Personal Honor and the Possibility for Redemption

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Foundations

What exactly is redemption? Webster's defines it as "an act or instance of repairing or restoring," and "expiation of guilt or wrong." More to the heart of the matter, is it possible to redeem oneself in an honor society when one's honor has been lost? This is a question that delves to the very heart of what it means to be honorable. To answer this question, honor itself must first be defined. The type of honor that will be considered is personal honor, and it will be shown that the answer to this question applies to all systems in which honor is personal in the way defined. This will be accomplished by examining two honor societies that, though very different in some respects, both conceive of honor as a personal virtue. First, the honor system at Washington and Lee will be described followed by a description of the code of honor from which our system grew, that of the antebellum South. Bushido, a system of honor that developed and flourished in feudal Japan, will then be examined. In each of these examples, it will be shown that a type of single sanction is employed when the fundamental precepts of the system, or code, are broken and that this must necessarily be so because honor is conceived of as a personal virtue. In other words, when honor is a personal virtue, there is only one punishment when honor is lost, namely banishment from the honor society. Once this has been established, the question of redemption will be addressed in full.

Personal Honor

Honor is an elusive concept. The word has been used many times in a myriad of ways, so it must be clearly defined in order that the particular meaning used is understood at the onset. The type of honor that concerns this work is personal honor, which is "a

virtue of an individual in a certain social context" (Sessions 8) and has four key components. First, this type of honor is "a matter of *individual character*" and "is measured in terms of how deeply a person is able and disposed to live and act in terms of honor" (Sessions 8). Such honor is an intrinsic part of the individual such that "a person with [this] sense of honor regards honor as being one of the more important features of herself, almost necessarily connected to herself" (Sessions 8-9). Second, this conception of honor "requires a certain social backdrop" (Sessions 9). This may seem counterintuitive at first but it is imperative that one recognize that, although "personal honor connects deeply with individual self-identity, nonetheless such honor is intelligible only in terms of belonging to a certain social group, the *honor group*" (Sessions 9). Thus, it is the case that "belonging to an honor group means adhering to an honor code [or honor system] that is socially shared and publicly supported" (Sessions 9). Third, "personal honor is an achievement" and "not a static condition…but rather an active personal attainment" (Sessions 9). A person possesses honor only as long as he acts honorably. Finally and most importantly, "at the heart of personal honor is the virtue [called] trustworthiness" i.e. "an honorable person can be counted on to follow the honor group's code [or system] without hesitation or question" (Sessions 9). This is imperative to the survival of any honor system or honor code because if there is no trust among members of an honor society, that society will dissolve. Trust is thus the fundamental precept of any honor society. This is personal honor in its most fundamental form, comprised simply of these four components.

Honor Codes versus Honor Systems

What is the difference between an honor system and an honor code? It can be argued that the difference is quite simple. An honor system does not conform to a list of rules, whereas an honor code does. Honor systems generally have overarching principles such as 'behave as a gentleman,' the one principle at Washington and Lee, or 'service to the master is supreme,' arguably the fundamental principle of Bushido. Honor codes, on the other hand, can be thought of as a list of do's and don'ts that relate explicitly what is the honorable course of action or inaction in various situations. This fundamental difference in construction leads to advantages and disadvantages for each that are almost completely opposite. However, honor can be conceived of in the personal sense in both honor systems and honor codes and, therefore, any conclusions reached concerning redemption apply to both.

The advantage of an honor code, because it is explicit in what is honorable behavior, is that there is no ambiguity over what is the correct course of action in a given situation. A well-constructed honor code will have tried to consider every possible situation and provided answers to each. However, this is a practical impossibility and, thus, the disadvantage inherent in honor codes.

No code can be complete because no code can in actuality consider each and every possible situation. A good honor code then can only approximate completion. In other words, such a code will consider all of the situations that arise regularly and determine what course of action is honorable in each. In this way, it is only when dealing with the extreme or unusual situations that the individual will have to make a decision. The individual, however, has not been encouraged to deal with such situations, only to

follow the code. When the code leaves him to his own devices, will he be able to determine what is the honorable course of action? This is questionable.

The advantage of an honor system is that, because there is no list of rules, the individual must use his judgment to determine what is honorable. In every situation, there is still an honorable and a dishonorable course of action. What is honorable is not simply a matter of the whim of the individual. However, the individual determines, to the best of his ability, what is the proper course of action and the honor society later judges if the individual was correct in his judgment. In this way, the disadvantage of honor codes is the strength of honor systems and vice versa. Because individuals are encouraged by the honor system to determine what is honorable, they develop their own faculty of judgment. Thus, when an individual finds himself in an unusual situation in which the question of honor arises, he should have no difficulty determining the correct course of action according to the honor system. The principles of the honor system have been inculcated within the individual. This is the theory at least, but in practical terms seeing what the proper course of action is may not be so easy.

The system relies on the judgment of the individual and, because of this, an individual may do what he believes to be honorable; later the society may judge he was wrong and his actions dishonorable. The greater freedom provided to the individual is a benefit as long as the society has clearly instilled what is honorable, and each individual's judgment is sound by the standard of the honor system.

This discussion of the differences between honor systems and honor codes leads us to a greater consideration. Specifically, we can consider whether honor societies must be limited in size. The argument that reaches this conclusion does so for a number of

reasons. Honor societies have traditionally been limited in size, but why is this? Honor societies have historically been elitist, such that "outsiders are often deemed incapable of honor and so are [regarded with indifference or even as] 'beneath contempt' " (Sessions 9). Must this necessarily be so? Absolutely not, because fundamentally honor societies are those in which the individual members choose to believe in "an honor code [or honor system] that is socially shared and publicly supported" (Sessions 9). The more people who believe in the honor code/system, the larger the society will be, and there is no theoretical reason why this size must be limited.

