The Book of Honor

A Guide for Twenty-First Century Americans

Charles Collins

PREFACE

Introduction

The concept of honor does not carry much power in twenty-first century America. The idea seems old-fashioned, quaint - antiquated, really - to people living in modern times. While there have been periods during which personal honor has been treated as the primary measure of an individual's quality, in recent years it largely has been replaced with 'success' - becoming famous, making money, 'winning'. These kinds of measures are tangible, immediate, and powerful, allowing them to seize, and to hold, the attention of modern Americans.

At an intuitive level, most people recognize there is something wrong with this situation. While material things are not inherently bad or evil, most people recognize that those measurements lack something - and that the 'something' is really important. An understanding of that absence is reflected in innumerable sayings and aphorisms. For example, people working in business frequently wax nostalgic about a time when 'a man's word was his bond', and parents often reflect that they wish they had spent more time with their children than in the pursuit of their careers. In short, people have an instinctive understanding that there are spiritual considerations which matter even more than material ones.

Unfortunately, these expressions usually reflect regret - the recognition that something has been neglected, possibly even lost forever. Exacerbating the problem is the reality that people living in modern times spend less time in quiet reflection than they have in the past. Americans are busy, pursuing an enormous array of activities and entertainments, working diligently - desperately - to avoid becoming bored. Consider, for example, the effect modern technology has on travel times. A twenty-mile trip which would have required the better part of a day just a century ago now is a normal morning commute. Somehow, though, even that reduction is not enough - modern drivers also feel compelled to use their cell phones to text and talk during those incredibly short trips. Americans cannot stand to

remain idle for any period of time, no matter how brief; they are in an endless quest to remain busy.

Overlooked in the quest for busy-ness is the cost - namely, time which once was spent in quiet reflection, in careful thought. As is the case with many intangible considerations, the value of quiet reflection often is overlooked and forgotten, with the result that most people embrace their distractions and entertainments without even realizing what they have lost.

Despite the lack of attention, the loss is both real and profound. In the absence of quiet reflection, it is extremely difficult for a person to see beyond material measures of success, virtually impossible for him or her to discover the deep and deeply important reality that there is a spiritual side to human existence.

Compounding the effect of that pre-occupation with busy-ness is that many of the pursuits injected into American culture are electronic, performed using devices which reduce the amount of human contact associated with an activity. Americans turn on televisions, surf the Web, play games on smart phones, or post banalities to social media in order to stave off boredom. Some of those distractions involve other persons - that is how the term 'social media' originated - but even at their most interactive, electronic media have the effect of placing other persons at a distance, of reducing them to abstract concepts. Electronic activity is inherently isolating; it has, as part of its nature, the effect of reducing the amount and depth of human contact.

The consequence of the effort to avoid boredom, especially when it is pursued through electronic devices, is that a person gradually loses touch with the spiritual side of his or her existence. Left with little time for deep reflection, it is natural for a person to gravitate toward measures of value and meaning which are tangible, which do not require a lot of thought or effort - measures which also tend to be material and shallow. Furthermore, the separation between individuals which is created by electronic modes of communication has the effect of reducing the pressure to account for the needs and wants of others. As a result, a person will tend to focus on his or her own wants, never reflecting on the broader effects of his or her action, losing the truth of what Socrates said: "The unexamined life is not worth living." [1]

It is crucial that the spiritual side of human existence be addressed. Eliminating such considerations from a person's thoughts and decisions does deep and lasting harm, both to that person and to the culture as a whole. Not only does the individual lose touch with an important part of his or her life, but he or she becomes less inclined toward understanding

the spiritual side of others, as well - with the result that the person is less inclined toward civil discourse, toward caring, toward cooperation. A study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2014 suggests that precisely that sort of effect is being felt within the political arena. Not only does the Pew study find that the American public is increasingly polarized, but it finds that members of the different sides are increasingly less likely to treat members of the other side with dignity and respect. [2]

Reversing the damage which already has been done to our civil society can be accomplished only if spiritual considerations are restored to the decisions made by individuals during the course of their daily lives. Americans must be provided with a framework which will help them to elevate spiritual matters to the forefront of their decision-making processes, help them to use intangible factors to guide their actions. In short, Americans have to embrace a Code of Honor.

The foundation upon which that Code must be built is a clear understanding for what it means to behave in a good and moral way. That requires a careful examination of intangible matters, because goodness and morality are spiritual in nature. However, that understanding of the intangible must proceed, must be developed, using clear logic and practical reasoning. Only careful, logical, rational thought can produce principles which are both convincing and which apply to a broad range of situations.

It may sound contradictory to suggest that spiritual matters be treated with cold, rational logic, but the endeavor does have parallels. The scientist Buckminster Fuller, commenting on his research, once said: "When I am working on a problem, I never think about beauty. I think only how to solve the problem. But when I have finished, if the solution is not beautiful, I know it is wrong." [3]

Generally speaking, the philosophies which are most successful in handling spiritual matters are, in point of fact, theologies. For that reason, the arguments which will be used to establish the Code of Honor are likely to resonate most powerfully with people who have embraced religion. However, it is critically important to recognize that all humans have a spiritual side to their lives, regardless of their approach to religion. Therefore the Code must establish principles which apply even in the absence of religious belief, to ensure that they cannot be rationalized away by those who reject organized religion.

It would be a mistake to overstate the ills which afflict modern American culture. American citizens are highly virtuous - generous, honest, and hardworking. On the other hand, it also would be a mistake to understate those ills. The challenges which face modern Americans are serious, with

the potential to have deep and damaging effects both on individual persons and on the whole of society. It is crucial that those ills be addressed, that the culture be re-infused with a recognition of the importance of the human spirit, that persons return to holding themselves to a standard of behavior - to a Code of Honor.

It should be clear that normal people will fall short of that standard on many occasions, so it is important to understand that the purpose of the Code is not to create a framework for people to pass judgement on one another. Rather, the purpose is to elevate spiritual considerations to a position of importance in daily life. The Code will be successful if it aids individuals in maintaining a focus on intangible considerations as they make decisions during the course of their daily lives.

Doubting Thomas
(The Author's Disclaimer)

My father used to say that his favorite saint was St. Thomas the Apostle, colloquially known as Doubting Thomas. For those of you (and I hope this writing is reaching many such persons) who do not know much about Christ, St. Thomas is the Apostle who questioned the news that Jesus had risen from the dead and demanded proof that Jesus was real when he visited his apostles. [1] Dad felt - and I agree - that doubt is essential to the development of a strong Faith. It is not healthy to believe something blindly, without sense, without thought, without reason. As Galileo Galilei once said, "I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with senses, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use and by some other means to give us knowledge which we can attain by them." [2]

I have striven to remain true to that spirit in this presentation. I have tried to question everything, to present a rational foundation for all of the assertions and arguments I make. As a consequence of that effort, I feel that these principles represent a strong foundation upon which to build a convincing and compelling guide for good, moral behavior.

Of course, remaining true to Doubting Thomas means that I believe in the value of challenge and disagreement, as well. Therefore, I believe the healthiest thing a reader can do is to question what he or she reads in these pages. I encourage you to reflect on the arguments I present and seek for their flaws, for mistakes and inconsistencies. I urge you to do so in the company of friends - spend late nights arguing about thought experiments and moral dilemmas. (I wanted that word to be 'dilemmae', but it isn't. I looked it up.) Not only will doing so lead you to a better understanding of the nature of goodness and morality, but it will strengthen your relationships with those others - which is where you will find the most important of the spiritual things which make us human. I feel confident you will forgive me when I say that I hope you are not able to find anything wrong with what I present . . .

Important to note is that I, myself, am among the many objects toward which I direct my doubts. I have some confidence in what I am writing

- enough confidence that I have gone to the trouble of articulating my thoughts in written form, enough that I am taking the risk of exposing those thoughts to you and the rest of the public. However, resting behind that effort is the nagging feeling that I am doing something which I do not 'deserve' to do.

Of course the ultimate root of that self-doubt is the fear that I am wrong - that readers will have an easy time tearing apart the logic and reasoning I present.

There is more to my fears than that, though. Even if the logic is sound, I worry that what I am writing may not be 'good enough' - that I am not qualified to say these things, that I have not earned the right to participate in this sort of discussion.

The most concrete way I can think to express that fear is that I am keenly aware that the arguments I present may be perceived as 'plain' - as 'common', rather than 'sophisticated'. I expect that scholars who work in the fields of philosophy and theology discuss these concepts in much more elegant and nuanced ways, and therefore are likely to discount, even to scorn, what appears in these pages.

I regret that, honestly. I have enjoyed all of the philosophy in which I have had the opportunity to participate. I took as many classes in philosophy as I was able to squeeze into my college schedule, and - as evidenced by this book - have continued to reflect on moral and ethical questions ever since. It pains me to think that I may be playing the role of irritating neophyte to the philosophers and theologians I admire. I would much prefer to be able to express my thoughts in the sophisticated manner suited to their discussions. Perhaps some day I will have a chance to refine and improve what I present.

In the meantime, I have chosen to set aside the fear and self-doubt and persist in putting my arguments in writing. The considerations which motivate me to do so are two-fold.

One is that it simply is not true that any person is disqualified from participating in discussions about morality. After all, every person is faced with moral decisions on a daily basis. As persons who must make decisions about morality, we are all - whether we wish to be or not - participants in this debate, no matter the level of our sophistication.

The other consideration which impels me to set aside my insecurity is that 'more sophisticated' is not always the same as 'better'. I am confident that any reader, with a few moments' reflection, will be able to identify a situation in which a 'sophisticated' practitioner within some field has managed to reach a conclusion diametrically opposed to the one described

by facts or common sense or both. The fields of law and politics are excellent sources of examples, for those of you who wish to reflect on the irony associated with allowing 'sophisticated' persons to control debate.

Therefore, plain and 'common' as they may be, I have decided to share my thoughts. I believe the framework I present is 'right' - meaning, as I hinted before, that the reasoning is sound, that it includes some insights into human nature, and that my reasoning has produced solid, workable conclusions. What is more, I believe there is value in a simple, common presentation - a presentation which should make sense and be accessible to a wide range of ordinary persons.

I hope I am right. I hope you find value here. I hope these thoughts help you to understand what is good and moral, that they lend you strength in doing good work, and that they give you comfort when the tangible, material world seems to discourage that effort. Even more than that, I hope that what you find here stimulates your thinking - that challenging what is written here will lead you to a greater understanding of the nature of goodness, the way St. Thomas's doubts did for him.

Part I: FOUNDATIONS

Underpinnings

Every philosophy must be built upon a set of assumptions and definitions. Indeed, since philosophers are very careful with the logic and reasoning they use to develop their conclusions, the assumptions with which they begin often are the only places where it makes sense to dispute their findings. For that reason, it is essential to begin with as few assumptions as possible and to provide strong justification for them.

Definitions of Terms

Good and Moral

The term 'good' is used within a great many contexts in contemporary culture - audiences decide what music they think is 'good', they argue over how 'good' an athlete is, and decide whether their food tastes 'good'. Of course, most of those meanings are not associated with the concept of morality. For a discussion of that concept, then, it is important to restrict the meaning of the term 'good' to its association with the moral aspects of decisions and actions.

In addition to limiting the meanings of those terms - good, moral - it is crucial to frame the concepts in a manner which will allow their presence to be assessed. Since the concepts are not tangible, not physical in nature, precise measurements of goodness and morality probably are not possible, but their presence certainly may be assessed. One way to frame that assessment, to make a qualitative evaluation of the morality of an action, is to express morality in terms of the value associated with the decision or action. That is, good decisions will provide value to the persons affected by them, while immoral decisions will harm the persons affected or deprive them of something considered valuable.

Worth noting is that this approach to expressing the concept of good does not exclude other ways to frame the concept. By way of analogy, consider that there are many ways to specify a geographical location, ranging

from numerical coordinates (latitude and longitude) to a description based on political boundaries (city, street, country, etc.). The physical location is the same no matter which system is used, but the presenter is free to choose the framework which suits the nature of the discussion. In much the same way, there may be many ways to present the concept of goodness, of morality. However, the framework which expresses those concepts in terms of value will help simplify the discussion of a Code of Honor.

(Aside: Those who are scientifically inclined may wish to consider the description of the movement of the Moon around the Earth. It is perfectly correct to express that movement using Cartesian, rectangular coordinates. However, the equations of motion are very complicated in that coordinate system. Far simpler is to describe the motion using spherical coordinates - the equations are easier to write, to manipulate, and to understand.)

Intrinsic Value

The development of a broad set of principles requires that decisions and actions be distilled to their essence. Since the concept of good is being framed in terms of value, this means the analysis must revolve around things which carry value in a fundamental way - that is, it must focus on things which carry value in and of themselves, rather than things which derive their value from other things. What is more, the value which is carried by those things must be persistent, must remain present irrespective of the situation. That concept - value which is fundamental to the object in question and which persists from situation to situation - is called 'intrinsic value' within this discussion.

Gratia

Having clarified the meaning of intrinsic value, it is important to develop a term which will refer to those items which carry that intrinsic value. Selecting that term is made more difficult by the fact that many of the terms which might serve the need either are clumsy or are used to to express other concepts. As an example, consider the phrase 'objectives of good actions'. While that is a descriptive way to express the concept, the phrase is clumsy and makes use of the word 'objective', which also must serve to express the concept of something which is not dependent on the nature of the observer.

For the sake of simplicity, and to reduce the number of terms used for multiple purposes (which will happen frequently despite the effort), this discussion will apply the term *gratia* - plural *gratiae* - to refer to something

which carries intrinsic, objective value. Loosely translated from Latin, this term refers to 'graces' - things which are intangible, but which are nevertheless recognized as being desirable.

Virtue

Translating from an abstract discussion of Honor to practical application requires the identification of factors which guide and encourage moral decisions and actions. A factor which fits that descripton will be called a 'virtue'.

Observer

Many of the examples and situations used to illustrate concepts will refer to an external observer, a third party viewing the situation without participating in it. Inherent within that reference is an understanding that the observer shares normal human inclinations and motivations, and that he or she is not suffering from a mental illness of any kind.

Assumptions

Objective Good Exists

The foundation for this discussion is the assertion that goodness and morality can be discussed in an objective way, that evaluations of goodness and morality are not entirely subjective, not entirely dependent on the point of view of the evaluator. The accuracy of that assertion may be established through the construction of a basic thought experiment.

Imagine a table in an otherwise empty room. At the table are seated a man, obviously well fed, and a child who appears malnourished. A server enters the room with a loaf of bread and places it before the malnourished child. The man reaches out and takes the bread away from the child.

That action will evoke an immediate, visceral response from normal human observers - a powerfully negative response.

Now imagine that, instead of placing the bread before the child, the server sets it in front of the man. The man pushes the bread toward the child, inviting the child to eat.

Again, the response evoked by that action is immediate and universal; all normal human observers will agree that the man has acted in a good and moral way.

