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THE CODE OF HONOR IN WESTERN CULTURE

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This paper intends to present a brief overview of the honor code and its sociocultural context, and its purpose is to alert the reader to the sort of world in which considerations of honor are an important -- indeed, an omnipresent -- factor. It is impossible to define the honor code in simple terms because, through the history of world culture in general and western culture in particular, it has coexisted with various social systems which themselves may either be independent or survive as parts of larger systems (like the peasantry within a kingdom or a modern national state); and these different contexts have transformed honor into a multitude of different shapes. The honor code first appeared as a feature of tribal peoples; it was, for instance, part of the traditional Plains Indian complex of culture traits, perhaps most spectacularly in the coup stick. Honor survived from the primitive period of Europe through the classical period both among the peoples of rural regions and even of cities, and with the aid of the Germanic tribal influx, it came to characterize the medieval era. With the end of the middle ages, it received a rebirth with the revival of classicism, outlasted the renaissance, and endured into the romantic centuries. When a new post-romantic cultural era begins (and it has almost certainly begun already), the honor

code will probably find a both new relationship to it and new host groups -- probably not dominant but recidivist such as those that can be characterized as honor cultures during the last few centuries: aristocrats, peasants, adolescents, and the military.[1]

The honor code is most easily decribed as it might exist in a small, simple, static, traditional society; by contrast, a large, complex, developing, changing society needs a widely and deeply researched and carefully nuanced presentation for each distinct area and for each period of a century or less. For the honor code is part of an ensemble of interpersonal relationships (shared agreements, received meanings) which form a pervasive communal background among people who are raised in it and continue to adhere to it. Although this cultural syndrome has survived in different cultural and economic worlds, its typical characteristics and its "type" incarnation, for our purposes, came during the European middle ages and early Renaissance as the carefully constructed appearance by which white, wealth, well-born males displayed their plumage. It is from this era that the honor code has come to impinge upon the subject now under discussion; the medieval synthesis was a paradigmatic past, and consequently

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[1] Peter L. Berger, The Homeless Mind (New York: Random House, 1973), pp. 83, 84, and 86, names off "military officers or ethnic grandmothers"; the "hopelessly European" or the victim of "a `provincial mentality'"; and "the nobility, the military, and traditional professions like law and medicine." In traditional New Mexico, however, lawyers were considered utterly dishonorable.

it has been constitutive of the present. The six traits we will examine are these: *orality, relative lack of historical awareness, territoriality and agriculture, hierarchical social structure, communality,* and *opinion and glory.*

Orality

1a A group is characteristically oral if the basic wisdom by which it lives is "contained" in the group memory and becomes actual only when it is recited or recollected (usually aloud and in public). As Walter Ong describes it for the wholly preliterate:

> The psyche in a culture innocent of writing knows by a kind of empathetic identification of knower and known, in which the object of knowledge and the total being of the knower enter into a kind of fusion, in a way which literate cultures would typically find unsatisfyingly vague and garbled and somehow too intense and participatory. To personalities shaped by literacy, oral folk often appear curiously unprogramed, not set off against their physical environment, unresponsive to abstract demands such as a "job" that entails commitment to routines organized in accordance with abstract clock time (as against human, or lived, "felt," duration). ...
>
> Oral cultures appropriate actuality in recurrent, formulaic agglomerates, communally generated and shared.[2]

Or as Berkeley Peabody has phrased the same sort of thing,

> Traditional singers produce songs. These songs are not about anything, since their "thought" does not exist as an entity organized separately from the songs themselves. ... The wisdom of an oral tradition, therefore, must be regarded as inherent and integral with the practice of the tradition itself, not localized

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[2] Walter J. Ong, S.J., Interfaces of the Word (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 18-19.

elsewhere.[3]

Therefore the oral culture tends to have an abiding dislike and distrust of the truly original; it is only what is compatible with the known that comforts and reassures -- "What oft was thought but ne'er so well express'd," what unavoidably follows from what is known, what fits the patterns of the received wisdom.

1b A characteristically oral culture, even if it knows about writing, will tend to place paramount value on the pledged word -- the promise or the oath. One's honor almost altogether rests upon his word, so that to belie a promise is to cast one's very raison d'être into doubt.[4] Paradoxically (it seems to us), "A man commits his honour only through his sincere intentions," says Julian Pitt-Rivers. "It is lack of steadfastness in intention that is dishonouring, not misrepresentations of them"; and consequently a well-wrought lie told to an outsider can even increase a man's standing with his in-group -- and before the gods, who "have nothing

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[3] Berkeley Peabody, The Winged Word (Albany: SUNY Press, 1975), p. 168.

