The Review of Politics 82 (2020), 548–570.

doi:10.1017/S0034670520000583

"The Constant Companion of Virtue": On the Dilemma and Political Implications of Kantian Honor

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Abstract: This article provides a reinterpretation of Kantian honor to resolve an ongoing debate concerning Kant's mixed attitude toward honor and to clarify the political implications of honor. Kant develops two distinct types of honor in his practical philosophy: natural honor as a human desire and ethical honor as a transcendental virtue. The conflict between these two types of honor can be resolved not in Kant's ethics but in his political theory, which tolerates nonmoral motivations owing to their positive impact on politics and which presumes an imperfect world where political authority has difficulties in properly punishing disrespect. As a viable motivation for citizens to fight disrespect in a principled way, a reformed Kantian honor that combines the normative content of ethical honor and the motivating power of natural honor into a single whole can be conducive to the politics of mutual respect.

Introduction[1]

On a blank page in his own copy of *Observations* published in 1764, Immanuel Kant wrote a note that revealed a touching moment of his early life:

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In addition to Ruth Abbey and the anonymous reviewers, I thank Samuel Bagg, Eric Cheng, Jiwei Ci, Elisabeth Ellis, Michael Gillespie, Peter Giraudo, Ruth Grant, Nora Hanagan, Michael Hawley, Peter Josephson, Alexander Kirshner, Sharon Krause, Alexandra Oprea, Emma Planinc, Geneviève Rousselière, Brian Spisiak, and Isak Tranvik for comments on earlier drafts.

[1]The following English translations of Kant's works are cited: *To Perpetual Peace* (*PP*) and *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent* (*UH*), in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1983); *The Conflict of the Faculties* (*CF*), trans. Mary Gregor (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992); *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (*Groundwork*), in *Ethical Philosophy,* trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1994); *The Metaphysics of Morals*

> I myself am a researcher by inclination. I feel the entire thirst for cognition and the eager restlessness to proceed further in it, as well as the satisfaction at every acquisition. There was a time when I believed this alone could constitute the honor of humankind, and I despised the rabble who knows nothing. Rousseau has set me right. This blinding prejudice vanished, I learn to honor human beings, and I would feel by far less useful than the common laborer if I did not believe that this consideration could impart a value to all others in order to establish the rights of humanity. (*Remarks*, 96 [20:44])

From this note, we observe how a condescending genius who once despised the ignorant masses came to see his duty to respect other human beings and commit himself to the establishment of their rights. The trigger of this turn was the transformation of Kant's honor (*Ehre*), and Kant allowed himself to be motivated by his sense of honor but replaced his old code of honor with a new one. Given the enormous, positive impact of Kant's practical philosophy on the modern view of the morality of mutual respect, it may not be hyperbolic to say that we are indebted to the transformation of Kant's own notion of honor.

Scholars[2] occasionally revisit the above passage, and there have been multiple recent attempts at defending Kantian honor.[3] These attempts are justified because, as "the constant companion of virtue" (*Anthropology*, 359 [7:257]), honor occupies important positions in both Kant's aesthetic and his ethical writings. However, they have not yet changed the view that Kant's morality of autonomy is an alternative to and even in conflict with the

(*MM*), trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); *Anthropology, History, and Education* (*Anthropology*), trans. Günter Zöller and Robert B. Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); *Herder's Notes from Kant's Lecture on Ethics* (*Herder*), in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings* (*Observations* and *Remarks*), trans. Patrick Frierson and Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Parenthetical citations to these editions are followed by volume and page number in the Academy edition of Kant's works.

[2]Ernst Cassier, *Rousseau, Kant, Goethe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 1–2; Susan Meld Shell, *The Embodiment of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 81–87.

[3]Joseph Knippenberg, "Moving beyond Fear: Rousseau and Kant on Cosmopolitan Education," *Journal of Politics* 51, no. 4 (1989): 809–27; Elizabeth Anderson, "Emotions in Kant's Later Moral Philosophy: Honor and the Phenomenology of Moral Value," in *Kant's Ethics of Virtue*, ed. Monika Betz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 123–45; Alexander Welsh, *What Is Honor?* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 138–67; Susan Meld Shell, *Kant and the Limits of Autonomy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 277–305; Rudolf Makkreel, "Relating Aesthetic and Sociable Feelings to Moral and Participatory Feelings: Reassessing Kant on Sympathy and Honor," in *Kant's "Observations and Remarks": A Critical Guide*, ed. Susan Meld Shell and Richard Velkley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 101–15.

ethics of honor—even among defenders of honor.[4] The orthodox view remains that Kant helps replace the outdated aristocratic ethic of honor with the modern democratic morality of autonomy and equal respect.[5] This view is equally justifiable, as Kant indeed depreciates the value of honor, claiming that honor's "maxim lacks the moral content of an action done not from inclination but from duty" (*Groundwork*, 11 [4:398]). Moreover, the notorious eighteenth-century practice of dueling exacerbated the moral unworthiness of the quixotic quest for honor. It is unsurprising even to see the claim that Kant regards honor as "the root of all evil."[6] The debate thus reaches an impasse: both sides have justification for insisting on their position.

Despite this interest in Kant's attitude toward honor, the political implications of Kantian honor remain largely unexamined. As a critic[7] of many ultraconservative political views of his contemporaries, Kant believes that honor helps us attain a politics of mutual respect in an imperfect world where such respect is not commonplace. As he claims in *CF*, in a rightful political society, "there will arise . . . perhaps more charity and less strife in lawsuits, more reliability in keeping one's word, etc., partly out of love of honor, partly out of well-understood self-interest" (*CF*, 167 [7:91–92]). Of the very few scholars who address the political relevance of Kantian honor, Rachel Bayefsky is the only one studying how this "love of honor" contributes to the formation of a rightful society.[8] Similarly, the recent literature on Kant's virtue ethics does not guide scholarly attention to the connection between

[4]Thomas Pangle, "Classical and Modern Liberal Understandings of Honor," in *The Noblest Minds: Fame, Honor, and the American Founding*, ed. Peter McNamara (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 213–16; Sharon Krause, *Liberalism with Honor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3–4; Robert Faulkner, *The Case for Greatness* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 227–35.

[5]Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 26–27, 41; Thomas Hill, *Respect, Pluralism, and Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 64; Manfred Kuehn, *Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 280–82; Stephen Darwall, *Honor, History, and Relationship* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 11–29.

[6]Allen Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 290. See also Jennifer Uleman, "On Kant, Infanticide, and Finding Oneself in a State of Nature," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 54, no. 2 (2000): 173–95 for similar criticisms.

[7]See Reidar Maliks, *Kant's Politics in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) for an account of how Kant's political theory was developed in the context of the current affairs and public debates of the eighteenth century.

[8]Susan Meld Shell, "Kant on Democratic Honor," in *Gladly to Learn and Gladly to Teach: Essays on Religion and Political Philosophy in Honor of Ernest L. Fortin, A.A.*, ed. Michael P. Foley and Douglas Kries (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002), 239–55; Mika LaVaque-Manty, "Dueling for Equality: Masculine Honor and the Modern Politics of Dignity," *Political Theory* 34, no. 6 (2006): 715–40; Rachel Bayefsky, "Dignity, Honour, and Human Rights: Kant's Perspective," *Political Theory* 41, no. 6 (2013): 809–37.

