

The Cult of Dignity

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Abstract

The cult of dignity is one of four stages in the development of society (with credit where due to Spencer). It is a devolution from its sister, the cult of honor. Whereas the latter introduces important institutions, the cult of dignity is a transition phase on the way to a normative dignity-based society during which individualism is excessive and its regulation defective where existing. This cult is knowable by the 1) structure of its offices; 2) the expected objective personality of its officers; 3) an ‘us v. them’ mindset, and 4) conduct that presupposes arrogance, narcissism or contempt (for victim, law and/or right).

The paper also makes two assertions; first that stewardship rather than ethics is the proper label to describe the normative regulation of offices, and second, that the evolution to a dignity-based culture is the only apparent way to achieve a stewardship outlook that would stem the excesses inherent to the cult of dignity wherever found.

Keywords: Dignity, Honor, Cult, Arrogance, Narcissism, Contempt, Professions, Bureaucracy, Ad hoc offices

1. Introduction

The slate of people in Table (1) who have developed metaphysical archetypes to account for reality is impressive to say the least. What is still more impressive is the similarity between them all (in fact the table is abbreviated from Herrman, 2010, p.14). There is quite simply no excuse for college graduates to be ignorant of material gathered from such sources in common. At the bottom are the four social archetypes for an honor-dignity binary. H-B = Honor-Based; C-H = Cut of Honor; C-D = Cult of Dignity; D-B = Dignity-Based.

Table 1. The Metaphysical Construct Behind the Honor-Dignity Binary

AUTHOR	ESSENCE	BEING	EXISTENCE	EMERGENT
Aristotle	Formal Cause	Efficient Cause	Material Cause	Final Cause
Zhuangzi	Amorphous Realm	Vital Energy	Form	Life
Hegel	Thesis	Antithesis	Synthesis	N/A
Peirce	Sign (Firstness)	Object (Secondness)	Interpretant (Thirdness)	N/A
Lao Tzu	First	Second	Third	Multiplicity
Weiss	Essence	Action	Existence	God
Paradigmatic	Essence Will	Being Power	Existence Obligation	Reality Authority
Social system	(H-B)	(C-H)	(C-D)	(D-B)

Each archetype of three or four elements is a ‘function’ which carries its own inherent semantic flow based upon the value/meaning of the archetypal elements. What is common to each of our authorities is a system ruled by a recursive principle that demands that each element in a function reflect the meaning of the archetypal element at the same position. We will be reliant on the ‘paradigmatic’ system, using its unique semantic configuration. An explanation of the recursive property is available using the function directly below the paradigmatic archetype (Table 1), where Authority is an emergent reality of the triad Will-Power-Obligation. In the context of authority, Will is essential to any activity or thought process that characterizes authority. Power is that without which Will is effete;

Will and Power absent Obligation are dangerous. Obligations are like rocks in the road, examples of Existence that must be dealt with; Power is agency, activity, in short, Being. This is how recursivity works in each of the systems developed by these philosophers.

We can now look at the Honor-Based as exemplary of *Will* in the social context of a culture. Most societies in the world are honor-based and some of the most persevering traits still harken to a time when reality was much more difficult than today. Survival was a matter of applying Will. Early in the H-B career cults of honor appeared in the form of offices – constructs enabling concentrations of power (expertise, influence, force, economic wealth, and so on) – to achieve what otherwise could not be effectuated. These cults took the finest H-B traits and applied them to these offices, out of which efforts sprang the major institutions: militaries, civil governmental entities, the professions and guilds, etc. Thus the C-H is characterized as the *Power* to effectuate necessary goods for society.

The Cult of Dignity comes next and expresses *Obligation* – or rather highlights it – by virtue of its failure to obligate itself to the high goals of the honor cult. It is also an office (for single, multiple or institutional occupants) but takes on the worst honor-based traits, which we will investigate anon. Lastly, the Dignity-Based label is associated with the emergent *Authority* in the archetype. This is because a normative D-B moiety takes its worth (and values) from inherent dignity from which flows an inherent sense of Authority, one which ideally would keep concentrations of power from causing harm. But we moderns have not been so good at applying the brakes.

