinking of people as individuals with autonomous free wills, Kant's principle of right accepts their choices as right as long as they do not impose on anyone else's equal autonomy. That was what he gave as his "universal principle of right." What to make of the fact that judges have a

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[156] *Ibid*., 6:331. Specifically, Kant asserts that the judge can only make rulings determining the fate of one's *civic* personality (which the judge is free to destroy if merited by a crime), but not one's *innate* personality (which must always be treated as an end in itself). This may be a dubious distinction, given that the punishment will be inflicted on neither of these allegedly severable personalities, but rather on the body of the criminal. Nevertheless, the distinction does allow Kant to maintain that the innate dignity of the person is stainless—and limits the jurisdiction of the judge.

clearly unequal capacity to impose their will on others, treating them in a sense as fit objects for heteronomous determination? Is that not a violation of the universal principle of right?

Kant clearly does not think that judges are a danger to the universal principle of right. Rather, the need to defend that very principle is what justifies the judge's power. The judge's role is to adjudicate cases or controversies about how the universal principle of right should be applied, as a disinterested third party standing between two interested parties in conflict over the question of who is violating whose rights.[157]

Even citizenship, for Kant, involves a practical inequality. Though all are entitled to "freedom and equality as human beings," all are *not* necessarily qualified for the "equal right to vote… that is, to be citizens and not mere associates of the state."[158] Practically, Kant argues, some are too dependent on others to be able to reason with the full independence proper to a citizen. Yet the fact that people are disqualified from citizenship by dependency on others is, in his view:

> …in no way opposed to their freedom and equality as human beings…. Whatever sort of positive laws the citizens might vote for, these laws must still not be contrary to the natural laws of freedom.[159]

Those natural laws of freedom are presumably expressions of the universal principle of right. Thus, the sovereign, the judge, and the citizens all have a role in reinforcing the universal principle of right. Their *inequalities* of dignity while performing their political role all exist to defend the ultimate *equality* of dignity that each shares with all other rational human beings.

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[157] *Ibid*., 3:316.

[158] *Ibid*., 6:315.

[159] *Ibid*.

Kant also ends up appealing to what I am calling "the honor spectrum" for political offices. He also provides an additional reason to honor political officers with the special dignity that their office requires. This reason is that having these leaders removes obstacles to the citizens' exercise of their autonomy. The differential degrees of honor in politics are not at odds with the equal respect due to human autonomy. Rather, these different honors are mutually necessary.

Insofar as special dignities are needed for political offices, Kant recognizes that special skills will be needed for particular political offices. As mentioned, he thinks ordinary tasks of citizenship require independent means. Serving as judge or sovereign requires a special knowledge of the law and ability to execute it. When thinking of political offices, including citizenship, Kant agrees with Aristotle that the role should be assigned to someone whose capacities enable that person to do the job well. Aristotle calls these enabling qualifications "virtues" while Kant does not, but whatever one calls them, Kant agrees that they are properly considered in assigning political offices.

So, Who Has these Qualities?

Even once there is an agreement that political offices need certain qualities, finding the people with the qualities proper for these political offices is not easy. Ultimately this is what the first chapter of this dissertation referred to as "the sovereignty problem." Plato and Aristotle had looked for a virtuous statesman to choose people with the virtues fit for their jobs because, as we might put it, it 'takes one to know one.' What does that mean? Consider again the judge: how can the litigants know his quality as a judge if they are not themselves experts in the law? Choosing a good judge is the work of

someone who is already an expert in law and its practical application, and the litigants are not. To have confidence in the judge, then, the litigants have to respect the manner in which the judge was chosen. This is a problem at every level of government, and it underlines how important honor is to litigation: without respect for the manner of choosing the judges there is no respect for the judge, and without respect for the judge there is no way to resolve these disputes except through force.

This holds for other kinds of political office. It is important for the long-term stability of the government that these necessary offices be filled with people who merit the extraordinary honors they exercise. Otherwise the necessary respect will wear away, and because it is necessary, the loss of that respect will undermine the existence of the office. But how does one know one can respect the officeholders? At minimum, one has to respect the manner of their selection.

The problem with Plato and Aristotle's method of selecting the right people for political honors can be grasped from Socrates' remarks in Plato's *Apology*. When trying to refute the oracle's claim that he, Socrates, was the wisest of men, Socrates started by going to men who were reputedly wise and examining their claims about things like truth or beauty or virtue. He found that those reputedly wise were confident that they knew things about which they contradicted themselves when questioned – and, thus, proved they did not really know.[160] If even these are not wise, Plato argues, likely no one is wise where these ultimate questions of justice and beauty are concerned. If there is no one who knows justice and if someone needs to know justice to be just, there is no one to choose

[160] Plato, *Apology*, 21c-22a.

judges and leaders who are just, nor is there anyone with these characters who could be chosen. Clearly, this model is unworkable.

Indeed, it is not clear that the model was workable even if we assumed that such statesmen could be had. In the *Laws*, Plato talks about rebellion against the rule of the highly-qualified statesmen.[161] The rebellion is provoked when the statesman does exactly what he normally ought to do: he assigns powerful positions and their necessary honors only to those who are most qualified for the jobs. The statesman's high degree of reason, which allows him to see that a person is the right choice for a job, is not present in the many. The many cannot see that they do not deserve the honors and powers being assigned, and desire the honors as well as the powers, and they therefore will in time revolt if the statesman persists in only assigning honors to the best people for the job. Because it takes someone who is already virtuous to recognize the rational virtue in others, those who do lack reason will not be able to see why those chosen are right for the position and why they themselves are not right for a powerful position and the honors that necessarily come with it.

So resolving the apparent conflict between Kant and Aristotle answers only the question of what characters make one worthy of honor whom to honor, not how to find people with these characters. Plato's expression of the need to sometimes resort to 'equality of the lot'[162] shows that even in the presence of statesmen the problem does not go away. If the statesmen do not exist to begin with, another answer has to be reached.

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[161] Plato, *Laws*, 757b-d.

[162] *Ibid*.

Democracy and the Transference Problem

Voting provides one answer to the question of 'whom to honor.'[163] For people to honor someone else is to accord him a special attention and to respect what he has done and what he thinks. However, the act of honoring someone enables him to influence those who honor him not just in the area that he is worthy of honor, but in every other area. People are free, as autonomous individuals, to make independent choices about whom to honor in this way. Citizens who are not experts may hear bad but passionate arguments from celebrities and, not being experts, fail to realize that the arguments are bad. This is potentially a grave concern, as the attainment of political positions of power by those who are not worthy of respect can undermine the necessary respect without which the positions collapse. That could mean the collapse of an entire system of government.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, voting is itself an honor both for the citizen (who is respected as someone whose voice should be considered in common decisions) and for the elected official (who is being granted the power to command a special position on the honor spectrum as well as to govern). Thus, honor – in the mode of honoring one another as voting citizens – provides a workable solution to a problem that philosophy has so far failed to answer.[164] Again, there is a kind of mutuality of honor here: the successful candidate is authorized by the voters. So by executing the office in

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[163] An obvious objection is that 'voting provides one method' is not a defense of democracy, but merely an observation that it is one way of solving the problem. Providing a defense of democracy is a philosophically significant undertaking that should be handled separately. For the purposes of this dissertation, it suffices to note that any system of government will require honor for the reasons already stated. Non-democratic systems require treating some people as more respectable to an even greater degree than democratic systems, which at least recognize some mode of equality. Thus, democracy minimizes differential honor's role in government relative to other systems, and nevertheless still proves to rely on differential honor in ways that this section of the dissertation will explore.

[164] Coincidentally, this workable democratic solution also solves the rebellion problem Plato was discussing. In the absence of a statesman, of course, there can be no problem of rebellion against the statesman, but the problem may generalize to any sort of rule by an elite. Plato, *Laws*, 757b-d.

the way he or she promised, he or she respects the voters as the source of legitimate authority. In this way some of the respect they accorded with their votes is returned to them. This system of voting is only *workable*, not ideal, but it is a functional substitute for wise statesmen or objective systems of merit. The system of selection is trusted because each of the people concerned has a voice in it and because mistakes in the selection process – and there are many – can be rectified in future elections.

Nevertheless, this move to democracy as a solution is not without its own problem. If there is a sewage crisis in a city, the best thing way to find a solution is not to put the question to a vote but to consult an engineer. Where specific technical knowledge is possible, one does indeed want an expert. Multiple claimants to expertise may present themselves as the ones to fix the crisis. In a democracy, anyone is free to make an argument that *they* are the expert whose advice is needed. The citizens trusted to evaluate these arguments and vote on them are not generally experts themselves. Evaluating the strength of these claims is, in other words, already the domain of the expert. How does a non-expert citizen know whose arguments to take seriously?

This remains a sticky question even for those citizens who are themselves experts at *something*. To return to the *Apology*, at one point Socrates went seeking knowledge among the craftsmen. He says that he did find knowledge among them, knowledge of things like how to make a pair of shoes. However, in knowing the one thing they knew, the craftsmen overestimated their capacity for "perfect understanding of every other subject, however important."[165] This overconfidence means that even expert citizens may not make ideal decisions about whom to honor. Their expertise does not transfer outside its proper area but, unfortunately, their confidence in making decisions about their craft

[165] Plato, *Apology*, 22d.

gives them confidence to make decisions outside their craft, where they have no expertise.

This transference problem means that people often take themselves to be plausible candidates for office based on expertise in irrelevant fields. Consider a baseball player with a high salary. He may well be excellent as a baseball player, and deserve some sort of honor in that field. Say now he turns to politics, and runs for President as a celebrity candidate. Such a candidate can reach a wider audience than an ordinary candidate because, in addition to the audience their political party knows how to reach, they bring their own audience. A celebrity also has personal wealth to expend on advertising or outreach, and can more easily garner free media. Thus, though his major claimed qualification for office is a wholly irrelevant expertise at baseball, he is more likely to succeed than a non-celebrity candidate (even a real expert). This transference property of celebrity, of wealth, or of fame creates an endemic problem.