Kantian virtue and politics.[9] Given the resemblance of honor to virtue, this fact further reveals the underestimation of the political relevance of Kantian honor.

In light of the ongoing debate concerning Kantian honor and the lack of attention to its role in politics, this article has two aims. The first is to resolve the debate. While Kant uses a variety of expressions[10] to depict the ways in which human beings are attracted to honor, they eventually boil down to two distinctive types. One type is honor as a natural desire, most notably discussed in his aesthetic and anthropological writings. The other type is honor as a transcendental virtue, most notably discussed in his ethical writings. For the sake of simplicity, I call the former type "natural honor," highlighting its pertinence to nontranscendental human nature, and the latter type "ethical honor," highlighting its pertinence to Kantian ethics based on the universal moral law. While both types are characterized by fundamental equality and an admirable moral strength necessary for any virtuous actions, the major conflict between natural and ethical honor lies in their relationship to social opinion. Whereas natural honor heavily depends on public approval, ethical honor demands independence from such approval. A dilemma of honor arises, which is responsible for the persistence of the debate concerning Kant's attitude toward honor. While there is no way to solve this dilemma in Kant's ethics, where morally inferior natural honor cannot be compatible with ethical honor, a reconciliation between natural and ethical honor remains possible in his political theory, which attempts to reconcile the normative ideal of a rightful society with empirical and contingent assumptions concerning human nature.

My second aim is to reveal the political implications of Kantian honor. The reconciliation between natural and ethical honor suggests a reform of honor in the political context. Kant claims that "Cervantes would have done better if, instead of ridiculing the fantastic and romantic passion, he had directed it better" (*Remarks*, 72 [20:9]), and his own account of honor can indeed be understood as an attempt not at ridiculing but at better directing "the fantastic and romantic passion" of honor. I argue that this reform amounts to a particular combination of ethical and natural honor conducive to the politics of mutual respect, as it can serve as a motivation for citizens to fight disrespect in an imperfect world where political authority is for various reasons ill-equipped to punish disrespect.

[9]One exception is Scott Roulier, *Kantian Virtue at the Intersection of Politics and Nature* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2014).

[10]Most notably, *Ehrliebe* (love of honor), which is usually equivalent to ethical honor, and *Ehrbegierde* (desire for honor), which is always equivalent to natural honor, but also *Ehrsucht* (mania for honor), *Gefühl für Ehre* (feeling for honor), *Trieb der Ehre* (drive for honor), and *Neigung der Ehre* (inclination of honor). Kant's attitudes toward the latter three are ambiguous and have to be understood in their context.

I begin with the problem that disrespect poses to Kantian politics and how honor is involved in this problem. While legitimate coercion plays an important role in Kant's political theory, the state and its legislation have difficulties in properly punishing disrespect in the form of insult and offense. Kant's discussion of honor and duels not only exposes these difficulties but also suggests the need for a reformed honor to tackle them. I then reconstruct Kant's account of natural and ethical honor, expose its dilemma, and critically examine current efforts to tackle this dilemma. After this I provide my own solution by reading the Kantian account of honor as a reform of honor in the political context. On the one hand, ethical honor, which confirms that the content of true honor is human dignity, discourages murderous actions as a way to fight disrespect. On the other hand, despite the bloodshed often linked to it, natural honor remains effective in motivating citizens to fight disrespect in an imperfect world. To reform honor, it is necessary to introduce the content of ethical honor into natural honor and to utilize the motivating power in natural honor to remedy the absence of such power from ethical honor. In conclusion, I discuss the relevance of Kantian honor to the current discussion of the role of honor and sentiments in contemporary politics and specify two limitations of this article.

Kantian Politics and the Difficulties in Punishing Disrespect

Before investigating the relationship between Kantian honor and politics, we must show that this very relationship is meaningful. Since Kant insists on the separation between politics and ethics, between right and virtue, it is not immediately clear how honor, which may seem to be an ethical concept, matters in politics. I establish a link between honor and politics by exposing a political problem in which honor is involved: political authority is ill-equipped to properly punish disrespect in an imperfect world.

Scholars have demonstrated that Kant's political theory, though in harmony with his system of moral philosophy, does not neglect the unique nature of political reality,[11] and one distinguishing aspect of Kantian politics is the necessity of coercion. As Arthur Ripstein claims, while Kant's account of coercion is premised on his moral philosophy and thus firmly rejects punishing individuals for instrumental purposes,[12] Kant "formulates many of his arguments in terms of coercion."[13] This claim is unsurprising. Kant's political

[11]Elisabeth Ellis, *Kant's Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); Katrin Flikschuh, "Justice without Virtue," in *Kant's "Metaphysics of Morals": A Critical Guide*, ed. Lara Denis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 51–70.

[12]Arthur Ripstein, *Force and Freedom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 300–324.

[13]Ibid., 3. See also Otfried Höffe's criticisms of Rawls and Nozick for their failure to account for coercion in "Kant's Innate Right as a Rational Criterion for Human Rights," in Denis, *Kant's "Metaphysics of Morals,"* 81.

theory assumes an imperfect world with imperfect human beings. On the one hand, as he argues in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, human nature is constantly troubled by radical evils. On the other hand, he claims that a rightful political society remains a practical possibility despite human nature: "Man, even though he is not morally good, is forced to be a good citizen. As hard as it may sound, the problem of organizing a nation is solvable even for a people comprised of devils" (*PP*, 124 [8:366]).[14] Given this evil human nature, crimes and offenses are precisely what politics is supposed to confront. It follows that legitimate coercion, which is necessary only when there are crimes and offenses to be punished, is central to Kant's political theory. Coercion is "a hindering of a hindrance to freedom" that remains "consistent with freedom in accordance with universal laws, that is, it is right" (*MM*, 25 [6:231]). Its purpose is to protect individuals' rights when citizens' self-constraint (i.e., virtue) can be neither relied on nor enforced. In a civil society, the sole legitimate source of coercion is political authority: "punishment is not an act that the injured party can undertake on his private authority but rather an act of a court distinct from him, which gives effect to the law of a *supreme authority* over all those subject to it" (*MM*, 207 [6:460], emphasis Kant's).[15] Without this authority, citizens return to the state of nature, where neither private nor public rights are guaranteed.[16]

Although coercion is not the only feature of Kantian politics, it is most pertinent to the discussion of honor and disrespect. At first glance, disrespect may not appear to be Kant's primary theoretical concern. What he cares about is its opposite, respect, which is famously captured in the duty to treat others not merely as a means but also as an end (*MM*, 209 [6:462]). Indeed, in Kant's moral genealogy, this duty originates not from restraining disrespect but from the moral feeling of respect necessitated by the universal moral law (*MM*, 210 [6:464]). Thus, any failure to fulfill this duty may seem to be defined as disrespect. In practice, however, Kant holds that the duty of respect requires us more to *avoid* showing disrespect toward others than to actively exhibit respect (*MM*, 211 [6:465], 213 [6:467]). The active exhibition of respect is called reverence, which we cannot exact from others: "The respect we are bound to show other human beings . . . is only a negative duty. I am not bound to revere others (regarded merely as human beings), that is, to show them positive high esteem" (*MM*, 213 [6:467]). In this sense, disrespect *precedes* respect, and understanding disrespect is important to understand the duty of respect in the political context.