The concept of ‘office’ is modelled as an additional function obeying the recursive rule. Listing the elements left-to-right of the respective functions:

Sincerity : Prerogative : Stewardship : Office
Will : Power : Obligation : Authority

Jean François Revel (1991, p.19) once made the point that what was wanted in modern society is ‘sincerity’ by which to combat mendacity, a core quality in many cults of dignity. The ‘Will’ to ‘Sincerity’ is equivalent to the Essence of Office. In the office – any office whatever – a portion of the Power takes the form of Prerogative, and for very good reasons: the office entails significant risks, specific to each office, but risks nonetheless. Some of the risk comes from the concentrated power, but we are here interested in the risk that would render an officer incapable of performing his duties, or external obligations upon his judgment to the same effect. Prerogative is the officeholder’s defense against such challenges, offering the application of independent judgment.

The consequence of all of this is the introduction of Stewardship as a modality of Obligation. It is stewardship that prevents under-use, mis-use or abuse of an office, whether purposeful or otherwise. It is the failure to attend to this that generates the loss of an office’s function or trustworthiness – and/or the development of a cult of dignity.

The obligations of office are focused on the office-holder with the sole exception of select prerogatives to which the public obeys as a respect to the office, not to the officer in authority. The obligations of any office are of two sorts; those ‘of’ the office are the duties required to perform the functionality of the office, and duties ‘to’ the office are undertaken to buttress the trustworthiness required for effective functioning of the office.

The essential functions of stewardship are to assure the quality requisite of the office, as well as pro-active prevention of danger to innocents or indeed to the office itself. The duties remaining to stewardship are ‘to’ the office. Such is the prerogative to command respect, but more usually it takes the form of oath-fulfilment. An oath, after all, is a promise to be held culpable should duty go awry; it is reliance on oath-conditions that a client can feel safe with the office-holder. Wherever this cannot be assumed, the client is exposed to ‘adverse reliance’: having to *rely* on the officeholder risks *adverse* outcomes.

We can summarize from Nichols (1987: 136); in brackets are stewardship substitutions in light of the concepts of office. Summarizing the Socratic notion of the ‘happy soul’ –

The unjust soul cannot be happy, Socrates concludes, because in it the many-headed beast [cult of dignity membership] runs riot. Socrates leaves to implication the happiness of the just man [steward], the human being ‘in control’, ‘nourishing and cultivating the tame heads [duties] while hindering the growth of the savage ones [proactive prevention of dysfunction]’ and ‘making the lion’s nature [concentrated power] an ally’ (589 a-b from *The Republic*).

2. Literature Review

Background on Peirce and Whitehead, the two most prominent and significant forerunners of the present metaphysical approach, will include Eco (1978), Will (1988), Sebeok (1991), Herrman (2015) and Auxier and Herstein (2017).

Forerunners to the cultural typology are 1) the anthropological studies specifically of *honor* (Peristiani, 1966; Herzfeld, 1980; Miller, 1993; 1997) and 2) the more recent inroads in legal theory specific to human *dignity* (U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948; Meyer & Parent, 1992; Kretzmer & Klein, 2002). The first (and only) two researchers to apply them as a viable typology – a parent binary – are Kamir (2002, 2006, 2015) and Herrman (2016b, 2017b).

The aim of this paper is to introduce the ‘cult of dignity’ which, along with the ‘cult of honor’ (Herrman, 2016b), are additions to the honor-dignity binary not elsewhere found. Furthermore, we offer the assertion that the listing of: honor-based, cult of honor, cult of dignity and dignity-based represents a continuum, stating the order in which these appear in the ontology of society.

3. The Frailties of Office

F. C. S. Schiller (1930: 2) states a truism as appropriate to offices as to institutions (which are in any case composite offices):

All human institutions have a way of growing into perversions of their original purpose that block its attainment. . . . Those who run the institutions are allowed to acquire interests that conflict with the professed purpose of the institutions they serve.

In a dignity-based society dignity is inherent, whence rights also. In the real world, institutions thus exist for the individual’s rights, whereas in the honor-based society the individual serves the community and its institutions reflect that fact. As modernity has historically canvassed and engulfed the world, various degrees of assimilation to dignity-based traits have been observed, to the effect that, for example, individualism becomes fashionable to the disadvantage of a former honor-based value. This process can occur in various ways and with varying results, but we can offer a general example that illustrates much of what we are wanting to communicate.

