

**This is the first of two lectures I gave at the Law School of Hong Kong University last year. It would be helpful to have comments before I settle down to revise finally for publication.**

***A Decent Respect:  
Honour in the Life of People and of Nations.***

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Lecture 1: “How do I save my honour?”

*...how, in the face of this shame to which I am subjected, do I behave?  
How do I save my honour?¹*

J.M. Coetzee *Diary of a Bad Year* (2008)

In 2012, ten days before Christmas, a twenty-year old gunman broke into an elementary school in Newtown Connecticut in the United States, carrying two handguns and a semi-automatic rifle, and murdered twenty children and six adults. Later it transpired that he had stolen the guns from his mother, whom he had shot in the head before coming to the school in her car. She was, news reports said, a “gun enthusiast” and her son had a wide range of weapons to chose from, even though, since he was under twenty-one, he wasn’t entitled under Connecticut law to own or carry a handgun himself. It was the deadliest shooting at a school in American history.

The outpouring of grief in the United States that followed these shocking events was accompanied by anger and by calls for reform of American gun laws. But there was something else, too, something that was particularly evident in the responses of Americans living outside the United States: and that was a sense of national shame. You could hear it in the words of Evan Osnos, who reports for the *New Yorker* from Beijing. “As an American overseas for the last ten years,” he wrote:

I’ve watched as other countries struggle with the curious fact that the most prosperous, successful, and emulated civilization the world has ever seen lives with the certainty that every few months one of its troubled citizens will casually acquire the tools to massacre a large group of his neighbours: shoppers in a mall, moviegoers, voters meeting their congresswoman, a kindergarten full of children. Even to those who desperately want to be American, this special brand of American madness lies not in the banal fact that deranged men attack children, but in the shame that the rest of us, all of us, allow our laws to enable it.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. M. Coetzee *Diary of a Bad Year* (New York: Penguin, 2008): 39.

<sup>2</sup> Evan Osnos “China Watches Newtown: Guns And American Credibility,” *The New Yorker* December 15 2012.  
<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/evanosnos/2012/12/china-watches-newtown-guns-american-credibility.html>. Accessed September 30, 2013.

Jon Lee Anderson, the *New Yorker's* war correspondent, who has reported from some of the most dangerous places on the planet, entitled his blog post: "Guns and the limits of shame." And he ended with these words: "If someone murdered a hundred schoolchildren in a single day with guns, would a majority of Americans agree to true restrictions on them? What is our national threshold for shame?"<sup>3</sup> In the *Washington Post*, Richard Cohen, one of the paper's opinion writers, wrote a piece entitled bluntly, "Killing of Children, Our National Shame."<sup>4</sup>

It is much too early to say whether this horrific episode will end the long-standing — and, yes, shameful — failure of American politicians and the electorate that chooses them to contemplate a serious transformation of the laws governing the possession of lethal arms. And it's hard to know where to begin. As London's *Guardian* newspaper reported, the US National Instant Criminal Background Check (NICBC) system received 16,808,538 applications to buy firearms between January and November 2012. "If they were approved," they pointed out, "that would be enough weapons to stock members of NATO's armed forces nearly five times over."<sup>5</sup> (Since many US arms sellers are not required to process applications through the NICBC, this understates the scale of the problem.) A third of American households owned guns in 2010 — down from 50% in 1973 — but many people, like the mother of the Newtown murderer, owned more than one.<sup>6</sup> Our country has less than 1/20<sup>th</sup> of the world's population but about half the guns.

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<sup>3</sup> Jon Lee Anderson "Guns and the limits of shame." *The New Yorker* December 15 2012 <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2012/12/guns-and-the-limits-of-shame.html>. Accessed September 30, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Cohen "The Killing of Children, Our National Shame." *Washington Post*, December 17 2012. <http://bit.ly/UN6cav>. Accessed September 30, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Simon Rodgers "How Many Guns Are Sold in the US?" Datablog, *The Guardian*, December 17 2012 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2012/dec/17/how-many-guns-us>. Accessed September 30, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Allison Brennan "Analysis: Fewer U.S. gun owners own more guns" <http://www.cnn.com/2012/07/31/politics/gun-ownership-declining/index.html>. Accessed September 30, 2013. In Canada, by contrast, only 5.5% of the population has gun licenses. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian\\_Firearms\\_Program](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_Firearms_Program). Accessed September 30, 2013.

My topic in these lectures, however, isn't weapons' regulation or even America's failure to do anything serious about the ravages of lethal weaponry at home. Rather, it's the question what this sort of shame might mean ... and what a philosopher like myself can say about its role in political debate within and across nations. What interests me is if — and how — honour and shame matter for the public life of nations and what, if anything, philosophy in particular can usefully say about these questions.