Those responses are sufficient to demonstrate the existence of objective

good, because they establish agreement amongst normal human observers. It is clear that something objective is involved in the evaluation process, because the observers share an understanding of the moral quality of the man's actions.

Worth noting is that it is possible to imagine circumstances in which the man might be justified in withholding the bread from the child - imagine, for example, that the man has hungry children of his own at home. However, that recognition does not contradict the conclusion that objective good exists, because the objectivity of the moral character of the man's actions is established by the agreement of observers. The property of objectivity does not require that the man's action have the same moral character in all situations - it simply requires that all normal observers agree on its character in a specific situation. Adding external circumstances to the situation creates a new scenario, a new situation, and therefore does not compromise the agreement of observers about the original situation. Indeed, the fact that all normal, human observers would reconsider their assessment of the morality of the man's actions in light of that new information serves as further evidence that objective good exists. Again, the observers are reacting to a set of criteria upon which they agree, illustrating the objective nature of that set of criteria.

Developing a clear understanding of the meaning of 'objective' is critically important, because the the mis-association of the property of objectivity with actions is one of the conceptual errors which often leads to moral relativism. A moral relativist might assert that the fact that an action (in this case the man's hoarding of the bread) is wrong in some circumstances but justified in others precludes the definition of objective good.

That assertion represents an error in logic. The action - the hoarding of the bread - is the *subject* of the evaluation, so it is incorrect (by definition) to associate it with the property of objectivity. Instead, that property must be associated with the set of criteria used to make the evaluation. Human observers share an understanding of those criteria. Even if differences in individual experiences and situational circumstances sometimes lead observers to arrive at different interpretations and conclusions, the criteria remain the same. That is, the criteria remain objective in nature.

The Concept of Good Applies to the Actions of Rational Creatures

Many events take place without any influence at all from sentient creatures (that is, humans). The sun produces flares, meteors fall into the

atmosphere, volcanoes erupt, and animals hunt and kill each other. These events may be desirable or not - worth noting is that contemporary culture often uses the term 'good' to mean 'desirable' - but they are neither good nor evil within the context of this discussion. It only makes sense to discuss good and evil within the context of rational decision-making.

Recognizing this truth is important, because it allows the Code of Honor to account for the intent of the decision-maker, the actor. Accidents and mistakes may have effects which are undesirable, but those things are not always evil or immoral. An evaluation of the moral quality of such events must take into account the intent which lies behind them.

Also worth noting is the phrase 'take into account'. The intent of the decision-maker, the actor, is important but not necessarily definitive.

Assessments of Moral Character Must Include All Persons Affected

When a person is confronted with the need to make a decision which carries moral consequences (in reality, almost every decision), it is crucial that he or she recognize the ways in which other persons will be affected by the decision.

The Existence of God Cannot Be Proven

While the vast majority of the human population believes in some form of higher power - in God - philosophers and theologians have not managed to develop a logical proof of His existence. Neither have they managed to develop a convincing proof of His absence.

The fact that the existence of God can neither be proven nor disproven is both appropriate and necessary. One of the essential characteristics of the human condition is that humans possess free will. If there existed some form of proof regarding the existence (or non-existence) of God, that proof would compromise the ability of persons to exercise their free will; humans would no longer be free to choose whether or not to believe.

Understanding this reality is important for a discussion about honor, because it reveals the importance of constructing a code which does not depend on religious faith. Certainly religious faith will support a strong Code of Honor, since religious teaching is the most commonly-used and most effective mechanism for the development of an understanding of spiritual matters. Strong religious traditions will serve to support and illuminate a Code of Honor, because such traditions will themselves reflect the underlying truths incorporated into that code.

While religious teaching will support a Code of Honor, however, it is

critically important that the code remain independent of such teaching. After all, the most convenient excuse for a person who wishes to avoid being bound by a standard of conduct is that he or she rejects the religious teaching on which that standard is based - in some cases, to reject religion altogether. That excuse is not available when the code has been developed in a manner which is independent of religious faith.

The Nature of Good

Establishing the existence of objective good immediately raises questions about its nature. Distilled to their essence, those questions become: What characterizes 'goodness'? Or, stating the same question in another way, what factors separate 'good' actions and decisions from 'evil' ones?

Framing the discussion in terms of value allows that question to be answered in a relatively direct manner (not easy, but direct). Good actions and decisions are those which provide value to the persons affected by them. Thus, the nature of 'goodness' may be understood by determining what persons find valuable. What is more, since the purpose of this discussion is to identify the nature of good in a general sense, the focus will be on things which are valuable in all situations, things which carry value intrinsically. The term *gratiae* is defined specifically for this purpose - to serve as the name for such things.

A good place to begin the search is with the thought experiment which was used to establish the existence of objective good. Worth noting immediately is that the physical objects in that scenario - the table and the bread - do not carry intrinsic value. Observers may be tempted to focus on the bread, since the movement of that item is the trigger for their emotional response, but in reality the value of the bread is dependent upon the situation. Consider, for example, a slightly different scenario in which both the man and the child are obviously well fed. In that circumstance, the disposition of the bread is of little concern. Clearly, the value of the bread is dependent on the situation; therefore, it cannot carry intrinsic value.

Since the physical objects within the scenario do not carry value in an objective sense, the emotional response of observers must be driven by something else - something intangible. The nature of that intangible something is suggested by the change which led to a reduction in the perceived value of the bread - namely, the change in the need of the child. The reason human observers react to the disposition of the bread in the

original scenario is that they realize that without food the child will sicken and, eventually, die.

Clearly, the item which carries value in this situation, the *gratia* around which the scenario is built, is life, or vitality. Furthermore, it is readily apparent that life retains its value from situation to situation. Modifying the needs of the persons in the scenario changed the value of the bread, but that change says nothing about the value associated with the lives of the participants. Were the bread in the scenario to be replaced with a gun, observers would once again become emotionally connected to the situation. That emotional reaction demonstrates that the lives of the participants are recognized as important - as valuable - by observers.

Of course, life is not the only thing which carries value in an intrinsic way. To illustrate another member of the set of *gratiae*, consider the example of an employee whose manager is a very strong advocate of a sports team - a team which is entirely unrelated to the business at which the two persons work. In fact, the manager is so committed to the team that he requires his employees to wear shirts supporting that sports team once each week, threatening disciplinary action against employees who do not comply. That demand elicits a strong, negative reaction from normal human observers. The requirement has no effect on the vitality of the workers, so the *gratia* involved must be something different. In this case, it is that of freedom, of liberty. To force a person to express support for one sports team, when the worker might wish to support another team or might wish not to participate, is a violation of that worker's liberty.

The value of liberty is explored in many works of literature and is exemplified by the real actions of historical figures. Indeed, the value is so high that persons sometimes are willing to risk their lives in order to preserve it for themselves or for others. As Patrick Henry said just before the American Revolution, "Give me liberty, or give me death!" [1]

In addition to vitality and liberty, there is a third item which belongs in the set of *gratiae*. To identify it, consider a situation involving an elderly man dying of a terminal illness. Imagine that the man has returned home, to his own bedroom, where he is attended by a hospice nurse and by his family. As the end of his life nears, the man requests that everyone except his wife leave the room so that he might have privacy. It is clear to all normal, human observers that the good, moral choice for those other persons is to grant the dying man's request. Since neither the life nor the liberty of any of the participants is affected by that choice, it is clear that some other factor - some other *gratia* must be involved in the decision. That *gratia* is the dignity of the elderly man.

While this example distinguishes the *gratia* of dignity from that of liberty, it is common for persons to mingle the two. A word which may help to clarify the difference between them is 'judgement'. When a person involved in a situation feels as though he or she is being 'judged', then the *gratia* of dignity must be included within an evaluation of the situation.

It is important to recognize that the word 'dignity' is sometimes used in a very different sense than it is used here. Sometimes, the term is used to refer to the manner in which a person carries himself or herself - a person may be described as behaving with dignity. That concept is different from the *gratia*, however. To illustrate the difference, consider that the elderly man in this scenario might conduct himself in a very petulant, ignoble - undignified - way. Nevertheless, the other persons will recognize and affirm the essential dignity of his person if they respect his desire for privacy - and that affirmation is independent of the manner in which the man conducts himself.

The *gratia* which is called 'dignity' refers to something essential about human persons - it represents the basic respect which should be accorded to someone simply as a result of his or her personhood. The manner in which a person conducts himself or herself is a very different concept. In fact, that concept is more closely related to that of Honor, which is explored in detail later in this discussion.

The Nature of the Gratiae

It is striking that all three of these qualities - vitality, liberty, and dignity - are intangible, are spiritual in nature. While no one can deny that material items are desirable, careful examination makes clear that material items do not carry value in an objective, intrinsic way. Part of the reason for this is that material desires vary greatly from person to person - which illustrates that their value is not intrinsic, does not persist from situation to situation for all observers. Another aspect of the discussion is that the value carried by material items generally is derived from their relationship to the *gratiae*. The value of the bread in the first thought experiment, for example, is a result of its ability to sustain life, to support the *gratia* of vitality.

Another characteristic of the *gratiae* is that persons are endowed with them individually, and that endowment occurs simply as a consequence of being human. A person's vitality, liberty, and dignity belong to that person alone, and they are independent of that person's status or income or job or race or point of origin.

At the same time, it also is clear that the *gratiae* are influenced powerfully by the actions of other persons. Outside actors, other persons, have the ability to deprive a person of his or her life, of his or her freedom, of his or her dignity. Indeed, it is for that reason that it is so important to restore honor to our culture. The *gratiae*, the things which are of real, intrinsic value to people, can flourish only when our fellow citizens recognize and protect them.

The nature of the *gratiae* reveals one of the essential paradoxes associated with being human. These are individual characteristics; a person is endowed with vitality and liberty and dignity on an individual level. Yet those properties are almost entirely dependent on the decisions of others.

Validating the Set of Gratiae

In order for the *gratiae* to serve as a framework for evaluating the moral quality of decisions and actions, it is important that the set of *gratiae* exhibit two properties. One is that all of the elements in the set must be necessary; they must be independent of one another. If they are not independent - if, for example, one of the three is really just a reflection of the others - evaluations are likely to become trapped in circular reasoning. The other property which is required is that the set of *gratiae* be complete. If evaluations of the moral character of decisions are to be trusted, they must include everything which carries value intrinsically.

The first of those characteristics, that the *gratiae* are independent of one another, has been demonstrated by the thought experiments used to illuminate them. The independence of liberty from vitality is illustrated by the manner in which they are put into conflict in the speech given by Patrick Henry. Similarly, the situation used to illustrate the value of dignity was constructed specifically to eliminate considerations involving the other *gratiae*. (In mathematical terms, it seems clear that these three items are linearly independent. In fact, these three elements even seem likely to be orthogonal to one another, making them good basis vectors for the moral-evaluation space.)

Much more difficult to establish is that these three elements represent a complete set, that there are no other elements which carry intrinsic value - and which, therefore, must be included in the evaluation of the moral quality of a decision or action. Unfortunately there is no ready method for proving the completeness of the set of *gratiae*, so establishing that property instead requires a review of all possible alternatives - a prohibitive task. Short of engaging in an exhaustive search, however, it is possible to

build a convincing argument for completeness by examining the most likely candidates.

One alternative worth considering is the property of health. Human beings clearly place a high value on health. However, careful reflection makes clear that health is, essentially, a refinement of the *gratia* of life, and therefore not an independent quality.

Another candidate worth examining is peace - humans clearly value peace, and just as clearly perceive actions which advance the cause of peace to be good, moral actions. Once again, though, careful examination shows that peace is not independent of the other *gratiae*. What humans find most attractive about a peaceful environment is that it confers a sense of safety - that is, it allows a person to trust that his or her life is not at risk. The greatest portion of the value of peace, then, is derived from its association with vitality. A peaceful environment also serves the *gratia* of liberty, because persons living in peaceful environments are not subject to the restrictions imposed by a state of conflict. Thus, while peace clearly is valuable, and objectively so, that value is derived from other *gratiae*, and therefore already is included within the framework. (In mathematical terms, the peace vector can be constructed using some combination of the vitality and liberty vectors, and therefore is not linearly independent of them.)

Another item worth considering is charity - it is clear that human beings recognize the value which is created when they care for one another. However, a close examination of the concept of charity reveals that it has a character which is different from the other elements.

Vitality, liberty, and dignity are properties which pertain to individual persons - it is sensible to say that a person has life, or has freedom. Furthermore, these properties are influenced - controlled, even - by the actions of others. It is possible for one person to deprive another of life, or of liberty, or of dignity.

Charity, on the other hand, has a very different nature, is not a property which pertains to an individual person. It is not sensible, for example, to say that a person 'has charity'. However, it does make sense to say that a person exhibits charity, that a person is motivated by charity. Thus, charity is a factor which motivates action, rather than a property associated with a person's essential humanity. Another major difference between charity and the *gratiae* is that the former does not fall under the influence of other persons. It simply is not possible for one person to force another to be charitable. While it is possible to coerce a person to give things - time and money and goods - to others, those gifts do not represent charity,

because the giver is not free to choose. Rather, the person coerced into giving is the victim of the crime of extortion.

In summary, then, careful thought reveals that charity has a nature which is fundamentally different from that of the three *gratiae*, and therefore does not belong in the set. The *gratiae* are items associated with persons as a consequence of their basic humanity, but which are subject to the actions of other persons. Charity, on the other hand, is an attitude which is chosen by a person independent of outside forces, and which is used by that person to motivate good, honorable actions.

Understanding that charity and the *gratiae* are different in nature is important for two reasons. One is pragmatic - that difference in nature serves to establish a limit on the range of candidates which must be examined in order to ensure that the set of *gratiae* is complete. Qualities such as patience, mercy, and sympathy (and many others of similar nature) need not be considered for inclusion in the set of *gratiae*, because they are different in kind. The other reason this discussion is important is that it illuminates the meaning of the term 'virtue'. Charity is a virtue - something which motivates a person to act honorably - so it serves as an illustration of the sorts of qualities which will be included in the Code of Honor.

Special Consideration: Joy

Another property which clearly is valued by humans is that of happiness; it is safe to say that all persons wish to be happy. Before discussing the relationship between happiness and the *gratiae*, however, it is essential to establish clear defintions of terms. Common usage connects that one word - 'happiness' - with two very different emotions, resulting in a great deal of confusion. Therefore, it is safest to eschew the use of that word altogether, and instead to replace it with two others: pleasure and joy.

Pleasure refers to the feeling which arises when a person is able to satisfy one of his or her desires. In most cases, the desire revolves around something material, something tangible, and the satisfaction is temporary in nature. A person feels pleasure when eating delicious food, when wearing comfortable clothing, when resting in comfortable temperatures. These experiences are good things; there is nothing wrong with seeking pleasant experiences. However, it should be clear that pleasure does not belong in the set of *gratiae*. Not only is pleasure a transient, temporary feeling, but pleasurable experiences vary widely from person to person; the value of such experiences will not be intrinsic, will not be objective.