On the other hand, some skills may transfer well to government. Someone who has had a successful career in business management may indeed be a good choice to head an agency like the Commerce Department. Honor for business acumen may thus transfer to political honors legitimately, as may other sorts of honors. The mere fact that honors are being transferred across fields cannot, therefore, serve as a heuristic to rule out the person from consideration.

The attention paid to someone worthy of honor for one ability could bring to light abilities or behaviors that less than honorable, as when the extra attention paid to someone because of a heretofore-successful career brings to light a hidden indiscretion. In this way, the act of bestowing honor can work to undermine the problem of

dishonorable people being treated to political honors. However, we cannot rely on honor to check honor in this way.

Reputation as a Solution for "Whom to Honor" in Democracies

In the previous section, honor – in the form of voting – provided an answer to a problem created by the absence of statesmen. The answer, however, created other problems. In this section, I want to suggest that another mode of honor can provide an answer to those problems as well. Mistakes are inevitable in any human system, but honor can help to limit them.

Honor in the mode of *reputation* is what provides this answer. Few of us would be able to evaluate the quality of the work of a physicist, engineer, or doctor even if we had evidence of performance in front of us. Instead, we rely on the evaluations of those who are qualified to make such judgments: other physicists, engineers, doctors, etc. We discover what those evaluations are, imperfectly, as the person advances through his career. They come to us as his reputation.

People begin their careers, typically, in positions of little responsibility and work towards more important positions with more responsibility. At each step in the process of their advance, they are being judged by people who are well-positioned to evaluate whether they were good at the previous responsibility. Non-expert citizens may not be in a position to judge the candidate's business acumen, but they can see that those who were in a position to do so did so favorably, and repeatedly over time. Their reputation in their company can stand as an imperfect substitute for the voter's own knowledge.

The same holds true in government. Say someone runs for a local office, serves well enough that they win support for a state office, and later turn that performance into a successful run for Congress. Such a person may, if they build a good reputation as a Congressman as well, be a good choice for Senator. Their good reputation, which is a form of honor in that it is itself a special respect, can be a heuristic for a non-expert citizen who is trying to decide for whom to vote.

The Senator, in turn, may be asked to confirm a nominee for the role of Supreme Court Justice. Senators often ask questions about ideology at the hearings for such nominees, and on the subject of political ideology a Senator may well be an expert. But they are also trying to assess the capacity of the potential Justice as a judge, and a Senator may not personally be in a position to evaluate a judge's quality *qua* judge. What they can do is consider the opinion of other judges, Justices, and legal organizations about the quality of the nominee. A good reputation, here too, is a heuristic that can stand in for personal expertise. The substitute is not perfect. Reputations are not always deserved, and a real expert might choose differently than the Senator. Nevertheless, a good reputation among judges who are themselves reputable is a functional substitute for personal expertise.

Though only assigned democratically at the highest levels,[166] military command is also based on a reputation system. Excellence of performance at lower level command and staff positions translates into promotability to higher levels. This is combined with a strong preference for those who have earned honors in the form of military awards during

[166] Technically all American military officers are appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate, but for all but the most senior positions this democratic consent by the Senate is *pro forma*. It is not so when considering very high appointments, such as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

their service. These awards serve both to honor a given act of excellence, and also to help evaluate your suitability for future assignments.[167] When an officer rises through the ranks to be nominated for a position that involves an actual Congressional vote, these awards are a heuristic for voting Senators who are not themselves always experts in military matters. Even if they were experts, they were not present and so rely on the testimony of others.

A second mode of honor that can stand in for expertise in selection comes from success at challenging tests. Unlike military generals, who can build reputation over time and increasing levels of responsibility, special operations soldiers need to be selected at a young age to be effective. This need to choose them young means that they must be chosen before they can show a reputation built on a long series of smaller tasks. Instead, they are put through grueling exercises designed to test whether or not they have the virtues to succeed. These include not only physical excellences, but also virtues of character – such as tenacity – that come out only under stress. Some political offices are similar. A sheriff should ideally have built a reputation for excellence as a minor officer of the law, but even the least significant officer of the law has real power. Junior police officers also have to be selected relatively young.

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[167] The awards process is a good model for handling fine judgments about positions on the honor spectrum. There is a sense in which the Silver Star and the Navy Cross recognize Marines for the same thing: particular excellence of courage in combat actions. There is another sense in which they are distinct: the Silver Star is the third highest award for valor, whereas the Navy Cross (in the Navy and Marine Corps) is the second highest. Determining which award is proper to a given set of actions is thus to some degree a judgment about just *how brave* the Marine was. To make this judgment as fairly as possible, the initial award recommendation is submitted to review. The review process involves a comparison of the facts on the citation to similar cases, in order to reach a judgment about where in the array of similar acts this particular act belongs. In this way, reviewers do their best to ensure that the judgment of which award is appropriate is one that most people would feel was correct.

This idea that any disinterested person would come to the same conclusion is the criterion of 'universality' in Kant's model for judgments on taste. The subjectivity of the military officers involved might make awards seem unmerited. Concern for the subjectivity of awards helps to keep them more objective; so does a diverse group of reviewers.

Tests can also be useful for people who might be wrongly excluded from building a reputation in the traditional way. Those subject to prejudice, even subconscious prejudice, might be excluded from opportunities that would allow them to build a reputation. A test, such as exposing their work to double-blind review by experts in the field, can help to identify people like this and enable them to begin to build the reputation their merits deserve.

In these cases, these honors are intended for those most worthy of executing them—the same reflexive criterion that is the ideal for all offices. Here, though, the determination of worthiness falls to a series of tests. Why, though, should anyone trust that the tests are relevant? There are two possible answers, depending on the age of the test. If the test is older, and has succeeded at producing good soldiers or police officers in the past, the test has its own reputation based on performance. If the test is newer and as yet untried, a good reason to trust that it might be reliable is if it was designed by proven officers of good reputation themselves. A test like blind review, for example, depends on having the reviewing done by people already recognized by experts. These tests will hopefully be rationally constructed, but the testing remains an honor function: the experts who design or perform the test have to be selected on the basis of their own reputations. Their reputation as experts in effect transfers to those who can succeed at tests set by these reputable people.

Even the best test is no substitute for experience, but it can at least eliminate some people who are clearly unqualified and select for capabilities that often do prove trainable. Over time, if the newer test is successful, it will develop its own reputation. If not, it can be adjusted by those with a reputation for proven expertise in policing. Each

failure is harmful, because the honor and power of a police officer is assigned to someone who does not merit it. However, reputation provides the means to mitigate the harm by reducing the number of such failures, and by providing a means for refining the tests. Here, too, the failure to choose individuals worthy of the honors given them is remedied, so far as possible, by through a system that is based on reputation.

Conclusion to the Third Chapter

Reputation is an honor-based system for solving the problem of balancing an equality of respect for all with the need to identify the right experts for leadership. Kant, an exemplary thinker for those who point to a fundamental human equality of dignity, found differential *dignities* in political offices to be necessary to defending the very equality his political philosophy champions.

What Kant's treatment shows is that the positions of equality and difference on the honor spectrum are mutually reinforcing. Offices like judgeships enforce the legal order that realizes Kant's human equality in a practical way. Since the offices depend upon a differential honor to function, the differential honor turns out to be necessary for the realization of equality of dignity. By the same token, their role in the defense of this equality of dignity is the thing that justifies the differential dignity for Kant. These special honors are thus justified by the very equality that they defend.

Assigning offices means assigning honors. It is extremely dangerous to assign political honors to someone who is unworthy of them, or otherwise to undermine the respect on which the offices depend. For this reason, systems of assigning political honors need to be capable of being respected by those who are required to live under

them, and these systems also need to be capable of selecting people who do genuinely merit the special honors associated with political office.

Identifying the right people is difficult, and democracy brings with it its own problem, which I have called the transference problem. People who are respected for any cause command, in a democracy, an ability to transfer that respect out of the areas in which it might be appropriate. There is no real answer to the transference problem, only ways of counterbalancing it. Reputation provides several means of mitigating the dangers, but mistakes are inevitable. Autonomous individuals cannot be constrained from respecting whomever they will – even if one decided, *contra* Kant, that it was proper to do so.

Yet the bad choices of free people have serious consequences. There remains a dark cloud around honor. Its power at enabling a successful politics can be turned to enabling other, more oppressive powers as well. In contesting those oppressive forms, it is necessary to draw upon the same powerful forces of honor that the oppressors do.

CHAPTER 4

Modþryðo wæg,
fremu folces cwen, firen' ondrysne;
nænig þæt dorste deor geneþan
swæsra gesiða, nefne sinfrea,
þæt hire an dæges eagum starede;
ac him wælbende weotode tealde
handgewriþene; hraþe seoþðan wæs
æfter mundgripe mece geþinged,
þæt hit sceadenmæl scyran moste,
cwealmbealu cyðan. Ne bið swylc cwenlic þeaw
idese to efnanne, þeah ðe hio ænlicu sy,
þætte freoðuwebbe feores onsæce
æfter ligetorne leofne mannan.

"Great Queen Modthryth perpetrated terrible wrongs. If any retainer ever made bold to look her in the face, if an eeye not her lord's stared at her directly during daylight, the outcome was sealed: he was kept bound in hand-tightened shackles, racked, tortured until doom was pronounced – death by the sword, slash of blade, blood-gush and death qualms in an evil display. Even a queen outstanding in beauty must not overstep like that. A queen should weave peace, not punish the innocent with loss of life for imagined insults."[168]

-*Beowulf*, lines 1931-1943.

Of the three problems set out in the first chapter, only the last remains: the problem of misplaced honor. The paradigmatic example in chapter one of this dissertation was Selma. I argued that in addition to seeking justice and equal rights, the marchers were motivated by a desire for respect. Respect, as we have seen, is a type of honor. We also saw that the whites who opposed the marchers were motivated by honor as well. They felt that national laws undermined their autonomy and authority, and they

[168] Haney, *Beowulf*, lines 1931-1943.

felt their social position was threatened by demands for equality. Of course, the conflict was primarily a matter of justice, but honor played a role in motivating both sides. Honor served justice and it opposed justice, and in the end it helped secure justice: when a similar march took place in Forsyth County decades later, the police and the white volunteers supporting the police felt it a matter of honor to *protect* the marchers and their rights.

