



What Is Honor?: A Question of Moral Imperatives

Alexander Welsh

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What is honor? Has its meaning changed since ancient times? Is it an outmoded notion? Does it still have the power to direct our behavior? In this provocative book Alexander Welsh considers the history and meaning of honor and dismisses the idea that we live in a post-honor culture. He notes that we have words other than *honor*, such as *respect*, *self-respect*, and personal *identity*, that show we do indeed care deeply about honor. Honor, he argues, is a continuing process of respect that motivates or constrains members of a peer group. Honor's dictates function as moral imperatives.

Surprisingly, little systematic study of the history of honor in Western culture has been attempted. Offering a welcome remedy, Welsh provides a genealogy of approaches to the subject, mining some of the most influential texts of the Western tradition. He rereads with fascinating results the works of Aristotle, Cicero, Shakespeare, Mandeville, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Kant, Adam Smith, and others. With a sharp focus on the intersection of honor and ethics in both literature and philosophy, Welsh invites new and constructive debate on a topic of vital interest.

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