You might expect the answer to be: Nothing. For the issue doesn't fit very well into the two broad areas of concern that engage modern moral philosophers in the English-speaking world. We write and talk, first, about meta-ethics, that is about moral epistemology and metaphysics and semantics and psychology. Can moral claims be true in the sort of way that scientific claims are? If so, what sorts of facts are moral facts? How can we come to know what is morally true? What does the "ought" of moral judgment mean? What is the relationship between moral judgment and the emotions?

And then, second, we think about questions in applied ethics. Some are about the structure of moral thought. Is there one fundamental moral principle? (That we should maximize utility, say, as the utilitarians taught, or that we should treat each person always "as an end never merely as a means," as Kant proposed.) Or is morality a set of particular judgments, not derived from general principles, as modern "particularists" have suggested?<sup>7</sup> Other structural questions have to do with blame and responsibility. (When can we hold people morally responsible for what they do? And what are we doing when we hold someone responsible?) Or with the logic of rights. (Does every right impose a correlative duty?) And then, in applied ethics, we can ask questions that are substantive rather than structural. Is abortion always wrong? What forms of sexual behaviour are morally permissible? When and why should we keep promises?

So we have a very full picture of the philosophical options in thinking about which moral judgments are true, what it is for a moral judgment to be true, how we can know that it is true, and what is involved in believing that it is true.

But we have spent surprisingly little time on the question how to get people to actualize what morality says is true. We know, from the long discussion

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<sup>7</sup> Brad Hooker and Margaret Olivia Little ed. *Moral Particularism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

going back to Socrates of ἀκρασία or weakness of will, that people appear quite often not to do what they know to be right. Socrates famously thought that this was an illusion: that once people knew what was right, they were bound to do it. If that were so, then the only question would be how to get someone to *see* what was right. But Socrates' position has not been the majority view among Western philosophers. Most have held, with Saint Paul, that it is possible to desire to do what is good, while not being able actually to do it.<sup>8</sup> And, on that (I think, more natural) view, the question of how to align our behaviour with our judgments is a real one.

The scholarly fields that have the greatest interest in the shaping of behaviour are psychology, economics and law. Psychology, after all, studies the ways in which our beliefs, desires, intentions and feelings produce our behaviour: and recent work in moral psychology has sought to understand what sorts of mental structures underlie the processes that produce our moral judgments and what it is in our development from childhood on that shapes those structures. Social psychologists have studied the ways in which our environments, including the things other people say and do, affect what our actions. And these insights from moral and social psychology are often very helpful in thinking about how to get other people to do what is right.<sup>9</sup>

Economists explore the ways that the incentives built into social institutions — and above all markets — shape behaviour. Modern economic theory began by developing a rich picture of how a rational economic agent, the *homo economicus*, would respond to money and other incentives, conceiving of rationality as a matter of seeking to maximize the satisfaction of our preferences. And in recent years, in so-called behavioural economics, people have developed models that recognize the many ways in which people do not (indeed cannot) conform to the standards of rationality implicit in these older models.<sup>10</sup> Here too, in thinking about institutional design, economics, in general, and the theory of rational choice, in particular, has much to teach us about the shaping of human behaviour.

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<sup>8</sup> “For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.” The Bible, New International Version. *Romans* 7:18.

<sup>9</sup> I explored this question in my *Experiments in Ethics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> That they cannot, I argued in my *Assertion and Conditionals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 79 *et seq.*

And legal academics, last but by no means least, reflect on the ways in which threats of civil and criminal penalties affect behaviour — noting, for example, that effective deterrence requires detection of non-compliance as well as speed and certainty in the imposition of penalties, so that the design of the law needs to be complemented by effective regulation and policing, as well as by timely processes of adjudication. The creation and regulation of legal institutions such as marriage, real property in buildings and land, or the business corporation, are guided, too, by ideas about the forms of behaviour the state wishes to encourage and discourage.

So all three fields have learned things that are relevant to deciding how we can align people's behaviour with ends we seek, including moral ends.

Now I don't want to suggest that philosophers have noticed none of this: each of the issues in psychology and economics and law that I have mentioned has drawn the attention of some philosophers. And, of course, we all recognize that the environment and the law and the market and the responses of other people play roles in shaping behaviour, in general, and, more particularly, in getting us to do what we know to be wrong or right. But the question of how we go about getting people to do what they ought to do has not been anywhere near the centre of philosophical discussion.