In practice, however, the size is limited for honor systems, though not for honor codes. This is because honor systems require the individual to judge what is honorable, and individuals from vastly different backgrounds would have difficulty doing this. In other words, honor societies could not inculcate what is honorable in individuals from completely different backgrounds. Consider two individuals, one raised with the definition that all untruths are lies and another raised with the definition that only hurtful untruths are lies. If the honor system has as one of its defining principles "do not lie," this will mean decidedly different things to these two individuals. Thus, their concept of honor will also be decidedly different. When these two individuals apply this principle, they will come to different conclusions. In essence, they are not part of the same honor society; even though they may hold the same principles, the principles have different meanings for them. This puts a limit upon the size of honor societies, for the individuals who want to be part of the honor society must have enough of a common background that the principles of the honor society possess the same meaning.

Honor codes, on the other hand, are not limited in size because they are explicit in what is honorable. They do not rely as heavily on the individual's judgment. In other words, an individual may have some degree of judgment in making a decision, but with an honor code the judgment left to the individual requires much less sophistication. Let us again consider the two individuals who hold different definitions of lying. The honor code would not say "do not lie," but would be as specific as possible putting forth something like "do not tell any hurtful untruths." The individual would have to first judge whether something was an untruth, and then, if that untruth was hurtful. These are more simplistic judgments and do not require the same degree of commonality of background between different individuals. This argument does however assume that there is a certain level of commonality among all the potential members of an honor code.

The distinction between honor codes and honor systems has been presented up to this point as absolute for the sake of investigating each possibility fully. This is not the case in practice. Honor societies are arranged on a spectrum, from those that come close to being pure codes to those that come close to being pure systems. No codes or systems exist that are pure. This is necessarily so because when an honor code approaches its absolute, it becomes stagnant and dogmatic, and this assures that, given enough time, the honor code will die because it cannot adapt. Likewise when an honor system approaches its absolute, it becomes too ethereal; the principles become so loosely defined that they do not provide ample structure to the honor society and thus the honor system dissolves. Therefore, all are somewhere between the two absolutes on the spectrum. Codes always require some amount of judgment and systems always have some rules, i.e. they hold certain acts to be dishonorable. Furthermore, because both codes and systems are

dynamic, a code can develop into a system and vice versa. This is the case with the honor system at Washington and Lee University.

The Honor System at Washington and Lee

Students at Washington and Lee University are members of an honor system that "is based on the fundamental principle that a spirit of trust pervades all aspects of student life" (The Honor System 1). Students choose to enter into a community of trust and this trust is built upon the principles of honor. This concept of honor does not solely mean that one must refrain from lying, cheating, and stealing. These are the basic tenets of the Honor System, but do not encompass all for which this system stands. Honor is the very "moral cornerstone of Washington and Lee" (Course Catalogue 11). Thus, the goal of the system is loftier. The system demands that all members of the University act honorably, not only in certain ways or at certain times, but in all aspects of life "wherever Washington and Lee students take themselves" (Course Catalogue 11). Furthermore, it is the goal of the honor system that its members not only act honorably but also become honorable, which requires that honor be internalized and made a personal virtue. The Honor System "is not a compilation of student regulations," as Washington and Lee holds that "honorable conduct cannot be codified" (The Honor System 1). This honor system "condemns only acts that demonstrate a student is not worthy of trust by his peers" (The Honor System 1). Furthermore, this system contends that all violations of honor break that bond of trust and, thus, the only sanction appropriate is dismissal from the University (The Honor System 1). Quite simply, "honor is not measured by degrees" (The Honor System 1).

The single sanction policy means that there is only one sanction, or punishment, for an honor violation, and that is dismissal from the University. This policy is based upon the belief that "no violation of trust is more egregious than another, nor too small to be ignored" (The Honor System 1). This is, in fact, what makes the honor system at Washington and Lee so effective. Honor is seen to be an indivisible whole. Adherence to those principles deemed by the honor society to be honorable is, in this community, the bond upon which trust is built. This is, in fact, the definition of trust in systems of honor in which honor is personal. When a dishonorable act is committed, that bond is broken and that trust is destroyed. The severity of the act does not matter, simply because any dishonorable act breaks the bond of trust.

The Foundations of the Washington and Lee Honor System:

Honor Embodied by Robert E. Lee

The system of honor at Washington and Lee University grew out of the honor system of the antebellum South, specifically honor as it was perceived and embodied by General Robert E. Lee. The effect Lee had upon the honor system at Washington and Lee was profound. He contributed "the force of his own exemplary personal integrity and personal character and his personal commitment to the system and its noble purpose" (Gunn 3). He replaced a codified system with one principle, "that every student must be a gentleman" (Thomas 397). This one principle for Lee embodied all that there was to being an honorable person. Lee explained, "The forbearing use of power does not only form a touchstone; the manner in which an individual enjoys certain advantages over others, is the test of a true gentleman" (Valentine 155). Lee held that one "does not

needlessly and unnecessarily remind an offender of a wrong he may have committed against him" (Valentine 155). A gentleman in Lee's mind was one who was magnanimous enough to not "only forgive, he can forget" (Valentine 155).