[4] Some familiar stories are the Jephthah episode in Judges 11:29-40, the Herod-Salome episode in Mark 6:14-19, and Chaucer's "Franklin's Tale" in The Canterbury Tales. Carl D. Schneider, Shame, Exposure and Privacy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977), pp. 113-17, comments helpfully on shame in the Bible, and F.S.C. Northrop, Man, Nature, and God (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), p. 124, draws the contrast between "law of status" and "law of contract." See also Sidney Painter, French Chivalry (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957), pp. 29-30; Aaron Gurevich, Historical Anthropology of the Middle Ages (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 138, 150.

against straight-forward lying, but they do object to their names being taken in vain."[5]

1c The actual "practice" of the honor code often became public by means of oral expression in a communal setting. Epic poems narrate the boasting and flyting of heroes.[6] Many oral cultures make much of proverbs or riddles, the latter of which have to be answered in a sort of wit-combat like the medieval university's disputation or its contemporary survival, the dissertation defense. Oral poetry sometimes took the form of a contest, as we find in Virgil's Eclogue

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[5] Bruno Snell, The Discovery of the Mind (New York: Harper, 1960), pp. 165-66; Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Honour and Social Status," in J.C. Peristiany, ed., Honour and Shame (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), p. 32, noting the King of Aragon's boast of having deceived the King of France nine times; E.R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 32.

Elsie Clews Parsons, Taos Pueblo (Menasha: American Anthropological Association, 1936), p. 71: "Anciently, stealing from other tribes or from Mexicans gave a man distinction"; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Honor and Violence in the Old South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 23, quotes an 1853 scholar, "In what does this Janus-faced honour consist? It is not honesty; for nothing is more common, both here and in Europe, than for men of honour to contract debts without intending to pay them. Nor can it be veracity, for the falsehoods of gallantry ... or diplomacy are sometimes matters of triumph with honourable men." See also pp. 137-38.

[6] Dodds, p. 30, speaks of the archaic (post-Homeric, pre-classical) "notion that too much success incurs a supernatural danger, especially if one brags about it. ... It is plain, however, from the uninhibited boasting in which Homeric man indulges that he does not take the danger of phthonos [divine resentment] very seriously; such scruples are foreign to a shame-culture." See also K.J. Dover, Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 234-35; Gurevich, p. 167; and Robert Kaster, "The Shame of the Romans," Transactions of the American Philological Association 127 (1997), 13-14.

VII, in the Germanic Meistersinger, in the French or Italian troubadour or trovatore, or in the Mexican or New Mexican trovo. And as noted above, even the well-told lie can be something to boast of -- or the convincing tall tale, like the Virginian's account to Trampas of frog-ranching in California. 1d Finally, when an oral culture knows of writing, it depreciates it by insisting that there be some bodily-performed supplement to any transaction involving a written document. Thus the immixtio manuum, the mingling of hands, was a necessary part of the lord-vassal relationship in the medieval period. The vassal would place his hands palm to palm within the lord's hands, and they would swear to their relationship; an illustration from the early fourteenth century shows the vassal with five hands; with two he points to the stalks of grain on the fields he receives, with one he points to himself, with two he performs the immixtio manuum. The kiss was another part of the ceremony. Yet another part of the complex act of possession might require the vassal to visit the fief and actually take clods, crops, or stones into his hands and throw them about.[7]

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[7] F.L. Ganshof, Feudalism (London: Longmans, Green,1952), frontispiece, pp. 64-66, 71-72. The immixtio manuum is the model of how we modern Christians of the European tradition fold our hands when we pray, imagining that we are the vassals of the heavenly Lord and that He reaches down from above to take our hands in his as we kneel before him. See also Ganshof, pp. 111-12; John Frederick Schwaller, Church and Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Mexico (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), p. 87; Brian Stock, The Implications of Literacy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 50-51; William A. Keleher, "The Law of the New Mexico Land Grant," New Mexico Historical Review 4 (1929),

Incomplete Awareness of History

2a The first three periods of our culture, the primal, the classical, and the medieval, were incompletely historical because they did not become reflexively aware of themselves (self-critical) nor did they possess a sense of the differences between their own ancestors and themselves. From the grasp of the variety of the past and from the conscious choice of classical over medieval came the Renaissance; from the choice of medieval over classical came Romanticism; from the choice of primal over medieval and classical could come yet another cultural era. But prior to the Renaissance, if history as such could be perceived at all, it appeared simply as an evil because anything that rendered this year different from last threatened to change "the way it's always been."[8]

It's always been the way it's always been because at the beginning time the gods or the culture hero established the patterns of all meaningful activities. They or he or she then permitted or even solicited the entire range of incidental troubles in order to provide an entire range of remedies.[9]

354; Marc Bloch, Feudal Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 88; Aaron Gurevich, Categories of Medieval Culture (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 77-78.

[8] Mircea Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), pp. 34-35, 75.