My main object in these lectures is to make a contribution to correcting that omission. I want to explore the ways in which one important feature of the psychological constitution of normal human beings plays a role in guiding people both towards and away from what they think is right. This is a topic in applied ethics, I suppose, except that it is not about what is right but about how to get people to do what is right: which might better be thought of as a question about the social regulation of moral behaviour. As we shall see, this inquiry will require us to wander over many domains, and you might ask why a philosopher should be engaged with this business at all. I hope to persuade you that the philosopher's particular concern with the exploration and articulation of concepts is helpful in approaching these questions, even though our explorations will take us through history and psychology and a whole host of other questions as well. And in any case, I think philosophical inquiry develops by taking up issues that are connected with questions philosophers are already thinking about. The questions that I want to take up in these lectures certainly connect in myriad ways, as we shall see, with our existing debates in ethics and political philosophy: about — to give but three examples — democracy and self-government, about human rights, and about our cosmopolitan obligations.

My general theme is what I will be calling “civic honour.” I want to explore the role of honour, and its negative counterpart, shame, in shaping the political behaviour of individuals and of nations. In this first lecture, I shall be exploring the role of honour in the civic life of democracies. In the next, I shall explore honour’s role in the global ethical conversation across nations. But I need to tell you something about what I mean by civic honour; and to do that I must first sketch a general account of honour.

This is an old topic in Western philosophy: what Aristotle called “τιμῆ,”<sup>11</sup> was one of the major foci of discussion in his *Nicomachean Ethics*; *honestas*, honour’s Latin counterpart, is discussed extensively by Cicero nearly half a millennium later, and again by Augustine, in the fifth century, and St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth; honour is there in Montaigne in the sixteenth century, not least in the essay “Des Récompenses d’Honneur,”<sup>12</sup> and later still it appears regularly in Montesquieu and Hume and Smith and Kant in the European Enlightenment. But by the time we come to the nineteenth century, such major figures as John Stuart Mill and Henry Sidgwick say little of substance about it: the word “honour” occurs only three times in the index to the standard thirty-three volume edition of Mill’s collected works,<sup>13</sup> and Sidgwick’s discussions of “honour” in *The Methods of Ethics* have largely to do with contrasting the Code of Honour of the upper classes with systems of morality and etiquette, somewhat to honour’s disadvantage.<sup>14</sup> Honour has a long history in philosophy but not a large place in its recent past.

It’s worth observing in our context, I think, that there is a related tradition of reflection on something very like honour in the traditions of East Asia: 面子 (*miànzi*) in Chinese, which is usually translated as “face,” is a concept that connects closely to the issues of respect and self-respect that are central to

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<sup>11</sup> And the associated term for something like shame: αἴσχος.

<sup>12</sup> Michel de Montaigne *Les Essais* Livre II, Chapitre 7  
<http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.o:3:6.montaigne>.  
Accessed September 30 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Jean O’Grady and John M. Robson ed. *Index to Collected Works* (Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Vol. 33) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Henry Sidgwick *The Methods of Ethics* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1901): 30.

Western thought about honour.<sup>15</sup> So in East and West there are traditions of honour or something very similar and traditions of philosophical reflection upon it.<sup>16</sup>

Reviewing some of the theory and the practice of honour, I have been led to a philosophical account of honour, one that explains what it is and how it works across space and time.<sup>17</sup> The account begins with an insight that I learned from the anthropologist Frank Henderson Stewart: Honour is fundamentally about rights to respect.<sup>18</sup> To honour a person is to treat her as worthy of respect, as entitled to it. And, if you recognize yourself as honourable, you will have self-respect, paying yourself the respect that is your due. The character of the respect due, how one displays that respect, and what gains and loses you these rights to respect: all these are culturally variable. But the structure of honour — rights to respect assigned by social norms or conventions, an honour code — is, I think, a human universal. That is why we can talk about honour pretty much everywhere.

Sometimes you have honour in virtue of who you are: an emperor, a father, an English gentleman. On other occasions you get it because of something you have done: a heroic act, getting a high score on the exams. Often there is a little bit of both, as with the Confucian 君子 (jūnzi), who is, etymologically, the son of an aristocrat — which is something you are — but is worthy of respect in part because of his wisdom, loyalty and self-control — which are all achievements, things done. And, as I said, honour is something you can lose, if you breach the codes that govern it. Losing honour leads, in those who care about their honour, to the feeling of shame, because shame is the appropriate response to your own dishonourable behaviour. The appropriate response from others is, first, to cease to respect you and, then, actively to treat you with disrespect. There is a fine old word for that kind of active disrespect: it is *contempt*.

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Carr “Chinese ‘Face’ in Japanese and English (Part 1)” 人文研究 ((The Review of Liberal Arts) (Otaru: Otaru University of Commerce, August 1992) Vol. 84, 39-77. <http://barrel.ih.otaru-uc.ac.jp/handle/10252/1737> Accessed September 30, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> David Ho argues for a distinction between honour and face, while pointing out their obvious affinities; David Yau-fai Ho “On the Concept of Face” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (Jan., 1976): 877.