[14]See Ellis's argument (*Kant's Politics*, 112–54) that Kant is aware of the gap between the norms for an ideal state, which is independent of empirical facts, and the norms for a real state, which must take into account facts pertinent to the particularities of a state.

[15]See also *MM*, 104 [6:331] and Allen W. Wood, "Punishment, Retribution, and the Coercive Enforcement of Right," in Denis, *Kant's "Metaphysics of Morals,"* 116–17.

[16]According to Ellis (*Kant's Politics*, 12–14), since civil society provides the public sphere as the mechanism of moral progress, public order must be protected.

In Kant's enumeration, disrespect includes arrogance, defamation, and ridicule (*MM*, 211–13 [6:465–68]). They are distinguished from crimes such as murder. In theory, since both disrespect and crime violate the rights of others, citizens can be legitimately coerced to refrain from showing disrespect toward others. According to Kant's principle of punishment and retribution, "whatever undeserved evil you inflict upon another within the people, that you inflict upon yourself" (*MM*, 105 [6:332]). Based on this principle, murderers shall be put to death. Similarly, disrespect, which amounts to insult, shall be met with punitive insult. However, Kant reveals in *MM* that political authority experiences three difficulties in punishing disrespect in practice.

First, Kant argues that whoever injures others verbally shall apologize publicly, but a punishment for disrespect can be effective only when it leads to shame. A fine, for example, can be imposed on disrespect, but if the disrespectful person is rich, then the fine means nothing but that he can simply pay to insult others (*MM*, 106 [6:332]). The first difficulty thus arises: the effectiveness of punishment in the form of shaming hinges on the assumption that the punished person has a sense of shame. This assumption is precarious, as we cannot be certain that, in an imperfect world, villains are not shameless. This is why Kant demands that moral education emphasize "the shamefulness of vice" (*MM*, 225 [6:483]). Otherwise, individuals may have an even weaker sense of shame and believe that their dignity is exchangeable with goods of equal prices, making it more difficult to effectively punish disrespect.

Second, Kant argues that the dead have the right to a good reputation. Thus, whoever attacks this reputation injures the right that belongs to the dead and shall be punished by shame. However, although the person who attacks my posthumous reputation is "as punishable as if he had done it during my lifetime," he is punishable "not by a criminal court, but only by public opinion, which, in accordance with the right of retribution, inflicts on him the same loss of the honor he diminished in another" (*MM*, 76 [6:296]). Unlike the punishment of public apology that a court issues, punishments for defiling the dead should not involve any court at all, casting doubt on the legitimacy of legal punishment for disrespect. The second difficulty is thus evident: Kant hesitates regarding whether it is always proper for political authority to punish the disrespectful at all.

The third difficulty is that disrespect, whether punished or not, may lead both the disrespectful and the disrespected to commit crimes. Arrogance, for example, which is one of the three forms of disrespect and appears to be an unreasonable object for political authority to punish, is a common source of malice that leads to vengeance and crimes: "It is the haughtiness of others when their welfare is uninterrupted, and their self-conceit in their good conduct . . . that generate this malevolent joy. . . . The sweetest form of malice is the desire for revenge" (*MM*, 207 [6:460]). Not only is it difficult for political authority to properly punish the disrespectful person, but even if he is punished, his disrespect can still hurt his victims and may motivate them to commit horrific crimes for revenge.

All three of these difficulties reappear in Kant's discussion of defending one's honor in a duel. A duel may end with the death of its participants, but rather than a willful murder, this violence is a reaction of the offended to the humiliating disrespect that he receives from the offender. Kant admits that dueling leads to a "quandary" for penal justice. First, the disrespect of offense provokes the offended to resort to the crime of manslaughter, which Kant believes must always be punished by death. This matter echoes the third difficulty described above. Second, penal justice against the offender can never be proper since legal punishment cannot "wipe away the stain of suspicion of cowardice" if the offended fails to respond to the offense. Political authority, even a just one (or precisely because it is a just one), is thus not the proper agent to punish the offender. Therefore, in a civil society, the offended still finds himself "in the state of nature" with the offender, seeking "punishment of the offender not by law, taking him before a court, but by a duel" (*MM*, 109 [6:336]). This matter echoes the second difficulty described above. Finally, although the authority may claim that his honor "counts for nothing" to deter the offended from resorting to a duel, Kant firmly rejects this solution because it is an unfair treatment of the honor of the offended, which "is indeed true honor . . . incumbent as duty on" him (*MM*, 108–9 [6:336]). After all, attacking the sense of honor is equivalent to attacking the sense of shame, and individuals who lose their sense of honor also lose their sense of shame, leading to the ineffectiveness of punishing disrespect. This matter echoes the first difficulty described above.

Thus, while political authority is supposed to force even "devils" to respect the rights of others, it encounters difficulties when punishing disrespect. If left unpunished or punished improperly, disrespect can lead to crime, threaten the sense of shame, and thus endanger the order of civil society. Surprisingly, when judging the cause of these difficulties, Kant blames legislation instead of honor: "the legislation itself (and consequently also the civil constitution), as long as it remains barbarous and undeveloped, is responsible for the discrepancy between the incentives of honor in the people (subjectively) and the measures that are (objectively) suitable for its purpose" (*MM*, 109 [6:336–37]). Thus, Kant defends honor even in its least favorable case. Disrespect must be fought, but political authority is not always the best enforcer of the moral law. As I will elaborate in the remainder of the article, given the ineffectiveness of legislation in punishing disrespect and Kant's insistence on honor even when it goes against the moral law, an improved honor is no less important than improved legislation for citizens to confront disrespect in an imperfect world.

Two Concepts of Honor

Having explained the political problem in which honor is involved, I now explain what Kantian honor actually is. The ethical account treats honor as a virtue exacted by the universal moral law, and the natural account

studies honor as a pathological desire.[17] This difference reveals a dilemma that gives rise to the persistent debate concerning Kant's attitude toward honor, but the similarities between the two types of honor also prepare for the possibility of their reconciliation.

Ethical Honor

Ethical honor bears the following dimensions. It is (1) a duty of virtue to oneself and (2) an intrinsic moral feeling that motivates individuals to respect the universal moral law. (3) Its content is human dignity, which essentially lies in the moral law.

(1) In the Doctrine of Virtue of *MM*, Kant categorizes love of honor (*Ehrliebe*) as "a human being's duty [of virtue] to oneself as a moral being only" (*MM*, 175 [6:420]). This categorization suggests what love of honor is *not* in three ways. First, love of honor is not a duty of *right*.[18] As discussed above, while a duty of right can be enforced by external lawgiving, namely, positive law, a duty of virtue can be established only by internal lawgiving, namely, the moral law in the human mind. Therefore, love of honor cannot

[17]Denis's similar reconstruction based mainly on students' notes supplements my analysis. See Lara Denis, "Love of Honor as a Kantian Virtue," in *Kant on Emotion and Value*, ed. Alix Cohen (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 195–202. I disagree with her view that Kant never truly admits honor into his ethics (202–3). According to her, calling the ethical duty to oneself love of honor is merely an analogy of Kant's. Though plausible, this interpretation not only is unable to explain why this analogy is necessary at all but also downplays the ambiguity intrinsic to the phenomenon of honor.