[9] Berard Haile, O.F.M., Legend of the Ghostway Ritual in the Male Branch of Shootingway (St. Michaels: St. Michael's Press, 1950), pp. 153-54; Katherine Spencer, Mythology and Values: An Analysis of Navaho Chantway Myths (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1957), p. 211; John Ladd, The Structure of a Moral Code (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).

Anything new is therefore troubling, and the people of an oral-traditional culture will tend to "understand" it into some familiar category and thereby negate all the newness. Thus the people perceived Jesus as "John the Baptist or Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the other prophets," while the Twelve perceived him as the Christ; but nobody could grasp him as God incarnate until a lot of the old categories and patterns were destroyed and Jesus' era was accepted as a new pattern-setting time.

But old patterns continue to assert themselves, for once a document has been put into effect, it becomes a paradigm for all the future. The document need not be present in its own being because its effects remain present, and so the document itself can appear to be less an effect-brought-about-in-continuing-time and more a cause-existing-in-exemplary-time with an effect in historical time.

2b The less historical-minded person or cultural era will tend to value space and land more than a more historical-minded person or era; the former will tend to be space-primary, believing that the gods primarily put man into a sacred place and that the sacredness of time derives from that of space.

2c The static mind of the unhistorical person or era will tend to fasten on the static two of the four Aristotelian causes (formal and final-exemplary) and the more dynamic minds of the historicist person or era will tend to fasten on the

efficient and material causes. Therefore the earlier type is given to synchronic pattern-thinking, whereas our era takes to diachronic scientific-philosophical thinking: we say that A causes B (which therefore follows A in time) because A does something to the material out of which B comes to be composed. Therefore also the later reasoning tends toward genuine mathematics, whereas the earlier discovers ever-proliferating sets of "magic" numbers -- three, four (directions, evangelists, animals in Ezekiel, elements, humors), seven (sacraments, weekdays, visible planets, known metals, branches on candlestick, capital sins, gifts of the Holy Spirit), twelve, twenty-eight ... perhaps straggling all the way to the notorious six hundred and sixty-six of Revelations.[10]

Territoriality and Agriculture

3a Some feudal relationships did not involve land held in fealty, but the feudal system as an entirety and the honor code along with it were nevertheless solidly and fundamentally based on agricultural land.[11]

3b All the people of the society took their names from land, running down from the royal top (King of England, King of

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[10] Berger, p. 91, says, "In a world of honor, identity is firmly linked to the past through the reiterated performance of prototypical [archetypal, we would say] acts."

[11] Ganshof, pp. 63, 87-88; Gurevich, Categories, pp. 45-46, 54-57; Gurevich, Historical Anthropology, pp. 207-08; Douglas Kent Hall, New Mexico: Voices in an Ancient Landscape (New York: Henry Holt, 1995), pp. 60, 68.

France; Prince of Wales) through the nobility (Earl of Devon, Duke of Bedford) and the landed gentry, and down to the lower classes who took their descriptive name from the pays -- the peasants. All these people were joined into a single socio-economic system of the agricultural-military type -- for much of the mutual obligation of lord and vassal had to do with military assistance in times of need, for the peasants worked to keep an armored knight on horseback with his feet in the stirrups.[12]

3c The village was the most important component in the peasants' lives, more dominant than penitential Brotherhood, nuclear family, job, and so forth.[13]

3d In between the upper class of royalty and nobles and the lower class of peasants, the middle class of commercial and industrial interests had not yet inserted themselves. The honor code is pre-commercial and pre-industrial, and therefore it is pre-urban. Its roots are in the land, especially ancestral land, as in the case of Naboth the Jezreelite and the hereditary vineyard Ahab and Jezebel set their hearts upon (1 Kings 21). Ahab and his forebears, just by being kings,

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[12] Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 179. See also Paul Kutsche and John Van Ness, Cañones (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981), p. 45; Hall, p. 60.

[13] Thomas J. Steele, S.J., and Rowena A. Rivera, Penitente Self-Government (Santa Fe: Ancient City Press, 1985), p. 11n16, with several references; Steele, Santos and Saints: The Religious Folk Art of Hispanic New Mexico (Santa Fe: Ancient City Press, 1994), pp. 104-08, 114-15.

had gathered a capital city around themselves and thereby started the calculus of history which would bring kingship to an end; and Ahab already looked upon land (someone else's land, at least) as a mere commodity. For Naboth, by contrast, ancestral land retained its sacral character. It had been rendered holy by the exemplary beginning-time ancestral possession, indeed, but in Naboth's own day it constituted as a space sacred to the family that pertained to it. There may be some very analogous honor-code territoriality in youth-gang "turf" in our large cities today, though these teen-age boys and girls would hardly verbalize their spatial rights and duties in terms of holiness or fealty.