"Lee's one rule standard produced the honor system" (Thomas 397) as it is present today at Washington and Lee University, and from this one-rule system came the single sanction of dismissal from the honor society. It seems incongruous that Lee's one rule would lead to the single sanction, for Lee himself said a gentleman "cannot only forgive, he can forget" (Valentine 155). However, what else could be the punishment if Lee's one rule is broken? It follows logically that since the entire system is based upon trust, once that trust is destroyed, it cannot be rebuilt. Trust is the foundation upon which the honor system is built. If an individual was allowed to lie and remain a member of the honor community, the foundation of the community would be undermined and the honor society would collapse. In other words, there is only one bond of honor in this community, that of trust. If this bond is broken, the community falls apart. A person is or is not a gentleman; there cannot be degrees of gentlemanliness. If there were degrees, then, these degrees would in fact be more than one rule hiding under a flawed terminology. Since there is only one rule and this is a system in which honor is indivisible, an individual either is or is not a gentleman, and there must be only one punishment.

It seems that Lee is contradicting himself with his view of forgiveness, but in his own definition we are provided with the solution. Lee holds that the way in which an individual exercises his power is the test of a true gentleman and describes different examples of this power. He explains:

> The power which the strong have over the weak, the magistrate over the citizen, the employer over the employed, the educated over the unlettered, the experienced over the confiding, even the clever over the silly; the forbearing and inoffensive use of all this power or authority, or a total abstinence from it when the case admits it, will show the gentleman in a plain light (Valentine 155).

He never once considers a situation of forgiveness or forbearance between equals, such as members of an honor society. In every situation he describes, there is one who is superior and one who is inferior. This is Lee's definition of noblisse oblige, which by definition does not apply to equals. Equals are held to a higher standard and, as such, the single sanction of banishment from the honor society is fitting because trust is "at the heart of personal honor" (Sessions 9) and "no violation of trust is more egregious than another, nor too small to be ignored" (The Honor System 1). When trust is broken, the bonds of honor are severed and so must the offender's bonds with the honor society.

The Foundations of the Washington and Lee Honor System:

Gentility and Primal Honor

The honor system of the antebellum south was actually a spectrum of honor societies; the first and oldest was "primal honor," and the second was "gentility." The latter arose from the intermingling of the older form and "from the Stoic-Christian system that the English humanists began to cultivate" (Wyatt-Brown Honor 27). Lee's understanding of honor was of this more refined second form such that "there was no difference…between 'the great principles of eternal justice, righteousness, and truth' and the code of honor" (Wyatt-Brown Shaping 87). Gentility was comprised of three

components "in the Old South: sociability, learning, and piety" (Wyatt-Brown Honor 41) which were also referred to as the three graces. Furthermore, "the culmination of the three graces of gentility was best exemplified in the figure of Robert E. Lee, the man as well as the legend" (Wyatt-Brown Honor 42).

Although gentility as embodied and put forth by Lee was a system of honor, primal honor in the antebellum south was "an encoded system, a matter of interchanges between the individual and the community to which he or she belonged" (Wyatt-Brown Honor vii). Under such a code, "honor was inseparable from hierarchy and entitlement, defense of family blood and community needs" (Wyatt-Brown Honor 4). Additionally, primal honor was "in intimate relation to its opposite: shame" (Wyatt-Brown Honor viii). Shame and honor in such a culture are inseparable because it is fear of shame that drives the individual to act honorably. As such, "honor requires a sense of self-mastery and independence," whereas "shame implies an inability to exercise will and power" (Wyatt-Brown Shaping 35). "[W]hen shame [is] imposed by others, honor [is] stripped away" (Wyatt-Brown Honor viii). Having "a healthy sense of shame" is the same as having "a sense of [one's] own honor" (Wyatt-Brown Honor viii). The honor of the individual and the community are thus inexorably tied together and it was "honor, not conscience, [and] shame, not guilt, [which] were the psychological and social underpinnings of Southern culture" (Wyatt-Brown Honor 22).

This "primal honor" is granted in three steps. The first step is an internal claim of self-worth; that is, the individual possesses an "inner conviction of self-worth" (Wyatt-Brown Honor 14). In the second step, the individual puts this claim before the community (Wyatt-Brown Honor 14). The final step is comprised of the "assessment of

the claim by the public, a judgment based upon the behavior of the claimant" (Wyatt-Brown Honor 14). In this way, "primal honor" is "both internal to the claimant...and external to him" (Wyatt-Brown Honor 14). In the internal sense, it "motivates him toward behavior socially approved," and in the external sense it is "only by the response of the observers [that] he [could] ordinarily understand himself" (Wyatt-Brown Honor 14). This is honor in its most simplistic form, arguably nothing more than a glorified type of reputation.

How then was behavior judged? This was a codified system and as such conduct was judged along very specific lines. Honor was judged as "immortalizing valor," in regard to "the opinions of others as an indispensable part of personal identity," by the "physical appearance and ferocity of will as signs of inner merit," and finally as the "defense of male integrity and the mingled fear and love of woman" (Wyatt-Brown Honor 27). Thus, honor was judged on many levels by very different criteria, but no matter what set of criteria was used, "the opinion of others was inseparable from inner worth" (Wyatt-Brown Honor 30).

Under this code of honor it was possible to lose one's honor in either of two ways: by another's actions against one's honor, and by one's own actions. It was possible to regain honor in the first case but not in the second. In the first case, honor was lost only externally, whereas in the second case the loss was both internal and external. It is important to examine the two ways in which honor could be lost in this society, and show why in the first case honor could be regained but in the second redemption was not possible. This examination is necessary, for it is the second case that constitutes dishonorable behavior in the present form of the system at Washington and Lee.

