

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Hour: \_\_\_\_\_

## Article of the Week #4

We will be using this week's article to prepare for a Socratic Seminar Circle to held on Thursday, 10/17/13.

1. Read the article and show evidence of close reading. Mark the text with 6 or more comments, questions, and/or connections

2. On a separate sheet of paper, create, write, and answer four (4) level two questions and two (2) level three questions based on *Costa's Levels of Questioning*.

3. Completed assignment due Thursday, October 17, 2013 at the beginning of the hour.

**Manly Honor VII: How and Why to Revive Manly Honor in the Twenty-First Century** by Brett on December 21, 2012

Traditional honor consists of having a reputation judged worthy of respect and admiration by a group of equal peers who share the same code of standards. In primitive times, these standards were based on strength and courage. In the medieval period, outward integrity and chivalry were added to these primal qualities of manhood. In the 19th century, the Stoic-Christian honor code drew from the philosophy of ancient Greece and the faith which gave the code its name, by seeking to form a new kind of honor – one that wed together ancient bravery with character traits like industry, coolness, sincerity, chastity, self-sufficiency, self-control, orderliness, and dependability. In the 20th century, traditional honor unraveled as urbanization and anonymity dissolved the intimate, face-to-face relationships that honor requires, people grew uncomfortable with violence and shame, individual feelings and desires were elevated above the common good of society at the same time a shared idea of what constituted that common good was lost, and people began to form their own personal honor codes which could not be judged by anyone else but themselves. This completed honor's transformation from wholly public and external to completely private and internal. Honor became a concept almost entirely synonymous with personal integrity.

But today I want to strip away many of those layers and try to get back down to the heart of manly honor – the basics of why it's worth preserving and how we can, and must, revive elements of it in this anti-honor-honor world.

### ***Why Honor Should Be Revived***

These days honor gets a bad rap for, among many things, inciting violence, being anti-egalitarian, creating intolerance, inducing shame, and motivating hypocrisy. But honor does have definite upsides: Honor is the moral imperative of men; obedience is the moral imperative of boys.

At the crux of the argument for the revival of honor is this: honor based on respect is a superior moral imperative to obedience based on rules and laws.

When you're a child, you do the right thing out of obedience to authority, out of the fear of punishment.

As you mature, you begin to see that the world does not revolve around you, that you belong to groups larger than yourself, and with this discovery comes a new awareness of the needs of that group and how your behavior affects others. This change in perspective (should) shift your motivation in doing the right thing from obedience to authority/fear of punishment, to respect for other people.

For example, as a boy I did chores because I had to, and I didn't want to get in trouble with my folks. As I grew into a young man, I began to do them because I respected my parents – I came to understand that I was part of a family and had a duty to keep the household running and pull my own weight.

The latter point is the key to the superiority of honor as a moral imperative – operating out of honor rather than obedience means realizing that you have a role to play in helping a group survive and thrive – that your actions directly correlate to the group's strength or weakness. When men function out of rules and laws, they do the bare minimum they can without being punished. When they function out of honor, they seek to at least pull their own weight, and then add further to the strength of the group to the best of their abilities. This is why, as Jack Donovan argues in *The Way of Men*:

“Part of the reason that honor is a virtue rather than merely a state of affairs is that showing concern for the respect of your peers is a show of loyalty and indication of belonging...Caring about what the men around you think of you is a show of respect, and conversely, not caring what other men think of you is a sign of disrespect. In a survival band, it is tactically advantageous to maintain a reputation for being strong, courageous and masterful as a group. A man who does not care for his own reputation makes his team look weak by association. Dishonor and disregard for honor are dangerous for a survival band or a fighting team because the appearance of weakness invites attack.”

Honor moves a man's motivation to act from base, childlike fear of authority to a higher, mature respect, even love – love of family, love of church, love of country, even the love of honor itself. A man will not let those he loves (or himself) down by slacking off.