How reliable a motive is honor if it can provoke good and bad actions? This is the problem of misplaced honor: people make mistakes in assigning honor to objects, values, and actions. Honor is responsible for opposition to equal rights as well as for battles between competing mafia gangs, ethnic and religious conflicts, and so-called "honor killings" of young women perceived to have disgraced the family. The previous chapters have shown that honor is necessary to morality and to good government, which means that we cannot set it aside. We have to face its dangers squarely. That means asking how the abuses that come from honor can be avoided or, where they already exist, corrected.

One seemingly obvious answer: employ reason to determine what is worthy of honor, and only honor those things. That answer is incomplete. Reason has a crucial role – it identifies those values that are necessary for democracy, for example – but reason alone cannot do the work. For one thing, as shown in chapter two, honor has a role in intrinsically public moral acts that is independent of reason. Likewise, passions can disrupt reason's rule. Consider fear. There are clear moral arguments against mafias, and people who are subject to their threats probably quite fully understand the *reasons* mafias are not worthy of respect. Nevertheless, many will demonstrate respect, honoring the mafia's members, as refusing carries immediate dire consequences but questionable

benefits. This is not quite what Kant would prescribe: he would insist on rational autonomy even unto death – indeed, Kant describes that impulse as a proper *love of honor*[169] – but the reality of passions like fear and the intractability of entrenched circumstances to a single heroic action makes correcting honor with reason impractical.

Still, the shift between Selma and the Forsyth County march shows that manifestly honor can be corrected. The police and the militia that supported them in the former case thought they were defending the law against insurgents who refused to abide by that law. The police and supporting citizens in the latter case had come to realize that defending the law had to include defending Constitutional protections, and that meant doing the opposite of what their predecessors had done. They came to honor the right things, and that honor defended those things.

Knowing that a correction can be made is not the same as knowing how to do it. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I discussed a dispute between Martha Nussbaum and Patrick Devlin over the allied question of the way morality is embodied in law.[170] This touches on cases like Jim Crow in which laws are grounded in prejudice. Nussbaum relies on trained judges to make a just decision on moral issues, and that seems to be what happened during the Civil Rights era. Years later, once tempers have cooled, the benefit of the court rulings is obvious to all sides. Thus, forceful imposition of a just ruling has its benefits.

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[169] Specifically, Kant says that the good man threatened with the choice of death or slavery chooses death because he is "acquainted with something that he values more highly than life, namely *honor*, while the scoundrel considers it better to live in shame than not at all." Kant, *Metaphysics*, 6:334. Kant also discusses "*love of honor* (*honestas interna, iustum sui aestimium*)" as a virtue that helps resist vices like servility at *Metaphysics*, 6:420.

[170] This discussion is on pp. 48-59 of this dissertation.

Nevertheless, forcing others to honor things is not ideal in a democratic form of government. Even worse, applied might is not always on the side of right: the Supreme Court had previously been on the side of 'separate but equal,' and – as the first chapter of this dissertation points out – enforced sterilization for the sake of eugenics.[171] The answer to the question of correcting honor cannot simply refer to the authority of judges, then.

Devlin looks to jurors more than to judges. He points out that the enforcement of the law ultimately depends on the decisions of the juries charged with convicting or acquitting those who are prosecuted. The system trusts juries to come to just decisions about whether to enforce the law; why not trust the same group of people, i.e. that group from whom juries are drawn, with authority over what those laws should be in the first place? The two functions are not quite the same, but they are allied. Only the jury needs to sift through the claims made and determine what the facts are, and only the jury is charged with imagining the experience of a particular accused in order to consider whether or not the state is prosecuting unfairly. However, both the jury and the legislative function involve a consideration of whether the law itself is unfair and, as Devlin points out, juries regularly refuse to enforce laws that violate the jury's own moral ideals.

Even if a single jury gets a particular case wrong, the broader public from which that jury was drawn will discuss that case and come to better conclusions about how to rule in future cases. In that way, the jury function and the democratic legislative function are very similar. Both involve a communal discussion aimed at determining the broad principles that should govern cases of a given type. Both functions require mutual respect, including the respect that comes from seeing each other as mutually empowered to make these kinds of decisions. That kind of respect is on the honor spectrum as respect

[171] *Ibid*., 58.

for the authority of fellow citizens, a crucial form of respect in a democracy. Nevertheless, what then would one say about the Southern juries that would not convict a white man for a lynching? Devlin would have to say that, while that can happen, communities like juries self-correct over time through this process of communal discussion. Nussbaum has every reason to question whether in fact they will.

One can ask philosophically what basis there is for thinking that community attitudes about justice might change. Change is difficult in the face of strong passions and entrenched traditions. Much of the opposition to civil rights was rooted in fear. Reason alone seems to be inadequate in the face of passions like fear. Something else is needed to make the change.

René Descartes has a helpful discussion of the limitations of reason in controlling the passions. Passions are necessary to counter passions, he argues, so that reason can rule. He distinguishes passion from active emotion as follows: passion is the result of something outside the body acting upon it or the body acting upon the soul, whereas active emotions result from the activity of the soul on the body. Reason generates emotions indirectly by stimulating the imagination. His insight is that active emotions can quiet passive emotions. I will examine his discussion in the first section of this chapter and, then, argue that honor resembles emotion. Although misplaced honor cannot usually be corrected by an act of reason, at least directly, it can be corrected with a contrary, more powerful object of honor. Whereas Descartes's passion versus passion opposition takes place within a person's mind and is initiated by the activity of reason, the honor versus honor opposition I explore here is mostly public and, by orienting people to honor what is really worthwhile, it allows reason to make correct judgments. This discussion of

honor shows that honor can have an instrumental role in correcting honor for the sake of correcting reason. However, I believe that honor has a stronger role to play. In many cases, when the dispute intrinsically involves honor, honor can be more than an instrument of reason. Honor can itself be the method of enabling a resolution of the conflict. In order to discuss this stronger function I will divide the cases of abusive honor into four kinds. This will be done along two axes. The first axis will be whether one is personally directly involved or looking on as an observer. The second axis will be whether or not force is being used to compel the rendering of honors. This gives us four kinds of cases: Self/Force, Self/Nonviolent, Other/Force, and Other/Nonviolent. Each of these types of misplaced honor requires its own remediation. I will discuss each in turn in separate sections.

Again, the question this chapter needs to answer is, "How to avoid honor's abuses or, when abuses are present, how to correct them?" I will first explore Descartes's argument that passion must be corrected by contrary passion and then show its implications for honor.

Understanding Descartes' Model

Why don't people just stop doing bad things in the face of rational arguments that those things are wrong? Partly, this is because honor has a role independent of reason in some moral decisions, as is explored in the second chapter of this dissertation. Even if that were not true, however, there would still be a problem for attempts to use reason alone to fix these abuses.

In the paradigm case of Selma, those who resisted change did so because, I submit, they were afraid of what would happen if they stopped suppressing the minority population. The threat of force by the Federal government provided a contrary set of things for them to fear. Fear of government force countered this fear of the minority, allowing the community to change its direction. One fear can counteract another because they are the same thing: fear. Reason is a different kind of thing, one that requires gaining some control over things like fear in order to function.

In order for that explanation to work, an account needs to be given of what 'kinds of things' reason and fear are and how those different things interact. Descartes gives a kind of model, one that I want to adapt, in his *Passions of the Soul*.[172] Descartes argues that there are bodily mechanisms that influence the way the mind functions. Passions like fear are caused when things that are outside of us impress themselves upon our bodies thereby producing physiological changes affecting the brain, the heart, the blood, and the nerves. Characteristic physiological states constitute the physiological dimension of the passion. On Descartes' model, the brain's pineal gland is the locus for the interaction of the soul with the body. Through the pineal gland, physiological states associated with different passions act on the soul. The soul, on the other, can act on the body through this gland. The soul has reason and will, but in order to use them effectively to cause the body to act, the soul must counter the force of the passions created by outside objects impressing themselves on the body or by the body itself acting upon the soul.[173] The soul

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[172] René Descartes, *Passions of the Soul*, trans. Stephen Voss (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989), §46-50.

[173] *Ibid*. The mechanisms themselves are not important; his physical model is certainly wrong. What is important is strong passions do seem to disable reason, and his model provides a way to counter that.

does this by creating a counterforce that acts upon the body and neutralizes the force coming from the body. It creates, as it were, its own passions, active passions, that act upon the body. In physics, whenever an outside force acts upon a body and, at the same time, another, opposing force acts upon the same body, the motion of the body depends on the relative strength of these forces. So, too, if the force of the soul's action on the body is stronger than the outside force that causes the bodily passions, the soul can direct the body to action. As noted in the previous paragraph, one fear can be overcome by a stronger, contrary fear.

Descartes relies on the soul itself to generate the contrary force that opposes the force of the passions. The soul can do this even though it cannot directly summon contrary passions, Descartes argues. He believes that a will that wishes to oppose outside passions has to imagine objects that will engender an opposing passion.[174] Thus, the person in battle imagines the scene of his disgrace or of harm coming to his wife. He choice to imagine such scenes is an activity that spurs a powerful desire to triumph in battle. Hence, the resulting courage is due to the soul's activity, rather than the body's passive perception. Facing hostile fire, a person has a strong inclination to proceed to safety. However, rightly exercised, the soul can overcome external forces.

In other words, Descartes is describing a problem for people being able to act on the decisions of their reason. Descartes certainly wants reason to play the deciding role, rather than for people to allow themselves to be driven by outside passion. He endorses what he calls a "strong soul," meaning one that wills according to its "proper weapons," which are "firm and determinate judgments relating to good and bad, which the soul has

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[174] *Ibid*., §45.

resolved to steer by in everything it does."[175] These determined judgments are clearly acts of reason, and they are meant to make the ultimate decisions on good action. However, even the will of the strong soul still needs to generate opposing passions in order to act against strong passions coming from outside.[176] Again, the reason the soul must do this is that passion is a physiological response that continues to influence the soul until the soul can modify the physiology. The soul does this by imagining things that provoke passions that oppose the passions coming from outside, in effect neutralizing them. Only once it has done so can the soul take a positive action dictated by reason.[177]

The passions that the soul uses the imagination to generate are active emotions, because they are choices of the soul. The passive emotions are the ones imposed by outside forces. Passive emotions create problems for reason. The soul can call upon active emotions as contraries to these passive emotions, thus allowing the rational will to regain control.