An individual could have his honor taken very simply, for example by being accused of lying by another member of the honor group. Our very definition of honor holds that truthfulness is "at the heart of personal honor" (Sessions 9). One's word was taken as being sacred within the honor group. When one was thus insulted, it was imperative that the injury be redressed. This retribution took the form of the duel. "Only certain kinds of insulting language and behavior led to duels" (Greenberg 8) because only certain types of insulting language challenged one's honor, lying being foremost among these. Accusing an individual of lying called into question the veracity of one's outer persona. It "meant announcing that [the accused's] appearance differed from his true nature" (Greenberg 9). In this way, "the charge of being a coward or a poltroon was another form of the charge of lying: the accuser unmasked the accused" (Greenberg 9). It was a charge made "by a gentleman intending to dishonor someone" (Greenberg 9). In Southern culture, to accuse an honorable individual of lying was to question his very self-worth because self-worth and outer persona were intrinsically linked.

Why must this accusation be redressed by a duel? Because any man accused of lying, as described by one seventeenth-century Englishman, "standeth so charged in his honor and reputation, that he cannot disburden himself of that imputation, but by striking of him that hath so given it, or by challenging him [to] combat" (Baldick 8). When one's honor was challenged in this way, it was possible to reclaim one's honor by directly challenging the individual who attempted to dishonor. By challenging one showed that he would give his very life for honor and this was the supreme sacrifice one could make. Furthermore, it required bravery to so offer up one's life, and this public demonstration of bravery also reaffirmed one's honor. The duel served to reestablish the outer persona the

way no other redress could by reasserting the core values that made one honorable publicly.

Interestingly, in this primal code of honor the man accused of lying does not care whether or not he lied. What he does care about is that his alleged lie is made public. The dispute is over the fact that "someone has given expression to an insult" (Greenberg 14). An example of this is that "when a man of honor is told that he smells, he does not draw a bath-he draws a pistol" (Greenberg 14). The point is that "the man of honor does not care if he stinks but he does care that someone has accused him of stinking" (Greenberg 14). This is the logical consequence of the emphasis of this type of honor being on how a person is perceived, not on what they truly are. Thus an individual could successfully present a persona of honor while having no internalized sense of honor.

Is honor truly lost when one is accused of lying? No, because only outer honor is lost and outer honor can be regained. Simply, when one is accused of lying, one's outer persona is challenged, not the belief one has in his self-worth. In other words, being accused of lying invalidates honor at the second step of the three steps discussed earlier. Specifically, such an accusation undermines the claim of self-worth put forth by the individual before the community (Wyatt-Brown Honor 14). If the accusation had shown the first step to be faulty, then honor would truly be lost. This is, because by invalidating the first step, the individuals "inner conviction of self-worth," the foundation upon which honor is built, is destroyed (Wyatt-Brown Honor 14). Honor, in its absolute form, is only lost when one is shown to have no self-worth and this only occurs when the fundamental precepts of the honor code are broken.

Under this code, when one breaks one of the fundamental principles, no redemption is possible. In other words, instead of losing one's honor from the outside in, honor is lost in the opposite direction. The individual who commits such a crime shows himself to have no self-worth; the honor society simply reflects this fact, it does not impose it. An example of this type of crime is the murder of a member of one's own family.

One of the fundamental precepts of European honor, from which "primal honor" in the South descended, was loyalty to family. "From the earliest times in Western history, the cardinal principle of honor was family defense" and "to war against one's own family was a violation of law - a law that, unwritten and often unspoken, superseded all other claims" (Wyatt-Brown Honor 59). An individual who committed such an act had broken the most fundamental principle of honor. Such an individual could not regain his honor because he showed himself to have no self-worth. As such, the only punishment was removal from the honor society, either in the form of banishment or execution. Often when an individual committed such a crime a "charivari" was held in which the individual who had lost his honor was publicly humiliated before being cast out of the society. This occurred to James Foster Jr., a wife-killer, in 1835 in the Deep South when "the citizens laid on the strokes with a cowhide whip 'until' said Thimblerig [a participant in the festivities], 'the flesh rung in ribands from his body' " (Wyatt-Brown Honor 240). Next, "the decision was for a partial scalping; a complete one would have been fatal" and "after this was done, tar was poured over Foster's head, shoulders, and back, followed by a dousing with the traditional feathers" (Wyatt-Brown Honor 240). After this, Foster was banished from the honor society for both his own safety and to

maintain the honor code, although this last goal is not so clearly verbalized by those present at the time (Wyatt-Brown Honor 242-243). As can be seen both philosophically and from this example, those who broke the fundamental precepts of this honor code had to be banished for the honor code to remain intact.

Honor in the South consisted of a spectrum ranging from the code of primal honor to the system of gentility embodied and put forth by Lee. One must deal with the entire system, even though it comprises such a range, in order to provide a fair description. Even so, from one extreme to the other it has been shown that honor, when it is adhered to absolutely, calls for a single sanction of removal from the honor system when honor has been lost because the bond of trust has been irrevocably broken.

Bushido: A Warrior's System of Honor

Bushido literally translates as "military-knight-way" and is the name commonly given to the honor system that was followed by the samurai of Japan (Nitobe 13). The samurai, also called bushi, were "the professional class of warriors" (Nitobe 14) and came to hold "great honor and great privileges, and correspondingly great responsibility" (Nitobe 15). They required a "common standard of behavior, especially as they were always on a belligerent footing and belonged to different clans" (Nitobe 15). From this need arose Bushido, a system "of moral principles which the knights were required or instructed to observe" (Nitobe 14). However, "those instructed in the [system] were expected to discipline themselves according to it" (Nitobe 11). The goal of the system was thus that it be internalized.

Bushido is "not a written code; [for] at best it consists of a few maxims handed down from mouth to mouth or coming from the pen of some well-known warrior" (Nitobe 14). First and foremost among these was loyalty to the master, for "if one were to say in a word what the condition of being a samurai is, its basis lies in seriously devoting one's body and soul to his master" (Tsunetomo 66). Beyond this, a samurai should "fit oneself inwardly with intelligence, humanity and courage" (Tsunetomo 66).