<sup>17</sup> The account and some of the evidence for it is to be found in Kwame Anthony Appiah *The Honour Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> Frank Henderson Stewart *Honour* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994): see esp. chapter 2, and appendix 1.

Respect and contempt for one person can both be the result of things done by others, because your honour is always your honour *as* a person of some social identity. You can gain honour for and from your family, your country, your profession; and what that means is that others who share your identity — fellow members of your family, fellow citizens, professional colleagues — can be entitled to respect because of what you have done.

Identity actually matters to honour in two quite distinct ways. First, as I say, you may share in the honour of those whose identity you share. This point — that honour can be collective as well as individual — will be central to my argument in these lectures and I will return to it often. But it's important to see that identity matters in a second, quite distinct, way because it determines what the codes of honour require of you. Gender identity plays a crucial role, for example, in fixing what many codes of honour demand, what behaviour on your part commands (or loses) respect. In eighteenth century England, those codes required men, but not women, of the upper classes to answer challenges to a duel from other gentlemen, but not from ladies; they prohibited duelling among what were called “the lower orders,” and if a gentleman was challenged by a man who was not a gentleman, the right response was not to accept the challenge, but to beat the challenger with a horsewhip. (Why a horsewhip? Well, because the distinction between gentlemen and the lower orders was a legacy of the feudal distinction between knights and esquires, on the one hand, who rode into battle, and the rest, who went on foot. Riding on horseback was symbolic of gentlemanly status and so the horsewhip was too.) The penalty for breaches of this code was the loss of honour: the loss of the entitlement to respect. Codes of honour, in sum, govern people of particular social identities and determine how they should behave, and, more particularly, how they should respond to people both of their own identity and of others.

Now to be respected is to be respected *by* somebody; and usually, honour does not seek the respect of people in general. What matters is the respect of some particular social group, what I shall call an *honour world*, a group of people who acknowledge the same codes.

But while honour is, indeed, an entitlement to respect, a person of honour cares not (or, at least, not only) about being respected, but about being *worthy* of respect. For the honourable person, honour itself is the thing that matters, not honour's rewards. It is something you care about for its own sake. You want respect, but only the respect you are entitled to. Confucius, in *Analects 4:14*, expressed exactly this basic contrast long ago: “I am not concerned that I am not

known, I seek to be worthy to be known.”<sup>19</sup> A final element of the picture, then: an honourable person wants to do what is worthy of respect according to the honour code, and doesn’t conform to the code of honour merely in order to get respect from the honour world (let alone, any other social rewards). When someone is concerned to be worthy of respect, we can say she has a “sense of honour.”

Suppose we share a social world in which many people have such a sense of honour. It is important to see that even if they are all convinced that they are morally required to do something, their senses of honour gives them further support in actually doing it. Suppose (as is actually quite common) that the codes of an honour world grant a right to respect to those who deal honestly with other people, something that morality, of course, also commends. If a person is tempted to lie or cheat or steal, she will have a variety of reasons for resisting the temptation. The most basic reason is just that to do so would be wrong. If she abstains for this reason, she displays what Immanuel Kant called a good will: she does what is right because it is right. And he thought, as he says in the first sentence of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, that a good will was the only unqualifiedly good thing in the world.<sup>20</sup>

But because she has a sense of honour, she also wants to maintain her right to be respected. So she has a further reason for abstaining, namely, to maintain her honour. She wants to be worthy of respect, whether or not anyone does in fact respect her. Both duty and honour, then, provide her with reasons that have nothing to do with anyone else’s actual responses to her — reasons that are, in that sense, internal. But there are also external reasons for doing what is right, reasons, like fear of punishment imposed by the courts, that will operate only if people find out that she has done something wrong.

As an honourable person, you care not just to be worthy of respect but also about actually being respected. You want to be respected because warranted

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<sup>19</sup> Confucius *The Analects* in *The Chinese Classics Volume 1* trans. James Legge (London: Trübner and Co, 1861): 33. A more recent translation: “The Master said: ... ‘Do not worry that no one acknowledges you; seek to do what will earn you acknowledgment.’” Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont Jr. trans. *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998): 92.

<sup>20</sup> Immanuel Kant *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, Mary Gregor ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 7.

respect is a human good; and also because, if people cease to respect you, they will treat you less well. So when others know that you have done what is honourable, you will gain external support for your honesty from the positive regard you get from others. A sense of honour prohibits you from seeking respect without deserving it: but it permits (even encourages) you to hope for — indeed, to expect and take pleasure in — the respect that is due from others when you are, in fact, behaving honourably.