The term 'joy' is used to represent a very different feeling; it refers to a sense of contentment, to the feeling of satisfaction which arises when a person is in the 'right place'. Providing a clear definition of the feeling is difficult, because it is intangible and rarely articulated, but it should be familiar to everyone. Imagine a person delivering a bundle of warm clothing to a homeless shelter in wintertime; whether that person receives any thanks or recognition is not relevant - he or she will feel a deep and abiding sense of rightness, of joy.

To emphasize the difference between the two feelings consider the situation of an ascetic monk - someone who has chosen to eliminate the pursuit of material pleasure from his life in order to live more simply, more contemplatively. Although he has deliberately chosen to avoid pleasurable experiences, that monk may be perfectly content with his choice. That feeling of contentment is joy.

Providing a careful definition of terms helps to reveal the difference between joy and the *gratiae*. The essence of that difference is that joy is a feeling, something which is the result of a person's actions, rather than a property which pertains to that person. Moreover, the fact that joy is the product of a person's actions and decisions means that it is not something which is subject to external influence. That is, a person has the ability to feel joy no matter what actions are taken by others. An external entity might refuse to grant a person dignity, or deprive that person of freedom, or even take away that person's life - yet the person may still experience joy.

As an example, consider the story of St. Stephen, an early Christian martyr. According to the biblical account, St. Stephen was engaged in spreading the teachings of Jesus - teachings which were rejected, and violently so, by the authorities of his time. They accused St. Stephen of the crime of blasphemy and sentenced him to death by stoning. Rather than condemn his persecutors, however, St. Stephen said prayers on their behalf even as his stoning was taking place. [2] Clearly St. Stephen's enemies performed actions designed to harm him; indeed, they did as much harm as they could manage. As a result of their actions, he was stripped of dignity, freedom, and eventually his life - all three of the *gratiae*. Equally clear, however, is that St. Stephen experienced joy. Despite his terrible suffering, he accepted his situation and remained satisfied with the decisions he had made. In fact, he was so completely at peace that he was able to set aside the anger and hatred which would have been natural reactions for someone in his position, instead offering forgiveness to his tormentors.

The story of St. Stephen offers an opportunity to explore the nature

of joy, in addition to illustrating that it is different in nature from the *gratiae*. Consider that the reason St. Stephen was sentenced to death was that he was spreading the Good News of Christianity. The essence of that Good News is that Christians believe humans are made in the image of God, meaning that all persons are endowed with life, freedom, and dignity by a loving Creator who wishes to share eternal life with them in Heaven. In other words, St. Stephen was engaged in actions designed to advance the *gratiae* as he understood them. Certainly there are many who disagree with St. Stephen's beliefs, but that does not change the fact that St. Stephen was striving to perform good actions in accordance with his beliefs. It was that pursuit which gave St. Stephen the ability to find joy in the midst of his suffering.

Since there are many persons who reject Christian teaching, it is dangerous to use biblical examples to illustrate and support points like this. In this case, however, the biblical passage is not being used as supporting evidence - it is being used to illustrate the concepts being discussed. A person does not have to believe Christian teaching to recognize and understand the principles involved in the story.

While careful examination shows that joy does not belong in the set of *gratiae*, that it is different in nature from those items, it also reveals that the concepts have an intimate connection with one another. The *gratiae* are things of value which will be served - advanced and promoted - by good and moral actions, and joy is the feeling which is produced when a person engages in good and moral actions, the feeling which arises when a person serves the *gratiae*.

Reflection and Summation

The American Spirit

It will not have escaped the notice of students of American History that the *gratiae* bear a strong resemblance to the fundamental rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence (US 1776) - the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The similarity is not intentional, is not the result of conscious effort. However, the convergence between these two sets of principles is important, because it serves as an affirmation of both. These efforts started from two very different places, with two very different purposes in mind, yet they arrived at very similar conclusions - a fact which suggests that those conclusions offer clear and accurate insights into the nature of humankind.

The primary concern of the men who established the United States of America was the definition of good government. Having lived under a government they considered oppressive and tyrannical, the Founding Fathers were striving to formulate and articulate the principles which would establish a benevolent government. That they were successful is beyond dispute; the United States has created more prosperity for its citizens than any other government in history, and the kindness and generosity of American society has benefited the entire world. When other nations suffer from tragic events, ranging from natural disasters to wars, they turn to the United States for help. What the American experiment demonstrates is that a government dedicated to preserving life, liberty, and the ability of citizens to pursue happiness will produce a prosperous and virtuous people.

The purpose of the discussion in these pages is very different; it is to create a framework which may be used by individuals to assess the moral quality of decisions made by individuals. The careful examination of simplified situations has provided insight into the process of performing that assessment, revealing three properties, the *gratiae*, which carry value for humans in an intrinsic, objective sense. Objectively good and moral decisions are those which support the vitality, liberty, and dignity of the persons affected by them.

Despite the very different natures of those two efforts, they have arrived at conclusions which are remarkably similar. In fact, the only apparent difference lies in the last item, the 'pursuit of happiness'. Worth noting is that the authors of the Declaration of Independence were heavily influenced by the philosopher John Locke, and the statement about the inalienable rights of humans was drawn from his works on government. [1][2] In his works, Locke defined the inalienable rights as life, liberty, and property, which offers some insight into what the Founding Fathers intended to express with their own statement. Rather than interpreting 'pursuit of happiness' within the context of a feeling - such as pleasure or joy - the connection with property suggests that what the Founding Fathers had in mind was that citizens should be granted authority over their own pursuits and possessions, that government should not interfere with the decisions made by citizens with regard to their own affairs - property, originally, but expanded by the Founding Fathers to include non-material affairs. In short, it is not a stretch to say that the intent of the phrase 'pursuit of happiness' in the Declaration of Independence is to assert that good government must treat citizens with dignity.

It is remarkable that an effort to define objective, moral good on an individual level should have so much in common with an effort to define principles for establishing good government. That this concept of good should resonate so clearly and powerfully at both levels serves as a powerful affirmation of its accuracy and insight.

Christianity

Followers of Christian religions will find the *gratiae* familiar, as well. Indeed, the leaders of Christian churches even use similar language to describe the moral foundations on which their followers are to model their lives - they discuss the sanctity of life, the importance of religious liberty, and the dignity of all persons from birth to natural death.

Underlying the moral framework presented by Christian teaching is the idea that humankind was created in the *image and likeness of God*. That connection suggests that the 'image of God' is embodied in the form of the three *gratiae*. Those properties are the essential elements which define what it means to be human, so a Christian can understand them as the manner in which the image of God is made manifest.

Conclusion

Understanding the nature of goodness (morality, honorable behavior)

is challenging because the concept is an abstract one, something persons cannot touch or see. Its intangible nature does not make goodness any less real, of course, but since an abstraction is difficult to quantify, it is a challenge to articulate the nature of goodness and morality in a clear way.

The first step toward overcoming that problem is to establish the existence of situations for which all human observers will agree on an assessment of the moral quality of a decision made within that situation. Those situations provide a definitive indication that there exists a set of objective criteria which may be used in assessing the moral quality of decisions.

It is important to understand that the property of objectivity applies to the set of criteria, not to the actions themselves. By definition, the actions are subjective - they are the subjects of the evaluation. Therefore, neither they nor evaluations of them will remain the same from situation to situation. Instead it is the set of *criteria* which remain objective.

Careful reflection reveals that one way to formulate that set of criteria is by using the three *gratiae*: vitality, liberty, and dignity. These are the essential elements which belong to a human person as a consequence of his or her humanity. A person should be given the opportunity to live, should be granted freedom, and should be treated with dignity in the arrangement of his or her affairs. To deny any of these things to another person is wrong, is immoral, while supporting their presence in other persons - enhancing the vitality, liberty, and dignity of those persons - is good and moral.

Important to note is that there are times, in the complexity of human interaction, when these properties come into conflict with one another. For example, a criminal who has committed murder is a danger to the lives - the vitality - of other members of society. In order to protect them, it is necessary that the criminal be deprived of the *gratia* of freedom. This is not desirable, but the need to protect the rest of society from a criminal demands that the criminal be imprisoned.

Also important to note is that the reflections used to identify the *gratiae* do not require that a person follow a particular religious faith - or any faith at all, for that matter. The *gratiae* are objective in nature; they are not dependent on any sort of belief system which might be considered subjective.

The process of identifying the *gratiae* has served to illuminate other concepts related to honorable behavior. One of those is the concept of joy, the feeling associated with behaving in an honorable way. While joy certainly is desirable, and objectively so, its character is different from that of the *gratiae*. What sets joy apart is that it is not affected by the actions of others - it may be achieved by a person through his or her own actions.

Also different in character from the *gratiae* are virtues. Where the *gratiae* provide criteria through which to measure the moral quality of an action, virtues are characteristics which guide and motivate honorable decisions, which drive good behavior. Establishing that connection is crucial, because after establishing the criteria which define honorable behavior - the *gratiae* - the next step in constructing a Code of Honor is to define the virtues of which it is comprised.

Part II: THE CODE OF HONOR
The Seven Virtues

Framing the Code

Using examples designed to illuminate basic principles, along with a minimal set of assumptions, the preceding sections have established that there are decisions which are objectively good and moral in nature - that is, decisions which are honorable. Moreover, that discussion identified a set of criteria which may be used to assess the moral character of a decision. Those criteria are the three *gratiae* - vitality, liberty, and dignity - properties which adhere to every person as a consequence of his or her basic humanity. Decisions which serve the *gratiae*, which recognize and nurture those properties, are morally good, while actions which do harm to those properties are immoral, are evil.

Expressing the nature of the *gratiae* in a clear way requires that they be contrasted with several related concepts - such as Faith and Joy - which require clear and careful articulation. Of particular interest are ideas which fall under the category of virtues, because those are the factors which motivate honorable behavior. In other words, they are the factors which drive individuals to put their understanding of goodness and morality into practice - they are the essence of a Code of Honor.

Real-Life Complexity

The scenarios used to illustrate the nature of goodness were chosen because they limited complexity. Those situations were designed to focus on one aspect of the discussion at a time, as well as to minimize the number of individuals involved. Unfortunately, most real-world situations are significantly more complicated.

One of the factors which adds complexity is that real-world situations often affect more than a few individuals. The *gratiae* of everyone involved in a situation must be considered when assessing the moral quality of a decision, so most evaluations are more complicated than the scenarios described here.

Another complicating factor is that most realistic decisions produce both positive and negative effects. Most real-world choices will aid the

gratiae in some ways, while harming them in others. The example used to identify liberty as one of the *gratiae* provides an excellent illustration of the conflict. In one of his most famous speeches, Patrick Henry demands "Give me liberty, or give me death!" [1] Within that statement, Mr. Henry indicates that he considers the *gratia* of liberty so important that he is willing to risk another *gratia* - his life - in order to preserve it.

The Nature of the Gratiae

Framing the concept of goodness in terms of value means that the criteria used to assess the moral character of a decision are (must be) items which persons consider to be of value. An essential insight into human nature is the recognition that the things which truly are valuable to persons are intangible, spiritual things - the three *gratiae*: vitality, liberty, dignity.

Also essential to understanding the nature of good and moral behavior is the recognition that while the *gratiae* are very individual in nature - that is, those properties adhere only to individuals - they exist, largely, under the control of other persons. An individual cannot grant life to him- or herself - nor can that person give him- or herself freedom or dignity. Essential to the human condition is that all persons depend upon others for the development of those properties.

(Aside: It is important to bear in mind that 'dignity' refers to the right of a person to be given control over his or her own affairs, rather than to a person's manner of conduct. That distinction was discussed more completely in Part I, Chapter 2, toward the end of *Identifying* Gratiae. The term used to describe the manner in which a person conducts himself is Honor, described below.)

Faith

The recognition that the *gratiae* are intangible, are spiritual, in nature means that acting in a good and moral way is possible only when a person recognizes the value of spiritual things, understands them, and holds a commitment to serving those things. That commitment is the definition of Faith.

In modern culture, the word Faith is used almost exclusively to refer to religious belief, so it is important to note that this formulation of Honor does not make reference to theology. Faith, within the context of this discussion, is simply the recognition that spiritual matters are important - indeed, that they are of primary importance - coupled with a commit-

ment to include those spiritual matters in the decision-making process. That commitment does not require a particular kind of religious teaching - indeed, does not require any religious teaching at all.

On the other hand, it also is important to recognize that religious teaching is consistent with this articulation of Faith. A strong religious tradition will emphasize the spiritual side of human persons and will provide its followers with a framework to help guide their understanding of spiritual matters.

Honor

Where the term Faith refers to a spiritual commitment made by an individual, the term Honor refers to the manner in which the individual puts that commitment into practice. Honor is the manifestation of Faith - it is the tangible, observable expression of the commitment a person has made to spiritual matters.

While these two terms refer to different concepts, it should be clear that they cannot be separated from one another. It is not possible to have Honor, to act Honorably, without Faith, and it is not possible for a person to have real Faith without striving to realize that Faith through Honorable actions.

Joy

One of the consequences of expressing the concept of goodness in terms of value is that doing so raises questions about what persons desire; it is natural to connect value with desirable things. Interestingly, however, the satisfaction of desire is not a good indicator of true value. The reason for this is that desires usually are individual in nature - each person's desires are particular to that person. As a result, desires generally do not coincide with real, intrinsic value, and the *gratiae*, by definition, are properties which must represent intrinsic, objective value.

The reality that desire and value are disconnected from one another serves to emphasize the reality that a person can not control his or her own *gratiae*. Instead, a person with a sincere commitment to spiritual matters must seek to support the *gratiae* in others. Said another way, a person with real Faith will be focused on the needs of others, rather than his or her selfish desires.

The difference between gratifying desire and finding true value - the *gratiae* - is illustrated by the feelings produced by the decisions associated with them. When a person seeks to satisfy his or her desires, that person

will feel pleasure. When a person seeks to nurture the *gratiae*, on the other hand, he or she experiences something deeper and more satisfying - Joy.

Virtue: Establishing the Code

In order to provide a clear articulation of the *gratiae*, it is necessary to establish the contrast between them and a class of items which, while clearly positive, have a character different from that of the *gratiae*. One member of that class is the quality of Charity - acting in a charitable way is obviously desirable. However, the quality of Charity has a nature which is different from that of the *gratiae*. One difference is that an individual has complete control over a quality like Charity. A person has the ability to decide whether he or she wishes to be charitable, and that decision is independent of the actions of others. Another major difference is that qualities like Charity serve to motivate decisions, rather than to measure the value of their outcomes.

Fortunately, a term was defined to encapsulate those differences. Qualities like Charity belong in the category of virtues, which are defined as factors used to guide and motivate moral decisions and actions.