Boguslaw (1968: 59-60) illustrates how modern American research labs and institutes fit a pattern of declination. Our view is that the declination is in fact that of C-H to C-D. He begins, in Figure (1), with a four-part recitation of the ‘classic’ scientific values – our idealized ‘cult of honor’ approach, based largely on Merton (1968: 604-615) and Storer (1966: 78-79). He then proceeds to characterize what he takes to be prevailing norms, paralleling them against the previous four as if to generate his own four ‘dimensions’ – these latter the very epitome of a cult of dignity.

<i>CULT OF HONOR</i>	<i>CULT OF DIGNITY</i>
1) <i>Universalism</i> – objectivity reigns over personal aspiration;	1) <i>Particularism</i> – “[He who] proved the superiority of...a rival research society would rapidly find himself ostracized...”
2) <i>Communality</i> – collaborative endeavors where “reward for... achievement should be restricted to recognition and esteem”	2) <i>Miserism</i> – “[It is] necessary to be a miser and hoard one’s own findings to prevent use by rivals
3) <i>Disinterestedness</i> – no explanation required	3) <i>Interestedness</i> – “Or, ‘Are you kidding?’
4) <i>Organized skepticism</i> – each scientist held responsible for self- and other-accountability	4) <i>Organized dogmatism</i> – “Above all, one must not raise significant questions about previous [in-house] research... it is behavior best described as traitorous”
(a)	(b)

Figure 1. The Declination from C-H to C-D

But why is the second listing called a ‘cult of dignity’? Isn’t dignity something good? Aren’t cults by definition bad? Of course dignity is a good, and indeed it is so considered in honor-based societies as well, where it amounts to the ‘backbone of honor’ (my phrase), perhaps equivalently stated in reverse, with Graber (2011, p.168): ‘Honor is surplus dignity’.

Furthermore, those who are dignity cultists will everywhere echo these same sentiments. The problem is that their actions betray their protestations as hypocritical; for the dignity cultist feels certain to deserve whatever advantages can be wrestled from whatever the ethical mire. There is no stewardship suggestion of ‘spreading the wealth’ as in so many honor-based groups. In fact, it has happened more than a few times that a dignity cultist not only hoarded but worked silently, effectively, behind the scenes to prevent the protective shroud of stewardship from protecting those in adverse reliance. Thus, for example (Scofield, 2016), “CEOs are provided with colossal nest eggs— monthly retirement checks ranging from more than \$100,000 to more than \$1,000,000— while at the same time many of their companies pursue strategies that erode retirement security for their employees.”

Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914), the American philosopher, had a keen sensibility for human frailty and described our cult well-nigh perfectly (1931, §1.75): “The old-fashioned political economist adored, as alone capable of redeeming the human race, the glorious principle of individual greed, although, as this principle requires for its action hypocrisy and fraud, he generally threw in some dash of inconsistent concessions to virtue, as a sop to the vulgar Cerberus. But it is easy to see that the only kind of science this principle would favor would be such as is immediately remunerative with a great preference for such as can be kept secret....”

In the abstract, a cult needn’t be good or bad; it just is what it is, namely, a sliver from the best social values edited and styled accordingly, and given special emphasis even at risk of laying a larger claim to public esteem than is warranted. In the case of the honor cult, the system is set up to ensure that very public esteem. The best values have been reified in the stewardship of offices. In the dignity cult, on the other hand, stewardship values are discounted at the feet of profit and pride.

In order not to appear oppressive in today’s environment, the honor-based characteristics of research from Figure (1) must presume two things above all: an adequate salary, and pride among the community for special contributions. Think of sports figures paid well and earning pride of place for quality play. They are a part of an honor-based team where honor means respect for the group mediated through the quality of one’s own conduct and play. H-B groups tend to confer an office as the *reward* for service or some form of esteemed success. Dignity-based persons are generally on the same page regarding the nature of most offices: they exist as opportunities to perform a *service*. When the H-B community cannot or will not pay an adequate salary the office is quickly mired under endemic corruption.

With a communitarian backdrop, the honor cult requires that everyone realize that any errors or faults will be dealt with and must come to the attention of an authority. The punishment, if any, need not be public and usually is not. The point is for all to report themselves as a matter of course and necessity so that reporting on others is rendered rare. Think of the professional golfer. No profession has so well upheld the cult of honor in an American sporting environment.