Hierarchical Social Structure [*prudence*][14]

4a In the section following this, we will see that the social order established on this agricultural land-base is highly communal; here we will examine its hierarchical, its

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[14] As Curtis Brown Watson points out in Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 111-12, the honor code fits quite well with the four cardinal virtues of Aristotle, prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. These will be noted in italics in parts four and six. See Watson, p. 229; Dover, p. 66. Hans Speier, Social Order and the Risks of War (New York: George W. Stewart, 1952), p. 43, cites various earlier scholars on the same point but sorts out virtues and their applications differently than I do -- putting magnanimity under fortitude rather than under (distributive) justice, for instance.

pyramidal, character.[15] As the previous section noted, there is a king/greater-nobility/lesser-nobility/gentry/peasant-serf/slave configuration, with one person on top, ninety percent of the people near the bottom, and the remaining ten percent serving as vassals to overlords and as lords at least to a handful of peasants. The parallel social structure, the church, had of course its own pyramidal shape, with the pope at the top, the laity at the bottom, and a network of bishops, abbots and abbesses, prioresses and priors, monsignori, priests, nuns, monks, friars, and other such minor clergy in the middle. At any rate, all the oral contracts (oaths of fealty, religious vows) which held each of these social structures together were agreements between unequals; there was no democracy here, the statement "All men are created equal" would have seemed a gross absurdity, and the king seemed really near to a near-God.[16]

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[15] Wilhelm Korff, "Honor Gives Way to Prestige," in Franz Böckle, ed., Dilemmas of Tomorrow's World (New York: Paulist Press, 1969), pp. 120-21, describes medieval society as an authoritarian and class-structured system of fixed interrelationships in which one's birth was the main criterion of personal honor and one's outlook involved consideration of society as a whole; this system offered stability and socio-psychological security. See also J.E. Lendon, Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 58-59, and Lyman L. Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, eds., The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame, and Violence in Colonial Latin America (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), pp. 28-30, 63, 140.

[16] Watson, pp. 137, 186. See Richard II 5.3.136, Hamlet 4.5.127-29: "There's such divinity doth hedge a king / That treason can but peep to what it would, / Acts little of his will." Lear was first staged before James I; during the American Revolution, George Washington could not bring himself to speak of

4b As Kenneth Burke notes, the father-headed family was the key metaphor that the medieval period used to understand social order:

> From this metaphor there flowed the need of obedience to authority, as embodied in custom. In families one does not vote. Authority does not arise by deputation, as in parliamentary procedure -- it just is where it is, being grounded in the magic of custom. And family affections cannot find their exact quantitative equivalent in money.

So like a father and his son, the superior and the inferior were both committed (but in radically different ways) to fulfilling the commitments in their part of the quasi-familial social order.[17]

4c The lord in a feudal relationship, even if he was in fact younger than his vassal, was known in Latin as senior (signiore, sieur, señor). This terminology reflects the tendency for a society of this traditional sort to revere age as the repository of wisdom and authority and hence to attribute age to any authority figure. Respect for age and the things of age is a pillar of such a society; as Bruno Snell puts it, "It perpetuates the authority and the hierarchic order of an earlier society whose venerable customs

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"the King's troops," calling them always "the ministerial soldiers."

Wyatt-Brown, p. ix, comments accurately, "No slaveholding culture could casually set aside the strictures of honor. The very debasement of the slave added much to the master's honor, since the latter's claim to self-sufficiency [control, we have called it] rested upon the prestige, power, and wealth that accrued from the benefits of controlling others. ... From the start [of the American South], slavery and honor were mutually dependent."

[17] Kenneth Burke, Attitudes Toward History (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 129; Ganshof, pp. 76-77, 85-87.

were regarded as sacred, as a work of the gods."[18] An inferior in age or status would advance his own opinion, if at all, in a most deferential manner, terrified at the ridicule he might call down on himself: who is he to question what the men in authority have always said, to want to do something in any way but the way it's always been done? In such a society, the elders hold a place of preeminence difficult for our culture to conceive; in New Mexico alone of all the places where he has studied children, Robert Coles found it necessary to study the elderly and write The Old Ones; in Nigeria during the Biafran rebellion, while the children were starving, the elderly repositories of the tribal wisdom were not, for if the wisdom perishes the children have nothing to live for.[19]

4d The vassal or peasant owed his lord respect, obedience, and service (which normally included some tribute and either fighting or work). The magnanimous lord's obligations -- noblesse oblige -- included the protection of his subjects, advice and leadership, exemplary living, and Christianization in circumstances where the subjects were newly conquered (as New Mexican Pueblo Indians). He should exercise distributive

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[18] Ganshof, p. 63; Snell, p. 168; Hall, p. 60; Dover, pp. 104-06.