Honor as Instrument

Passions are often connected with honor. Fear can motivate dishonorable acts, for example. Love can motivate brave actions.[178] By the same token, honor and shame can provoke passions: being shamed in public is likely to produce a passionate sense of humiliation. That suggests that some of the same analysis of passions can carry over to

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[175] *Ibid*., §48.

[176] *Ibid*., §46. Descartes says that the will can at best stop itself from acting on strong external passions until it has generated a contrary passion.

[177] *Ibid*., §45

[178] Courage is inherently honorable; see discussion on p. 68 of this dissertation.

honor, even though honor is not simply a clash of forces within a mind. The causality does not just go one way, with passions provoking actions that are honorable or dishonorable. The receipt or expectation of honors (or of shame) can also provoke the related passions. This allows honor to be used as an instrument of reason.

Descartes was talking about a way of opposing passions with something generated internally by the soul's use of imagination. One of the things that can be imagined is the receipt of honor, or the avoidance of shame. This *imagined receipt of honors* is different from *actual honors* in that the actual honors entails another person's public act to honor you, whereas the imagination of receiving honors is something your soul[179] is doing for itself internally. What remains the same is that both the imagined honors and the public reception of honor can create an opposing force in you to help your rational will regain control. Honors can thus fill the role of either active or passive emotions.

An example of the internal case has already been given: imagining the respect you will receive for completing a dangerous mission. The public case involves another person. Say one receives a humiliating review at work. The humiliation is a passion whose force can make it hard to appreciate which parts of the harsh review were legitimate criticisms; that, in turn, can make it hard to reason about how to address those aspects of the criticism. The passion of humiliation can drive one to reject the whole criticism as unjust, or – alternatively – to submit to its force by resigning in disgrace. Neither of these improves one's performance at work, and improving one's performance was the whole point of the review. A wise employer refocuses someone after such a review by praising the things one does well – that is, providing a contrary honor to the

[179] Or mind, etc.

shame of the humiliating review. Then, rather than just rejecting the review or resigning in disgrace, one can begin to think critically about how to improve one's performance.

Thus, honor can be used to correct the abuses of honor as an instrument that aids reason. The honor is an external cause, a motivation that might have come from active emotions had the person had a strong soul. In addition to the actual receipt of honor or shame, which I have just described, the use of an internal sense of honor – as with imagined honors – can be used to create an opposing passion. Note that while shame is externally received, the "fear of shame" is a passion that can be produced actively. If fear of shame can be opposed to fear (or other passions), then love of honor can as well. This is because the fear of shame and the love of honor are just two names for the same thing; one speaks of fearing shame when one is imagining being placed lower on the honor spectrum, or of loving honor when imagining doing things that would merit rising on the honor spectrum. To reflect on how one's comrades will despise one for abandoning one's mission is just the other side of reflecting on the respect one's comrades will feel when they learn that you won through in spite of all the difficulties you had to face.

Honor and shame are not passions, but they can produce passions either passively or actively. In the active case, what Descartes is calling 'a strong soul' can thus use these reflections, these imaginations, to give its rational will the chance to rule in spite of fear. This kind of love of honor, the active love of honor, allows the soul to act on a determined judgment by imagining honors *deserved*, rather than honors *expected*. There is a parallel with Aristotle's magnanimous man, who acts out of a concern for *what merits great honors*, but who proves to be disdainful of whether or not he receives any actual honors: when he receives honors he knows that what he merits is better than

anything that anyone can actually give him; should he receive dishonor, he is unconcerned because he knows that is unjust.[180] The strong soul and the magnanimous (note the similarity of the formulation) thus have an autonomy in their striving for honor that answers one of the chief objections Aristotle raises against honor as a motivation: that it depends on others, instead of being proper to the man and not easily taken from him.[181] These active emotions are proper to the individual because they are the product of an internal decision, and the sense that one's difficult and virtuous act *merits* honor is not easily taken away.

Thus it is possible to discuss honor and shame independently of the passions it produces. One object of honor can be posed against another. If the wrong thing is honored, the right thing can be honored more. The objects of honor that sustain democratic-self government are the right things to honor, at least if one is a citizen of such a democracy, because they enable all the goods that come from a representative government. Objects of honor that are harmful to democratic self-government can therefore be remediated with honors for the things that are right to honor.

How does that work? The strong soul can sometimes also use honor in the passive sense, not to correct themselves but to help another correct themselves. Perhaps someone is doing wrong because they are swayed by a strong passion. First, honoring or shaming can create a contrary passion that brings them out from under the powerful influence of fear. One can then engage their reason to help them work to a better decision.

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[180] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1124a4-16.

[181] *Ibid*., 1095b22-1096a4.

As an example, let me return to my discussion of Martha Nussbaum's book on disgust.[182] Nussbaum's approach to disgust is to treat it as an irrational force that is baleful in its effect on human morality – a passion, if you like, that disables reason. Reason should rule in politics, she argues, not the dark forces that lie beneath reason.[183] Nussbaum does not use my technical terminology, "honor spectrum," but for her to say that someone is disgusting is to put them in a special place of disrespect, indeed quite deep disrespect. Nussbaum's argument is that disgust involves such a deep disrespect as to entail a rejection of the other person's humanity, making it impossible to treat them justly.[184]

Yet, even while arguing against using disgust in political philosophy, Nussbaum regularly uses the language of disgust to refer to her opponents. For example, she writes of the justice deciding the Oscar Wilde case, "[W]e might say that his whole speech… is more like vomiting than like judicial argument." This is a literary analogy designed to compare the justice to a disgusting sort of person – a man vomiting in public. This literary analogy carries a part of the force of her argument. This direct analogy between physical disgust and moral disgust comes up occasionally in her work, as when she quotes approvingly Charles Fried's description of those she takes to be her opponents as doing something "hideous."[185]

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[182] See pp. 49ff of this dissertation.

[183] Nussbaum, *Disgust*, 13.

[184] *Ibid*., 65.

[185] *Ibid*., 50-1, 65. Fried apparently shares her view of what opponents of gay rights must be doing, as he describes the only alternative to her "imaginative" approach as "to deny their humanity, which would be hideous[.]"

What is going on here? This technique would not work if her audience were the actual judge who made this ruling, as it would likely offend him and make a discussion much more difficult. Rather, her intended audience is third parties she hopes to persuade to disagree with the judge. The judge's honor creates a transference problem for her. Judgments of judges are generally to be respected, that is, placed on the honor spectrum above the judgments of ordinary people. By describing this judgment as being like *vomiting*, Nussbaum's rhetoric creates a contrary effect in mind of the reader. She is using words like "vomiting" to provoke her readers to imagine something disgusting associated with the judge and his judgment in this case. Unlike Descartes's suggested use of imagination, this imagination of vomiting is not created internally for purposes of the soul's own. Rather, it is something Nussbaum is provoking in her readers using the language of disgust. She is using language of emotion to describe honors and dishonors. She is, moreover, implying that the judge's decision is unworthy of our respect because we ought to respect a worthier object, humanity. The judge's ruling deserves not respect, but the disrespect for his reasoning implied by the word *vomiting*.

Note that her purpose in using disgust this way is rational, which is interesting because a major argument of her book is that disgust is necessarily irrational in a way that is deadly to reason. Nussbaum has a set of determined judgments that she would like to convince readers to accept. Yet, as part of her attempt to persuade people to accept these rational judgments, she resorts to what she herself has described as an irrational sort of appeal. Perhaps she does this to free some readers to do the work of considering and (hopefully) accepting her rational argument. Tacitly agreeing with Descartes, then, she writes as if at least some readers' feelings cannot be reasoned away: emotions have to be

resisted with emotions. Thus, though Nussbaum sees herself as making an argument *against* disgust, ironically she elicits that very feeling in making her case. The success of this rhetorical technique undermines Nussbaum's explicit philosophical argument: disgust as she herself is actually using it *can* be used to provoke a reasoned and fairer treatment of other human beings. She is shaming precisely in order to win a space for reason.

It should not be surprising that she has to appeal to honor and shame here. Honor is intrinsic to the problems she is trying to solve. Honor has *everything* to do with her problems of mutual recognition and the respect we show one another. Her problems are about people who are placed on the honor spectrum in positions of special disrespect that they do not deserve.

This discussion of honor as instrumental to reason should make clear that honor can have a role in correcting abuses of honor. I will now suggest a stronger role for honor in resolving abuses of honor. In this stronger set of cases, honor is not merely instrumental. It is the method for resolving abuses.

Honor as Method: The Typology

I have interpreted Nussbaum's use of the language of disgust as instrumental to the purpose of getting readers to consider her rational argument. It is not necessary to use honor instrumentally in this way. Honor could be used directly as the method for addressing her concerns. The problem she is concerned with is that a segment of society is held in deep disrespect. She is offering a rational argument for according respect to victims of irrational disdain. For the reasons noted earlier, reason is rarely effective by

itself in opposing passions or reorienting people towards honoring more worthy objects. That, I have suggested, is why she repeatedly emphases how disgusting her opponents are as people. In making an argument for why gays and lesbians merit respect she is also showing a demonstration of respect for people who wrongfully have been the victims of disgust. Being a prominent figure herself, she is moving members of her social circle into joining her in revaluing people who have been dishonored. Her prominence is itself on the honor spectrum as a kind of special respect; Nussbaum is effectively using her position of special respect to increase respect for another group. This group gains in respect by being respected by the respectable.

Inversely, for her to say that people who think as her opponents do are "hideous" is to use her position of prominence – of respect – to assert that her opponents are largely unworthy of respect. A *hideous* person is presumably unworthy of almost any respect. If this is right, Nussbaum uses both honor and shame directly: to accord honor to people who had been regarded as disgusting, and to undermine the respect in which her opponents were held. This might provide an answer to the question of how abuses of honor can be corrected or, at least, mitigated by honor itself. Nussbaum's usage provides a model for one approach that fits cases similar to her chosen problem. It is necessary to consider a larger spectrum of cases to see how the same principle of opposing honor with honor might apply to different kinds of abuses.