When the fruits of office-holding become strictly a function of monetary reward, problems creep in if the money is not forthcoming or if there is significant jealousy amongst office-holders. But they creep in anyway, for the office-holder will start working as much on behalf of his money as for his client. It matters not how the money arrives; determining remuneration based on value to the client in no way precludes the risk of placing an office-holder’s self-interest ahead of the client. These are issues observed by everyone. The problem comes in getting everyone together in the effort to keep stewardship alive and well.

What we generally expect to see in offices typifying the cult of dignity can be arranged as structure or as personality, the latter (in Fig. 2.) taken from Keough (2008).

Structure	Personality
Power has its privileges	Be infallible
Centralized authority	Risk too little or too much
Autocratic leadership	Love bureaucracy
Heavy on structure and rules	Be inflexible
Low tolerance for deviants	Isolate yourself
Loyalty-directed	Play close to the foul line
Contempt for outsiders	Keep all others ignorant

Figure 2. The Cult Characteristics

4. The Cult Personality

An unstated and rarely heard mantra of the dignity cultist provides the underlying explanation aback the commonplace of ‘feeling deserving’ of more than what the office warrants. In a phrase: ‘My dignity is better than your dignity’. There does sound something off-putting in this, as though we were prejudiced and willing to enjoin a label out of misplaced righteousness. Yet for the bad odor, it is nonetheless accurate enough. It strikes a parallel with ‘institutional racism’ – we are not accusing people of racism in that label but rather of unmindfulness of actions that influence others *as if it had been* frank and rank racism. The damage on the ground justifies the label without casting unnecessary aspersions. The cultist ought to know (but doesn’t care enough to be ashamed at) the suffering that results from a principle arguing for his elevated worth. What he gains licitly from the system is not necessarily deserved if a bevy of moralists would more correctly call it ‘unjust enrichment’.

Associated with this mantra is a caste of mind redolent of what Weber identified in associating Protestantism with the right or duty to make the most of life’s advantages. So long as done with hard work and devotion, one need not but wink at the passing downstream defects. It comes across like a variation on spirituality which combines ‘justification’ (a self-perpetuating claim upon righteousness) with a devotion to the means offering preferred ends. In some of the same contexts many accused Humanism of similar faults; it was presumed that the ‘creed’ of human superiority would justify malignant activities. This interpretation of Humanism was treated as a variant of mendacity clothed in spirituality. Again, we are wanting to be delicate here. The issue is unmindfulness at what one ought to know better than to countenance regardless the excuse. When this attitude is endemic to a group we have a cult of dignity. It is less a matter of ‘seeing’ the attitude but of seeing the results amid shameless disregard, and *inferring the attitude*.

Clearly, this is not much to go on and risks over-generalizing a cause from a perceived effect. Still the attitude exists and that much is important in itself. To gauge the existence of the cult by simple, direct observation requires a knowledge of stewardship or ethics on the one hand, and psychology on the other. We can get a handle on the range of stewardship issues by arbitrarily (not less efficiently for that) classifying their breaches. In the form of ‘causes’ intended to explain generalized anger at the professions, McKnight (1979, pp. 5-6) cites 1) *inefficiency*; when with additional resources the office still under-performs; 2) *arrogance*; the presumption “that the nature of professions is inherently elitist and dominant” which leads practitioners to value personal gain as much as professional responsibility, decreasing the quality of performance; and 3) *iatrogenic*; when “the negative side effects of technological, specialized professionalism are... professionally administered injury.”

The stewardship interpretations follow naturally: inefficiency is a failure to ensure the expected quality, a duty ‘of’ the officeholder; arrogance offers the presumption of a failure of conduct to exemplify the trustworthiness of the office and is thus a breach of a duty ‘to’ the office; and iatrogenic influences follow from a failure to be proactive in securing against harm, another duty ‘of’ the office. The classification of observed deficits thus covers the principal objectives of stewardship.