[18]Scholars observe Kant's claim that "rightful honor" is one division of the duties of right (*MM*, 29 [6:236]). See Shell, "Kant on Democratic Honor," 243; Arthur Ripstein, "Private Order and Public Justice: Kant and Rawls," *Virginia Law Review* 92, no. 7 (2006): 1399; Höffe, "Kant's Innate Right," 85–87. Höffe even argues that claiming one's "rightful honor" is crucial to Kant's account of rights, as it is the premise for any individual to "be considered as a legal entity in relation to other human beings" ("Kant's Innate Right," 87). Given the strict distinction that Kant maintains between virtue and right, it is difficult to harmonize honor as a duty of virtue and honor as a duty of right. The fact that Kant never again in *MM* discusses honor as a duty of right despite his promise to do so inclines me to dismiss the idea of "rightful honor" as insignificant. After all, it is unreasonable to punish someone just for failing to respect oneself. See Lara Denis, *Moral Self-Regard: Duties to Oneself in Kant's Moral Theory* (London: Routledge, 2015), 22–25 for a fuller exposition. Moreover, if, as Höffe claims, an individual has to claim his rightful honor to be considered a legal entity, then the state is not justified in punishing him when he fails to observe the duty of rightful honor because this failure disqualifies him from being a legal entity and thus from being a proper object of meaningful punishment. If one is not punishable, then the failure to uphold one's rightful honor cannot be a failure to observe a duty of right, which is supposed to incur punishment.

be legalized, and its negligence cannot be justifiably punished. Second, love of honor is not a duty to *others*. It issues such commands as "Be no one's lackey" (*MM*, 188 [6:436]) but does not directly order, for example, that one should not dominate others. While the categorical imperative asks one not to *use others* merely as a means—as is usually interpreted and emphasized—love of honor emphasizes a specific aspect of the categorical imperative: one ought not to *be used by others* merely as a means (*MM*, 29 [6:236]). Third, love of honor is not a duty to oneself as an *animal* being. Whereas such a duty commands, for example, that one strengthen one's natural capabilities to preserve one's natural life, love of honor, as a duty to oneself as a *moral* being, commands instead that one strive to live up to one's transcendental human dignity and "yield nothing of one's human dignity in comparison with others" (*MM*, 211 [6:465]). Therefore, love of honor is essentially a duty of self-respect regarding one's moral practical reason, demanding that an individual "pursue his end, which is in itself a duty, not abjectly, not in a *servile spirit* as if he were seeking a favor, not disavowing his dignity, but always with consciousness of his sublime moral predisposition" (*MM*, 187 [6:435], emphasis Kant's).

(2) Understanding ethical honor as a duty of self-respect leads to its second dimension as a moral motivation. In *MM*, Kant claims that the universal moral law within a human being "unavoidably forces from him *respect* for his own being, and this feeling (which is of a special kind) is the basis of certain duties, that is, of certain actions that are consistent with his duty to himself" (*MM*, 162 [6:403], emphasis Kant's). The duty of self-respect is a motivation that individuals must have in order to be moral agents, obey the moral law, and take moral actions accordingly. It should be noted that, as a *moral* feeling, a feeling "of a special kind," love of honor does not have an empirical origin. Rather, it is transcendental and intrinsic to our practical reason, equivalent to a pure "good will" (*Groundwork*, 7 [4:393]). As I will show below, this transcendental motivating power not only contributes to the moral superiority of ethical honor but also limits its political application.

(3) It follows that the content of ethical honor is essentially human dignity. As can be deduced from above, taken as a duty of virtue, ethical honor directs one to live up to one's own dignity, as one is morally obliged to do; taken as a moral feeling, ethical honor is immediately triggered by one's own dignity. Since human dignity is derived solely from the universal moral law, the content of honor can also be viewed as this law.

Identifying the content of ethical honor with human dignity and the universal moral law has two theoretical implications. First, it reveals the pivotal role of ethical honor in Kant's system of moral philosophy: love of honor is the basis of all other duties. Since it is directly related to human beings as moral beings, love of honor is the most important duty among the duties to oneself. Furthermore, its existence is presupposed by the existence of all duties to others, as evidenced in Kant's argument against the attempt to deny the existence of duties to oneself:

> For suppose there were no such duties: then there would be no duties whatsoever, and so no external duties either. —For I can recognize that I am under obligation to others only insofar as I at the same time put myself under obligation, since the law by virtue of which I regard myself as being under obligation proceeds in every case from my own practical reason; and in being constrained by my own reason, I am also the one constraining myself. (*MM*, 173 [6:417–18])

Accordingly, duties such as "I ought to help others" and "I ought not to hamper the outer freedom of others" can be duties *for* me only if I have already agreed that these duties are binding commands and hence if I have already upheld this agreement of my own. Love of honor, so to speak, is the duty of duties.

Second, that human dignity is the essential content of ethical honor reveals the noncontingent nature of ethical honor. As a virtue, love of honor is a duty to oneself and thus does not primarily focus on others. As a moral motivation, love of honor is innate to one's practical reason and thus does not originate from without. Since these aspects of love of honor are merely formal but have nothing to do with the specific content of honor, love of honor may remain sociological or pathological if its content remains socially or psychologically contingent. By identifying the content of honor with human dignity, which is derived from the universal moral law and thus is independent of the empirical world, Kant renders ethical honor truly noncontingent. It provides a solid ground in a fluctuating empirical world, on which individuals are able to make moral judgments despite social opinion.

In summary, Kant understands ethical honor both as a duty of virtue to oneself and as a moral motivation. The content of ethical honor is human dignity derived from the universal moral law, making honor the duty of duties and a duty that is noncontingent.

Natural Honor

In contrast to ethical honor, what I am calling natural honor may appear to be highly problematic. In *Observations*, Kant is perturbed by the reality that honor is too often determined by social opinion and thus too often leads individuals away from virtue. As shown in his note cited at the beginning of this article, the content of Kant's own honor changes. Through his reading of Rousseau, Kant comes to realize that misidentifying the content of honor leads only to false honors that are "blinding prejudice" (*Remarks*, 96 [20:44]). Unsurprisingly, in *Observations* Kant presents his most critical assessment of honor's role in morality, in which virtue and honor are explicitly separated: "What happens from this impulse is not in the least virtuous, for which reason everyone who wants to be taken for virtuous takes good care to conceal the motivation of desire for honor" (*Observations*, 25 [2:218]). In Herder's notes from Kant's lecture on ethics during the same period, Kant

even claims that "the pursuit of honor is more harmful to morality than any other passion; all others have something real about them, but this one is a phantom of the brain" (*Herder*, 283–84 [27:44]).