[19] Watson, pp. 374-76. Charles L. Briggs, Competence in Performance: The Creativity of Tradition in Mexicano Verbal Art (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), studies "la plática de los viejitos -- the talking of the elders" as they communicate traditional values within the village context of Northern New Mexico.

justice by displaying a certain splendor of house, clothing, and retinue and by giving generous gifts when appropriate.[20]

4e The lord was often called to deeds of *fortitude*, which might include not only physical courage but also a dogged endurance in surviving adversity so as eventually to conquer and destroy the foe.[21]

4f Further, in the honor-code societies of which we are speaking here, the primacy is always held by a man. The social order is not only patrilocal and patrilineal, it is also very patriarchal. The reason for this arrangement may rest in the agricultural base, once it has advanced beyond the digging-stick and isolated-village stage of early agriculturalism. True peasants, those who use draft animals

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[20] Charles Ross, Edward IV (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 257. In Shakespeare, a king without a retinue is no king at all; when Richard III enters alone and offers to trade his kingdom for a horse, only a fool would accept the offer. See also Maurice McNamee, S.J., Honor and the Epic Hero (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), p. xii; Painter, pp. 30-32, 79, 84, and 167-69; Dover, pp. 175-80; Gurevich, Historical Anthropology, pp. 178-87; Lendon, pp. 63-72, 149-54, 260-61; Johnson and Lipsett-Rivera, pp. 22-23, 30-35, 92.

[21] Watson, pp. 313-18, 324-26, 345. On the link between physical violence and honor, see Wyatt-Brown, p. 14. Moral courage tends to elevate the discussion above the honor-code level (Lawrence Kohlberg's third stage in the development of moral reasoning) into the law-`n'-order level (Kohlberg's fourth-stage) or even -- if it includes non-violence -- the spiritual level (fifth- or sixth-stage).

Watson, p. 335, helpfully distinguishes between three meanings of the word "pride": that which is inherent in megalopsychía, the totally positive self-image of the good and heroic "great-souled" aristocrat (Kohlberg's third stage); unjustified self-esteem in Aristotelian ethics (fourth-stage); and the Christian capital sin (fifth-stage or beyond). See also Dover, pp. 161-62, for the militaristic emphasis of tribal, classical, and feudal societies.

and live in villages that pertain to a nearby market town and to a king in his capital city, are always patriarchal, and the "greater society" which they support is patriarchal with them, on the level of family, of village, of region, of kingdom. Women have their own ways of getting their voices heard and their wills followed, but it is from beside the throne or behind the bedcurtains, for if it were known that the wife ran the cottage or the manor or the duchy or the kingdom, the husband's honor would be severely compromised if not altogether destroyed. In such a system, each woman pertains (practically speaking, belongs) to some man -- to her father or her husband; and so the father disposes of her in an arranged marriage. And the woman's honor is not merely her own but an honor her father or brother or husband or son must defend at all costs because it is identically his own.[22]

Communality

5a In this sort of society, the individual is not yet separated from the communal matrix, which overshadows his individuality.[23]

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[22] In earlier literature, non-arranged marriages tend to be deadly; see Romeo and Juliet and other love tragedies, perhaps especially The Duchess of Malfi.

Facundo Váldez, "Vergüenza," in Paul Kutsche, ed., The Survival of Spanish American Villages (Colorado Springs: Colorado College, 1979), p. 102. Chaucer's "Franklin's Tale" is a fine example here.

[23] Berger, p. 90, writes, "The concept of honor implies that identity is essentially, or at least importantly, linked to institutional roles. .. To return to Falstaff's image ["Honor is a

5b Even more than family and far more than any job, it is the village that gives identity to the traditional person, and it is in terms of village respect and village survival that he will judge his success, not in terms of his individual attainments, his victories in competition, or his personal survival and reward after death. It is this land-and-people-based commitment that even a modern democratic nation reverts to in time of major war, when it asks its young men to subordinate their individual wellbeing to the good of the group in defense of the territory.

5c It is within this village matrix that the individual has his security, not in what he personally possesses but in his entitlements as a member of the group. As B.H. Silcher van Bath says of the early medieval European farming villages,

> The duties and rights of these communities were based more on custom and oral tradition than on written rules, and everyone knew his obligations. In the little circle of relations and neighbors they were always ready to help one another in trouble and to share in the joy or sorrow at births, marriages, sickness, or death. The village community was entitled to judge minor causes and have its own weights and measures; it engaged the sexton and village herdsmen, supervised the roads, regulated the water supply, and so on. The farmers of the community were entitled to use the waste [outlying land, ejidos], or were in some cases [its] owners. The use of the woods

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mere `scutcheon," 1 Henry 4 5.1.140], in a world of honor the individual is the social symbols emblazoned on his escutcheon. The true self of the knight is revealed as he rides out to do battle in the full regalia of his role." See also Hall, pp. 60, 69; Kaster, pp. 9, 17; Gurevich, Categories, pp. 298-304.