Bushido exemplifies the dynamic nature of honor systems, as its development "was an organic growth of decades and centuries of military careers" (Nitobe 14). It had three main influences: Buddhism, Shintoism, and Confucianism (Nitobe 18). Buddhism, specifically Zen Buddhism, which is a Japanese version of the religion, imparted much to the honor system such as "a sense of calm trust in Fate, a quiet submission to the inevitable, a stoic composure in sight of danger or calamity, [and] a disdain of life and friendliness with death" (Nitobe 18). These teachings are invaluable to a warrior class as they not only address the question of death, but also provide a means of overcoming one's end. It is the goal of Zen to discover and become one with the "principle that underlies all phenomena, and, if it can, of the Absolute itself, and thus to put oneself in harmony with this Absolute" (Nitobe 18). Bushido embraces this goal, as it does so many of the teachings of Zen, such that a true master of Bushido is also a Zen master. Additionally, the bushi's sense of justice arose from the teachings of Zen. "To hate injustice and stand on righteousness is a difficult thing" (Tsunetomo 25) which will lead to "many mistakes" (Tsunetomo 26). The Absolute or "the Way is in a higher place than righteousness" and "when seen from this standpoint, things like righteousness are rather shallow" (Tsunetomo 26). In other words, by discovering the Way one knows innately

what is right and wrong. The human conception of righteousness is flawed because it is a human conception and, as such, is subjective. By discovering the Way, which is present in each of us, one comes into contact with the objective and, thus, absolute truth. However, it is important to note that the Way is beyond such simplistic description, possibly beyond all description, and this is merely a poor Western approximation of what is meant by this term.

Shintoism provided further moral lessons. Shinto theology "believes in the innate goodness and God-like purity of the human soul" (Nitobe 19). According to this doctrine, the human heart, "when perfectly placid and clear, reflects the very image of the Deity" (Nitobe 19). Because of this, an individual need only look within himself to find the moral good. In other words, the ultimate judge of what is honorable is within each; the individual who is morally pure will always be able to determine what is correct. Furthermore, "the tenets of Shintoism cover the two predominating features of the emotional life of [the bushi] – patriotism and loyalty" (Nitobe 19). It is imperative that a warrior class possesses both of these traits, and the strong emphasis placed on each by Shintoism fits well the needs of the bushi. This emphasis can be seen in the teachings of Yamamoto Tsunetomo who recommended, "Every morning one should first do reverence to his master and his parents and then to his patron deities and guardian Buddhas" (Tsunetomo 23). Loyalty to the master is seen as being supreme, such that "for a warrior there is nothing other than thinking of his master" (Tsunetomo 23).

The last major influence upon bushido was Confucianism. Confucius outlined the "five moral relations between *master and servant* (the governing and the governed), *father and son, husband and wife, older and younger brother*, and between *friend and*

friend" (Nitobe 20). His work applied directly to the samurai who were charged with keeping order for their masters. They were the intermediaries between those who ruled and those who were ruled and as such needed to possess a strong sense of their duties to the master and obligations to those over whom they exercised power. In this way, Confucian "politico-ethical precepts were well suited to the samurai" (Nitobe 20). Also, the Three Universal Virtues of Confucianism, "intelligence, humanity and courage," were subservient only to loyalty to the master, which was first and foremost in Bushido.

A samurai's sense of justice was cultivated to its fullest. It was the "most cogent precept in the code of the samurai" as "nothing [was] more loathsome to [a bushi] than underhand dealings and crooked undertakings" (Nitobe 24). The closest equivalent to the Western conception of justice is called in Japanese "*giri*" which means "literally the right reason" (Nitobe 24). The meaning of this word evolved over time "until its meaning was perverted in the popular acceptance…to mean a vague sense of duty which public opinion expects an incumbent to fulfill" (Nitobe 24). "In its original and unalloyed sense, it meant duty" (Nitobe 24) and this was the sense in which the bushi used the term and embraced that for which it stood.

The rectitude of the samurai's judgment, although mentioned before, cannot be overemphasized. Ruth Benedict states this succinctly in her work The Chrysanthemum and the Sword:

> Though every soul originally shines with virtue like a new sword, nevertheless, if it is not kept polished, it gets tarnished. This 'rust of my body,' as they phrase it, is as bad as it is on a sword. A man must give his character the same care that he would give a sword. But his bright and gleaming soul is still

there under the rust and all that is necessary is to polish it up again (Benedict 198).

Because of this, no man can ever say he did not know what was the honorable course of action. The soul is infallible because, when polished, it possesses "innate goodness and God-like purity" (Nitobe 19). It is each bushi's responsibility, arguably his greatest responsibility, to keep his soul polished, so to speak. Failure to do so would indeed obscure what is the honorable action, and this would be the fault of the individual. Thus, the dishonorable act would only make the rust of the soul apparent.

The samurai also held veracity in the highest regard. This was carried to its extreme such that "*Bushi-no ichi-gon* - the word of a samurai - was sufficient guarantee for the truthfulness of an assertion" (Nitobe 42). Written pledges to samurai were deemed as insulting and "quite beneath [a bushi's] dignity" (Nitobe 44). Oaths were seen in an even worse light such that "the best of the samurai looked upon an oath as derogatory to their honor" (Nitobe 44). One samurai, Morooka Hikoemon, when "called upon to swear before the gods concerning the truth of a certain matter" expressed this sentiment elegantly stating, "A samurai's word is harder than metal. Since I have impressed this fact upon myself, what more can the gods and Buddhas do?" (Tsunetomo 43). Lying was "denounced as weakness" and, thus, dishonorable. To ask a bushi to give an oath was to question his truthfulness and, by extension, his very honor. There are "many thrilling anecdotes…told of those who atoned by death for *ni-gon*, a double tongue" (Nitobe 44).