These considerations show that honour gives you additional reasons to do what is right. But honour can also give you reasons to do things that are not right: either because they are wrong or because they are morally indifferent.<sup>21</sup> Nobody, I hope, pursues scholarly excellence (which is surely morally indifferent) merely in order to get honorary degrees. But those degrees are one of the rewards of great academic success: as is the respect of colleagues who think your work makes it right to respect you. Similar thoughts apply to the honours gained by success in sports, vocations and other professions. In the next lecture I will discuss in more detail some cases where honour encourages people to do what is wrong.

Now, as I said, honour can be both individual and collective. And the civic honour that I shall be discussing in these lectures takes both forms. The individual form is a kind of honour due from citizens of a state to one another. It is governed by social codes associated with the political life of a nation: that is what makes it civic. And I shall suggest that it plays a crucial role in moving citizens to do many of the things that are necessary if a society — and particularly a democratic society — is to function. I shall take up the collective form of civic honour in the second of these lectures. But if I call it “national honour” you will already have some idea of what I have in mind.

The core of this individual civic honour is quite simple: we think of people who make special contributions to civic life as worthy of the respect of their fellow citizens. We display that respect by treating them in ways that show our positive regard for them. When I learn that my neighbour is a member of the local volunteer fire service, which protects our community from the threat of conflagrations, I see her in a new and more positive light. She knows this, in part because she knows that we share a code that makes this act honourable. (I

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<sup>21</sup> These are the acts, which the Stoics called ἀδιάφορα (“indifferent things”), that morality neither mandates nor forbids.

assume she is not doing this honourable thing just in order to get my — or anyone else's — respect; and if I were to discover that that *was* her motive, she would lose my respect, not gain it).

Similarly, when I see people from my district at the voting booth, we look at each other with the mutual regard of people who know they are voluntarily doing something important together. Let me offer one final, particularly American, example: quite often, as I pass through an American airport, I will hear someone say to a member of the US armed forces travelling in uniform, "Thank you for your service." We are grateful, in a country with a volunteer military, for those who offer to serve. This expression of gratitude honours that service; treats it, that is, as making the soldier or sailor or marine or airman worthy of our respect. Such routine moments of recognition are part of the everyday experience of civic honour in a modern democracy, as are the corresponding moments of civic shame.

To see why they are so important, contrast the role that honour plays in regulating behaviour with those two other great mechanisms of social control, the law and the market. Consider, for this purpose, military honour, in particular. It is worth asking why modern militaries continue to place such weight on teaching soldiers to behave honourably. We could, after all, use the law all by itself to guide our armies; military discipline makes easy use of all sorts of punishments. And mercenaries can be motivated by money. So, why aren't these familiar forms of social regulation — the market and the law — enough to manage an army, as they are enough to manage, say, such other state functions as the maintenance of the highways?

Well, first of all, both these other forms of regulation require surveillance. If we are to be able to pay you your bonus or punish you for your offenses, someone has to find out what you have done. But when the battle is hardest, everything is shrouded by the fog of war.<sup>22</sup> If the aim of soldiers were just to get their bonus or escape the brig, they would have the least incentive to behave well at the very moment when we most require it. At the moment when they are

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<sup>22</sup> As Clausewitz put it in *Vom Kriege*: "Der Krieg ist der Gebiet der Ungewißheit; drei Vierteile derjenigen Dinge, worauf das Handeln im Kriege gebaut wird, liegen im Nebel einer mehr oder weniger großen Ungewißheit." (War is the territory of uncertainty; three-quarters of the things from which one's dealings in war are constructed lie in the fog of a greater or lesser uncertainty.) Carl von Clausewitz *Vom Kriege* (Hamburg: Nikol Verlag, 2008): 56.

hardest to keep track of, honourable soldiers are guided by their own sense of honour.

Now, of course, we could devote large amounts of expensive effort to this sort of surveillance — we could equip each soldier with a device that monitored his or her every act — but that would have psychological and moral costs as well as significant financial ones. By contrast, honour, which is grounded in the individual soldier's own sense of honour (and that of his or her peers), can be effective without extensive surveillance; and, unlike a system of law or a market contract, anyone who is around and belongs to the honour world will be an effective enforcer of it, so that the cost of enforcement of honour is actually quite low.

There's another reason for favouring honour over law as a mechanism for motivating soldiers. The sorts of sacrifice that are most useful in warfare involve taking risks that require them to do things that are, in the philosopher's jargon, supererogatory: they are acts that are morally worthy but which ask too much of us to be morally required. To punish someone for failing to do something that they have no duty to do is morally wrong. Since it is normally permissible, however, to offer a financial reward for doing what is supererogatory, you might conclude that the right way to regulate military behaviour, if you could solve the problem of the fog of war, would be by financial incentives.