Since the virtues serve to motivate individuals to act upon their commitment to the *gratiae*, and since Honor represents the translation of that commitment into tangible actions and decisions, it is clear that the virtues are essential to honorable behavior. Stated succinctly, the virtues are the building blocks of the Code of Honor. Understanding and applying the virtues will guide individuals into making better, more moral decisions, which will in turn nurture and strengthen the *gratiae* for everyone in society.

Wisdom

It is fitting to begin the list of virtues with Wisdom, because it is the one which gives direction to the decisions made by an honorable person. Not only does Wisdom inform a person when a situation requires an action or decision, but it guides the person in finding the decision which is most likely to produce a positive result. In other words, Wisdom is the virtue which allows a person identify honorable choices.

An immediate pre-requisite for the making of good decisions is knowledge. A person must have a clear understanding of the facts associated with a situation before he or she can hope to make an effective decision. However, experience also makes clear that knowledge alone is not sufficient. Just as important, sometimes even more so, are the intangible and emotional factors which surround a situation. Wise persons understand the need to account for those things when choosing a course of action - they apply empathy, as well as knowledge.

Wise persons also recognize that, in many cases, the reality of a situation is different from its appearance. Whether consciously or unconsciously, persons involved in a situation often distort the facts and factors. For that reason, true Wisdom requires the ability to identify inconsistencies and anomalies - that is, it requires strong critical thinking skills.

Worth emphasizing is that many distortions are not deliberate. The persons involved in a situation generally do not realize the biases they hold, and therefore often distort their presentation of circumstances without realizing they are doing so. This problem is particularly pernicious, particularly damaging, when the decision-maker *is one of* the persons involved. Self-deception is the most difficult kind of distortion to detect and overcome.

Distilled to its essence, then, acting with Wisdom means that a person must learn as much as possible about a situation, must empathize with the emotional and spiritual concerns of the persons involved, and must engage in careful, critical thought to see through any distortions in the presentation of the situation.

Since a Code of Honor which is applied broadly will produce positive results for everyone, it should be clear that one of the wisest things a person

can do is to help other persons to make honorable decisions. Accomplishing that purpose can be difficult, because there are many situations in which the truth causes discomfort, particularly when the truth concerns a person who does not wish to acknowledge an undesirable characteristic in him- or herself. It is for this reason that self-deception is so difficult to overcome. Recognizing that reality, a Wise person strives to present the truth with as much gentleness and kindness as possible.

Of course, that motivation must be balanced by a firm commitment to the truth. The desire to be kind must not be used to undermine the truth.

The importance of that last imperative has become apparent within modern culture, where the inclination to be kind to other persons has given rise to 'political correctness'. In the name of tolerance and diversity, those who pursue social justice have reached the point of punishing and ostracizing anyone who expresses thoughts which might be interpreted as hurtful to a particular group. That culture inevitably has the effect of suppressing the truth - because the truth sometimes causes discomfort.

It simply is not possible for this to be consistent with honorable behavior. Denying the truth cannot lead to good and moral results, cannot produce honorable actions. Even worse, the nature of the effort to enforce kindness and diversity requires that one group of persons be given the authority to determine which thoughts may be expressed, or how they may be expressed, by others. That effort is clearly immoral - it violates both the liberty and the dignity of those other persons.

Persons who strive to enforce tolerance and diversity insist that they are not, in fact, suppressing the truth - they argue that they only suppress falsehood. They believe - in many cases sincerely - that they are advancing the cause of truth by preventing others from advancing false points of view. However, that argument rings hollow for two reasons.

One of those reasons is that no person can claim to hold perfect knowledge of what is true and what is false. Thus, the purveyors of political correctness cannot credibly claim they are suppressing falsehoods - the best they can claim is that they are suppressing thoughts and opinions which they believe to be false.

To illustrate the danger - the evil - associated with granting that kind of power to a person or group of persons, consider that for centuries the Earth was believed to be the center of the universe. So strong was the consensus, so certain were those who believed this 'truth', that they convicted doubters of blasphemy, had them tortured, and even executed some of them. While modern political correctness has not yet led to physical torture and execution, its purveyors are the moral equivalent of the in-

quisitors who strove to exterminate opinions they found objectionable in medieval times.

The other reason that arguments supporting political correctness ring hollow is that suppressing thoughts and opinions - even ones which are truly, demonstrably false - does not have the effect of advancing the cause of Wisdom, does not have the effect of improving acceptance of truth. Indeed, the result is quite the opposite. If a thought or opinion is false, the most certain way to expose it as such is to allow it to be expressed as clearly and completely as possible. Thoughtful persons will examine the opinion, will find its flaws and inconsistencies - and they will reject the falsehood. Attempting to suppress the opinion, on the other hand, will have the opposite effect; suppressing an idea suggests to observers that it has power, that it has merit, making it more likely that observers will be seduced by the falsehood.

The best way to advance the virtue of Wisdom in modern culture is to permit - indeed, to embrace - the free expression of ideas and opinions, including those which are considered objectionable or are demonstrably false. Doing so will allow falsehoods to be exposed and discredited, leading the members of society to a better, clearer understanding of the truth.

Unfortunately, many persons find it difficult to take that step, to choose to allow the expression of objectionable opinions. Making that choice represents an act of Faith. To act with Wisdom, to allow other persons to express themselves freely, requires that a person acknowledge the value of the liberty and dignity associated with those persons. Furthermore, it requires a conscious decision to trust that persons who hear the opinions expressed by those other persons will make good, honorable evaluations of what they hear.

Courage

One implication of the thought experiments used to identify the *gratiae* is that most persons feel an inclination toward honorable, ethical action. Observers have positive reactions toward actions which they perceive to be honorable, which suggests that persons wish to behave honorably, to make choices which are morally good.

Of course, experience shows that persons frequently make choices which are not honorable. The reason for this is that every situation presents participants with other factors to consider - worries which may involve finances, health, relationships, or other concerns. The thought experiments used to identify the *gratiae* were constructed purposely to minimize those complications, but they always are present in real-life situations.

The effect of those complicating factors is to create confusion about the choices facing a person, often creating pressure for a person to make a dishonorable choice. In some cases, the sources are external, applying active pressure, but more often the pressures are internal, proceeding from the person's own desires. In both cases, the virtue which allows a person to overcome those pressures is Courage. Stated succinctly, Courage is the desire and ability to remain committed to honorable action despite pressure to do otherwise.

The virtue of Courage is most commonly associated with situations that have a physical component - athletes who overcome injury, firefighters who enter burning buildings, police officers who confront criminals, activists who face imprisonment for their political views . . . all of these are excellent examples of persons who exhibit Courage. However, it is important to recognize that many pressures are not physical in nature. Indeed, there are situations in which mental and emotional pressures are even more overwhelming than physical ones. A direct, and tragic, illustration of that truth is provided by the reality that there are persons who commit suicide. For them, feelings of mental and emotional stress are stronger than fear of physical pain, of death. To overcome those stresses and continue living requires Courage, as well.

Another aspect of Courage which deserves emphasis is that it is complementary in nature. The virtue of Courage allows a person to behave

honorably even when under pressure to do otherwise - but that statement implies there is something separate from Courage which gives a decision its honorable character. As a result, the presence of Courage is not revealed until the decision is challenged, until the other virtue or virtues involved are put under pressure.

Finally, it is important to expand and clarify the meaning of the phrase 'desire and ability', because those terms are placed into a delicate balance. On the one hand, it is critical to understand that 'ability' does not refer to the effectiveness of a person's actions. Consider the example of a person who is imprisoned and martyred for his or her religious beliefs. That person was not able to alter his or her situation, yet there is no doubt he or she has shown tremendous Courage. The term 'ability' refers to an internal commitment, rather than the power to take action.

On the other hand, it also is crucial to understand that Courage requires more than simple desire. Consider a student who is a chronic procrastinator - the student may wish to start his or her work earlier (to show the virtue of Industry to a greater degree), and that desire may be sincere. However, in order for that person's actions to be considered honorable, he or she must do more than simply desire to behave virtuously; the person must put that desire into action.

It is relatively easy to identify obstacles which demand Courage, that is, factors which make it difficult to express other virtues, and which therefore require Courage to overcome. However, identifying factors which make it difficult for a person to express the virtue of Courage itself is more difficult. Since Courage is complementary in nature, revealing itself only when another virtue is tested, factors which influence it tend to be subtle and obscure.

In modern culture, the most powerful factor affecting a person's ability to exhibit Courage is wealth. Living in a prosperous society makes it possible for most persons to achieve comfortable circumstances with relative ease. When hardship is rare, the effects of hardship become more striking - and less acceptable. As a consequence, those effects are magnified, making it more difficult for persons to make the decision to overcome the obstacles which produce hardship.

Worth reiterating is that seeking wealth and success is not unethical; objects are just objects, neither moral nor immoral. It is natural for a person to strive to better his or her conditions. However, it also is important to realize that material things have a powerful effect on the way he or she perceives hardship, which in turn affects his or her ability to show the virtue of Courage.

Another facet of society which interferes with the expression of Courage is the importance modern culture places on popularity - on fame and on being 'cool'. While there are many ways to achieve status in American culture, something that all of them have in common is that they are associated with satisfying desires. A person gains status when he or she is able to do what he or she wants, especially if that also means allowing friends to do what they want. Wealth is an obvious avenue for gaining status, but other forms of power also provide status - politicians hold status, as do those who influence those politicians, producers and directors in the entertainment industry hold power over the dreams and aspirations of artists, and simple schoolyard bullies hold power because they are able to inflict pain on others.

As was the case with wealth, there is nothing inherently immoral about status. However, in most situations, the demands of honorable behavior require that a person set aside his or her selfish desires. As a result, acting with honor generally has the effect of making a person less popular, less 'cool'.

Overcoming these obstacles - which means, in some sense, having the Courage to show Courage - requires that a person be willing to sacrifice material rewards in favor of intangible ones. In other words, showing Courage requires a clear recognition that there are intangible qualities (namely, the *gratiae*) which are more important than anything tangible, as well as a commitment to act in accordance with that understanding. That is the definition of Faith. In fact, in a very real sense, Courage is the measure of the strength of a person's Faith, since it represents a person's ability to remain true to that commitment despite hardship and adversity.

Compassion

One of the essential characteristics of the *gratiae* is that they, while entirely individual in nature, are largely dependent on the actions of others. A person's ability to take action, to make decisions, which benefit his or her own *gratiae* is very limited. For the most part, a person depends on others to assure his or her vitality, liberty, and dignity.

What that means is that honorable behavior requires that a person develop a focus on others, because that is where he or she will have the greatest effect. A person motivated by Compassion is one who has embraced that reality and committed him- or herself to enhancing the value embodied in other persons.

The power and importance of Compassion is reflected in the fact that it is expressed in so many different ways. When the virtue is expressed within the context of caring for poor persons, it is given the name Charity. When it motivates the giving of aid to someone who is sick or injured, the virtue is called Mercy. Within the context of an intimate personal relationship, the term Love is used. Each of these is a virtue in its own right, of course, but they are not independent virtues, because all are realizations of the same motivating force, Compassion.

Worth noting is that many persons consider the terms Love and Compassion to be interchangeable; indeed, since Love is the more commonly used term, and since it may seem stronger and more direct, many might prefer it. However, modern usage frequently associates Love with romance, and there are many forms of Compassion which do not involve romance. In fact, the Ancient Greeks used the term *eros* to refer to romantic love and the term *agape* to indicate a more spiritual commitment - and they considered the latter to be the stronger, deeper, and more passionate of the two.

Essential to a clear understanding of the virtue of Compassion is the recognition that it requires freedom; Compassion can be expressed only when a person has the ability to make a choice. This is true of every virtue, really; a person who is compelled to act in a manner which appears virtuous is not really showing virtue, because the actions were not his

or her own. The presence of coercion makes it impossible to determine whether virtue truly is present.

In the case of Compassion, though, the effects are particularly damaging. Not only does coercion obscure the presence of Compassion, it actually inhibits the development of the virtue. One of the effects of compulsion is that it erodes a person's sense of responsibility; when a person is forced to act in a particular way, he or she becomes disengaged from the purpose and meaning of the action. Unfortunately, that sense of responsibility is the defining element of Compassion - the virtue *is* the sense on the part of a person that he or she is responsible for caring for others. Therefore, eliminating a person's sense of responsibility actually undermines the development of Compassion.

By way of contrast, consider the effect of compulsion on the virtue of Wisdom. When coercion is present, it is impossible to determine whether a person is truly Wise, since he or she is not free to choose his or her actions, but the person's ability to choose actions remains unaffected. In the case of Compassion, on the other hand, the presence of coercion has a strong negative effect on the development of the virtue itself. A person compelled to care for others loses his or her sense of responsibility for those others and actually becomes less generous. In fact, the harm done by coercion is even more serious, because it engenders resentment, actively reducing a person's willingness to take responsibility for caring for others.

While the harm done by coercion is clear, the temptation to apply it can be overwhelming. When a person perceives a need, it is natural - and positive - for him or her to seek to address it. If the person lacks the resources to answer the need alone, he or she will seek the help of others - and if the voluntary response seems insufficient, the person will be sorely tempted to create a system which will compel that help. It is very difficult to accept an inability to answer a need, even when a person understands the harm which follows from an attempt to force others to participate.

The answer to that dilemma is Faith - not religious Faith, as has been emphasized several times, but the Faith to adhere to a commitment to the power of intangible things. Making that commitment allows a person to trust that other persons will make the choice to be Compassionate even if they do so in a manner different from the one that person recognizes.

Thankfully, there is good reason to believe that an act of Faith will be rewarded. As an illustration, consider the way American citizens respond when disaster strikes anywhere in the world. There is no nation which is quicker to answer the need of other nations. Moreover, the assistance provided through private entities often is much larger than public

assistance. That private, individual response is a direct result of the American commitment to freedom, which creates an environment in which the Compassion of citizens is able to flourish.

The essence of a virtue is that it is an urge, a motivating force, which impels a person to behave in an honorable way. The virtue of Compassion is born of the recognition of the value embodied in other persons, and it represents a commitment to nurture that value. In short, Compassion is the virtue which makes it desirable for a person to behave honorably. In that sense, Compassion is the quintessential virtue, since it represents the desire to affirm the value of others.

Discipline

It is natural for persons to seek pleasant experiences, to strive to obtain things which make life more comfortable. However, there are many situations in which the desire to obtain those things clearly causes harm. In many cases, the person who is harmed actually is the one seeking to fulfill his or her desires; a person who drinks or eats or gambles to excess likely is doing more harm to him- or herself than to anyone else. Of course, there also are many cases in which a person's lust for some material thing causes harm to others, as well. In either case, it is clear that the cause of the trouble is a lack of Discipline.

One way to define the virtue of Discipline is that it is the ability to withstand pressure to overindulge in the satisfaction of desires. There are times when that pressure comes from external sources - as an example, consider that young people suffer a great deal of pressure from their peers to overindulge in alcohol. However, it is more common for these pressures to be internal, for a person to be driven by his or her own desires, rather than by external influences.