I am going to sketch a typology of abusive cases of honor, and then work through each type separately. The first axis of division will be whether one's self is directly subject to the abuse in question. If one is, then the case falls in the "self" half of the

model. If one is not, it falls on the "other" side. The second axis will be whether or not force is being used unjustly[186] to compel honors.

Thus, the four are: Self/Force; Other/Force; Self/Nonviolent; and Other/Nonviolent. Note that the division between the Self/Force and Other/Force quadrants depends on whether or not you yourself are having honor compelled from you by force. It is not a division between cases in which you yourself, or only some other, may use force to oppose this act. There may be cases in which honor is being forced from you in which another, for example a peace officer, would be the one to whom you would appeal for any necessary force. That is still a Self/Force case because the attempt to extract honor by force is being directed against you. Likewise, if *you* are a peace officer, the case in which you are called upon to assist (say) a woman being subjected to a threatened honor killing is not a Self/Force case for you; this is because the force attempting to compel honor from another is not pointed at you, but at her. Ultimately nearly all force cases will involve both a Self/Force and an Other/Force aspect. Any such case necessarily has a Self/Force aspect because if no one were being subjected to force directly, the case would not exist. Similarly, the only way a case could be purely Self/Force is if everyone was directly under threat. Thus, a case like Selma would be Self/Force for the black community in and around Selma; it is Other/Force from the perspective of everyone else. Unlike the typology in the second chapter of this dissertation, this one is not intended to be all-encompassing or formally rigid, so that a given case always only falls in one category. Rather, this typology is for the purpose of

[186] For the purpose of this dissertation, the justice depends on what is necessary to sustain a democratic society. In general it is wrong, in a democratic society, to attempt to compel more-than-equal respect from another by force. The exception is the special respect needed by officers of the democratic government, but this exception is justified exactly because those offices exist to reinforce a fuller equality between citizens. See pp. 95ff of this dissertation for a discussion of Kant's defense of this approach.

contemplation or discussion. Readers may see ways in which methods identified in one area could apply in other areas. That is fine, as encouraging further thought along these lines is my intention in raising this discussion.

In talking about methods that can work, I do not mean to imply that these methods always will work. Honor issues are very difficult to address, and some of these issues – as the discussion will show – are at best balancing acts. It could be easy in such cases to go too far in using honor to redress a problem, causing a new problem. Other times the attempt to use honor may simply fail, especially if people are not also virtuous to some degree. I do not mean to convey the impression that acting in the following ways will solve all of society's problems. I only wish to illustrate how honor can be used to mitigate abuses of honor.

Self/Force

Say that you own a business of some sort, one that has flourished in a community for some time. One day you hear that a crew of gangsters has moved into the community, and is beginning to demand protection money from businesses like your own. People sometimes refuse to pay, but when they do they have their legs broken or their business burned. One afternoon a man who is identifiable as one of these gangsters enters your shop. He wants to talk about your paying him protection money. He wants your money, but he is also demanding your respect. More than that, he is treating you with disrespect by asserting that he views you as being of so little worth that he can just take what you've worked hard to build. What is to be done?

Refusing straight off, and showing him that you very much do not respect extortionists, would be highly honorable behavior: it is the sort of thing motivated by Kant's *love of honor*. However, most people are not ready to stand up to a gangster by themselves, and would thus only get their legs broken or their building burned. That would create an example for the mob that would help them tighten their control. Some people may be personally capable of standing up to gangsters, but if they do so only for themselves it does nothing to uproot the mob as a threat to the community in which they live. As a result, they will still see the effects of the mob's reign of terror on people they are directly concerned with as friends or neighbors. Autonomous reason would seem to dictate a direct and immediate refusal, but for many that resembles jumping in to rescue a drowning person when one does not know how to swim.

Making an ethical argument to the gangster is probably useless. It is unlikely that the gangster is not aware of moral arguments against extortion or arson. Making an ethical argument to other shopkeepers is even more useless. They are likely to agree with the argument, because they likely already agree with the argument without the bother of anyone making it. Of course they understand why nobody should beat them and take their property. The problem isn't that they don't share the right values, but that they do not feel safe acting on those values.

All the same, submitting to this extortion would mean allowing the values that underlie your stable community to be subverted or worse. If you choose this path, you will end up living in a society that treats decent people without respect, but honors thieves and gangsters. The attempt to extract honor by force must always be opposed, because if it succeeds it destroys the foundation necessary for any decent society. The

values that enable a decent society are worthy of honor because, without them, everything else one values is endangered.

So what can you do? How do you decide what kind of honor to give the mob?

It is true that the mob's treatment of you as someone who can be bullied implies a significant insult. However, one is not required to reject the provocation instantly. A hasty reaction to an insult can have the effect of confirming it – if someone calls you a 'hothead,' for example, a heated response proves they were in some sense right about you. The mob thinks you are weak, so weak that they can bully you into handing over your property. What must be proven is that you are not weak enough to bully, and that requires care given the nature of the threat.

There is thus a place on the honor spectrum that a mob genuinely merits, and that is the place due to serious threats. A serious threat has to be respected in a way. It cannot be disregarded (which would be a form of disrespect) because it is indeed a serious danger. It has to be faced and considered carefully, and that attention is a form of respect. The mob demands this attention and consideration. One ought to give some thought to how to address the threat it represents.

Does honor provide methods for doing that? Several. I am going to walk through the methods that you, personally, could use as someone who is building up a response to a mob. Honor is external, so these honor modes necessarily involve others: but the mob is affecting you, and your efforts to organize a resistance to it in your community may thus embrace any or all of these various approaches.

A first answer lies in the honor invested in the criminal justice system. The previous chapter looked at ways in which good government is necessarily built on modes

of honor. The police and courts, and institutions like the FBI, they all depend on forms of honor; so, one way to use honor as a method to correct an abuse of honor is to appeal to that kind of governmental system. The justice issues and the honor issues are closely connected, but the honor of the courts and the police is necessary to their ability to correct a mob.

Of course, the police and the courts find it difficult to handle a mob without evidence. Mobs try to leverage this fact by terrifying people so they will not speak to the police nor testify to witnessed crimes. This is exactly the kind of situation in which active emotions must be generated to resist such fears. The citizen faced with a gang must be brave in order to testify, but the courage can be found – and not just through balancing fear of the long term harm to family or community of a rampant mob against the fear of being hurt one's self. Kant is not wrong to invoke his *love of honor* as a virtue because it can stiffen moral resolve.[187] A free society needs people who are devoted to the ideal of freedom to defend it, and not just intellectually devoted. They also need to be *courageously* devoted.

Even an honor-loving shopkeeper may not feel safe testifying if he or she feels isolated and alone. As one among those shopkeepers, you have it in your interest to encourage others to testify as well because it reinforces your own likelihood of winning in court. Honor can be used as a method of encouraging this through friendship. Plato and Aristotle separately argue that any society, even a society of thieves, requires a degree of political friendship.[188] Without it the thieves would not even treat each other well enough to work together. It is also this political friendship that allows them to trust one another

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[187] Kant, *Metaphysics*, 6:394-395; 6:420.

[188] Plato, *Republic*, 352b-d; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1167a21-30, 167b1-5.

enough to engage in criminal behavior in defiance of the authorities. A democratic society theoretically enjoys a stronger mode of this political friendship because it has a more robust ideal of justice. Political friendship is weaker than actual friendship, as not all citizens are friends. Still, all citizens are like friends in that they have a set of common values and work together towards a common end. For example, people who live by this stronger democratic ideal of justice can trust one another more than thieves can trust other thieves.

Both trust and friendship are forms of honor. Trust, like friendship, comes in degrees. The more one is trusted the greater the honor, because of the higher the degree of respect entailed by the greater degree of trust. Friendship is also related to honor in just the same way. The greater the friendship, the more one invests one's self with another person. That increased degree of investment – in time, in attention, in concern for the other's good – is an honor to receive because not everyone can receive it equally. By investing more of it in one person than another, you are setting that person above those others in whom you are not investing it.

In theory, this greater degree of political friendship should allow a decent society to out-compete any society of thieves. However, a mob is often made up of actual friends – or, in the case of mafia, of "family" members. They have a stronger sort of bond than political friendship, and these strong ties can out-compete the political friendship among the members of the decent society. One answer is for the decent people to build actual friendships, increasing the degree of investment in each other's good and each other's safety. The mutuality involved in this bond means that the mob no longer encounters isolated individuals who can be threatened in relative safety. Gangsters now find that they

walk in to demand money from people who have a strong sense that their community will be there to protect them if they choose to resist extortion or if they decide to testify. Armed with actual friendships that are rooted on the stronger principles of justice that they hold in common, the community will have a better chance of out-competing the mob.

Building yourself a band of friends is thus a primary method of resisting this kind of mob oppression when it affects you. Even a heroic individual's defense of himself and his own shop does little to defend the rest of the community. That is not true of a tight band of shopkeepers determined to defend each other. They can provide their own protection. In addition to directly defending each other as individuals, a group of honest shopkeepers can trust each other enough to establish a fund to hire private security. Even if money is lacking, the bonds of trust and friendship could encourage local shopkeepers and their friends to join you in a neighborhood watch to patrol against arsonists.

A third method of using honor to address the dangers of a mob involves the use of your neighborhood watch to shame others who are working with the gang. For example, gangsters may not be ashamed to be involved in drugs or prostitution rings but their clients often are. A neighborhood watch will witness who has been making use of prostitutes or buying drugs. This can be brought to bear in court, published in a newspaper, posted on signs about the community, or those who have been doing it can simply be confronted with their shameful acts in a public space. That shame can cause some of the gang's money-making activity to dry up. A gang that cannot make any money cannot command much respect according to the standards of the underworld. If its

members do not end up in prison and the gang does not dissolve, the gang may well move on and cease to be a threat to your community.