Once we have a set of shared codes about military honour, though, we also have commitments that make us think of money as simply the wrong idiom for rewarding military prowess: it is symbolically inappropriate. Money can certainly express gratitude. But because of the way markets work, offering money for valour can look like placing a price on it. And, since we know that no modest amount of money would get most of us to risk our lives in the ways that soldiers do in battle, we should either have to price it very highly — which would be beyond our financial resources — or to treat it, as we in fact do, as beyond price. So we don't give soldiers bonuses for bravery, we give them medals; and, more important, we honour them. We give them the respect we know they deserve. Our modern standing armies have kept in place a world of military honour many of whose loyalties and sentiments I suspect Napoleon or the Duke of Wellington or, for that matter, a Japanese samurai, would have recognized; as would, indeed, Shakespeare's Duke of Bourbon, who — realizing at Agincourt that the day is lost — cries out:

Shame and eternal shame, nothing but shame,  
Let's die in honour! (*Henry V*, Act IV, Sc. v)

Warriors who think like that make formidable opponents.

Once you see why honour is such an effective and powerful way of motivating soldiers, it will occur to you that there might be analogous arguments to be made for other professions. Bankers, for example, do many things that it is very hard or expensive for outsiders to keep an eye on. We have every reason to hope that they will do more than can be required of them by their contracts of employment. So the behaviour we want is, like military heroism, both supererogatory and hard to surveil. And, as we saw in the crises in the American economy in the first decade of this millennium, the behaviour of individual bankers seeking to make profits can, in the aggregate, impose large costs on us all. Part of the resentment many ordinary Americans felt about the behaviour that led to the collapse of the US housing market in 2008, was because the discreditable behaviour of irresponsible lenders was so shameless.

But the important point is that civic honour, of the sort I sketched above, can help provide some of the motivation for the many acts that citizens need to engage in if a society — and especially a democracy — is to work. The reason is that many of the acts that are essential to the life of a modern nation (like voting, for example) are just as supererogatory as most acts of military bravery. We certainly want people to do these things, but it would be wrong to punish them if they didn't. They are also, again like military bravery, hard to keep track of, in the ways that would allow us to incentivize them through the market. We *could* reward people with dollars for keeping themselves informed about public matters and voting responsibly: but how would we confirm that this is what they were doing? It would require both extensive and expensive surveillance, in ways that would be unbearably intrusive. And, as with soldiers, if the rewards were to be substantial — which they'd have to be to have any chance of being effective — the incentives themselves would cost us a great deal. A code of honour, once established, on the other hand, does the job at almost no cost, because people in an honour world automatically regard those who meet its codes with respect and those who breach them with contempt. Because these responses are automatic, the system is, as I noted earlier, extremely cheap to maintain. It only requires us to respond in ways we are naturally inclined to respond anyway.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> This is one of many important points made in Geoffrey Brennan and Philip Pettit *The Economy of Esteem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 260.

If we want to incentivize the sorts of behaviour that will make a modern society and state function well, we would be wise, therefore, not to rely solely on the law and the market. And the kinds of behaviour we want to encourage are widespread, diverse and pervade many spheres of life. This is especially true in a democracy. In a democracy, we say, the people rule. To take this idea seriously we have to suppose both that a people can act together and, since the people can only act through the agency of individual men and women, that there are many individual acts that together make it true that the people are ruling.

When America starts or ends a war, accedes to a treaty, gives foreign aid, raises taxes, authorizes corporations, creates patents, defines and punishes crimes, these things are done in the name of the American people.<sup>24</sup> We, the American people, choose, by way of elections, the occupants of the legislative and executive positions that manage the doing of them. And that popular election occurs through the acts of individual voters. But in a democracy people need to be involved in the processes of government in more ways than as voters. For, in a democracy, we are managing the republic together. The successful functioning of the republic depends upon many citizens playing many roles. Some will serve as public servants, as soldiers, police officers, civil servants, judges or elected officials, employed to do the labour that is required if America is to do anything at all. Others will serve the republic from time to time as unpaid jurors or as election officials. But the republic will only function properly if most of the citizens who do these things think about what they are doing in certain specific ways.

Public officials must, for one thing, avoid using — or, ideally, even appearing to use — the powers they are granted by their public role to their private advantage. For another, they must observe norms of non-discrimination. The republic can flourish with less than perfect conformity to such ideals; but certain basic standards — the rules against nepotism and bribe-taking, for example — are rightly enforced by the criminal law; and others — such as persistent or egregious racism or sexism in the exercise of your duties — are properly grounds for removal. If we do not demand absolute conformity, we can insist on certain basic standards. And we must, or the republic will not be able to do its job: indeed, it may degenerate into something that is no better for some than tyranny.