and pastures was of great importance to farming.[24]

But beginning in the later middle ages -- or beginning shortly before Virgil's first Eclogue, we could say as well -- waves of enclosures began to pauperize the landless or smallholding but still entitled cottagers, the residents of cottages who had rights in the local commonland simply because they were resident in that neighborhood. The oral world fell apart for those people when literacy put another world together which excluded them, as Burke notes:

> The English "Statute of Frauds"... celebrated the turn from status to contract (i.e., from unwritten custom to written legality) by holding that a man was not entitled to retain his property unless he could show a deed for it. Since the old feudal rights to the use of the "lord's" acres had arisen purely by the authority of custom ... it followed that the very lineage of a right was grounds for its retraction. The longer it had prevailed, the less likely was there to be a written document attesting it.[25]

So much, therefore, for "the way it's always been." And hence the Jack Cades of the early fifteenth century wanting to kill all the lawyers after the Black Death brought on the first wave of enclosures, and hence the instant urban proletariats when the enclosures of the eighteenth century completed the dismantling of the traditional world -- just in time to get the necessary legal machinery into the Common Law before the American Revolution -- and into the American Southwest after

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[24] B.H. Silcher van Bath, The Agrarian History of Western Europe, 500-1850 (London: Edward Arnold, 1963), p. 158; R.H. Tawney, The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 257-58; Briggs, pp. 30-39.

[25] Burke, p. 144.

the Mexican War. But for that matter, the eventual course of events might have been the same in the region without the American takeover, for as F.B. Pike points out, early nineteenth-century "liberals" -- economic liberals, that is to say, what we call free-market capitalists -- "sought to eliminate traditional compartments in society by suppressing the old subsidiary, corporative entities or organisms that stood between the government and citizens. Rather than the corporative or organic society, they aspired to the non-organic structuring of the body politic so that citizens might be liberated from unnecessary restraints in their individualistic pursuit of self-development."[26]

5d In certain of the earlier forms of this communality, moral reasoning is typically done at a pre-ethical level -- done apart from formal operations involving abstract-theoretical moral norms. There may be a large residue of concern for ritual impurity, which of course can occur despite the best of intentions. The Japanese shame culture of which Ruth Benedict wrote, like every shame culture, is extremely concerned about "gaucheries which are in no way sins. [A Japanese man] may be extremely chagrined about not dressing appropriately for the occasion or about a

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[26] F.B. Pike, "Catholicism in Latin America," in Roger Aubert, ed., The Church in a Secularized Society (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 325.

slip of the tongue."[27] When by contrast the norms of an ethical code are available, as they are to any Christian peasant, he will still tend to live not in a guilt-culture manner but by his own pragmatic and earthy traditional norms. And as he has not yet learned the trick of being conscious of himself apart from his consciousness of the communal background, so he does not yet develop on his own a sense of personal immortality (though he may share a belief in immortality with the larger society of which his own subordinate society is an included part, as the Christian peasant certainly does).[28]

5e Looked at according to the history of philosophy, the member of the communal honor culture took his stand on the earlier side of the Realism-Nominalism split. Realism saw the individual mainly as a member of the group, which possessed a paramount reality -- as primal archetype in illo tempore, in the Platonic world of ideas, in God's Augustinian mind, or (we might say today) in the Jungian archetypes. Nominalism, by contrast, sees the group -- species, society, whatever -- as

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[27] Michael Gagarin, Aeschylean Drama (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 5-9; Ruth Benedict, The Chrysanthemum and the Sword (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946), p. 222; Paul Radin, Primitive Man As Philosopher (New York: D. Appleton, 1927), pp. 49-51.

[28] Benedict, p. 224; Burke, p. 128, says, "Churchmen were admittedly not perfect, but the Church, as the earthly incorporation of the body of Christ, was perfect. Hence by membership in the church, one shared perfection vicariously, so that the incentive to `justify' oneself by individual initiative (`ambition') was sidetracked."

nothing more than an aggregate of individuals; individuals are real, and common nouns (nomina) are merely mental counters used for convenience' sake.[29]

Opinion and Glory

6a When I began studying Greek at age fifteen, I was bemused by the two English equivalents given for the word doxa: opinion and glory. The seeming illogicality continued with me for some years, since I never quite let go of Greek, but it has only been since my concern with the honor code that I have come to realize that glory is at its very center the opinion others have of one -- how one seems (dokei) to them.[30] And so in this one word the honor code sums itself up -- and manifests itself as the opposite of all that Plato strove and

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[29] J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (London: Edward Arnold, 1924), pp. 186-87, 195-97; Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), pp. 125-26; Harry R. Klocker, S.J., "Ockham and Efficient Causality," The Thomist 23 (1960), 107; Gurevich, Categories, pp. 294, 307-08.