This set of examples assumes the police and courts have not been corrupted by the mob. However, that assumption is not necessary ultimate success against those attempting to extort honor by force. In a case in which the government is not on the right side, the honor of the ordinary people affected by the mob might be the only hope for restoring a just and free society.

Cases where the authorities are on the wrong side are more like Selma. Many of the same modes for resisting a mob apply to a case like Selma, but success in such cases turns much more on the reaction of those who are not directly under threat by the oppressive forces. Since the honor of others is so important to their successful resolution I will treat those cases under Other/Force.

Other/Force

This category differs from the Self/Force region in that one is not directly touched by the force: it is not pointed at you nor does it create a problem in your immediate community. Thus, one incurs no need to be brave in testifying, nor in cooperating with authorities. However, whenever violence is being used by private individuals to extract honor from a part of society, there is a loss of freedom that threatens the basic values that undergird the whole democratic project. The disparities of honor that allow political officers to operate were justified, in the previous chapter,[189] because the special honors due to officers like judges exist to enforce the ordinary equality due to all. When private

[189] See pp. 108-110 of this dissertation.

individuals attempt to use force to assert special honors for themselves, it instead threatens this project. Such violence must be opposed.

Personally getting involved is one way to do that. When citizens act in defense of each other's interests it strengthens political friendship in the whole polity. Unlike the friendship being strengthened in the Self/Force cases, this is a broad political friendship. All are interested in the defense of each other from forced honors. Coming together to resist these cases wherever they appear, under whatever guise, can reinforce this basic foundation of a free society. In doing this, we honor each other as being worthy of a defense, and we honor the value of the political friendship without which the free society would fail. Ultimately, indeed, what we are honoring by defending each other is liberty itself.

Thus one could honor those affected by the mob by getting involved in their efforts to defend themselves. One could contribute to their fund for hiring private security, for example; one could join their neighborhood patrols. It is not necessary to be personally affected by the force to recognize it as a threat to democratic society. If force is imposed on some, it can be imposed on others and, eventually, everyone.

Another way to honor those who are wrongly affected by force is to tell their stories. Journalism plays a key role in building support for those afflicted by wrongful attempts to extract honor. One way it does this is by creating a wider field of people who are aware of the problem, and thus finding more people disposed to getting involved with attempts to honor the afflicted by assisting their efforts. This is a way for journalists to honor the opposition to the coercion of honor. In addition to this, journalism can build sympathy – the form of honor for the afflicted that Nussbaum invoked – in a way that can

transform the conflict. It can also build disgust, as Nussbaum did, for those who engage in the attempt to extract honor by force.

In addition to these personal ways of opposing forced honors, public and community action should be brought to bear. Consider 'honor killings' of women by their families. Such killings are antithetical to a democratic society in which everyone has a say. We therefore have a strong social interest in protecting women from families that engage in these killings, and we can enforce laws to that effect. The people motivated to perform honor killings feel that they would suffer severe loss of honor if they do not do it. Shame and exposure should be directed toward perpetrators of such horrific acts. They should come to feel more shame should they participate in, or even endorse, an honor killing than they feel at enduring any insult that might provoke such a killing. Shame can come in the form of the way they are spoken of in newspapers, or on television, or treated by members of society who have become sympathetic to the women in their community by exposure to artistic or journalistic treatment. It can also come from prison sentences, and from the harsh public condemnation of their crimes by prosecutors and judges. Journalists report on and transmit that condemnation, magnifying the effect of the judge's or prosecutor's words.

The same extends to violence against sexual minorities, which is a form of radical disrespect for them as individuals. Respect for individuals is a fundamental value for a democratic society. It is not enough to make arguments in favor of such respect. Those who engage in violence to try to compel sexual minorities to feel shame must themselves be shamed. This can be done through humiliating prison sentences, lectures from judges

during sentencing, and through art – such as drama – that portrays such acts as inherently shameful and unworthy.

Art uses honor and shame to cultivate people's opposition to those who commit violence against women or sexual minorities.[190] Such people will themselves deploy mechanisms of shame against those things.

Another public act one can use is legislation. Laws are principally related to questions of justice. However, they also have an honor function. Even just laws must be enforced. Police, prosecutors, and courts can all be corrupted if they come to honor money or power more than they honor democratic values like justice or duty. The proper assignment of honor plays an important role in resisting such corruption. For one thing, the fear of shame can cause a powerful office holder not to misuse an office. Just as the office of judge entails a position of special respect, someone in this office or a similar one who is perceived to be corrupt could be prosecuted, ridiculed in the press, and shunned by people who had once respected him – all of which are shameful. Even if the corrupt judge was sure that there would never be sufficient evidence to convict him, or was so confident in his power that he did not fear prosecution, the threat of humiliation is a powerful deterrent.

The respect for an institution can be a threat to these mechanisms. As an institution, police deserve respect for doing a dangerous and necessary job. However, abuses of authority by individual officers go unchallenged just because the institution is so respected. Respecting the institution can therefore be at odds with respecting the

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[190] Art can also be used to do the opposite: one could make a dramatic film that showed respect for honor killings as a practice. Concerns about art that honors what I am calling *antithetical principles* properly falls under Other/Nonviolent; see discussion there.

individuals who make up the institution. Respecting the institution includes making sure it remains respectable, which means subjecting its members to the sunlight of inspections, of a free press, and of a serious-minded investigation into charges against members. Just because of respect for the institution, it is sometimes necessary to set aside respect (in the form of trust) for someone working in the institution enough to ponder seriously the possibility he has abused his office. Properly honoring the institution becomes the method for addressing a misuse of honor by the individual, and makes it more likely that these institutions will perform their intended function *vis a vis* mobs and other criminals.

Correcting the institutions by correcting individuals does not address cases like Selma, when the institutions themselves were wrong. Those in the community at Selma used honor in many of the ways already discussed, but they also had two additional modes of honor that have not been discussed. These were ways by which the marchers showed respect to the people using violence against the marchers, thus proving themselves to be decent people who deserved respect as well. These modes worked because, in the end, those who opposed the marchers at Selma were not mobsters: they were ordinary people who were scared. These acts that provoked respect could work as a contrary emotion to the fear that had been ruling in the hearts of those opposed to extending civil rights to the minority.

The first of these two modes used at Selma was an open commitment to nonviolence. A commitment to nonviolence is a form of respect, because it shows that you respect the other side enough that your side will, at least as a practical matter, treat your opponents' lives as more valuable than victory. When only one side makes this commitment it is a gift. It is a gift because it is not merited by the other's conduct. The

marchers showed respect for the humanity of their opponents. Those who received this recognition are motivated, to a greater or lesser degree, to prove themselves worthy of it. They can do this by showing respect for the marchers. Showing respect for one's opponents requires courage. When, at Selma, they chose to do otherwise, what was intended as a show of strength was transformed by this honor gift into a show of fear. Seeing people committed to nonviolent change being beaten by their opponents mades clear which side was genuinely worthy of respect. Since the conflict at Selma was very much about the fact that black Americans were not being treated with the respect they deserved, this unrepaid gift thrust at the heart of the conflict.

The second method from Selma, another honor gift, was the demand for equality. The Selma marchers demanded only *equality* from a people who were behaving horribly. The courage required for any form of resistance to unjust and violent power is going to be the sort of virtue that is justly rewarded with honor; the use of unjust and violent power is vicious and, therefore, dishonorable. Though there is a sense in which all are equal, complete equality of respect between the honorable and the dishonorable is not merited. That makes the offer to accept equality a gift. The gift assuaged some fears of what would happen if the minority were accorded equality. This isn't an ethical argument either: that is, it was not that someone proved through reason that the fears were unfounded. The marchers showed through their to those who had mistreated them that they were decent people, and *therefore* the fears were unfounded. They were not out for revenge, or to punish the majority, though such punishment might have seemed just. Rather, because they sought only to gain an equality of respect, they showed a kind of respect to the society that had been abusing honor towards them.

They also swayed many who might have thought of themselves as 'not involved' to come in on the side of the marchers. Those who are not directly affected by the unjust use of force in a case like Selma can contribute in several ways. One way is by contributing to the contest against the mechanisms of law and police being misused. This can be done by contributing to the defense with gifts of money or, especially if one happens to be a lawyer, time or expertise. Another way that the members of society not directly affected can contribute is by helping a fearful part of society to understand the implication of honor gifts like nonviolence. It can be hard for someone who is afraid of someone else to hear even a peaceful message from the object of their fear. A third party that is not considered fearsome might be able to validate the message of peace in a way that makes it easier for the fearful to accept.

Opening a road for others to receive honor by changing is something we can do to help people change. It is unlikely to work in a mafia case, as the mafia has its own ideas about honor that the broader society has to reject. It can work in cases like Selma. Shame's role is obvious, but it depends on a group that regards an action as shameful. Showing disrespect can teach shame for things like prejudice or honor killings. This disrespect has to be balanced with a promise of honor to work the desired change. It is easy to provoke a defensive reaction when one is shaming an aspect of a culture. Culture is very close to identity, and people can easily elect to honor their own culture (and therefore themselves, insofar as they identify as members of that culture) by rejecting the proposed change. When shame is deployed to try to provoke cultural change, it is crucial to success to make it especially honorable to assent to the change. Praise should be fielded for the courage, independence of mind, and sense of justice involved in admitting

to the need for the change. This dynamic may not always produce progress, but it could do so.

Self/Nonviolent

The nonviolent cases are cases in which no one is using force unjustly to coerce honor. There can still be misplaced honors without force. The Self/Nonviolent cases are cases in which one recognizes in one's self that honor is wrongly deployed. How do you correct misplaced honor in yourself?

First, what is misplaced honor when it is not honor that is being coerced from you? Two Medieval thinkers who were concerned with honor both point in the same direction. Geoffroi de Charny and Raymond Lull both state that the honor for which knights and lords should strive is to be worthy of their proper role in upholding the lawful order from which all derive goods.[191] De Charny in particular is at pains to correct his fellow knights' misplaced honor by pointing out areas in which things that are respected are not as good as other things, for example, the respect due to tournament fighters should not eclipse the honor given to those who succeed at actual war.[192] The reason is that the only purpose to engage in tournaments is to prepare to be good at war, and the purpose for being prepared to fight in war is to sustain the order on which his civilization depends. For that reason, there would be no reason to honor success in tournaments

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[191] *Raymond Lull's Book of Knighthood and Chivalry & the Anonymous Ordene de Chevalerie*, trans. William Caxton (The Chivalry Bookshelf, 2001), 28-29; Geoffroi de Charny, *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry*, trans. Elspeth Kennedy (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 76-79.