Redemption Under Bushido

This idea of atoning for ni-gon by death leads us directly to the question of redemption in Bushido. For the samurai, the institution of suicide was highly developed. First and foremost, "it was an institution, legal and ceremonial" (Nitobe 76). The names for it are seppuku, kappuku and hara-kiri (Nitobe 74). It was a method by which bushi could "expiate their crimes, apologize for errors, escape from disgrace, redeem their friends, or prove their sincerity" (Nitobe 76).

This ritualistic suicide had a specific form. It is important that this be both known and understood because this was not wanton self-destruction. It was a refined means of ending one's life and a method that required the utmost determination. Mitford gives a description in his book Tales of Old Japan:

> Bowing once more, the [individual committing seppuku] allowed his upper garments to slip down to his girdle, and remained naked to the waist. Carefully, according to custom, he tucked his sleeves under his knees to prevent himself from falling backward; for a noble Japanese gentleman should die falling forwards [symbolically towards the enemy]. Deliberately, with a steady hand he took the dirk that lay before him…for a moment he seemed to collect his thoughts for the last time, and then stabbing himself deeply below the waist in the left-hand side, he drew the dirk slowly across to his right side, and turning it in the wound, gave a slight cut upwards…When he drew out the dirk, he leaned forward and stretched out his neck…At that moment, the *kaishaku* [his second]…poised his sword for a second in the air; there was a flash…with one blow the head had been severed from the body (Nitobe 78).

This description is both long and thorough, but is necessary as it shows the type of courage or stalwartness that was required to commit seppuku. The samurai believed "one's way of dying can validate one's entire life" (Morris 14). This was, as said before, neither wanton self-destruction nor an easy means of escape.

Death is arguably the strongest punishment an individual can receive and, thus, suicide the strongest self-imposed punishment. Why would an individual choose to take such drastic action? He would do so for honor, for "the high estimate placed upon honor was ample excuse with many for taking one's own life" (Nitobe 75). Yet seppuku was not always the honorable solution, for Bushido held that one should "bear and face all calamities and adversities with patience and a pure conscience" (Nitobe 79). What is required is "*makato*" which is "the cardinal quality" of a samurai and translates roughly to "purity of motive" (Morris 22). It is only when one has such purity of motive that hara-kiri is the honorable course of action.

Is seppuku then an avenue to redemption? As it depends upon the intent behind it; seppuku comes in two philosophic forms. In the first, the individual is forced by the society to commit seppuku. How can an individual be forced to commit seppuku, as it is by definition an act the individual must commit? This forcing is not physical, but mental and takes the form of pressure: from family, friends and the larger society. Such an individual commits hara-kiri to prevent "intolerable humiliation not only for himself but, far more damaging, for the reputation of his family both retroactively and in generations to come" (Morris 15). In the second form, the individual chooses to commit seppuku to regain honor. The difference between the two forms is that in the first the intent is to

pacify the society, in the second the intent is personal redemption. It is only through this second form that redemption is achieved.

Again we are faced with two absolutes and again it is the case that a spectrum exists between them. Hence, most cases of seppuku would be motivated by a combination of both outer pressure and an internal desire for redemption. However, what is imperative is that the individual choose to commit seppuku because honor is worth more to him than his own life. In other words, other reasons can exist for committing hara-kiri, but the individual must be motivated primarily by his desire to redeem himself. All other reasons must be secondary to this.

Thus, Bushido allows for redemption in practice. Both Bushido and the honor system at Washington and Lee are honor societies in which honor, as defined at the beginning of this investigation, is personal. Therefore, this work contends that both, and by extension all honor codes and systems in which honor is personal as defined, should reach the same conclusion concerning redemption. Thus, since Bushido allows for redemption, from a logical perspective so too should the honor system at Washington and Lee because both have as their foundation personal honor.

Redemption Under the System of Honor at Washington and Lee

At this point a careful examination of the case for redemption at Washington and Lee must be made, for if we find that redemption is possible then we justify the claim of this work that since both hold honor is personal in the way defined earlier then both should reach the same conclusion concerning redemption. If we find that redemption is not possible at Washington and Lee, then the a priori argument has been successfully

refuted by the real world examples and will have to be reformulated to salvage it, if it is salvageable at all.

Members of the community of trust at Washington and Lee are expected to "accept responsibility for their own conduct" (White Book 1). Is it possible then in this system to redeem oneself by taking responsibility for one's actions? This is a question that has not been fully answered by the Executive Committee, the body in charge of governing over the Honor System. It poses a serious conundrum and calls into question the single sanction policy. Is it possible for a student to "accept responsibility for [his] own conduct" if it is dishonorable and, thereby, regain his honor? The argument to follow will show that it is possible to redeem one's honor within this system, in both an external and internal sense, and that the single sanction policy is crucial to redemption.

The single sanction policy holds dismissal from the University is the only punishment for a dishonorable act. This policy stems from the principle that "no violation of trust is more egregious than another, nor too small to be ignored" (The Honor System 1). As said before, honor is seen to be an indivisible whole. Adherence to those principles deemed by the honor society to be honorable is the bond upon which trust is built. When one acts dishonorably, the bond of trust is severed and honor is lost. The severity of the act does not matter; any dishonorable act breaks the bond of trust. Yet, is it possible for this bond to be reformed? If so, how does this affect the validity of the single sanction policy?