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<sup>24</sup> I expand on the arguments made in this last part of the lecture in a paper on “The Democratic Spirit” *Daedalus* 142 (2) (Spring 2013): 1-13. In particular, I say something about how the norms of citizen honour in the United States today should determine the bases for granting and denying civic respect.

But, as I have already remarked, one central task that must be performed if the republic is to flourish is voting. Among the major reasons that democracies are better places to live than tyrannies is the fact that we can change our rulers from time to time. That disciplines those who are, for the time being, exercising authority. An effective lifetime guarantee for incumbents — able, once they arrive, to steer the state's resources to those who will continue to vote for them in return — exposes them to temptations it is hard to resist.

There are other conditions that must be met if there is to be a reasonable sense of accountability. Voting districts need to be designed so that there is a reasonable chance of incumbents being removed if enough voters are dissatisfied, for example. And replacing them has to have a prospect of leading to a change in actual policies. The current system in the United States, with its partisan districting and divided government operating with parliamentary style parties, often does not meet these two conditions.<sup>25</sup>

Even if they *were* both met, however, the discipline of the threat of removal only works if voters' choices are responsive to what elected officials actually *do*. And that requires, first, that there be reliable sources of information about their activities; and, second, that enough of the voters pay attention to that information. The first of these conditions means that someone has actually to investigate and report on public affairs, paying attention to what is happening, deciding what is important, and making it known. So we need the freedom of expression promised in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and we need a free media to take its job seriously. But the second condition requires that citizens actually aim to vote in ways that are guided by that information.

We can survive if some journalists don't care about the truth or are toadies to those currently in office. (We know we can because all the major democracies live on with some media that suffer from each of these vices.) We can survive if some voters don't bother to vote or vote without knowing what the governors are doing. (This we know, too, from political experience in the same democracies.) But without a lively world of journalism governed by respect for the truth, the electorate cannot do its job; and even with it, only an electorate that takes notice of that journalism will be able to act together to discipline those who rule.

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein *It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided With the New Politics of Extremism* (New York: Basic Books, 2012): 46.

These are examples of the many different ways in which citizens participate in the activity of the republic. And if enough of us do it well enough we will gain the advantages of democratic rule. It is, I think, the participation of the ordinary citizen in ways like these is the literal reality that makes it figuratively true that the people govern. The workings of the republic are, in complex ways, the outcome of all these things that citizens do. But that means that those who do not participate in any of these ways are what we call “free riders” on the contributions of those who do. They are gaining the advantages of a shared practice without contributing to the burdens, like the rider on the public bus or train who has not paid his fare. Free riding of this sort is, generally speaking, wrong. And it wrongs particularly those who *are* contributing their fare share. Acts of this kind tear at the delicate fabric of the political bond, which, in a large-scale modern society, is always a bond between strangers. When members of a community fail to contribute in this way they lose the right to the respect of their fellows. And since, as I have said, honour is basically a system of rights to respect and shame is the proper response to the loss of such a right, it is shameful.

I think we can demand morally that those citizens who have the capacity participate in specific ways; and, in requiring jury participation on pain of penalty in the United States, as in Hong Kong, we make exactly such a demand.<sup>26</sup>

The question *what* forms of participation in the life of the people we can demand is harder, I think, than the question *why* we can ask individuals to obey just laws. So it isn't easy to say when a law-abiding citizen who is not participating in the life of the republic in some particular way is doing something that is morally wrong. And it is hard, as a result, to be sure what forms of participation, such as jury service, we have the right to demand, on pain of penalty.

But honour comes to our rescue here. For citizen honour is not something we owe to all. What we owe morally to each person is the respect due to their humanity, their human dignity. But how we honour each other *as citizens* is, in good measure, morally up to us. The rewards of civic honour can be reserved for those who do more than what is morally required; and we are free, looking at it

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<sup>26</sup> It is important to see that these legal demands on us as citizens are different in important ways from many other exigencies of the law. The demands of the criminal law or the laws of torts and contracts are not demands made on us as citizens. Those apply to all within a jurisdiction. Obeying such laws is not part of the business of self-government in the way that helping to make the law, through politics, or administer it, as jurors, or defend it, as police officers or soldiers, is.

the other way round, to impose the penalties of dishonour on those who have not done anything morally wrong, provided they have fallen below the standard we have set for good citizenship. We may not have the moral right to punish bad citizenship with the coercive power of the state; but honour has its own logic and we can shame those whose lapses are not moral but civic.<sup>27</sup>

In order to decide what kinds of behaviour fall below the level that entitles you to citizen honour — the political respect of your fellow citizens — we need some ideas about which of the many things a person can do as a citizen are required to earn citizens their due respect. What is the fair share of the burdens of maintaining democracy that each of us owes for this purpose? Once we decided this, we could cry shame against those who were not doing at least their fair share. We should also cry shame against those who do participate, but do so in ways that are inconsistent with the norms that govern our shared life: impartiality for public officials, truthfulness for those in the media, and so on. Honour can operate in the life of citizens not only through their concern for the national honour — this will be my topic next time — but also through their concern for their own individual honour as citizens.