***Honor is more powerful than rules and laws in shaping human behavior.***

Not only is honor a more mature moral imperative than obedience, it's often much more effective too. Studies have shown that social pressure — the very thing that drives honor — is more powerful than rules and laws in getting people to do the right thing. The book *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness* documents several studies that demonstrate individuals will modify their behavior when they know or simply believe their peers are watching them. Despite the way modern civilization has greatly transformed our lives, we are still social animals at heart – we still fear shame and desertion above all.

Without honor, mediocrity, corruption, and incompetence rule. Honor is based on reputation, and when people stop caring about their reputation, and shame disappears, people devolve into doing the least they can without getting into legal trouble or being fired. This leads to mediocrity, corruption, and incompetence. Navigating any business or customer service network these days, you encounter the most egregious examples of the latter. Because few potential employers check references anymore, and your reputation is unknown when you apply for the job, people have no fear of their history following them from job to job, and thus little incentive to perform their work with excellence, as opposed to mind-blowing ineptitude.

***Honor both constrains AND frees.***

The paradox of honor, and the constraints of any virtuous life, is that while the commitment to live with certain principles limits you in some ways, it also frees you in others. A man may willingly consent to and even impose on himself certain restrictions that he believes will actually lead to greater freedom and/or

more opportunities. For example, a man may choose not to smoke, so that he can be free from addiction, and from that addiction dictating his choices.

Similarly, as a youth, the more you showed your parents and other adults you could be trusted to do the right thing, the more they removed their rules, gave you more freedom, and allowed you to make your own decisions.

As society has become more complex and anonymous, and the bonds of honor have dissolved, we've had to rely more and more on obedience – rules and regulations — to govern people's behavior. Because we no longer trust people to do things because they swore an oath to do so, and because concern for their honorable reputation compels them, we've created ever more elaborate rules and regulations to enforce ethics. Instead of feeling safe in the knowledge that a man has internalized an honor code to the extent that he may be trusted to do the right thing, even when no one is watching, now he must be constantly checked up on and videotaped. The reason the minutia of rules at your office feel infantilizing...is because they are. We must be policed by an external authority to check our behavior in the absence of honor.

This web of rules and blanket mandates constrains our choices, prevents us from exercising practical wisdom in taking into consideration the specific circumstances of a specific situation in order to make the best possible decision, and thus curtails our freedom and stunts our moral development.

#### ***Honor acts as a check on narcissism.***

Honor begins as an inner-conviction of self-worth, but then you must present this claim to your peers for validation. Other people serve as a mirror of the self and a check to your pride – they are there to call bullocks on an inflated or false self-assessment. Without this important check, people become like Narcissus – staring at only themselves all day and absolutely loving what they see. At the same time, the ability to give and receive feedback openly and honestly creates affability among you and your peers – the bonds of respect.

#### ***Honor creates community.***

A shared honor code and the reliance on mutual respect to enforce that code can bind a community together stronger than laws, rules, and regulations. Honor forces us to think about what's best for the group, and not necessarily what's best for our individual needs. It also forces us to deal with one another and sort problems out ourselves, instead of relying on some third-party authority to resolve our problems for us. That social friction, while certainly uncomfortable, strengthens social ties because it requires us to engage our neighbors and actually be social with them.

The longer I live, the more I appreciate the benefits of structure, of rules, of friction. Life seems empty and insubstantial. Evil goes unpunished. Good goes unrewarded. Merit goes un-honored. There's no clear way to earn honor or avoid shame. Instead of a few earning the just fruits of their valiant labors, everyone is given a tiny portion of the egalitarian pie of praise, a crumb that offers no nourishment, does nothing to satiate our hunger for glory. Nobody cares what you do. There's no in or out. We each construct our own realities, but without the comparison with, the competition with, the esteem of others — it all feels sometimes like a great charade where we've all convinced ourselves that the world's never been better, while shoving down the empty pit in our stomachs.