[192] *Ibid.*, 57. The concern with making sure people correctly identify which behavior is most honorable among many things that are honored permeates his work.

today; such tournaments, where they exist, no longer plays any useful role in sustaining the common order.

This basic idea survives the transfer to a different kind of society. Democratic society has some necessary values, and it needs citizens with particular qualities. Honor is misplaced when it values the wrong things, meaning the things that are at odds with that basic set of values and qualities. There are two cases: honor that is problematic for sustaining a democratic society, and honor that is antithetical to a democratic society. A case is *antithetical* if the thing being honored is entirely destructive to the foundations of a democratic society. A case is *problematic* if the thing being honored can contribute something good, but where too much emphasis on honor for the quality can create problems. For example, De Charny warns against honoring people for being fine judges of food and wine as this contributes to a softness that prevents knights from being as good at their necessary martial functions.[193] Good taste is not bad, but it is more worthy to pursue the things that hold up society. Thus, honoring good taste was problematic.

There are similar problematic values in democratic society. One thing most people pursue is wealth. This is not antithetical to democratic society. The economic system that drives American society is capitalism, and this system depends upon people pursuing wealth. It thus makes a degree of sense to honor the pursuit of wealth, or at least not to shame it, since it drives an economic system upon which the society depends. Nevertheless, honoring the pursuit of wealth also is dangerous to the basic values of the society. Wealth makes its possessor powerful and unduly influential. That can mean having more honor than is deserved, or worse, making its possessor able to circumvent

[193] *Ibid*., 61.

the legal protections instituted for all. Thus, wealth is a problematic value; it has to be corrected by honoring – in this context, by pursuing – some contrary that reinforces the needed values for democratic society.

So, now that there is an account of what a misplaced honor could be, how would one come to recognize and correct it in one's self? There is both an instrumental and a direct case for honor's use here. The instrumental case has already been discussed: it is the case of Aristotle's magnanimous man, or Descarte's person of strong soul. Taking the things necessary for sustaining a democratic form of government as the governing principle, it is possible to come to determined judgments about what qualities and values to honor. When one finds one's self honoring an antithetical or problematic quality, one can use honor internally to create a contrary force to the existing honor. In the case of antithetical qualities, a strong soul should be able to recognize that valuing this thing is in fact shameful. In the case of problematic values, one should be able to sort them roughly as De Charny does: more worthy things will become apparent, and the strong soul can elect to honor those more worthy things to a higher degree.

For example, someone who has previously honored wealth by pursuing its acquisition could come to perform magnificent[194] acts of charity. Just by reflecting on what would be the most magnificent act, that is the act most worthy of honor, one can come to the best choice among the many options for charity. Democratic values serve as a guide. The funding of educational opportunities, of libraries, of health care options, these things can help to maintain democratic values by showing a devotion to giving opportunities to all in spite of differences in wealth. It also honors the recognition that democracy can be sustained only if the voting electorate has sufficient education to make

[194] I mean this word in roughly Aristotle's sense. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1122a19-35.

informed decisions at the polls, and sufficient opportunities for success so as to be invested in the fate of the nation. One is likely to be honored in return for performing magnificent acts of charity, but this is proper as could convince others to act in this way. However, the truly magnanimous will not care much for externally granted honors: knowing that he has acted in a way that merits great honors is enough. In this way, the honor of the magnanimous is his own.

So much for the instrumental use of honor. There is also a direct use of honor. Consider pursuing something that is worthy because it expresses one of the necessary democratic values or qualities. Pursuing this thing in the hardest cases is more honorable than pursuing it when it is easy or requires little effort. Pursuing it to the greatest degree is more worthy of honor than accepting some small achievement as adequate. Honor can help you to abandon things that do not point in this direction by showing that other things are far more worthy of pursuing. Pursuit is a kind of honor, since one's attention is limited. Thus, the more one honors the best things, the less one will honor things that are less worthy.

Other/Nonviolent

Other people very often honor money, power, beauty, athletic ability, and other things that are problematic for a democratic society. The respect these people are due as individuals requires respecting their will: in other words, we respect others by recognizing that they have a right to their own choices. One can tell people to honor the right things, but reason cannot oppose honor in the right way to convince people to leave off honoring things that they do. Since one does not have control of their will (as one

does of one's own), in the Other/Nonviolent cases we need to look for ways to deploy public honors against misplaced honor.

As noted above, the pursuit of wealth has some good effects. However, democratic society also depends on convincing some talented people to leave off the pursuit of money in order to pursue public service. Of course, public servants can be rewarded with money as well – student loan forgiveness following a career of public service being one example – but there is a problem with paying very large salaries from the public treasury.[195] For that reason, it is unwise to try to out-compete the market in talent by paying high salaries for public service. Honors associated with political office can attract some talented people to pursue this path. Military honors both recognize extraordinary acts of public service in that context, and also encourage others to aspire to serve in this way. The same is true of titles and forms of address ("The Honorable," "His Excellency," etc.) for those who undertake difficult offices of importance to the democratic project.

In addition to the problematic values, there are also values that are antithetical to democratic norms. A democratic society cannot afford to value what some societies call 'good birth' in the same way as an aristocracy, for example. An undue respect for those born to wealth or fame or connection is antithetical to the democratic ideal that all citizens are equally worthy of respect. Honors can be deployed to encourage people to act on the ideal of electing ordinary people to office, rather than people with famous names or famous parents. To a small degree, shame can be deployed against the idea of trying to

[195] Specifically, the problem is that public servants are paid with tax money that is extracted by force, whereas the rates of pay set by the market are consensual. High rates of pay in the market may provoke jealousy and concentrated wealth, but a government that enriches government workers via high taxes can provoke political instability in the state.

trade on one's name, that is, on one's parents, but this has to be limited. Equality of respect regardless of births means that having a famous name should be no more of a liability than it is a benefit, so that famous children can compete for public office, but on equal terms.

Some who honor physical beauty can inadvertently shame those who are not beautiful. This extends to cases of physical deformity or disability, which can leave people feeling shamed by a society that seems not to value them. The danger is that a sense of physical disgust at something like deformity can provoke the same passions internally as a moral disgust. It is possible to reason that one ought not to feel disgust, but that does not address the fact that people experience it. What must be opposed is honors. Privately, shame is deployed against those who would mock the disabled. A person who mocked anyone with a physical deformity would likely experience intense public shaming. This is a use of honor to correct misapplied honor, and a way in which a community can correct itself. Public honors also work. Consider the Special Olympics. These take cases of disability and transform them into public displays of honor for the disabled, as well as opportunities for them to demonstrate their virtues. It turns out that many people with disabilities can prove themselves to possess great virtues in this way, which inspires observers to feel respect. That respect counteracts and can transcend the unfair physical emotional response to disability or deformity.

Additional methods of opposing misplaced honor include education, such as civics education. People cannot honor values they do not understand. Literacy education is the foundation of a democratic society's success. So too is the use of public honor by naming particularly great books that are worthy of reading, because they convey ideas or

models that it is important for members of a democracy to think about. The use of public resources to provide opportunities for education honors the poor by showing that their fellow citizens think they are worthy of such goods even if they cannot afford them, but it does more than that. It also addresses a fundamental need of democratic society for members to respect each other's decisions in elections. It is important to be able to respect the opposition when they decide an election, and that is hard to do if one cannot respect the opposition's voters. Respect is encouraged by making sure that all citizens have access to education, and are aware of and encouraged to consider important literary or historical works. Bad candidates may still be elected, but it is important that the people who elected them can still be seen as respectable fellow citizens who might be persuaded differently next time. Otherwise, the temptation to find ways to deprive them of the vote will endanger the democratic project.

Because of the difficulty of sustaining this mutual respect in spite of different political opinions, publicly celebrations honoring the democratic society are also important. Holidays like the Fourth of July celebrate and reinforce a common commitment to democratic society and, therefore, to its values. Speeches by prominent public figures that remind citizens of these values and celebrating the values is another method of opposing wrongful honor with what is truly honorable. Likewise, Thanksgiving holiday honors the idea that Americans live in a good society and enjoy many good things that come from the work of other people – all the other people who are involved in the project. In celebrating the holiday of giving thanks, Americans celebrate each other, and they very nearly all do it together. In this way they remind each other that

all these goods come from their dependence upon each other, and that they are glad of this dependence and all of the goods it has created.

Art beyond the aforementioned literature also has an important role to play in the Other/Nonviolent category. Artists should be honored if they promote the qualities of public service, justice, honesty, political friendship, and integrity – democratic values all. While it is not appropriate to use legal force against artists who do otherwise, honor and shame can encourage art that shores up necessary democratic values. Art is worthy of praise when it honors exemplars of these qualities. Another praiseworthy thing is dramatic treatments of the importance of these values in democratic life.[196] Such treatments can help people to understand how things that many people look down on as careers – lawyers, journalists, politicians! – fit together in making democracy possible.

Speaking of honor and journalists, journalists have an intense honor concern that is not widely recognized. This is the need to use shame to self-police.[197] Journalists are only as powerful as they are credible, and credibility is a form of reputation – that is, a kind of honor. If the profession's reputation for credibility collapses, journalism's whole power to correct dishonorable conduct collapses with it. Journalists like public officials can become corrupted, and when they do, it damages not only their own credibility but

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[196] Hollywood often did this well during the mid-20th century using the genre of the Western, which provided a useful canvas for illustrating the importance of these values in building the nation. To take just three examples, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* emphasizes the role of education, journalism, and the law in establishing a democratic society, the need get the right people to stand for public office, and the limits of individual heroism in resisting organized crime. James Warner Bellah and Willis Goldbeck, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, directed by John Ford (Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1962). *High Noon* portrays a heroic marshal, but one who finds himself unsupported by citizens when it comes time to face a danger to the community. Carl Foreman and John W. Cunningham, *High Noon*, directed by Fred Zinnemann (Jamestown, CA: Stanley Kramer Productions, 1952). *Rio Bravo* shows a community of flawed citizens coming together to support a similar marshal, and how that allows the community to assert their liberty and enforce their laws against a powerful cattleman and his hired guns. Jules Forthman and Leigh Brackett, *Rio Bravo*, directed by Howard Hawks (Los Angeles, CA: Warner Brothers, 1959).