It bears repeating that there is nothing wrong or immoral about the satisfaction of desires, nothing wrong with seeking comfort and pleasant experiences. These are natural impulses, part of the nature of physical human beings. It is only when those desires are pursued to excess that they raise issues of morality.

As a consequence, it is important to focus on understanding the point at which the healthy pursuit of enjoyment crosses the line into unhealthy overindulgence. That boundary is determined by the relationship between the decision and the three *gratiae*. Since the latter are the things which carry value intrinsically, an action is unhealthy when it does harm to the *gratiae*. Moreover, since the nature of the *gratiae* is that they lie largely under the control of others, an honorable person must place the *gratiae* of those others ahead of his or her own desires.

That commitment is essential to the development of the virtue of Discipline. The decision to place the *gratiae* - especially the *gratiae* of others - ahead of individual desire is what enables a person to exercise restraint in his or her actions.

Worth noting is that it is possible to imagine situations in which a person's desires are directed toward preserving the *gratiae*, and it is possible to imagine that person failing to exercise Discipline in that pursuit. Since serving the *gratiae* normally is healthy, it is difficult to imagine such a desire leading to dishonorable behavior, but it is worth acknowledging the theoretical possibility.

Far more common, of course, are situations in which a person fails to show Discipline in the pursuit of physical and material desires. Humans are physical beings, feeling tangible sensations which are both powerful and immediate. As such, they command the majority of a person's attention. Even though most persons readily agree the *gratiae* are more important than material things, it remains the case that people often forget that truth when faced with the immediacy of tangible wants.

The challenge associated with remaining Disciplined in the face of material desires is made vastly more difficult by the wealth which infuses American culture. Since the abundance of resources makes it possible for most Americans to satisfy their desires quickly and completely, it might seem that they would fade in importance, but experience suggests that the opposite is true. As their wants are met, Americans discover new comforts and pleasures, with the result that material pursuits occupy more time and attention, rather than less. Exacerbating that problem is the fact that plentiful resources lead people to expect immediate and complete gratification; that expectation also plays a role in elevating material concerns, since it strengthens the perception of hardship which accompanies delays in gratification. As a result, it grows more difficult to accept limits, to remain Disciplined.

The presence of wealth also has the effect of reducing the perceived damage done by overconsumption. In a wealthy environment, it may appear that all persons are able to satisfy their wants without harming others, without preventing others from doing the same. Therefore there is no reason to limit consumption, because overindulgence does not appear to have any negative consequences.

What is more, the presence of wealth creates the perception that those negative consequences can be eliminated, on those rare occasions when they do manifest themselves. Rather than exercise the Discipline to avoid problems, members of a wealthy society often turn to medication or surgery or monetary payoffs to ensure they will not have to face the consequences of their choices.

It is worth noting that there are times when wealth truly does change the moral character of some activities from overindulgence to a simple

pursuit of pleasure. Again, the line between those two assessments is defined by the way an action relates to the *gratiae*; if wealth provides a person with the resources to nurture the *gratiae* and pursue his or her desires at the same time, then it is fair to say that wealth has changed the character of the action.

Far more common, however, are situations in which the presence of wealth obscures the damage done by overindulgence rather than removing it. As the nature of the *gratiae* reveals, humans are affected in a powerful way by intangible things, and an abundance of material resources has very little effect on those spiritual matters. What is changed by wealth is the perception of the costs associated with gratifying material desires and the attention which is devoted to that gratification - but the reality of those costs is unaffected.

That the virtue of Discipline is an expression of Faith is clear from the manner in which the line between simple enjoyment and overindulgence is drawn. If an action does harm to the *gratiae*, especially the *gratiae* of others, it is a lack of Discipline. Embracing the value of the *gratiae* in that way is the meaning of Faith. In that sense, the exercise of Discipline is an articulation of a person's Faith, because it reflects his or her commitment to valuing spiritual factors ahead of material ones.

Industry

A simplistic definition of the virtue of Industry is that it is the desire to get work done. Of course, being virtuous requires a little more than simply slogging through to the end of a job. One way to express the difference is through the colloquial phrase 'take pride in your work'. What separates someone who simply completes tasks from someone motivated by the virtue of Industry is that the latter takes pride in his or her work - the person enjoys the work, performs it willingly and cheerfully, and gives his or her best effort.

The term 'pride' frequently is used in a negative sense, to refer to egotistical and self-centered behavior, so it is important to emphasize that this usage of the term is different. Within the context of the virtue of Industry, 'pride' refers to taking responsibility, to fulfilling commitments, and to accepting consequences.

Associating the concept of responsibility with Industry also serves to illuminate the virtue's connection with both Faith and Joy. What sets Industry apart from ordinary activity is the internal commitment made by the actor; that is, the Faith of the person engaged in the activity. A person with a strong commitment to intangible things, with a strong Faith, will embrace his or her responsibilities, and as a result will find Joy in his or her work.

Imagine a customer entering a retail store. The shopper finds the aisle containing the products he wishes to consider. As he walks down the aisle, a young saleswoman glances up, then quickly turns away to avoid eye contact. She pulls her cell phone out of her pocket and thumbs it for a moment, then goes back to arranging the items on the shelves. The customer waits for a moment, then clears his throat to get her attention. She responds by looking at him with her arms crossed and an expression that suggests she finds him to be an irritant.

Now consider an alternative situation in which the young saleswoman responds differently. This time, as the customer enters the aisle, she immediately stops arranging the items on the shelves. She turns to the customer with a smile and asks if there is anything she can help him find.

In both situations, the work being done is the same - at least on the surface. The shelves are being stocked and the customer is receiving an answer to his questions. However, all observers will agree the situations are vastly different on an intangible level - it is clear that the second saleswoman is exhibiting the virtue of Industry, while the first is not.

The virtues of Discipline and Industry often are linked to one another - and often confused with one another, as well. It is common, for example, for an observer to describe a person who works hard as being Disciplined. In reality, that commitment to work is a reflection of Industry, but since the worker probably exhibits the virtue of Discipline as well, there is a great deal of potential for mixing the two ideas.

Since they are so closely connected with one another, it is reasonable to ask whether Industry is, in fact, a facet of Discipline - that is, to ask whether it truly represents a separate virtue. A succinct way to illustrate the difference between the two is with the term 'workaholic'. A person matching that description clearly is committed to his or her work - derives satisfaction from it and almost certainly does it well. However, it is equally clear that a workaholic does not exhibit the virtue of Discipline, because that person is so consumed with work that he or she is doing harm to relationships with loved ones.

While the primary focus of the virtue of Industry lies on the commitment of the person doing the work, it is important to recognize that the nature of the work plays a role, as well. When tasks are not productive, are more difficult than they should be, or do not provide value - do not serve the *gratiae* - the meaning of virtuous action - of Industry - changes. A worker cannot be faulted for completing tasks of those kinds, of course, but an Industrious person has a responsibility to strive for change, as well. In the majority of cases, Industry is reflected in positive, cheerful compliance with work requirements, but in some cases honor demands resistance.

Recent human history is, in many ways, defined by the virtue of Industry. Rapid technological advancement has made agriculture more productive, transportation faster and easier, and has revolutionized communication - several times. In every tangible area, technology has made it possible for persons to complete tasks more effectively, more efficiently, and more productively. Viewed from that perspective, technology is both a reflection of the virtue of Industry and an augmentation of it.

As is the case with any powerful tool, however, technology also presents humankind with a great deal of risk. While technology allows persons to achieve tangible results more quickly and easily than ever, it is essential - *essential* - to remember that real value, that which is truly meaningful

for human persons, lies in intangible qualities, in the *gratiae*. For all of its positive results, technology also has the effect of drawing attention away from the spiritual side of the human experience and toward material comforts.

One of the ways this change in focus expresses itself is through an erosion in the sense of responsibility felt by persons toward their situations. Technology makes information readily available, so students feel less responsibility for learning, trusting instead that their electronic devices will make information available when it is necessary. Writers take less care in their communications, trusting their devices to correct spelling and grammar errors. Travelers do less planning, because technology makes it so easy to overcome mishaps when things go wrong. Workers put less time and energy into their jobs, because technology has produced so much wealth that even poor persons in America have many material comforts - air conditioning, cell phones, and game systems.

From a material perspective, all of these things are very positive. It is a good thing to have technology which will prevent mistakes from happening and which will reduce the impact of those mistakes when they occur. For technology, and the wealth it helps to create, to improve the living conditions of the poor is extremely desirable. However, it is crucial for honorable persons to recognize that the essence of the virtue of Industry lies in responsibility. The danger which accompanies the advancement of technology and wealth lies there, in the likelihood that many will abdicate their sense of responsibility, both for themselves and for executing the duties which belong to them.

The corrosive effect of that abdication is apparent in the sense of entitlement and victimhood which pervades large swaths of American society. It is increasingly common for persons in all walks of life to view setbacks, whether they are caused by circumstances or from differences in physical talents and abilities, as cases of unfair treatment. Rather than embrace responsibility for overcoming those setbacks, Americans increasingly demand that someone else provide compensation for what they are unable to achieve on their own.

That mindset is terribly destructive. Entitled persons focus on their own victimhood, rendering them incapable of caring for the *gratiae* of others. Even worse, the mindset of entitlement makes it more difficult for the person to experience the *gratiae* him- or herself. It simply is not possible for a person to be free, to have liberty, unless he or she accepts responsibility for his or her own circumstances - unless a person embraces the virtue of Industry.

Hope

The virtue of Hope often is overlooked, because it rarely serves as a direct catalyst for action. Nevertheless, Hope is essential to a Code of Honor, because it is the virtue which provides a person with a reason to follow the Code: it is the belief that acting in an honorable way will produce positive results, even if the path toward those results is not clear.

Worth noting is that the word 'hope' often is used in a different sense, referring to a person's desire to see a particular outcome for an event - a longing, or a wishing. That meaning does not reflect the virtue described here, however. A sense of longing is, by definition, transient. What is more, it usually revolves around a desire for something tangible. In contrast, the nature of the virtues is that they represent a lasting frame of mind focused on the spiritual *gratiae*. That sense of the word is very different from a longing or wishing, and it is important to keep the distinction in mind when discussing the virtue.

Hope is the virtue which leads a person to behave honorably when no one is watching - drives a person who finds a lost wallet to return it anonymously, guides a person into making anonymous donations to charity, motivates a person to spend time and energy on a public garden. Certainly there are other virtues associated with these actions and others like them, but underlying all such efforts is Hope, the belief that doing the right thing will nurture and develop the *gratiae*, even when the results are far from guaranteed.

Important as it is in guiding individual behavior, however, the most powerful manifestation of Hope lies in its effect on relationships between people. In that context, the best way to understand the virtue is by relating it to trust - the trust that others will strive to behave honorably when given the opportunity. To act with Hope is to grant others the freedom to make decisions, the dignity to manage their own affairs.

Viewed in that light, the connection between Hope and the *gratiae* is clear and direct. Nevertheless, it often is difficult to act on that connection, because doing so requires that the Hopeful person relinquish control over a situation, that he or she allow him- or herself to become vulnerable. Doing so is a challenge under the best of circumstances; the difficulty is

magnified when the Hopeful person has a personal stake in the decision or when he or she sees a connection with something perceived as a major injustice - such as poverty. When faced with an issue of that sort, it is very tempting to try to retain control in order to ensure that the 'right' decisions are made.

Lending power to that temptation is that those 'right decisions' often masquerade as Compassion; the person fighting for control often believes - truly, sincerely believes - that he or she is acting Honorably by combatting injustice and greed. Unfortunately, that perception is misleading. Insisting on control of a situation robs others of their agency, strips them of the *gratiae* of freedom and dignity. The virtue of Hope requires that an honorable person embrace the decision-making of others. What is more, that imperative holds true even when the other person makes mistakes.

As an aside, it is important to recognize that the virtue of Hope does not require that a person give up control over decisions which truly belong to him or her. An honorable person embraces the dignity of others, but is not required to sacrifice his or her own agency in order to do so.

In modern society, the most dangerous threat to the virtue of Hope is socialism. That political philosophy has grown popular in recent years, especially in wealthy societies, because it offers the appearance of Compassion. Many of the people who are inclined toward socialist policies are genuinely good, caring people. They see the many people living in poverty and seek to alleviate their suffering. The urge toward Compassion is a good thing, of course, but socialism betrays that honorable impulse by demanding that action be taken collectively, thereby depriving other citizens of their freedom and dignity.

In addition to undermining those *gratiae* directly, socialism has another, more insidious effect on the development of the virtue of Hope. The nature of socialism is that it places responsibility for honorable action in the hands of the collective, usually the government, removing that responsibility from individuals. In doing so, in robbing individuals of agency, socialism dissociates people from their responsibility to behave honorably toward one another, and in doing so, it inhibits the development of virtue and honor within citizens.

Compounding the immoral nature of socialism is that, in effect, socialists are declaring themselves to be the ultimate authority over right and wrong. Not only do they demand that other citizens address the needs identified by the socialists, but they demand that those needs be addressed in the manner they choose. Stated another way, socialists are driven by fear - first by the fear that other citizens will choose not to prioritize the

same issues, then by the fear that those others will choose to address those issues in a manner different from the one the socialists prefer. That fear, that lack of trust, is a clear rejection of the virtue of Hope.

Despite the clarity of the connection between Hope and the *gratiae*, it is worth repeating that exercising the virtue of Hope is extremely difficult. Most people find it very difficult to relinquish control over a situation, even more so when feelings of Compassion are placed in the mix. Overcoming that challenge is possible only through a clear and conscious act of Faith. Indeed, 'faith' and 'trust' often are used as synonyms, which suggests that they have a very close relationship to one another. The virtue of Hope is a conscious decision to trust other persons - to embrace their freedom and dignity. As such, it is a conscious choice to affirm the *gratiae* in those other persons - a clear demonstration of Faith.

Humility

An essential element of the nature of the *gratiae* is that a person cannot secure them for him- or herself; in order for a person to have vitality, liberty, and dignity, those qualities must be protected and nurtured by others. Therefore a good, honorable society can exist only when persons are willing to place a high value on the *gratiae* of others - that is, when they exhibit the virtue of Humility. It is for this reason that Humility belongs at the end of the list of virtues, in a place of emphasis. Humility is the most fragile of the virtues, for human persons are naturally inclined toward their own self-interest, and it is the absence of Humility which most frequently leads to dishonorable behavior.

Conceptually, the virtue of Humility usually is associated with those who are poor and weak. Someone who faces a scarcity of resources must work with others in order to improve his or her circumstances - that is, he or she must be willing to compromise his or her self-interest and recognize the value of the interests of others. That need helps to drive the virtue of Humility, with the result that it develops more frequently and more rapidly where there is scarcity than where there is wealth.

It is ironic that power and money have the effect of suppressing the development of Humility, because that virtue represents one of the most essential characteristics of good leadership. Discussions of leadership generally revolve around tangible, measurable things, such as decisions and actions, but what truly defines successful leadership is what lies behind those decisions and actions. An organization is successful when its members are able to perform their duties efficiently and effectively, so a good leader seeks ways to make members of the organization more efficient and effective. That is, a good leader sets aside his or her self-interest in order to address the needs of the members of the organization.