Kant's concern about natural honor is that it bases one's worth and self-respect on the "tyranny of popular mores" (*MM*, 210 [6:464]), transforming the virtuous love of honor into the dangerous desire for honor (*Ehrbegierde*). This desire for honor takes different forms, such as vanity, haughtiness, pride, pomp, and conceitedness (*Observations*, 55 [2:249]). Kant portrays a prominent model corrupted by this desire for honor: "the choleric person." This person follows principles that are not "of virtue, but of honor" and therefore "has no feeling for the beauty or the value of actions, but only for the judgment that the world might make about them." According to Kant, this person is either vain or foolish (*Observations*, 30 [2:223–24]).

Despite the damage to morality when its content is misidentified owing to the influence of social opinion, Kant never rejects natural honor. As he claims, "Honor wreaks much ill, and then it also serves as a means to prevent the greatest excess of the very same" (*Remarks*, 137 [20:105]). Even in his critical assessment in *Observations*, Kant argues that, in terms of its form (vis-à-vis its content), natural honor does not necessarily conflict with morality.[19]

Kant surprisingly claims that natural honor, despite its pursuit of superiority, is fundamentally premised on equality. Otherwise, "would a savage search for another in order to show him his advantages? If he can be without him, he will enjoy his freedom. Only if he must be together with him, will he attempt to outdo him" (*Remarks*, 102 [20:55], 137 [20:107], 180 [20:165], 202 [20:192]; *Herder*, 293 [27:63]). The acknowledgment of equality is thus embedded in the drive for honor, even if the individuals who pursue honor are not aware of it.[20] Since ethical honor necessarily demands equality according to the universal moral law, natural honor that is fundamentally based on equality appears similar to ethical honor in this regard.

Moreover, natural honor leads to the sense of shame, a feeling that "is fine and moves us" and "can also balance cruder self-interest and vulgar sensuality" (*Observations*, 25 [2:218]). It is "a secrecy of nature aimed at setting bounds to a most intractable inclination, and which, in so far as it has the call of nature on its side, always seems compatible with good, moral qualities,

[19]Makkreel distinguishes three types of honor in *Observations* and argues that the "feeling for honor" and the "love of honor" are not as morally condemnable as the "desire for honor" ("Relating Aesthetic and Sociable Feelings," 101–6). Since Kant sometimes uses these terms interchangeably (e.g., *Observations*, 25 [2:218], 34 [2:227]), the distinction among these terms may not be as rigorous as Makkreel concludes. Nevertheless, Makkreel is correct in concluding that honor as a natural desire is not necessarily evil.

[20]See also LaVaque-Manty, "Dueling for Equality," 724–31 and Tamler Sommers, *Why Honor Matters* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), 92–96 for discussions of the relationship between honor and equality.

even if it is excessive" (*Observations*, 41 [2:234]). Honor and shame, therefore, give individuals some power to stand against the tide of vices originating from their inclinations and interests. Accordingly, natural honor can be "so highly valued because it indicates so much renunciation of other advantages" (*Remarks*, 103 [20:56]). Indeed, since shame-driven behaviors are fundamentally heteronomous, natural honor cannot truly be virtuous owing to its connection to shame. Nevertheless, because of the firmness that it provides to individuals, natural honor remains "the simulacrum of virtue" (*Observations*, 25 [2:218]; *Herder*, 285–86 [20:46]).

Another striking similarity between natural and ethical honor is thus revealed: both types exhibit the moral strength that is necessary for morality.[21] Ethical honor, which is itself a virtue, intrinsically requires moral strength. Kant considers the fight between virtues and vices a war and concludes that "the vices, the brood of dispositions opposing the law, are the monsters he has to fight. Accordingly, this moral strength, as courage, also constitutes the greatest and the only true honor that man can win in war" (*MM*, 164 [6:405]). This moral strength is also found in natural honor because of the sense of shame that accompanies it. For this reason, Kant goes so far as to suggest that even when the specific content of certain natural honors is *contrary* to the universal moral law, natural honor itself should not be simply dismissed—not even legally—as completely vicious. This explains Kant's surprising defense of honor in duels discussed above. Although the categorical imperative undoubtedly commands that the "unlawful killing of another . . . be punished by death," it remains wrong for legislation to claim that honor in duels "counts for nothing" (*MM*, 109 [6:336]). The same holds true in the case of punishing rebels. Although rebellion is wrong because it threatens the civil state and thus violates the postulate of public right (*MM*, 86 [6:307]), it remains inappropriate to punish rebels driven by honor in the same way as punishing rebels driven by self-interest because "the man of honor is undeniably less deserving of punishment than the other" (*MM*, 107 [6:334]).

The moral strength shown in natural honor must be distinguished from the purported "strength of soul" shown in crimes.[22] Kant denies that this strength

[21]See also Robert Louden, *Kant's Impure Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 150.

[22]Critics may argue that the moral strength of natural honor is inferior to the moral strength of ethical honor because only the latter originates from moral causes. Richard McCarthy's distinction in *Kant's Theory of Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 188–91 between the *moral worth* of an action and the *virtue* of an action is helpful in refuting this argument. On the one hand, it is true that the moral strength of ethical honor has the moral worth that the moral strength of natural honor lacks. Therefore, moral maxims should be based on the former rather than the latter. On the other hand, both types of moral strength can equally motivate praiseworthy actions. This understanding echoes Kant's claim that "although the desire for honor is a foolish delusion if it becomes the rule to which one subordinates the other

of soul is connected to crimes, since such strength belongs to healthy souls, whereas crimes are themselves marks of a disease of the soul. Criminal "strength," therefore, is mere frenzy (*MM*, 148–49 [6:384]). The moral strength shown in natural honor, in contrast, is not frenzy, because natural honor is not a criminal motivation. In the case of honor killings, for example, honorable individuals think more of defending their honor than of committing a crime. According to Kant, the lack of any evil desire in honor killing makes this crime more innocent than a willful murder.[23]

Thus, on the one hand, natural honor relies on social opinion. If this opinion is morally corrupted, then natural honor is also corrupted. On the other hand, natural honor is fundamentally premised on equality and always accompanied by a sense of shame, which, despite being a sign of heteronomy, motivates individuals to exhibit moral strength and thus fight vices. This fundamental equality and this moral strength are what natural honor and ethical honor share, enabling Kant to call both "honor" despite their differences.

The Dilemma of Kantian Honor

Regardless of the similarity between ethical and natural honor, their difference remains substantial. Whereas the source of ethical honor is the universal moral law that transcends social opinion, the source of natural honor is social opinion. A focus on this difference gives rise to a dilemma for Kantian honor that is responsible for the persistence of the debate concerning Kant's mixed attitude toward honor.

On the one hand, viewed from the perspective of ethical honor, an honorable individual ought not to judge the value of an action and henceforth whether he should take this action or not according to how social opinion would judge. Rather, the only authority that he should follow is his pure practical reason, which amounts to the universal moral law. Thus, even if social opinion takes as ridiculous what his pure practical reason judges to be worthy, this individual must remain unperturbed. As Kant explains in *Anthropology*, genuine courage is "aroused by reason," and "to venture something that duty commands, even at the risk of being ridiculed by others, requires resoluteness, and even a high degree of courage; because love of honor is the constant companion of virtue, and he who is otherwise

inclinations, yet as an accompanying drive it is most excellent" (*Observations*, 34 [2:227]). See also Michael Frazer, *The Enlightenment of Sympathy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 115–18.