It was mentioned above that an honor cult should self-police; clearly when a mistake by one officer is covered up by another the principle of self-policing is a dead letter and tells us that an important gauge of the dignity cult is in play. It says in effect that the protection of one another from accountability matters more than one’s duty to clients and to the office. It is saying, however indirectly, ‘My dignity is better than your dignity’. The deficiency is of a duty ‘to’ the office and expresses an arrogance that can be implied from the observed violation.

When we see ‘parachute packages’ of several million dollars for executives who argue that market value dictates bonuses despite the ethical injunction against unjust enrichment, we know that something is wrong, and it is apt to be endemic to the group where these excesses occur. This is another deficiency of duties ‘to’ the office, and again implies arrogance.

There is a distinction between stewardship and ethics that these examples have presupposed. The problem is that ethics implies a ‘do this’, ‘don’t do that’ schema similar to law. Some authority has to have prescribed what is right and wrong and attached to it a moral undercurrent. In ethics a moral component arises in every case that need not and often does not in the application of law qua law. Too often we forget that ethics wants to imply a *weltanschauung* that ought to prevent the conditions violative of ethics. Such a worldview does not so much rule the roost in law qua law.

There is no mistaking what stewardship requires. The stress is less on what has been determined to be an infraction than the attitude necessary to prevent them. What is more, stewardship is a far more effective canopy term for describing the requirements of official conduct. In stewardship we can’t help but speak of duties ‘of’ and ‘to’ the office. We mention no such thing in either law or ethics. Stewardship outlines the rationale for the care and concern we all know are required in the prosecution of offices. Ethics and law do not take the office as the basis but rather specific violations

that may or may not imply the office but which are intended to reflect the fact of an 'ought' that has gone wanting. Yet there is no characterization of such 'ought' as would specifically apply to the do's and don'ts of offices. In legal lingo, tort law is situational, not principled.

We can begin to mark out evidence for three primary personality traits, one or more to be observed in any given stewardship violation: 1) failure to be mindful of requisite quality and of security from ill effects, suggesting the mindset associated with *arrogance*; 2) conduct that directly imputes *narcissism* from evidence of satisfaction or pride in the fact of violation, and 3) conduct so devoid of care as to imply *contempt* of/for victims, law and/or right.

Alfred Kroeber, in his magisterial work on anthropology (1948 [1923], p.323), showed forbearance in so judicially (and correctly) identifying shades of the normal and abnormal in society:

Terms like 'paranoid' or 'megalomaniac' do not imply downright insanity in psychology, as they frequently do in laymen's speech. A man may have a definite megalomaniac streak in him and yet be a 'normal' and useful member of society. Most of us in fact can think of an acquaintance or two whom that cap just fits. Also, there are five or ten individuals with clinically recognizable paranoid or schizophrenic or manic-depressive tendencies for every one that actually breaks into such a psychosis. We speak of such persons, quite properly, descriptively and without stigma, as being for instance of manic-depressive temperament.

Much more recently the same ideas amounting to a manic-depressive 'temperament' or 'personality' (nowadays 'bipolar') are discussed in relation to so-called 'shadow syndromes' of Ratey and Johnson (1997) – but with little attention to what in fact presents before their eyes: constellations of *hypomanic traits*. But consider the opinion of Gartner (2011):

The people who generate the most wealth for a society, are much more likely to have what I called a hypomanic temperament. People with this biologically based temperament have, as a stable trait, heightened energy, drive, ambition, confidence, creativity and risk tolerance and are thus more likely to be the kind of charismatic visionary leaders who start enterprises of all types, including businesses.

The 'bipolar personality', the term we prefer, lies in a vast region between fully normal (behavior we all expect and approve of) and actual illness. This personality is comprised of a number of these hypomanic traits that are obvious to anyone who knows what to look for. To assess their prevalence, consider our tendency to elect strong bipolar personalities to high offices without the slightest thought of accountability. But in reality we find these hypomanic types everywhere, especially in academe, art, comedy, discovery and invention. We find them as well wherever there is severe or continual stress. And we certainly do discover them in the business context (McLellen, 2016):

Rewarding top advertising talent [those most apt to bear bipolar traits] with a supervisory position can seriously backfire, especially in today's market. It's understandable to want to reward exceptional workers, but managers often believe that the only way they can do so is by promoting them to supervisory roles. This thinking is not only untrue, it is dangerous. ... Today's marketing environment makes it treacherous to move ad agency employees around without planning.