[30] Honor was a mutually-correcting dialectic balance of the individual aristocrat's positive self-image (which begged for public response) and the in-group's opinion (which rewarded the individual, often with an ad-hoc leader as spokesman). See also Werner Jaeger, Paideia (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), pp. 8-13; Salvador de Madariaga, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Spaniards (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), pp. 7, 12; Dover, pp. 226, 229; Painter, pp. 44-62.

Korff, p. 118, defines honor as "the estimation of a man, formed and evidenced by other men on the basis of his merits. It is manifested objectively in his social status and subjectively in his personal estimation of his own worth." Wyatt-Brown, p. 15, describes it as "self-regarding in character. One's neighbors [in-group, we might say] serve as mirrors that return the image of oneself."

For shame, see Kaster, p. 4.

struggled for in his day. Doxa is all that stands opposed to the true knowledge (epist□me) which an individual ought to gain firsthand; doxa is all that stands opposed to the creation of a singular ethical agent discovering the good and performing it out of individual conviction, whatever the group says. The new Platonic man was the person in whom literacy had made its mark, prying him out of the communal background and pushing him off in the direction of personal immortality; it was at about the same time in Palestine that the graven Law brought the Jews to the same realization of personal survival after death.[31]

6b *Temperance*, one of Aristotle's four cardinal virtues, is not so much a cause of achieving honor as it is a condition of retaining it. If a person -- like Marc Antony in Antony and Cleopatra -- is in the grip of any addictive behavior, his or her behavior will destroy either the basis of honor or at least the appearance of it, as Hamlet makes clear:

> This heavy-headed revel east and west
> Makes us traduced and taxed of other nations.
> They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
> Soil our addition; and indeed it takes
> From our achievements, though performed at height,
> The pith and marrow of our attribute.
> So oft it chances in particular men,
> That for some vicious mole of nature in them, ...
> His virtues else, be they as pure as grace,

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[31] Snell, pp. 109-12, 160, 182, 185; Eric A. Havelock, Preface to Plato (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 40-47, 197-214, 234-53, 303-04. Enduring fame is a sort of survival after death, and Dodds, p. 29, notes correctly that "in the Iliad heroism does not bring happiness; its sole and sufficient reward is fame."

> As infinite as man may undergo,
> Shall in the general censure take corruption
> From that particular fault (1.4.17-36).

For a woman of this traditional world of honor, chastity was the primary locus of honor, and for her to lose her purity was not only to lose her individual honor but that of her entire family as well.[32]

6c The insult is normally an oral event -- as we see Touchstone rehearse it in As You Like It, or an oral event with a little manual emphasis, as in Hamlet's hypothesis:

> Who calls me villain: breaks my pate across?
> Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face:
> Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie in the throat
> As deep as to the lungs?[33]

And of course the "satisfaction" of an insult will be some form of revenge -- what Francis Bacon called "wild justice," what we might call vindictive *justice*. It might take the form of war, feuding, lynching, dueling, or suicide, depending on the cause and extent of the dishonor.

Feuding survived in the Appalachian regions of this country into the present century and in the San Luis Valley of Colorado until just over a hundred years ago; Fr. Salvatore Personè gives this account from 1874:

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[32] Watson, pp. 437-47. Self-control, control of one's well-being, control of one's in-group, and control of the in-group's well-being are the four legs that honor stand upon. See Dover, p. 204.

[33] As You Like It, 5.4; Hamlet, 2.2. See also Gurevich, Historical Anthropology, p. 167, on early Scandinavian and Germanic abusive songs.

> The enmities among the principal families were such that nobody dared to go twenty steps unarmed. Several times some people saved their lives by miracles. There was nobody who could rest secure in his own house, because through nocturnal attacks various persons had lost their lives in their own beds, and about four months before our arrival three men were found one fine morning hanged from three different branches of the same tree.[34]

Lynching is a particularly wild (and often unjust) sub-species of wild justice, and it was a feature of the Old West -- such as Albuquerque in the 1870s and early 1880s. As recently as 1891 Pope Leo XIII issued an encyclical letter against dueling, this one directed to the bishops of Germany and Austria and leveled at least partially against the student duels in the universities -- academically the leading universities of the world at that time. The final sort of revenge was that taken against oneself for the "insult" of failure -- Japanese hara-kiri was an example -- so as to retrieve honor. A sea-captain's going down with his ship was an honorable passive suicide.[35]

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[34] Salvatore Personè, S.J., letter in Lettere Edificanti della Provincia Napoletana 1 (1874-75), 5, translated in Marianne L. Stoller, et al., Diary of the Jesuit Residence of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Conejos, Colorado, December 1871-December 1875 (Colorado Springs: The Colorado College, 1982), p. 184; see also p. 11, diary entry for 1 February 1872, "The people [now] live in peace without being afraid of being attacked and killed." See also Lendon, pp. 41-42, 54, 247.