[23]In his critique of Wood's claim that honor is the root of evil, Makkreel draws evidence from *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* and concludes that "the mere intent to act honorably is not evil" ("Relating Aesthetic and Sociable Feelings," 108).

sufficiently prepared against violence seldom feels equal to ridicule if someone scornfully refuses this claim to honor." Such an individual possesses the moral courage that "many who show themselves as brave figures . . . in a duel do not possess" (*Anthropology*, 359 [7:257]). Therefore, he must be indifferent to disrespect, and social opinion in general, from people who attempt to lower his social status: "The virtuous one looks upon the rank of others with indifference, although if he refers it to himself, he looks at it with contempt" (*Remarks*, 76 [20:16]).

On the other hand, viewed from the perspective of natural honor, an honorable individual ought to be sensitive to social opinion. Particularly in the case of dueling, "when a junior officer is insulted he sees himself constrained by the public opinion of the other members of his estate to obtain satisfaction for himself" (*MM*, 109 [6:336]). The universal moral law that prohibits killing does not speak to him. On the contrary, he must act against this prohibition to defend his military honor in the face of the offender and his fellow soldiers. In fact, Kant holds that the opinion of others is definitely not irrelevant to one's honor. Our total indifference to disrespectful opinion and treatment is a sign not of any honor but of its forfeiture (*MM*, 186–87 [6:435]). It reduces us to the status of a slave who voluntarily accepts his master's disdain and becomes a "worm" that "cannot complain afterwards if people step on him" (*MM*, 188 [6:437]). Thus, a virtuous individual must be sensitive to social opinion and stand up to it when disrespect threatens his honor.[24]

Therefore, the dilemma of Kantian honor is formulated as follows: an honorable individual must be not only indifferent but also sensitive to disrespect from others. In this formulation, what I am calling ethical and natural honor necessarily conflict with each other, and scholars participating in the debate concerning Kant's attitude toward honor are largely divided because of this dilemma. This division is seen not only between defenders and opponents of Kantian honor but also within the defenders and within the opponents. Whereas the defenders either emphasize the positive effect of natural honor[25] or show the moral superiority of ethical honor,[26] the opponents either criticize the corrupting effect of natural honor[27] or explain how ethical honor is itself a sign of the corruption of modern morality.[28] Most of them presume that the gap between natural and ethical honor is

[24]See also Bayefsky's analysis of Kant's *Lectures on Ethics* in "Dignity, Honour, and Human Rights," 825.

[25]Anderson, "Emotions in Kant's Later Moral Philosophy"; Makkreel, "Relating Aesthetic and Sociable Feelings."

[26]Bayesky, "Dignity, Honour, and Human Rights"; Darwall, *Honor, History, and Relationship*; Welsh, *What Is Honor?*

[27]Uleman, "On Kant, Infanticide, and Finding Oneself in a State of Nature"; Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*.

[28]Faulkner, *The Case for Greatness*; Pangle, "Classical and Modern Liberal Understandings of Honor."

insurmountable and thus find it necessary to take sides. A reconciliation between natural and ethical honor thus appears impossible.

Among the attempts at confronting the dilemma, the most intuitive one leads to its dismissal on chronological grounds. Accordingly, while what I am calling natural honor is developed in Kant's earlier works such as *Observations*, what I am calling ethical honor is found in his later works such as *MM*. The thirty-year gap in between the two works indicates that Kant might have changed his mind and abandoned his earlier affinity for natural honor. However, as shown above, Kant criticizes natural honor in *Observations* and defends it in *MM*. Thus, it is questionable that Kant replaces natural with ethical honor as the sole legitimate understanding of honor.[29] This dismissal of the dilemma of honor is based on the theoretical distinction between Kantian anthropology and morality. It ignores the fact that this distinction does not always apply to Kantian politics, in which pathological motives do not have to be dismissed simply because they are not virtuous.

Among scholars who provide solutions to the dilemma, David Sussman attempts to capture the reason that Kant cannot sustain honor as complete independence from social opinion: "Kant considers contempt always to be morally inappropriate, but lack of objective justification will not change the social fact that someone who is disgraced will no longer be taken seriously as an agent, as someone towards whom justification might be owed, and who needs to be kept in mind as a significant source of challenges, protests or approval."[30] In response, Sussman distinguishes between an "ordinary insult" and "disgrace" and claims that while the former "do[es] not diminish what is ours without our acceptance," the latter diminishes our freedom "in that we lose a certain power to act regardless of our own 'inner' attitudes or acceptance."[31] Thus, an honorable individual should ignore an ordinary insult and stand up to disgrace. This solution makes sense but is difficult to apply to particular cases because the line between an ordinary insult and disgrace can be obscure. Nor does Sussman suggest in concrete terms how we can discern this line. Moreover, Sussman's view lacks textual evidence. Kant never makes distinctions between one form of ridicule and another in his discussion of disrespect, and the reason is obvious: from the ethical

[29]Nancy Sherman, "Kantian Virtue: Priggish or Passional?," in *Reclaiming the History of Ethics: Essays for John Rawls*, ed. Andrews Reath, Barbara Herman, and Christine Korsgaard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 271–78, correctly argues that emotions as presented in *MM* help us identify and respond to morally relevant circumstances and thus support our moral feeling. See Anderson, "Emotions in Kant's Later Moral Philosophy," for a focused discussion of honor as one such emotion.

[30]David Sussman, "Shame and Punishment in Kant's Doctrine of Right," *Philosophical Quarterly* 58, no. 231 (2008): 313–14.

[31]Ibid, 315.

point of view, disrespect is *always* vicious and must be tackled without compromise.

Krista Thomason argues instead that contempt from others is not necessarily bad in Kant's view. Referring to Kant's claim in the *Critique of Practical Reason* that individuals ought to feel a certain type of humiliation before the moral law, Thomason argues that an individual deserves public contempt if he places himself in a dishonorable position by violating the moral law, and that the sense of shame aroused by such contempt is morally sanguine.[32] This argument suffers from three problems. First, Thomason argues that the dishonorable individual rightly feels ashamed because public contempt and the violation of the universal moral law converge with each other. This argument seems to indicate that the origin of shame is fundamentally the moral law and that public contempt merely *triggers* shame, but it is questionable whether this "shame" is shame at all or merely a synonym for guilt. After all, shame seems to be shame proper when it *originates* from the judgment of social opinion. Second, it follows that Thomason's interpretation cannot explain Kant's defense of natural honor where codes of honor and the universal moral law do not converge, such as in the case of duel discussed above. Third, put in the political context, the convergence of social opinion and the moral law becomes even more problematic, as this convergence amounts to the premise that social opinion is always upright, which conflicts with the premise of Kant's political theory that civil society can remain rightful despite evil human nature.