[197] The role of honor in journalism is not limited to this part of the typology, but universal to it.

the credibility of their profession. Thus, like a corrupt judge or police officer, a corrupt journalist deserves the greatest degree of public shame. Journalism cannot be corrected by law, as their freedom to speak is protected whether they speak well or badly. They cannot be impeached, nor suffer a recall election. Self-policing of the dishonorable in their profession is therefore of tremendous importance to the profession's ability to perform its work in service of democracy. Journalists must defend their reputation for honesty at all costs.

How can they do this? Other journalists may become aware that one of their own has left important details out of a story, or bowdlerized a quote, or that they are secretly promoting an agenda under the guise of straight reporting. Such journalists can then make a story of their own. The shame that is brought to bear by the profession can help to limit the damage to the bad journalist's own credibility, and do something to restore the credibility – that is, the honor – of the profession as a whole. By contrast, should they ignore or accept bad practices, journalists bear a great blame because their profession is crucial to democratic government. Far more than is realized turns on the honor of reporters.

All these are examples of correcting honor abuses using the forms of honor itself. Such corrections can shore up the values on which society is based. People's right to choose for themselves what to honor and how to live is respected, in the sense that they are allowed to do it. However, the honor spectrum is invoked in these methods for the same reason that it is invoked in assigning honors to political office. It is this use of honor that helps make the purer equality a project that can be realized in a greater degree. People make their own choices of what to honor and, thereby, of what to pursue. Some of

what they honor is necessary to sustain and enhance a democratic society. Some, on the other hand, does not contribute to democratic society or, even, works against it. The challenge is to allow people to choose freely while encouraging them in subtle ways to choose to honor what sustains the society.

Conclusion to the Fourth Chapter

There are some things that must be honored if a democratic society is to be sustained. These things include a robust notion of justice, good government, the rights of minorities, and the political friendship necessary to the project. Inversely, there are also objects of honor and ways of honoring them that wrong because they are incompatible with such a society.

This allows us to talk about misplaced honor and about the remedies for it. For example, to honor democratic government is to work against the honor that is paid to objects that are antithetical to it. How do we or should we honor democratic government? It turns out that one way is by honoring each other. We do this when we accept an election result that was decided by a part of society other than our own. We do it when we find ways to hang together against threats to compel honor by force, whether those threats affects us as individuals or only indirectly through others who are part of our larger community. We also do it when we take time and trouble to be sure to include those who, through no fault of their own, are unable to live up to ideals in areas like education or healthiness. Another way we do it is by *dishonoring* each other – shaming those who would engage in practices that are inimical to a system in which all have a say. We do this when we create such a shame around honor killing that the practice is

undermined so that no one would think he could restore his honor by this means but, rather, sees is as shameful

Disputes about honor are likely to be passionate. That makes it quite difficult to direct honor away from what is harmful and toward what is truly worthwhile. The methods I have suggested may not always work, and some of them are quite tricky to execute well. Getting the right balance on such matters is not easy, and mistakes will happen. Nevertheless, honor is a necessary tool. Developing ways of showing respect can sometimes enable a better solution than is possible while disrespect rules.

Conclusion to the Dissertation

There were three problematic examples of honor raised by the first chapter of this dissertation, from which I extracted three problems. Beowulf raised a concern about whether honor and ethics are even compatible, as his strident pursuit of honor sometimes seemed to defy what would be ordinary ethical considerations. St. Francis raised questions about the right way to honor people in society, as well as about the wide range of things that are honored. Selma brought to light that honor can be on the side of actual injustice as well as justice. Indeed, Selma underlines the sometimes dark connection between honor and injustice. It also shows how important honor is to those striving for something better.

This dissertation wrestled with each of these questions in turn. Honor and ethics do have a relationship that is seemingly even a paradox, as pursuing glory can undermine the moral worth of an action. The paradox only dissolves with the realization that many actions are by their nature public actions with an intrinsic honor component. When one is

acting in public roles, as for example fulfilling political office, honor cannot be discounted in making ethical decisions. There is no way to get the ethical considerations right, in those cases, without getting the honor concerns right as well.

The question of how and whom to honor in a democracy turns on the need to balance respect for the many with respect for expertise. Many decisions are rightly autonomous, but political offices necessarily entail positions of special respect. Since maintaining that respect is necessary for the survival of the democracy, it is important that this respect is shown. That means both that (a) people who merit respect should occupy the offices that require respect, and (b) the process for selecting these officers needs to be respected, even by those who disagree with a particular selection. Elections give voters a reason to respect the process, and an ability to fix mistakes, but voters need a way of recognizing expertise they do not necessarily share. Honor, in the form of reputation, provides the heuristic that enables voters to do that as well as it can be done. Mistakes are inevitable over time, but reputations change with new information and that will inform the results of the next election.

Honor's necessity to moral philosophy and good government means that the problem of honor's dark side must be faced head on. Honor cannot be done away with, so it must be trained. What tool exists to train it? Reason has a role, to be sure, but it cannot do the whole of the work. Partly this is because honor provides independent information to moral philosophy in addition to that which reason provides. Partly it is because reason by itself cannot oppose passions in the right way. Honor must itself be used to oppose honor when people have come to honor the wrong things in the wrong ways.

I might close with a literary analogy. In the *Lord of the Rings*, J. R. R. Tolkien presents the Ring as a thing that is powerful only for evil. It has to be destroyed because it cannot be used without corrupting any purpose, no matter how noble. That is not the way in which honor is dangerous, as this dissertation has shown. Honor is indeed dangerous, but it is dangerous in another way.

"Dangerous!" cried Gandalf. "And so am I, very dangerous: more dangerous than anything you will ever meet, unless you are brought alive before the seat of the Dark Lord. And Aragorn is dangerous, and Legolas is dangerous. You are beset with dangers, Gimli son of Glóin; for you are dangerous yourself, in your own fashion."[198]

To be *dangerous* is not to be *evil*, but to be *powerful*. Honor is powerful for good and evil. Unlike the Ring it cannot be set aside, but also unlike the Ring, its effects need not be baleful. Much that is good can come of it, if it is used with the right care.

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[198] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers, Being the Second Part of the Lord of the Rings* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1954), 131.

APPENDIX A

Þær æt hyðe stod hringedstefna
isig ond utfus, æþelingesfær;
aledon þa leofne þeoden,
beaga bryttan on bearm scipes,
mærne be mæste…. on bearme læg
madma mænigo, þa him mid scoldon
on flodes æht feor gewitan.

"There at the haven stood with ringed prow, ice-hung, eager to be gone, the prince's bark; they laid then their beloved king, giver of rings, in the bosom of the ship, in glory by the mast. There were many precious things and treasures brought from regions far away… on his lap lay treasures heaped that now must go with him far into the dominion of the sea."[199]

-*Beowulf*, lines 3150-3155.

On the last day of September 2016, on a beautiful autumn afternoon, my father was laid to rest. I mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation that he was on the line with the volunteers protecting a civil rights march in Forsyth County, Georgia, during his early days with the local fire department. He went on to become a captain in that department, and after his decades of active service, continued to volunteer as a mechanic on a 1937 ladder truck that now bears his name.

No one mentioned his service in defense of civil rights marchers on the day of his funeral, and I may have been the only one even thinking of it. But the Forsyth County Fire Department remembered him with all honor. When he died, they sent a truck to bring his body from the hospice to the funeral home. They stripped the flags from their

[199] J. R. R. Tolkien, *Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary*, ed. Christopher Tolkien, (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2014), 14.

stations so that they could line the streets with them during his passage, and had the police department stop traffic at all the intersections so they could escort his body with their fire trucks.

At his funeral they brought their ladder trucks out and crossed the aerial ladders, and provided an honor guard. They escorted his remains on that 1937 ladder truck to his place of rest. Not one but two ministers said that they wanted to speak, and one of the captains of the department spoke as well. They provided a bagpiper. They provided a bugler to play "Taps." They had a formal flag-folding ceremony, presenting it to his widow my mother "on the behalf of the United States Army and the Forsyth County Fire Department," thus honoring his military service as well. They presented his helmet to his grandson as a token of his service. They carried out a rifle salute, with an explanation that it was being done in the manner of the ancient Romans' salute to a fallen warrior. They had trucks stationed on hills surrounding the cemetery, so that each could sound its siren in turn, all along the horizon. Finally, they used a big brass bell to ring the traditional "Return to Quarters" signal, in memory of the way of early American fire departments.

Nobody asked them to do this. They did it because they needed to do it, and because they wanted to do it. The honor guard are volunteers, and none of them were paid for their time. Though it was of immense benefit to the family, it was not done out of any formal duty to the family.

All this was done as a gift of honor. Many of them felt debts to him, especially those who struggled to become firefighters and received his help. Others remembered his service alongside them among the perils of the fires they fought together. Others remembered lives he saved, including a baby he prevented from choking to death. Others

respected his work to fix up that old ladder truck, which is beloved by the department even though it is not actually useful. But you cannot pay a debt of this sort except to the person to whom it is owed, and he could no longer receive. Nor, it should be said, would he have thought he was owed payment in any case. He did all those things because he wanted to do them. Their honor for him at his funeral could only be a gift to him, because he would never have accepted that he was owed anything at all.

This dissertation is dedicated to my father. I wish I could express the rest of what my father taught me about honor, or what I have learned from others. I have had the fortune to know and spend time among men and women of the greatest honor. What I needed to know to share their company I knew from my father, who taught me through his stories and his conduct what I required.

We should not expect to see an end to the dangers of honor. We should hope never to see an end to its glories. We should only strive to do as well as those who have done best, while working carefully to avoid the harm. If we do that, we will have used our time honorably.

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