[35] Leo XIII, "Pastoralis Officii," 12 September 1891. In the humoral psychology of the Renaissance and earlier periods, the tendency of sorrow (the "cold dry tears" of melancholy) to become adust and turn into anger (hot and dry choler) would seem to give natural and divine warrant to revenge; Watson, p. 246, aptly quotes Malcolm to Macduff, Macbeth 4.3.228-30, on the point; Francis Bacon, "Of Revenge."

See also Gurevich, Historical Anthropology, pp. 122-23, 135, 142, and 145, and Kaster, p. 4. Watson, pp. 354-62, seems to wish

6d As suicide could restore honor when all else had failed, so proper burial rites and the surviving family members could maintain in this world the honor that an individual had won in life.[36]

Humanity existed for a long time before developing that ornament of literate civilization, the guilty conscience. As Bruno Snell puts it, "Happiness and ethics are found together in many ways, particularly so by the vexation which the memory of a wicked deed excites in the doer. ... It is true that the guilty conscience was not known prior to Euripides; evidently it presupposes a high degree of introspection."[37]

And even something that has been retained from the past can be transformed to some degree by the new consciousness which surrounds it; thus renaissance honor and shame, along with the rest of truly renaissance thinking, become very historically aware, and so we have Spenser and Shakespeare informing the ladies of their sonnets that of course they will survive forever in the immortal lines of the poem. These

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to approve actions of revenge that the plot-outcomes do not approve. The Christian doctrine, clearly stated by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:43-48) and by Paul in Romans (12:19, quoting Deuteronomy 32:35; see also Hebrews 10:30), seems to me to be affirmed in every Elizabethan and Jacobean drama that touches the question: the revenger is never a good man, for though he may be "the scourge of God" in the subjective-genitive sense of the phrase, he in fact ignorantly or knowingly usurps God's prerogative of judging.

[36] Watson, pp. 141, 252, 388-414; Dover, pp. 229, 261-67; Lendon, pp. 119-20.

[37] Snell, p. 163.

authors and their readers had a clear sense of fame's (and infamy's) ability to live in memory, keeping alive the memory of famous and infamous persons alike.[38]

Conclusion

We have all suffered public manifestations of our lack or loss of control over ourselves or over the external world; we have all been embarrassed when persons with whom we have ties lose control in those ways; and we all know the fear of these things happening again. Therefore each one of us knows what shame is, so we know to some degree what honor is; and indeed the fundamental reality of honor is indeed control -- control of one's own destiny and control of the destiny of any ingroup for whom one is responsible. Most human beings know that such perfect control is more often than not an amiable illusion.[39]

We have all experienced both shame and honor, but our culture is characterized by literacy, historical awareness, urbanization and commercialization, democracy, individualism, and the ethical conscience. Hence we can retrieve only with

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[38] Consider Christ's remark in Mark 14:9 about the sinful woman's washing his feet with ointment and drying them with her hair: "Wherever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

[39] "Masculine culture judged that a man's failure to act with proper courage and physical skill was, in effect, an admission that his wif of toher female family members could not be defended"; Lyman L. Johnson in Johnson and Lipsett-Rivera, pp. 130-31. We are well warned neither to make facile comparisons of group with group or era with era nor to assume that honor itself stays the same in societies that are different; see pp. 71-72, 153-54.

a great effort of vicarious imagination a complete sense of an older world to which not a single one of these six characteristics of our world was proper. In this earlier world, the honor code was the only glue which gave coherence to the whole human enterprise, for the honor code protected the private integrity of each person embedded in the community, safeguarding his or her entitlements as a member and serving as a restraint upon any encroachment. Since this six-ingredient social coherence, honor, was so pervasive and important, consolidating corporate human consciousness for several millennia in its own way (at times quiet and invisible, at other times noisy and showy), it richly rewards our closer examination.

Peter Berger remarks, "The demise of honor has been a very costly price to pay for whatever liberations modern man may have achieved." But in the Navajo emergence story, one of the original creatures returns to a lower level to retrieve and bring along some pottery left behind; the pot is an emptiness, a womblike readiness, a symbol of past memory that makes meaning and freedom possible.[40] This existentially astute example should encourage us first to become fully aware of the shortcomings of the honor code in itself and encourage us next to integrate its many good features with loftier levels of moral reasoning, transforming the handsome

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[40] Berger, p. 95; Sheila Moon, A Magic Dwells: A Poetic and Psychological Study of the Navajo Emnergence Myth (Middleton: Wesleyan Univeristy Press, 1970), pp. 24-33.

attainments of true gentility into precious ornaments of lawfulness, altruism, and religious self-sacrifice.

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