In fact, the bond of trust can be reformed and honor redeemed. The possibility of this lies in the "positive, though unwritten, rule that students are to accept responsibility for their own conduct" (White Book 1). A student may redeem his honor, after

committing an honor violation, by taking responsibility and reporting himself. By committing an honor violation, the student has lost his honor and broken the bond of trust. This occurs even if the student is not caught, because as soon as a student commits an honor violation, the bond is broken. The community only needs to discover that the bond is broken. When a person is found guilty of an honor violation, the loss of honor is retroactive to the point when the dishonorable act was committed. At the moment the dishonorable act is committed, the student has lost honor, both internally and externally because he has broken the bond of trust. Thus, even in the case that the dishonorable act is not discovered, the student has lost his internal honor.

When an individual has thus removed himself from the community of honor, there is only one way in which he can reenter into that community, and that is by taking responsibility for the action that dissolved his membership. He must recognize and admit to the dishonorable act by reporting himself to the Executive Committee. Through the act of self-reporting, the individual has reentered the honor community by taking responsibility for his actions. Furthermore, if the individual is found guilty, he should be willing to be held accountable by the single sanction policy. In other words, in order to regain honor, the individual should report himself, knowing that the only possible punishment is dismissal. Just as honor is seen as an indivisible whole, so too is the redemption of it. One either is or is not redeemed; there can be no degrees of redemption. Honor encompasses all and, to regain it, all must be sacrificed.

The individual must report himself in order for honor to be regained. The only opportunity for redemption lies in the act of self-reporting. Honor has an intrinsic social component and so redemption must be in the eyes of the community and the individual; it

must be both an external and internal rejoining of the community. In other words, the individual could not simply never report himself and do good deeds to make up for his honor violation. As has been said, the bond of trust is broken even if the community does not realize it has. An individual may gain internal redemption through the process of self-reporting as well. In fact, it is this internal search for redemption that must fuel the entire process. If another reports the infraction, the violator never has the chance for redemption. Furthermore, the individual cannot report himself only because another is going to do so, for in this case, the individual is not genuine in his desire to redeem his honor. He does not realize or does not care that the bond of trust is broken. He may believe it is more honorable to report oneself than have another do so, but he is not trying to rebuild the bond that was broken. Instead, he is instituting a type of damage control, trying to preserve whatever is left of his external honor, merely his reputation. For redemption, the desire to regain the lost honor must be genuine and, therefore, the individual must consciously make the decision to redress the wrong.

The single sanction policy must also apply to those who would report themselves in order for the trust to be reestablished and honor regained. The single sanction policy is the backbone of the Honor System. Under it, all honor violations are seen as being of the same magnitude, in a sense, because they all destroy the bond of trust. Therefore, a self-reported honor violation should be seen no differently. Although it is self-reported, it is still an honor violation. If such violations were treated differently, public honor could not be regained. This is because the individual's intent could be to report himself in order to receive a lesser penalty. Even if this was not his intent, if the single sanction did not apply to those who reported themselves the community could never be sure that the

motivation was to reestablish trust and regain honor. One must have "purity of motive" just as in Bushido. Following the single sanction policy in cases that are self-reported helps to reassure the community that the individual is reporting for noble reasons. Therefore, the single sanction policy must be upheld in order for external redemption to be possible.

Arguments Against Redemption Gained Through Self-Reporting

How can one who has been expelled from the honor society still be an honorable member of that society? This seems counterintuitive at first, but upon closer examination the apparent difficulty with this stance disappears. An individual who falls under the single sanction policy must leave the University. However, leaving the University does not constitute leaving the honor society. Another example of this is the alumni of the school. The alumni are still considered to be members of the honor society even though they are no longer physically present at the University or even subject to the honor system. In the same way, an individual who redeems himself by self-reporting would be looked upon as honorable by the University even though he is no longer physically present. Such an individual would be an honor member in abscentia.

Some would ask, why is reporting oneself the only way to regain honor? For those who take this position, there may be other possible ways to regain honor and rebuild the trust that was broken. For example, if a student cheated on a test, he could purposefully do badly on another exam. If a person had committed sexual misconduct, he could enroll himself in a program to address what he had done. The idea behind this argument and the examples presented is that self-punishment can lead to redemption.

The logical conclusion is that an individual can personally make amends for the wrong committed.

The flaw in this position is that the individual never truly rebuilds the trust that was broken, in the sense that once the act is committed trust is lost, and the honor in the community is not restored. This approach may provide a method for internal redemption, in that the individual makes personal amends for the wrong he committed and, thus, regains his personal sense of honor. He may also feel that he again deserves the trust of the community and honor in the community. Nonetheless, this cannot be so, for honor is communal and cannot be regained without dealing with the community. Likewise, the trust of the community can never be reforged in this manner due to the fact that the breach of trust is between the community and the individual. The only way to reforge this trust and regain external honor is by dealing with the community. The individual earns his honor by showing that he is trustworthy in the eyes of the community. This can only be done if the community knows that there was both a breach of trust and that the bond has been reforged. Living with the knowledge of a personal violation of honor and not reporting it is a form of dishonesty, no matter what other means are taken to regain honor. Furthermore, it is impossible for dishonesty to rebuild a bond built on honesty, thus no actions the individual takes to correct his wrong besides self-reporting can rebuild the bond.

Another question that may arise is: how exactly is honor regained by self-reporting? Although this self-reporting is an honorable act, it does not necessarily lead to the redemption of honor. In other words, once honor is lost it cannot be regained. This argument cannot be refuted by talking of honor. It must be refuted at a deeper level.

This is because its basis is that honor, once lost, can never be regained. From this point of view, one's honor is seen as so absolute that once it is lost, it is lost forever. Therefore, there is no redemption.