Some defections from our citizen obligations will be dishonourable because they are morally wrong; wrong because they involve a failure to contribute our fair share to the common good. So those who are sufficiently motivated by the thought that these defections are wrong will not need the apparatus of honour to keep them doing what they should. Some defections are not morally wrong but are undesirable nevertheless, because without certain contributions the good that democracy brings will be hard to achieve.<sup>28</sup> So what a culture of citizen honour allows us to do is to shape both the behaviour of those who are only motivated by morality and the behaviour of those who are not even motivated by it, using what Geoffrey Brennan and Philip Pettit have dubbed the “intangible hand” of social esteem and contempt.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See chapter five of my *The Honour Code op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> You could say that the fair share of non-contributors is nothing when things are going well. What’s needed is enough participation and no more. If that’s right then there’s nothing wrong with occasionally jumping the subway turnstile. But it’s not obvious that our democracy is actually working as well as it could if more people participated in the right ways. So even if you are tempted by this thought, you ought to want people ought to be doing more than they are.

<sup>29</sup> Geoffrey Brennan and Philip Pettit *op. cit.* 5.

There are places — Australia, famously — where voting is a legal duty. For nearly seventy years, Australia, through having a small fine for the failure to show up at the polls, has achieved a turnout rate of 95 per cent. (Since you can effectively simply record your presence, by voting for “none of the above,” this is not so much mandatory voting as mandatory appearance at the voting booth.) The penalty is so small — A\$20 if you cannot provide a reasonable excuse for failing to vote — that we might in fact see this as a case where the law’s function is largely to express its disapproval of, rather than to punish, those who do not vote.<sup>30</sup> And so the society has effectively inculcated a sense that voting is a civic duty.<sup>31</sup> But notice what this means: it means that what is really producing those high turnout rates is not the threat of legal punishment but a sense of duty, sustained, in part, by the wish to avoid the shame that honourable citizens feel when they fail to perform their basic civic duties.

There are norms of at least three kinds governing our involvement as citizens in the life of the republic. First, there are moral norms requiring *that* we participate in certain ways, where non-participation is free riding. We could call these *norms of participation*. Second, there are political norms governing *how* we participate, if we do, which we can call *norms for participation*: they rule out corruption in public officials, inattention in jurors, ignorance in voters and the like. Third, there are norms of civic honour, which assign rights to respect to citizens who do more than is morally required in the life of the republic; but which also warrant contempt for those who fall below certain minimum standards, (including those who break the norms of and for participation). My argument today has been that the last of these — the codes of civic honour — are an essential part of the life of a modern society. Internalizing these codes makes us responsive to those who respect them. It means that our civic behaviour can be shaped by the respect of others and our own sense of honour, and that we can shape the behaviour of our

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<sup>30</sup> See the website of the Australian Electoral Commission [http://www.aec.gov.au/FAQs/Voting\\_Australia.htm#compulsory](http://www.aec.gov.au/FAQs/Voting_Australia.htm#compulsory). Accessed September 30, 2013. Notice that Australia could make it true that everyone who voted was A\$20 richer than she would have been if she hadn’t voted, instead of making every Australian who doesn’t vote A\$20 poorer. We could use the market, that is, rather than the law. But here the market looks like a worse solution than the law, in part because this small sum of money wouldn’t have the effect of treating voting as especially worthy, whereas a small penalty for not voting does succeed in making not-voting especially unworthy.

<sup>31</sup> I’m grateful to Norm Ornstein for helping me to frame this point.

fellow citizens by granting them the civic respect that is their due and contemning those who have fallen below the minimum standards we have set. And if that is so, we need to think more deeply than we often have, about how to develop and nourish these sentiments. That is not the task of philosophy alone. Indeed, it is not even, I think, especially the task of philosophy. But getting clear about the concept of civic honour *is* a characteristically philosophical task: and it is an essential preliminary to the project, which we can share with other disciplines and approaches, of understanding how we can develop, in every society, the means for raising our children with a sense of civic honour and sustaining it in them when they grow to adulthood.