Bayefsky speculates that Kant's toleration of natural honor even in the case of honor killings marks his acknowledgment of the status quo of an imperfect world and that he aims at "the eventual phasing out"[33] of natural honor. This interpretation correctly treats Kant as a reformer of honor who is sensitive to social reality, but in her fundamental rejection of natural honor, Bayefsky underestimates its moral potential and thus finds it difficult to understand Kant's "genuine approbation" of the duelist's honor.[34] Moreover, Bayefsky also overestimates the political potential of ethical honor. While she correctly argues that ethical honor is compatible with proper social recognition,[35] her argument that ethical honor better helps us avoid the "risks" of the quest for recognition than natural honor[36] is problematic, as these "risks" are intrinsic not to natural honor but to Kant's politics, where some individuals may willfully deny this recognition to others by disrespecting them, as I discuss below.

[32]Krista Thomason, "Shame and Contempt in Kant's Moral Theory," *Kantian Review* 18, no. 22 (2013): 30–33.

[33]Bayefsky, "Dignity, Honour, and Human Rights," 830.

[34]Ibid., 824, 830.

[35]Ibid., 825.

[36]Ibid., 828.

The Kantian Reform of Honor

In contrast to Bayefsky's speculation, I argue that, while natural honor is morally inferior to ethical honor, it should not be replaced by ethical honor in the Kantian political context. I have argued above that Kant's political theory assumes an imperfect world, where punishment for disrespect is necessary and political authority is ill-equipped to punish disrespect. In the conflict between the legislation of the state and the honor of citizens, Kant sides with the latter—but with a critical eye. Citizens should fight disrespect, as honor demands, but they also should refrain from exhibiting the same disrespect in their fight, as the moral law demands. This prescription amounts to a particular fusion of ethical and natural honor, as ethical honor achieves better results in restraining disrespect, whereas natural honor is more powerful in motivating reactions against disrespect.

On the one hand, in the ethical context, ethical honor is superior to natural honor because it is noncontingent and motivates our genuine respect toward others. Ethically honorable individuals do not rely on social opinion to make moral judgments. Otherwise, even respect toward others can be mere subjection to social opinion, but "a human being cannot carry his giving an example of the respect due others so far as to degenerate into blind imitation (in which custom is raised to the dignity of a law)" (*MM*, 210 [6:464]). Owing to the moral strength inherent in ethical honor, individuals can insist on their own values even when popular mores push them to betray these values, and interpersonal comparison thus loses its moral importance: Since my own value is universal and absolute and thus does not rely on the opinion of others, why do I need to compare myself to others to see my relative value?[37] It follows that ethical honor can free individuals from a vicious form of reciprocity, namely, deciding whether I should perform a certain virtuous action to you according to whether you have done it to me. As Alexander Welsh claims, "in Kant reciprocity is sometimes absent, and respect need not be mutual."[38] If I willingly respect you because doing so is honorable, then I will respect you even if you do not respect me. From this nonvengeful attitude toward disrespect, it is clear that ethical honor can inspire a response to disrespect that is not necessarily equally disrespectful.

On the other hand, when placed in the political rather than the ethical context, ethical honor is ineffective at deterring disrespect and needs the assistance of natural honor. The sources of this ineffectiveness have been developed above concerning the nature of Kantian politics, disrespect, and ethical honor. First, even if it is not completely out of reach, as a virtue, ethical honor remains rare among citizens. This rarity, which Kantian politics presumes, means not only that not all citizens take virtuous actions but also that, even when they do, they seldom do so out of the most virtuous motive

[37]See also Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, 136–39.
[38]Welsh, *What Is Honor?*, 160.

alone. In terms of its nature, virtue demands nothing less than the purest good will as its only motive to the extent that it is "an ideal and unattainable" (*MM*, 167 [6:409]). Thus, our best attempt is to keep our pursuit of virtue "in progress" (ibid.) and try to "approximate" (*MM*, 148 [6:383]) to it. In terms of anthropological observations, Kant claims that "few" people act out of principles (*Observations*, 34 [2:227]). In contrast, natural honor "is distributed among *all* human hearts" (ibid., emphasis mine). Thus, natural honor is a more common and hence more reliable motivation than ethical honor. Again, this difference does not suggest the moral superiority of natural honor, but if natural honor is not necessarily evil and if it is more widely spread than ethical honor as a motivation to the reaction against disrespect, then there is no reason to reject natural honor in the political context.

Second, even if ethical honor could be widespread, the reactions that it can motivate against disrespect are limited and often impotent. Driven by natural honor, the insulted soldier cannot tolerate the shame and thus attempts to kill the offender. For an individual who subscribes only to ethical honor, this reaction is unthinkable because ethical honor demands that he unconditionally respect others by refraining from disrespecting them. Thus, an ethically honorable individual would vindicate his honor neither by killing the offender nor by taking any other disrespectful actions. Indeed, he may respond to disrespect by openly condemning it or by going to court. Neither response involves disrespectful actions on the side of the offended. However, these solutions only drag us back into the Kantian "quandary" for penal justice when the defense of honor is at stake. Since "devils" in the imperfect world of Kantian politics may not even blush when condemned only with words, the effect of mere words on defending one's honor and deterring disrespect is weak. Since the court is a third party, relying on its intervention rather than one's own actions to vindicate one's honor may still appear to be a less honorable response.

Finally, a key feature of ethical honor may even render an honorable individual more vulnerable to disrespect. Since his honor lies in his dignity as a rational being, which remains undamaged despite disrespect, he can be indifferent to the opinion both of people who disrespect him and of people who think he has not done enough to vindicate his honor. However, in a world permeated by social opinion, individuals who are indifferent to social opinion may not always be perceived as honorable individuals. Rather, their failure to be bothered by disrespect may only motivate offenders to keep exploiting their principled insensitivity. In contrast, natural honor drives us to take effective actions against disrespect. As Kant claims, "The opinion that others may have of our value and their judgment of our actions is a motivation of great weight, which can coax us into many sacrifices, and what a good part of humanity would have done . . . out of principles happens often enough merely for the sake of outer appearance, out of a delusion that is very useful although in itself very facile" (*Observations*, 25 [2:218]). Natural honor influences us through the social opinion about honor and

shame that we care about and thus motivates us to fight disrespect. Such a fight may not be driven by the most sublime motive, but it remains better than the vulnerability to insult and the cowardly acquiescence to disrespect that Kant rejects as slavish (*MM*, 187 [6:435]).

Nevertheless, as the quotation above confirms, natural honor involves "delusion." Even if the intention behind honor killing is not evil, unlawful manslaughter as its consequence is always morally wrong, and the usefulness of natural honor cannot justify the accompanying atrocities. Thus, natural honor must be informed by ethical honor such that citizens realize that killing is never genuinely honorable despite the importance of fighting disrespect.