Unfortunately, it is common for persons who lack Humility to rise to positions of authority. The primary cause of that problem is that persons generally are given positions based on perceptions of success. Persons who lack Humility promote those perceptions aggressively, disguising their faults and shifting responsibility for errors onto others. The fact that those people are able to exert a strong influence over the way they are perceived

makes it difficult for Humble persons to achieve positions of authority, despite the importance of Humility in leadership roles.

The reality that self-promotion frequently allows persons to achieve the ends they desire has a powerful negative effect on the development of Humility within modern American culture. In many ways, in fact, the job market actively and consciously suppresses the virtue, instructing job seekers to 'sell themselves' and to avoid settling for imperfect employment situations.

It is important to note that these motivations are not inherently immoral. Ambition is very healthy, an expression of the virtue of Industry; it is good for persons to seek advancement, to seek to improve their situations. However, that effort must be performed in a balanced way - in a manner which recognizes the value associated with other persons. In short, ambition must be balanced with Humility.

Modern American culture does not promote that balance. Instead, it focuses almost exclusively on material success, pressuring persons to resist any sacrifice in comfort and pleasure. The reality of that pressure is apparent in every aspect of American life. The rate at which marriages end in divorce seems to increase every year, in large part because partners are less willing to compromise with or to accept imperfections in one another. Persons are waiting longer to become parents than ever before, often because they are unwilling to undertake the sacrifices associated with raising children. It is important to recognize that there are many cases in which divorce is the best available option, many cases in which deferring the start of a family is a wise decision. However, there also are many cases in which those decisions are driven by a lack of Humility - an emphasis of material self-will over the spiritual *gratiae*.

In a society as wealthy as that of the United States in the twenty-first century, it is natural for citizens to develop the expectation that they will achieve a high level of material comfort. As a result, attaining that level of comfort - or, more accurately, avoiding the embarrassment of falling short of that level - becomes the primary focus of attention, leaving little room for persons to care for the needs and desires of others. Embracing those others - acting with Humility - generally means that a person must accept a lesser level of material comfort, generally requires some degree of material sacrifice. Said another way, choosing to care for others is not possible without a recognition that there are things more important than material goods - that is, it requires a conscious act of Faith.

Summation and Reflection

From Gratiae *To Virtues*

The essential purpose of a Code of Honor is to provide guidance for individuals as they interact with one another - guidance intended to improve the quality of those interactions and to provide value to the participants. Achieving that purpose requires, first, a clear understanding of what constitutes 'improvement', of the meaning of 'value'. Within this discussion, that understanding has been articulated in the form of the three human *gratiae*: vitality, liberty, and dignity. Good, healthy interactions between persons are those which nurture the *gratiae*.

Worth noting is that the *gratiae* are intangible qualities, spiritual in nature. Given that most persons spend most of their attention on material things, the reality that true, intrinsic value resides in spiritual qualities may seem surprising, but recognizing that situation is the essence of Faith. Material items carry value only in so far as they support the *gratiae*, which means that their value is transitory, varying from situation to situation, rather than intrinsic.

Closely related to characteristic of Faith is that of Honor; the two traits are different facets of the same concept, in many ways. Where Faith represents a person's commitment to spiritual factors, Honor is an expression of the person's ability to translate that commitment into action. Guidance for making that translation comes in the form of seven principles, the seven virtues: Wisdom, Courage, Compassion, Discipline, Industry, Hope, and Humility. Finally, making a commitment toward spiritual things and acting on that commitment brings with it a deep sense of satisfaction, of Joy.

Completeness of the Set of Virtues

Since the set of virtues is designed to guide persons who wish to behave honorably, it is important to ensure that the list will be effective. That is, it is important to know both that all of the items on the list are necessary and that the list includes all of the items which are necessary. It will not have escaped the notice of astute readers that there are seven virtues

in the set: Wisdom, Courage, Compassion, Discipline, Industry, Hope, and Humility. That number might strike some as very convenient - and therefore deserving of careful examination.

One facet of establishing that each of these virtues is necessary is to demonstrate that a person applying the virtue in question will have a positive effect on the *gratiae.* That connection was made within each virtue's presentation, with the establishment of the relationship between that virtue and Faith. Since Faith represents an understanding of, and commitment to, the *gratiae*, and since it was shown that each virtue reflects Faith in some manner, it follows that applying the virtues will serve to nurture the *gratiae.*

The other facet of establishing the necessity of each item on the list is to show that it is independent of the others. Again, that independence was discussed within the presentation of each virtue. However, it is worthwhile to add emphasis to those discussions for a couple of reasons. One is that the virtues rarely appear in isolation; it almost always is the case that a difficult decision will require the consideration of several, maybe even all, of the virtues. That reality can make it difficult for an observer to discern the differences between virtues. Courage, for example, becomes recognizable only when a person strives to express some other virtue and is met with an obstacle; Courage never appears by itself. Despite that complementary nature, Courage clearly is an independent virtue, as demonstrated by the fact that other virtues may be expressed in the absence of Courage, as well as by the fact that Courage may be articulated in conjunction with each of the other virtues.

Demonstrating that the list of virtues is complete, that it includes all of the items which are necessary, is much more difficult. In fact, doing so requires a comprehensive examination of all possible candidates for inclusion on the list. As was the case with the *gratiae*, performing that examination is not feasible. However, it is possible to review a set of the strongest alternatives, and thereby to provide a convincing argument that the set is complete.

The virtues of Charity, Mercy, and Love have been mentioned previously as examples of items which should be considered as candidates for inclusion in the list of virtues. However, the analysis of the virtue of Compassion addressed those items, revealing that they are manifestations of Compassion rather than separate concepts. Another item which often is mentioned as a virtue is that of Faith. However, Faith has a nature which is different from that of the virtues. Faith is a commitment to supporting the spiritual aspects of human existence, while virtues are factors which

motivate people to make decisions which support those spiritual aspects.

Another approach worth investigating is to review history for other candidates. Ancient Greek philosophers discussed a set of four virtues [1]: Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude. However, careful examination reveals that these four represent alternative expressions of items already included on our list. Prudence, by definition, is the exercise of good decision-making - in other words, Prudence is an expression of Wisdom. Some might argue that Prudence also articulates an element of restraint, or Discipline - but that nuance does not change the reality that Prudence already is reflected in the list of virtues. The search for Justice is a relatively complex activity, incorporating elements of Industry (working to right wrongs), Wisdom (seeking truth), Discipline, and Compassion (in the sense of applying only measures which are necessary, rather than exacting vengeance). While complex, however, Justice does not introduce any concepts left out of the list of virtues. Neither do Temperance or Fortitude add elements which are absent, since Temperance really is another way to articulate the concept of Discipline, and Fortitude is another way to express Courage.

Another set of candidates was presented by the Christian saint, St. Paul, who identified Faith, Hope, and Charity as essential elements. [2] The term Faith was discussed above; within the context of this discussion, Faith actually represents something even more foundational than the virtues used to guide the making of decisions, while Hope and Charity - a manifestation of Compassion - already are included.

Those two sets of virtues were merged by Latin philosophers and evolved over time into a modified list which was articulated by Prudentius [3]: Chastity, Temperance, Charity, Diligence, Patience, Kindness, and Humility. From this list, Humility and Diligence - the Latin for which is *Industria* - already appear on the list, while Kindness and Charity have been explained as alternative expressions of the virtue of Compassion. Similarly, Patience, Chastity, and Temperance already have been included on the list, in the form of the virtue of Discipline.

Unfortunately, it is not feasible to attempt an exhaustive examination of all possible virtues. However, the fact that the list already includes all of the concepts mentioned within popular historical examinations of the subject is very affirmative. That inclusiveness is an excellent indication that the list described here is complete.

Vices

When wrestling with concepts which are subtle, nuanced, and difficult to grasp, it sometimes is helpful to change perspective and look at them from another angle. In this case, it may help to clarify the Seven Virtues if they are contrasted with their opposites, the Seven Vices.

The clearest way to express the opposite of Wisdom is Deceit. However, it is important to bear in mind that Deceit does not always take the form of active dishonesty. The most common - and most pernicious - reflection of the absence of Wisdom lies in self-deception. Most people do not deceive themselves consciously, of course - but it happens, nevertheless. Also very common is for people to mistake knowledge for Wisdom, to focus on facts and figures and material things to the exclusion of the intangible and spiritual. A more accurate word for that problem might be Foolishness, since it suggests a problem which is both less conscious and less malicious than Deceit.

As was the case with the virtue which is its opposite, Cowardice only becomes apparent when a person faces a challenge to the expression of one of the virtues. That is, Cowardice stems from a person's failure to act honorably when he or she sees a virtuous course of action, but is unwilling to overcome obstacles to that course.

Just as the virtue of Compassion is expressed in different forms, so too is its opposite, a good term for which is Spite. Miserliness, Cruelty, and Antipathy are terms which express the opposites of Charity, Mercy, and Love. While the manner in which Spite is expressed changes depending on the situation. Nevertheless, the cause remains the same: the dishonorable individual takes pleasure in doing harm to others.

Two virtues which can be difficult to separate from one another are Discipline and Industry, since common usage often applies those terms in conjunction with one another. The differences between those virtues were explained during their presentations, but they are made even more apparent with the identification of their opposites: Gluttony and Sloth. In many cases, it takes a great deal of effort and dedication to overindulge, to exhibit Gluttony, whether that overindulgence takes the form of Lust, Overeating, or the abuse of alcohol or other drugs. Sloth, on the other hand, represents a lack of effort - a reluctance to engage in work and a complete lack of concern over the quality produced.

While the obvious antonym to Hope is despair, that term really does not capture the nature of the virtue as described here. Something which is essential to the virtue of Hope is the idea of trust - a person who has Hope believes that nurturing the *gratiae* in others is worthwhile, and embraces the freedom and dignity of those other persons, accepting the risk that

they might not act in the way the honorable person wishes. Therefore, a more accurate way to describe the opposite of the virtue of Hope is with the term Coercion, or possibly the term Tyranny - it represents a willingness to deny the *gratiae* of other persons in order to ensure that they will behave 'correctly'.

The reason the term despair deserves to be mentioned is that 'hope' often is used to refer to something different from the virtue - namely, it is used to describe the expectation of, the desire for, a good outcome to a particular situation. 'Despair' is a good way to express the opposite of that concept, but that definition of hope does not reflect the virtue as described here, so it does not help to clarify the Code of Honor.

A good way to articulate the opposite of the virtue of Humility is Conceit or Vanity; it occurs when a person elevates his or her desires above the concerns of others. Another term which is used to express this concept is that of Pride - as with the proverb "Pride goes before destruction." [4] However, the term pride often is used in a positive sense, as an expression of the virtue of Industry, so the term Conceit is more definitive.

Like the virtues, the vices are abstract and nuanced concepts. Fortunately, contrasting the two sets makes both easier to understand. Examining the nature of the vices helps clarify their opposites, the virtues.

Following the Code

Ultimately, the purpose of identifying the virtues is to weave them together into a coherent code of conduct. The virtues represent principles which, when used to guide the decisions made by individuals within their daily lives, will drive honorable behavior - that is, will drive actions which serve to create value for all of the members of society through the nurturing and development of the *gratiae*.

Thus a sense of Compassion leads a person to recognize the value of other persons. Humility is the virtue which allows a person to set aside his or her desires in order to serve the value he or she recognizes in those others. The virtue of Industry impels an honorable person into taking action on the impulse to serve the *gratiae*, and Wisdom allows a person to determine which actions will be successful in that effort. Discipline provides a person with the self-control to avoid harmful action and to remain free from distractions. Hope is the virtue which allows a person to trust that recipients will make good use of the gifts they are given. Finally, Courage is the virtue which allows a person to act despite the many obstacles which will be raised.

Taken together, these seven principles, the Seven Virtues, represent a complete set of factors which must be considered when a person seeks to make honorable choices, to behave in a good and moral way. Behaving honorably serves as a tangible expression of a person's internal commitment to the importance of intangible, spiritual things - that is, Faith. In that sense, Honor and Faith must be present together. A person cannot truly act with Honor unless he or she has Faith, and a person who has Faith will be compelled to act with Honor. Finally, the result of that commitment, and corresponding action, is that an honorable person feels Joy.

PART III: PRACTICING HONOR

Applying the Code of Honor

Articulating the seven virtues yields a set of principles which may be used to guide an honorable person in making decisions. By ensuring that those principles are reflected within the choices he or she makes, to the fullest extent possible, a person will ensure that those choices serve to nurture and strengthen the *gratiae*.

Of course, that goal often is very difficult to achieve in practice. The complexity of human interactions and the reality that different people weigh factors differently make it difficult to assess the moral quality of a decision. There are many, many situations in which people of good conscience arrive at very different assessments of a situation. It is difficult, maybe impossible, to make reliable and accurate measurements of intangible, spiritual characteristics like the *gratiae*, so there is a tremendous amount of uncertainty in moral conversations.

Despite that complexity, it is important that Americans engage in these conversations. Doing so is the best way to develop a sense of honor amongst the population. To help facilitate those conversations, some situations are explored here.

Judgement and Forgiveness

The fundamental purpose of a Code of Honor is to establish principles which allow a person to determine whether a decision, an action, is moral. As a result, the effects of such a Code ought to be positive, increasing the amount of good behavior within society as a whole. It is ironic, then, that the presentation of strong principles often evokes a powerful negative reaction.

The negative response is a reflection of the fact that people know, instinctively, they are not perfect. It is common, normal for a person to fall short of the ideals expressed in a Code of Honor, even when he or she agrees with the Code's principles. The recognition of imperfection makes it difficult to present a set of principles vigorously, both because doing so comes across to others as being accusatory and judgemental, and because the presenter him- or herself is aware of his or her flaws, and does not want to be accused of hypocrisy.

The heart of that dilemma can be described using the word 'judgement'. Sometimes 'judgement' is used as a synonym for Wisdom, but that is not the meaning which applies in this discussion. Here, judgement is the use of a set of principles to belittle or devalue another person - to 'pass judgement'. The reason many people react negatively when principles are presented in a strong way is that they perceive that sort of judgement taking place. Moreover, many people are reluctant to present, or even to hold, strong principles out of concern that they will be perceived to be passing judgement themselves.

Clearly, it is of critical importance to address the problem created by judgement, to ensure that, when lived properly, the Code of Honor is not judgemental. That effort begins with the recognition that Compassion and Humility are essential elements. A person who truly reflects those virtues will realize that he or she is just as flawed and imperfect as everyone else, and will embrace others - not just tolerate, but *embrace* others - despite their flaws. That stance, the affirmation of the value of another regardless of his or her imperfections, is the definition of forgiveness.