This argument contends, at its basis, that there is no possibility for redemption. This would be true if we lived in a static world. In such a world, a tree would have to be the same size and shape exactly for it to be the same tree. In the same sense, an individual would always be the same size, shape, and consciousness. In this world, there would be no change. Thus, a person who commits an honor violation would be incapable of being anything but dishonorable because they could not grow and change. Furthermore, it would actually be impossible for an individual to even become dishonorable, each person would either be honorable or dishonorable; there could be no change. In a world such as this, where all is incapable of change, there is no redemption because there would never be growth. However, our world is not a world of absolutes.

We have the ability to grow and to learn from our experiences. Since we can learn, we can learn to be better than we were. We can learn to improve ourselves. As such, we are capable of redemption, for we can make amends and can grow to once again embody honor and deserve the bestowing of it. Because we can grow, we are capable of redemption.

Others may argue that honor may only be regained by complete sacrifice. The proponents of this argument would argue that the individual must make a sacrifice equal to or greater than the punishment he would have received. This is in fact what individuals who self-report do. The individual knows that he will be dismissed if his behavior is found to be dishonorable. If he had not reported himself, he would either not

be punished at all or would be reported by another student, and would face the same punishment. So, in fact, the student does face an equal or greater punishment. The individual must have "purity of motive" and report himself for the correct reason, which is to admit guilt and rebuild the trust. If this is the motivation, then, since the punishment is at least equal to what it would have been, honor can be regained.

One final point needs to be discussed. Is it possible that some honor violations may be so heinous that honor can never be redeemed? Crimes such as murder and rape are obviously violations of honor. Is it possible for individuals who commit such crimes to ever redeem themselves? In theory, yes it is. Since all are capable of growth, all are capable of redemption. In practice, however, it is unlikely individuals who commit these types of violations would ever truly take responsibility for their actions. As in all honor violations, taking responsibility would include taking all punishment deemed fit, in both the honor community and society at large. Just because all are theoretically capable of redemption does not mean that all will be redeemed. Redemption lies in the hands of the dishonored, for they must initiate the process, and only they can take the steps necessary to be redeemed.

To those who fully enter into the honor system and believe in honor itself, such a noble action as reporting oneself is not surprising at all. In fact, it is to be expected. Honor, for those who embrace it, is all encompassing and permeates through every facet of life. It is possible to redeem honor by returning to the honor community. This is what is done by one who self-reports. Committing a dishonorable act is how one leaves the honor community. Reporting that act is how one reenters. As we all are capable of

growth in both a positive and negative way, we are all capable of redemption and, thus, honor, once lost, can be regained.

This justification of redemption deals directly with the Honor System at Washington and Lee. However, it applies to any code or system that defines personal honor as we have done in this investigation. Thus, it also justifies redemption in Bushido.

Two further points of contention must still be dealt with. The first is, even though redemption has been shown to be possible, would a truly honorable person ever need to be redeemed in practice? In other words, would a truly honorable person ever do anything dishonorable? This argument attempts to portray honor as an absolute, such that honor demands nothing less than perfection. This may be the case in theory, but is not so in practice. Honor is a human institution and therefore must be able to deal with human frailties. Otherwise, the institution could not survive. Bushido holds that "one should not hesitate to correct himself when he has made a mistake" (Tsunetomo 42). This is because if one "corrects himself without the least bit of delay, his mistakes will quickly disappear" (Tsunetomo 42). The institution of honor does not demand perfection; it demands that an individual accept responsibility for his actions. As was said before, all individuals can grow and so all individuals are capable of both making mistakes and atoning for them, thus gaining redemption.

The second point of contention is this: would a situation ever arise in which honor demanded conflicting actions? If this situation arose, what would the correct course of action be? The most famous story of the samurai deals with precisely this dilemma. It is a case of obligation to giri versus obligation to chu, chu being "duty to the Emperor, [and

thus] the law [and] Japan" (Benedict 116). The story relates that Lord Asano, in an attempt to avenge an insult, drew "his sword in the Shogun's palace" (Benedict 200). This was forbidden and so Lord Asano killed himself "according to the rules of seppuku" (Benedict 200). His samurai retainers thus became ronin, masterless samurai. Forty-seven of these determined it was their duty to "complete the vengeance their own lord had been unable to carry through" (Benedict 201). They succeeded, which fulfilled their obligation to giri, but they had created an obligation to chu in thus doing so. The forty-seven had "broken the State rule against undeclared vendetta but they were not in revolt against chu" (Benedict 205). Therefore, "whatever was demanded of them in the name of chu they must fulfill" and "the Shogunate ruled that the forty-seven should commit seppuku" (Benedict 205). All forty-seven complied. By doing so, they fulfilled their obligation to both giri and chu, both aspects of honor. Furthermore, it was imperative that they fulfill both obligations in order to retain their honor. Thus, when it is the case that honor demands opposing actions, one must simply choose between the actions and accept whatever punishment is deemed necessary. In a sense, in order to maintain honor, one is dishonored and then must be redeemed. If redemption were not possible, then this situation would undermine the entire honor system. In effect, the honor system would oppose itself, which would undermine its value. An honor system or code, which creates a situation in which any action is the incorrect one, is fatally flawed. Redemption provides a path, albeit a difficult one, by which honor can be maintained. How would one choose between the actions? It does not matter because both are honorable. What is necessary is that the individual take an active role in maintaining his honor. If one were

to do nothing, one would simply be abandoning honor. This is a situation in which there is no clear resolution, but what is required is that the individual act to maintain honor.

An individual who desires redemption must value honor more than the punishment he will receive. As such, one who chooses this course exemplifies what it means to be honorable. Paradoxically, it is only through such a challenge that one's sense of honor can develop to its fullest. Thus, an individual who has been dishonorable and then redeemed embodies honor in its purest form. Only such an individual has been tried and proven.

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