Therefore, in the political context, the Kantian reform of honor does not mean the replacement of natural honor with ethical honor. Rather, it amounts to a particular reconciliation between natural and ethical honor. While Kant consistently maintains the gap between politics and ethics and between right and virtue, nonmoral motivations with moral effects can help bridge the gap. Admittedly, actions taken out of the concern for social opinion are fundamentally heteronomous and lack moral worth, but they do not have to be morally *wrong*.[39] As "the constant companion of virtue," natural honor is not only useful in an imperfect world for individuals to fight disrespect but also more compatible with virtue and morality than other nonmoral motivations, such as self-interest, which may devalue dignity and thus conflict with morality. Therefore, even if we resort to natural honor as a motivation to fight disrespect, it does not block our path toward true ethical honor. Natural honor becomes morally *wrong* only when its content is misidentified with vicious maxims. To avoid this misidentification and keep the justifiable fight against disrespect from violating moral principles, what is necessary for the reform of honor is to combine the *content* of ethical honor, namely, the equal respect toward others, with the form of natural honor, namely, the strong motivation to defend oneself from disrespect. Not all citizens are virtuous, and some may even be devilish, but when the reformed honor of at least some groups is consistent with the moral law, social opinion combines both the motivating power of natural honor that provokes firm responses to disrespect and the moral content of ethical honor that constrains such responses from deviating from moral principles. If Rousseau inspired Kant to retain his sense of honor but replace his old and disrespectful code of honor with a new and respectful one, then Kant could inspire us to do so too. In fact, one reason that dueling is no longer justifiable among Westerners is neither that they have become virtuous nor that they have lost their sense of honor but that their codes of honor have changed for good.[40]

[39]Kant is clear about the distinctions among morally worthy, morally wrong, and morally indifferent actions (*MM*, 14–16 [6:221–23]).

[40]Kwame Appiah, *The Honor Code* (New York: Norton, 2010), 1–51.

Conclusion

I began this article with Kant's emphasis on honor in his personal life and practical philosophy and with the debate regarding Kant's mixed attitude toward honor. Elaborating on the two types of Kantian honor and their dilemma, I have made it clear that this debate persists if we focus exclusively on Kant's ethics. Owing to its heteronomous and thus morally inferior nature, natural honor is incompatible with ethical honor. Neglecting Kant's praise of natural honor may be unfair to his practical philosophy, but exaggerating it undoubtedly conflicts with his ethics.

The dilemma disappears when we turn to Kant's political theory, a branch of moral philosophy that admits of empirical and contingent assumptions about human nature. Both natural and ethical honor are premised on equality and provide people with the moral strength necessary to fight disrespect, which is inevitable in the imperfect world that Kant's political theory assumes and which political authority is ill-equipped to punish. Although natural honor is not virtuous, it better motivates citizens to defend themselves from disrespect and thus serves a moral purpose in political life. Although ethical honor is not only too demanding for a rightful political life but also less able to motivate effective actions against disrespect, the moral law intrinsic to its content is necessary for citizens to follow moral principles when defending their honor from disrespect. With a reformed honor that combines the content of ethical honor and the form of natural honor, citizens who are not necessarily virtuous can fight disrespect in a principled way and thus advance a political life of mutual respect.

This account of Kantian honor sheds new light not only on Kant's own philosophy but also on contemporary political theory in general. Our political world remains similar to Kant's in that not all citizens are virtuous and that disrespect remains pervasive. Racial disrespect, for example, disturbs justice in the United States and the well-being of its residents. While the abolition of Jim Crow laws has deprived racism of its legal foundation, "color-blind" racism[41] persists on the social level, notably in the physically nonviolent way of verbal insults, purportedly protected by the freedom of speech that everyone equally enjoys. Given the long-standing scholarly disagreements[42] about the limits of free speech and its relationship with hate speech, it is clear that we are facing a conundrum similar to the one that troubles Kant's politics: the legal difficulty for political authority to properly punish disrespect. While this conundrum takes time to resolve, it is unreasonable to ask insulted individuals, eighteenth-century and twenty-first-century

[41]See Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017) for a comprehensive account of contemporary color-blind racism.

[42]See, for example, Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate Speech* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014) and Teresa Bejan, *Mere Civility* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

alike, to either patiently wait for its resolution or simply ignore the insult. In effect, such a request is not so different from political quietism and may even encourage the offenders to take advantage of the good temper of their victims. This is precisely what Kant rejects in his defense of natural honor despite its imperfection.

If the Kantian reform of honor that aims at the combination of its natural and ethical aspects can help Kant's contemporaries to tackle disrespect in response to the said conundrum, then it is also suggestive for citizens today faced with a similar conundrum. The academic interest in honor has surged in recent years, and a number of studies[43] have examined the role of honor in motivating civil disobedience and initiating social changes in an oppressive environment. From these works, one theme stands out: moral sentiments and their motivating power must not be ignored, and the sense of honor definitely counts as one such sentiment that encourages victims of racism and other forms of injustice to fight disrespect without themselves becoming too disrespectful to the offenders.[44] Unfortunately, little attention has been paid to the way in which Kant's political theory can contribute to this study. In the eyes of both its advocates and critics, Kant's moral philosophy is often seen as the outcome of his unflinching opposition to any moral and political theory that takes sentiments seriously. I hope that my conclusion will motivate scholars to appreciate the Kantian reform of honor and to reconsider Kant's view on sentiments in general as well as their relevance to a world where citizens still have to fight disrespect in a brave and principled way.

Two limitations of this article must be addressed. The first is intrinsic to Kant's practical philosophy. Although the Kantian reform of honor can, in theory, be universalized and thus applied to both women and men, Kant does not explicitly make this claim. On the contrary, after eighteenth-century fashions, he prescribes a particular code of honor for women centered on chastity (*Remarks*, 71 [20:8], 154–55 [20:131–32]; *MM*, 109 [6:336]). Moreover, when judged according to contemporary standards, some of his comments on honor are irredeemably sexist (*Remarks*, 175–76 [20:159–60], 179 [20:163–64]). This limitation does not necessarily mean that honor cannot motivate women to fight disrespect,[45] but we must examine the

[43]See Krause, *Liberalism with Honor*; Appiah, *The Honor Code*; Sommers, *Why Honor Matters*; Christopher Brooke, "Arsehole Aristocracy (Or: Montesquieu on Honour, Revisited)," *European Journal of Political Theory* 17, no. 4 (2018): 391–410; Haig Patapan, "The Politics of Modern Honor," *Contemporary Political Theory* 17, no. 4 (2018): 459–77.

[44]See Sharon Krause, *Civil Passions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Fraser, *The Enlightenment of Sympathy*; Rebecca Kingston, *Public Passion* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011); Martha Nussbaum, *Political Emotions* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013).

[45]Krause, *Liberalism with Honor*, 159–68 argues that honor motivates women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony to fight gender inequality and paternalism. Cf. LaVaque-Manty, "Dueling for Equality," 731–33.

relationship between honor and gender, which leads us beyond Kant's philosophy. The second limitation is concerned with the mechanism of the Kantian reform of honor: *How* can we achieve the combination of the form of natural honor and the content of ethical honor? Kant's philosophy of history may shed light on this question. As shown in its dilemma, Kantian honor combines an individual's sensitivity and indifference to social opinion. It thus parallels Kant's idea of "unsocial sociability," the "antagonism" that ultimately serves as "the cause of law-governed order in society" (*UH*, 31–32 [8:20]). It follows that the content of ethical honor may gradually reveal itself to citizens precisely when their natural honor motivates them to fight disrespect. Thus, although beyond the scope of this article, the relationship between the mechanism of the Kantian reform of honor and Kant's idea of world history warrants our attention.[46]

[46]See Shell, *Kant and the Limits of Autonomy*, 277–305 for a rare study of the relationship between Kantian honor and the development of history.