It is important to recognize that forgiveness does not require that mistakes and errors be ignored. Strong principles always lie at the center of a

Code of Honor, with the inevitable consequence that people will fall short of those principles on occasion. Those events must be acknowledged, must be recognized as wrong, if a person is to remain true to his or her principles. However, an honorable person also will make those assessments in a manner which continues to affirm the value of the person who has erred - that is, to act in a forgiving way. To do otherwise shows a lack of Humility, Hope, and Compassion (as well as a lack of Wisdom) - in short, being judgemental is very dishonorable.

As an aside, it is worth emphasizing is that a person must forgive him- or herself, as well as others. One of the ironies of the human condition is that many find it easier to forgive others than to accept their own flaws. That difficulty creates a great deal of heartache and pain.

Unfortunately it is impossible for a person who is standing on principle to control the way he or she is perceived by others. Those others, especially when they disagree with the person's principles or have fallen short of those ideals, may feel as though they are being criticized, being judged, even when that truly is not the case. Also worth noting is that the virtue of Wisdom will motivate an honorable person to act with care, to strive to avoid creating the impression of judgement whenever possible.

On the other hand, it must be understood that it also is not sensible - not Wise - to set principle aside in order to avoid hurt feelings. At some point, an honorable person must remain firm and trust that others will show enough maturity to handle challenges to their beliefs, to accept difficult truths.

Unfortunately, modern American culture does not encourage that level of maturity. It increasingly is the case that society revolves around material success and the expectation that everyone should be able to achieve what he or she wants. This mindset is enabled by the increasing level of wealth infusing society. Even the poorest Americans enjoy a standard of living higher than the majority of people in other parts of the world. With so much wealth available, it is possible for most Americans to gratify their desires with very little sacrifice and even less delay - allowing most people to avoid learning the self-discipline and critical thinking (Discipline and Wisdom) which define maturity. That lack of maturity is reflected in three trends apparent in American society.

One of those is the increasing strength of the philosophy of moral relativism. Essentially, this philosophy represents the rejection of judgement carried to an extreme. An honorable person will strive to avoid passing judgement while remaining true to objective principles, but a moral relativist avoids passing judgement by rejecting the idea of objective prin-

ciples entirely. It should be clear that doing so rejects the idea of honorable behavior. Without principles, there is no such thing as honorable or dishonorable behavior.

Another trend which reflects an absence of maturity in American culture is an increasing resistance to the idea that individuals are responsible for themselves and their actions. The clearest manifestation of that resistance lies in the way victimhood is embraced by members of American society. The increasing power of identity politics, the articulation of the political philosophy called 'critical theory', and the concept of 'intersectionality', which assigns social status based on a person's membership in victim groups - all three of these are tangible manifestations of an unwillingness to accept personal responsibility for actions and events.

Finally, the trend toward 'political correctness', which was described in the section on the virtue of Wisdom, also reflects an absence of maturity in American society. Essentially, political correctness represents an effort to censor speech - and, what is worse, to silence thoughts and ideas - which might hurt the feelings of other persons. It is ironic that those who reject the idea of judgement enforce their censorship through public shaming - that is, by passing judgement on those who do not conform to their idea of political correctness.

Worth repeating is that Compassion and Humility are essential components of the Code of Honor. An honorable person must strive to avoid passing judgement on others - that is, must not demonize other persons - because of their flaws. Everyone has flaws; an honorable person recognizes that truth and uses his or her flaws to help relate to the imperfections of others. That effort allows an honorable person to affirm the value of others, even when he or she disagrees with them.

On the other hand, an honorable person also must remain firm in upholding the principles which define honorable behavior. That can be difficult, since immature persons struggle to distinguish between those stances and often misperceive the upholding of principle as moral judgement. That reality makes it very difficult to balance these imperatives, because an honorable person also will make an effort to accommodate the feelings of others. In the end, that effort must stop short of accepting that a person's feelings are more important than the principles in the Code of Honor; the honorable person must trust that the hurt feelings will ease as the offended person matures.

Moral Imperatives for Organizations

Perhaps the most visible arena for discussions about ethical concerns is that of politics. Governments exercise enormous power over the lives of their citizens, so it is extremely important that a government be structured in a way which fosters moral behavior on the part of citizens. Of course, governments are not alone in having power over their members; every organization exerts some level of influence. Therefore it is important that every organization weigh the manner in which that influence is applied.

Since the moral character of a decision or action is assessed using the three *gratiae*, regardless of the nature of the acting party, it is logical to use similar reasoning when assessing both individual and organizational decisions. Of course, organizations are not individuals, so it is to be expected that the moral imperatives which apply to organizations will differ from the imperatives which apply to individuals. The difference which is most important in this context is one which was alluded to above: organizations, by their nature, exert power over their members - power which takes the form of collective action. The use of that power has the effect of reducing the freedom and dignity of the members of the organization - which means that collective action has an inescapable negative effect on the *gratiae*.

Obviously, this does not mean that all actions taken by organizations are immoral; there are many popular organizations which have very positive effects, and many of those organizations share their benefits with non-members as well as members. However, the reality that collective action has the effect of compromising the freedom and dignity of members means that organizations must treat every decision, every action, with an extra measure of care.

The result of that extra care is, in many cases, to reverse the moral imperatives which govern the decision-making process. Essentially, a moral imperative is a simplified moral analysis - it serves as a shorthand way to express a principle which allows decisions to be made more quickly. An example of such a principle is 'give to the poor'; most Americans recognize that charitable giving is an honorable thing to do. That short admonition

represents a simplification of a detailed moral analysis in which: Compassion drives a person to recognize the need of another, Discipline allows that person to set aside his or her own desires, Industry drives the person to take action, and Wisdom guides the person into choosing effectively.

While 'give to the poor' serves as an excellent guide for individuals, however, the analysis is problematic when applied to organizations. The virtues described above remain important, but for an organization there are other considerations which must be included in the analysis. One of those lies in the realm of modification; in addition to showing Compassion for the recipient of the charity, the organization must show Compassion for the members who are being pressured to provide that charity. Those members may themselves be faced with some level of need, after all. An organization must also pay heed to the virtue of Hope, which requires that the organization believe and trust in its members. In this context, that means the organization must affirm the dignity of its members by granting them the authority to decide for themselves how charity is to be expressed. Moreover, the organization must exercise Humility and recognize that it may not have the authority to make decisions on behalf of members.

To illustrate the effects of these additional factors, consider the example of a youth baseball league. The league charges a registration fee to families in order to cover the costs of its operation - uniforms, fields, umpires, and other costs. The majority of families pay the fee without hesitation. However, there are some families which face difficult circumstances and request monetary aid from the league. In addition to those families, there are some which do not submit a request - they simply register children to play in the league and never provide payment.

For an individual faced with a situation of this type, the analysis is relatively simple: individuals who recognize the moral imperative to 'give to the poor' will do their best to grant as much financial help as possible. Importantly, even this statement includes the qualification 'as much as possible', acknowledging that there is value - that it is honorable - to show moderation (Discipline) in charitable giving.

The fact that the league holds some influence over its members complicates that evaluation, however. At first glance it seems natural to apply the same reasoning which was used for the individual: if the organization has the capacity to give aid without suffering undue financial impact, it should follow the imperative to 'give to the poor'. However, the administrators of the league also must weigh other factors.

One of those is that granting financial help to some families has the effect of raising the fee charged to others, since those fees represent the

source of the league's resources. The act of raising those fees may impose hardship on other families belonging to the organization. Even if it does not, the fact that some families are being accorded special treatment may create resentment within the organization. In effect, the fee increase represents a lack of Compassion for those families which do not require financial assistance. In a more abstract sense, the imposition of the league's decision to be charitable has the effect of weakening its expression of the virtue of Hope, which requires that individuals be allowed to choose for themselves the manner in which they will exhibit charity.

While there is an excellent chance that the correct choice for a youth baseball league will be to extend financial assistance to needy families, it is clear that the decision is much more complicated than the one which applies to individuals. Since the league is an organization, capable only of acting collectively, its administrators must undertake to discern the will of its members before taking action in order to avoid compromising their freedom and dignity.

While the moral imperatives which apply to individuals represent a good place to begin assessing the decisions and actions of organizations, there is a crucial difference between the two. That difference rests in the fact that organizations can only take action in a collective sense, meaning that every decision has the effect of compromising the freedom and dignity of members. As a consequence of that reality, organizations carry an obligation to weigh that effect in the decision-making process, and to forego actions which do not clearly reflect the will of a large majority of members.

The Influence of Wealth

The subject of wealth bears on many facets of moral analysis. Not only has it arisen in several parts of the presentation of this Code of Honor, but it is a frequent whipping boy for religious sermons, and class warfare is the foundational animus for all socialist movements. Given that wealth plays such a central role in moral discussions, it will be beneficial to examine that role carefully.

Worth emphasizing at the outset is that wealth is not a bad thing - not immoral, not evil - in and of itself. At its core, wealth really is nothing more than the establishment of good living conditions: access to healthy food, safe work environments, and entertaining pastimes. From that point of view, wealth clearly is a positive thing. All persons should strive to obtain wealth - that is, they should strive to secure good food, safe environments, and shelter for themselves and those who depend on them. In fact, when described in these terms it is clear that the pursuit of wealth represents the essence of the virtue of Industry.

Another important facet of this discussion is that everyone must be allowed to define wealth in his or her own way. One person might consider the purchase of season tickets for a professional football team, costing thousands of dollars, to be a disgusting waste of money, while another might consider those tickets to be a necessary element in his or her entertainment schedule. Neither should be allowed to decide what wealth means on behalf of the other; doing so would strip away the *gratia* of dignity from the one denied the ability to choose. It is the virtue of Hope which guides an honorable person away from this problem; an honorable person entrusts others with the dignity to decide what wealth means to them.

It is for these reasons that capitalist, or 'free market', systems of economics are much healthier, much more honorable, than other economic structures. A free-market system provides explicit affirmation of the rights of individuals to enter - or to refuse - transactions at their own discretion, which affirms the dignity of participants.

Of course, this very positive view of wealth stands in contrast to the priestly sermons mentioned above. Clearly there is something about wealth

which leads people to believe it has a negative effect on the morality of those who pursue it - in fact, there are at least two somethings.

One of those factors is that the pursuit of wealth sometimes becomes more important to an individual than the *gratiae*. This problem is not surprising; it is the natural consequence of the fact that material comforts are tangible and immediate, and therefore have a powerful effect on a person's attention. In fact, that argument was presented in the introduction to this book, where the Code of Honor was described as an effort to re-awaken people to the importance of spiritual matters. Viewed from that perspective, one problem associated with wealth is that it tends to draw attention away from the things which are truly valuable - it becomes a distraction, an obstacle, to a focus on the *gratiae*.

Another facet of this problem is that wealth has the effect of changing expectations, which are central to the way a person perceives his or her situation. This is a subtle but essential difference: it is not the actual value of a person's wealth which leads to discontent, it is the shortfall between that person's wealth and the living conditions he or she had come to expect. By changing what people view as comfortable living conditions, increasing wealth elevates the likelihood that people will perceive a shortfall - a perception which then becomes a powerful obstacle to focusing on the *gratiae* and leads to immoral behavior in the pursuit of wealth.

Since discussions of morality frequently involve wealth, it is important to gain a clear understanding of its influence on human action. There is no doubt that the presence of wealth increases the likelihood of bad, immoral behavior - both because it distracts otherwise good people from a focus on the *gratiae* and because it changes a person's expectations, which creates the discontent which drives people to concentrate on selfish desires and turn away from nurturing the *gratiae* of others.

Unfortunately most efforts to address these difficulties fail, because they demonize wealth and promote class warfare. The reality is that wealth often is a very positive thing, so attempts to control it, its pursuit, and its application are doomed to failure - they go against both human nature and the virtue of Industry. Instead, it is far more effective to establish systems which recognize the benefits of wealth and its pursuit, and to strive to incorporate the recognition of spiritual concerns into those environments.

Post-Modern Philosophy

In recent years, a great deal of thought has gone into an area which often is described as 'post-modern' philosophy. This field of thought is characterized by a focus on the nature of existence, on whether the physical reality perceived by a person really exists, and whether that physical reality is shared by other persons, by other consciousnesses. These questions arise from the recognition that every person perceives and interprets the physical world individually, raising the possibility that those interpretations might not match.

Countering that suggestion is very difficult, because it is impossible to offer evidence for any point of view when a philosopher is free to question the very existence of that evidence. Post-modern philosophy cannot be discussed with regard to shared experiences or even simple common sense, because the post-modernist explicitly rejects the reliability of those things. If every consciousness experiences the world differently, there can be no certainty that any experience really is shared, or that common sense is anything more than a set of constructs instilled in a person through his or her upbringing.

Accepting this premise renders it impossible to make objective statements about anything, including physical reality. What a person perceives may be nothing more than his or her imagination, not shared by any other consciousness. Furthermore, since there is no way to compare the validity of one person's perceptions to those of another, all interpretations of reality are equally valid.

One way to illustrate the consequences of adopting a post-modern stance is with the old joke about four blind men encountering an elephant. The first man feels the elephant's trunk and declares that he has found a snake. The second man finds the elephant's leg and declares it to be a tree. Standing by the elephant's side, the third man insists that they have come up to a barn. Finally, the fourth man touches the elephant's tail and declares it to be a paintbrush.

A post-modernist must insist that all four interpretations are correct - indeed, that all four are correct simultaneously. Furthermore, a post-modernist rejects the idea that the four blind men are mistaken, that

what they have found actually is an elephant, because that interpretation of reality is no more valid than any of theirs.

As was the case with the existence of God, it is not possible to prove or disprove the post-modern conclusion that there is no objective reality. It is conceivable that everything perceived by a consciousness actually is nothing more than a creation of that consciousness. Since perceptions cannot be separated from consciousness, there is no way to invoke external evidence about reality. A post-modernist simply rejects that evidence as a product of the offerer's imagination.

On the other hand, the post-modern stance does not match human experience. People recognize the presence of other consciousnesses, and they appear to communicate with one another, which suggests that they share experiences and perceptions. Scientific advancement depends on the existence of objective reality and on the ability of scientists to share experiences. While it is possible that those things are nothing more than figments of the imagination of an individual consciousness, that interpretation simply does not correlate with what a person perceives. Said another way, that assumption about the nature of reality is not plausible.

Worth noting is that post-modern philosophers themselves do not behave as though they believe their own assumptions. As an example, consider that if every possible interpretation of an experience is valid, there is no point in seeking to convince another consciousness of a particular point of view - that is, the post-modernist must believe that his or her point of view has no more validity than others, so it makes no sense to try to convince another person of post-modernism. What is more, it is nonsensical to make the effort to convince another person of any point of view, because there is no proof that the other person exists at all.

It is difficult to find a philosophy which is entirely consistent with a post-modern approach. One which comes close is Friedrich Nietzsche's perspectivism. The essence of that philosophy is articulated in the title of his seminal work, *Beyond Good and Evil.* [1] Essentially, Nietzsche argued that there is no objective reality, and therefore a person should ignore morality. Within Nietzschean philosophy, the only thing which matters is power: 'might makes right'.

Interestingly, it is possible to argue that even Nietzsche was not internally consistent, since he took the trouble to explain his philosophy to others, spent his time writing books and presenting arguments. Viewed from that perspective, the only persons who live the post-modern philosophy consistently are sociopaths - those who care nothing for laws or rules, who take what they want and do what they want - hedonists and

anarchists.

Post-modern philosophy offers some interesting areas for exploration about the nature of existence and reality. However, the post-modern approach quickly descends into absurdity. Not only does a post-modern approach fail to mesh with ordinary human experience in a natural way, but the philosophers who present and promote the philosophy do not behave in a manner consistent with the approach. Perhaps most telling is that following the philosophy to its natural conclusion leads to behavior which normal human observers would identify as sociopathic, as deviant.

Taken together, those factors make it difficult to embrace post-modern philosophy. Much more plausible is to assume that objective reality exists, that human consciousnesses exist, and that those human consciousnesses can communicate about their shared experiences of that objective reality. While those experiences will differ from consciousness to consciousness, there is an objective reality which underlies them. Stated succinctly, it is much more plausible to make the assumption that objective reality exists than it is to question that reality using a post-modern approach to philosophy.

The Cult of Self

Exploring the nature of goodness, of morality, reveals a paradox reflected within the three *gratiae*. On the one hand, these qualities are entirely individual in nature. Every human person possesses them, and everyone expresses them in a way which is unique, individual, personal. At the same time, however, these qualities rest, for the most part, under the control of other persons, who have the power to decide whether to affirm or deny the life, liberty, and dignity of an individual.

This paradox has a profound impact on the manner in which the Code of Honor is put into practice. An honorable person seeks to nurture the *gratiae*, but he or she cannot do so on his or her own behalf. Instead, an honorable person must be almost entirely 'other-focused' - that is, he or she must place the *gratiae* of others at the forefront of his or her decision-making.

As an aside, it is important to bear in mind that being 'other-focused' does not require a person to remain passive in the face of injustice. Remember that Industry also is a virtue; it is honorable for a person to work to improve his or her situation, particularly if he or she is being mistreated.

Unfortunately, there are many factors in modern American culture which inhibit the development of an 'other-focus'. Some of the most influential of those are a sense of entitlement on the part of citizens, a growing dependence on technology, and the increasing acceptance of moral relativism.

As is discussed elsewhere in this presentation, it is natural for members of a wealthy society to develop the expecation that their desires will be gratified quickly and easily - usually they are, after all. Of course, that expectation is misleading, since it is not possible to obtain anything of value without hard work and dedication on someone's part. That clash, between the expectation of immediate gratification and the necessity of hard work, leads to frustration on the part of those who do not have their desires met, driving them to focus on obtaining those things rather than on the *gratiae* of others.

Worth emphasizing is that there is a defining distinction between the virtue of Industry and a sense of entitlement. While both are oriented to-

ward the improvement of living conditions, the former drives an individual to earn the objects he or she desires, while the latter leads the individual to demand those things from others. Expressed in terms of the *gratiae*, a sense of entitlement causes a person to strip freedom and dignity away from others so that he or she may have his or her material desires satisfied.

The effects of technology on society often are very similar to the effects of wealth; indeed, advanced technology is a product of wealth, so in many ways the effects are identical. However, where wealth, treated generally, tends to affect the motivations of individuals, the most powerful effects of technology lie in the way it influences interactions between individuals. As a result, it deserves separate mention.

As is the case with wealth, advancements in technology really are positive things. The ability to travel quickly, to communicate more clearly and rapidly, to produce vast quantities of food from small amounts of land, to treat disease effectively - all of these things are direct products of technological development, and there is no doubt that they have elevated the material living conditions of Americans tremendously.

Of course, the real value provided by those technologies is that they support the spiritual side of human existence, the *gratiae* - those technologies allow people to live longer, freer, more dignified lives. Conversely, when technology begins to draw people away from that spiritual side, it becomes negative - just as the pursuit of wealth becomes negative when a person elevates it above the *gratiae*.

With regard to technology, the area in which negative effects are most prominent is that of communication. Using electronic devices as intermediaries for communication has the effect of insulating individuals from one another, reducing the emotional connection between them.

The effect of that separation is readily apparent in on-line environments; chat rooms, the comment sections of news articles, and social media outlets all are notorious for the disrespectful way participants treat one another. Some of that vitriol results from the sense of anonymity provided by electronic devices; a person who is isolated from others by an electronic device is more willing to say hurtful things, because he or she feels insulated from the consequences, even when the person really is not anonymous. Moreover, the use of an electronic intermediary also makes it easier for a person to ignore the humanity of the person on the receiving end of a message. Both of these effects are readily apparent in American culture, and both inhibit the development of a focus on the *gratiae* of others.

Another facet of technology which inhibits the development of an

'other-focus' lies in its ability to provide increasingly immersive individualized environments. These environments make it possible for an individual to use technology as a replacement for human interaction, rather than a supplement to it. From virtual reality environments to sex robots, electronic devices make it possible for an individual to simulate going anywhere he or she wants, doing anything he or she wants, and being with anyone he or she wants - and to accomplish this without the need for any real human interaction. It simply is not sensible to expect a person to develop a concern for the *gratiae* of others if he or she is never exposed to any others.

A third development within American culture which inhibits the development of a focus on others is the increasing influence of moral relativism. On the surface, that might seem counter-intuitive, since it may seem 'other-focused' to allow each person to define his or her own moral code.

Upon deeper examination, though, it becomes clear that the focus of moral relativism is not on others. The insistence that all moral codes are equally valid has the effect of denying the existence of objective truths - the most important of which are that real, intrinsic value lies in the *gratiae* and that a person is capable of influencing the *gratiae* of others. In consequence, a moral relativist does not need to develop a focus on others, because he or she need only be concerned with his or her own values. In doing so, moral relativism grants individuals the license to reject honorable behavior.

In order for a society to be healthy, it must promote the well-being of its citizens. Since it is the *gratiae* which are truly, intrinsically valuable, and since individuals must be responsible for the *gratiae* of others, that means a healthy society must be organized in a way which promotes the development of honorable behavior and an 'other-focus'.

Since these factors - a sense of entitlement, technological isolation, and moral relativism - inhibit that development, they are inimical to the development of a healthy, civil society. Instead, they enable and encourage individuals to isolate themselves from one another, to immerse themselves in the 'Cult of Self'.

AFTERWORD

On Brokenness

Early in Part III of this book, I discussed the concept of judgement - not in the sense of 'good judgement', which is an aspect of the virtue of Wisdom, but in the sense of 'passing judgement', which is the act of devaluing another person because of that person's flaws and imperfections. At the time, I was doing my best to write in a formal way, but - I think the concept of judgement deserves to be explored from a more personal point of view, as well. So I decided to offer a little bit more reflection here, in the epilogue area, where that sort of thing is more appropriate.

I want to start with something that a former colleague told me his mother once told him. She said, "Watch out for that guy who doesn't smoke or drink or chase skirts. Everybody has a vice, so whatever that guy's is must be worse than any of those." [1]

Now, I don't think that is *literally* true - guys who stay away from those particular vices may well have found something relatively harmless. However, it does make the point that no one is perfect, that everyone is broken. Every person has faults and weaknesses, everyone falls short of their ideals sometimes. Many of us fall short often. That is the reason it is so crucial that an honorable person work diligently to forgive, to avoid passing judgement. Since I am a flawed person, it is wrong for me to devalue another because of his or her flaws. Moreover, it is wrong for me to tell another person how to live his or her life.

Equally important, though, is to recognize that avoiding judgement does *not* mean abandoning principles altogether. The principles remain. It is possible to assess another person's actions as wrong without devaluing that person - I like to use the word 'mistake' to help communicate the difference. If I feel someone is doing something wrong, I describe it as a mistake, since I think that word acknowledges that the other person is likely to have good intentions. Moreover, I think that approach accepts the possibility that the other person might know something I don't.

OK - I wanted to use this section to be personal and direct. One of the things I want to make sure to say is: Don't reject the principles I have tried to present here in this book, just because you know that I am weak.

Another thing which needs to be said is: Don't compromise your principles even if you know that *you* are weak. Instead, use that weakness to help yourself be forgiving - while continuing to uphold the principles in which you believe.

Since I am Roman Catholic, I feel compelled to point out that my religion is amongst the best at recognizing the brokenness of humans. While I have worked to ensure that this Code of Honor does not depend on religious belief (of any kind), I find it significant that Catholic teaching resonates so strongly with Honor. Forgiveness and compassion are essential components of the Catholic faith, as are the *gratiae* of freedom and dignity.

Another philosophy which resonates deeply with the brokenness of humans is the one which undergirds the American spirit. The Founding Fathers of the United States built our nation on the ideas of individual freedom and personal responsibility. What the founders understood is that governments are operated by very flawed humans - humans who are vulnerable to corruption and temptation, and who often behave in a judgemental manner. That insight led the Founding Fathers to place strong limits on the powers of government - they explicitly and consciously set out to limit central government in order to deny it the ability to intrude deeply into the lives of citizens. That approach to governance is rare; authoritarian governments are far more common in human history (and in the human present). However, it is the rejection of authoritarianism which allowed the United States to become the most prosperous and powerful nation in the world, so it is essential that American citizens embrace that spirit and continue to reject authoritarianism.

I hope this helps add clarity to what I included in other sections. No one likes to be 'judged' - but that does not mean that principles should be abandoned. Far from it; the principles which underlie a good Code of Honor should reduce the risk of judgement, because Compassion and Humility are essential elements of that Code. We need principles, especially principles which consciously affirm the importance of the spiritual side of humanity. And we need to uphold those principles even while we forgive ourselves and others for being unable to live up to them on occasion.

Credit Where Credit Is Due

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to those who have depended on me for any part of their spiritual formation - my children and Godchildren in particular. I hope that, despite my limitations and weaknesses, you derived something positive from what we did together. I love you and pray for you.

Some Really Smart People

In constructing this work, I worked to lay a foundation of experiences and thought experiments which would be common to the vast majority of readers. From there, I have worked to apply logic which is as direct and simple as I could make it. As a result, my conclusions really are not dependent on external works and structures; this discussion represents a self-contained whole.

Of course, there are many philosophical discussions worth reading, and I have used some to help add color and depth to these arguments. In addition to those works, I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to a number of persons who have contributed to my understanding of Honor. Their conversation and living examples have meant more to me than I could ever put into words.

That list of persons has to begin with my father, Michael M. Collins, M.D., who planted and nurtured the seeds of my understanding with long talks about right and wrong. It is from Dad that I have the term 'Cult of Self', and it was in him that I was given a chance to see that Humility is the most essential of the virtues.

Without doubt, conversations with my mother, my wife, my siblings, and my children have challenged and strengthened my understanding of what it means to live an Honorable life - and have forced me to work hard

to live up to my ideals. (Note that I cannot claim to have succeeded, but their presence has forced me to put great effort into the attempt.)

I have many friends who deserve recognition for the things they have taught me, as well - I am avoiding any mention of names, for fear that I would hurt someone through an unintentional omission. From high school to college to graduate school I have been blessed with many good and honorable friends - all of you have contributed to what I believe, and all of you have a hand in what I have produced here. (I hope you are not disappointed . . .)

Worthy of particular mention are the students who participated in Professor (Dr.) Cam Walker's section of Honors 201-202 during the Fall of 1985 and Spring of 1986 (at the College of William and Mary). That group provided me with an intensive environment in which to hone and refine my understanding of goodness and morality. (Again, I hope you are not disappointed . . .)

The community which surrounds Mt. Michael Benedictine Abbey and High School in Elkhorn, Nebraska also has contributed a great deal to the development of my understanding of Honor and related concepts. Worthy of particular note is that the Benedictine charism holds at its center the Latin phrase "ora et labora", which unites prayer and work, emphasizing the importance of a work ethic - and driving home that there is no piece of work too small, no decision too trivial, no action too humble to be assessed in terms of Honor.

Finally, I want to mention a video game: *Ultima IV: The Quest for the Avatar* by Origin Systems, designed by Richard Garriott. (I would like to provide a formal reference for it, below, but . . . well - I don't really know how to construct that reference, so hopefully offering all of the information here fills the need.) This game centers around the development of virtue on the part of the player character - something which is very unusual in fantasy role-playing games. The game is built around eight virtues, three of which - Honesty, Compassion, and Valor - are foundational, with the others arising as combinations of those basic three. I think the concept of 'combining' virtues is intriguing, and I consider the fact that the game's three basic virtues coincide with the first three identified in my own study of the subject to be a strong affirmation of both. As was the case with the Declaration of Independence and the *gratiae*, having separate efforts arrive at similar conclusions is very positive.

External References

Preface, Introduction

[1] Plato, and Jowett, B. (translator) (1994). *The Internet Classics Archive — Apology by Plato.* Retrieved March 31, 2015. URL: http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html
[2] Pew Research Center, June, 2014, "Political Polarization in the American Public".
[3] Darling, David J. (2004). *The Universal Book of Mathematics.* John Wiley and Sons, page 34. ISBN 0471270474.

Preface, Doubting Thomas

[1] John 20:24-29 New International Version
[2] Galilei, G. and Drake, S. (translator) (1957). *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo.* New York: Doubleday Anchor Books. ISBN 0385092393.

Part I, The Nature of Good

[1] Wirt, William. *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry.* (Philadelphia) 1836, as reproduced in *The World's Great Speeches*, Lewis Copeland and Lawrence W. Lamm, eds., (New York) 1973.
[2] Acts 7:54-60 New International Version

Part I, Summation and Reflection

[1] Locke, John (1690), *Second Treatise of Government*, as reproduced in *Social Contract*, Sir Ernest Barker, ed., Oxford University Press (London) 1960.
[2] Wills, Garry (2002), *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Part II, Framing a Code of Honor

[1] Wirt, William. *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry.* (Philadelphia) 1836, as reproduced in *The World's Great Speeches*, Lewis Copeland and Lawrence W. Lamm, eds., (New York) 1973.

Part II, Summation and Reflection

[1] Rickaby, J. (1908). *Cardinal Virtues.* In The Catholic Encyclopedia.

New York: Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved May 19, 2016 from New Advent: http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03343a.htm

[2] 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 New International Version

[3] Prudentius and Louis B. Snider (translator) *The Psychomachia of Prudentius*, Loyola University Chicago (1938). Translation of *The Battle for the Soul of Man (Psychomachia)* by Aurelius Prudentius Clemens. Retrieved May 19, 2016 from Loyola eCommons: http://ecommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi ?article=1371&context=luc_theses

[4] Proverbs 16:18 New International Version

Part III, Post-Modern Philosophy

[1] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil.* Dover (1997).

Part IV, On Brokenness

[1] Iosbaker, Gary. Personal conversation.