The relevance is best defined by the article's title: 'Don't Be Mad About Promoting Madmen (or Women)'. For a comprehensive listing of over 100 hypomanic traits see Herrman (2008a, p.8). For the role of hypomanic traits in illegal finances and various 'schemes' see Herrman (2008b). For a classic example in which a primitive tribe self-identified bipolar personalities, see Valentine (1963). A faithful and more exhaustive treatment of these same points is found in Jamison (1994, 2004).

The short and long of this psychological interlude is to indicate that the traits that make for a bipolar personality all too frequently are associated with attitudes we associate with the cult of dignity. Narcissism, for example, is a standard feature of the stronger bipolar personalities, and is also observed (imputed) in some 'captains of industry'.

In normals a bipolar 'flare' is a very occasional and short-lived phenomenon; in the bipolar personality we can't help but take note at so many good traits while we have also learned to presume some of the bad (they can be easy to hide from the public gaze); and in illness the bad actually overtake the personality. Some percentage of 'personalities' will ultimately develop the illness. One can reasonably reckon the prevalence of the 'personality' level at perhaps 5-6 percent of the population and the ill an additional 3-4 percent given that hypomanic complexes are underdiagnosed.

The medical community is in agreement (Davidson et al, 2006) that Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson were clinically bipolar. I will venture to suggest the same will at some point be directed at President Donald Trump.

Below in Figure (3) is a short guide to bipolar personality traits abbreviated from the original (Herrman, 2008a). The

bipolar personality will feature perhaps half of these on a recurrent basis, but the actual components are highly variable. The full bipolar will regularly evidence over three/fourths of them. Try your hand with, say, Donald Trump. I counted 15.

ebullient	vengeful	prodigality	risk-friendly
schematizing	attenuated interest	addictive	directness
redoubtable	intense	scheming	ambitious
precocity	impulsive	shameless	forward
prodigious	combative	resilient	interruptive
blurtatious	thin-skinned	cross-talking	loud

Figure 3. Representative Bipolar Traits

5. The Professions

This section treats of just one commonality apparent across the professional spectrum. It is a species of the C-D hoarding (Fig. 1.b.), taking the form of treating all knowledge as proprietary. The stewardship shortcomings of specific professions will be brought up as they become topical within a given discussion.

Democracy succeeds or fails upon the education of the electorate, for this determines the degree of tolerance without which the tyranny of ideology rears its ugly head. Today's electorate is embarrassingly ignorant in law, culture and behavior. The ideology that has been left to its own devices is one that preaches ignorance for clients. The premises are two: it makes clients more tractable and keeps people from abusing information they are presumed incapable to process. Perhaps the classic example ultimated in a financial calamity. Graeber (2011: 15) perfectly captures the essence –

The message was transparent: leave these things [derivatives, credit swaps, etc.] to the professionals. You couldn't possibly get your minds around this. Even if you don't like financial capitalists very much...they were nothing if not capable, in fact so preternaturally capable, that democratic oversight [stewardship] of financial markets was simply inconceivable.

(It should be mentioned that we will treat corporate and financial institutions as the abode of valid professions for the simple reason that they are first of all offices, and thus share the relations of stewardship in common.) The same 'ignorance' rationale is found in Auguste Comte's *Catechism of Positive Religion* (1858: 275), and reminds us that his system, written from a rigorously honor-based position, demonstrates just how easy it was, and remains, for cults of dignity to follow from honor cults:

For the priesthood alone knows the whole system of the laws of the external world ... Should he...feel the want of some new general ideas, he must go again to the priesthood for them. He must not interrupt his industrial action by a vain attempt at scientific cultivation.

Keeping clients or personnel ignorant creates within the ambit of office an 'us v. them' mentality allowing officers to claim for themselves more authority than is warranted. This is turn reemphasis the bottom line: 'My dignity is better than yours'.

But as a general rule, ignorance harms; as a matter of principle, the pro-active prevention of danger or damage (as well as maintaining trust) includes the education of clients who tend as a result to be less, not more, unreliable and more, not less, tractable. This clearly has little bearing on ethics or law, and yet is clearly relevant to good order and general welfare, something offices are supposed to be especially mindful of, and the ensuring of which is a duty 'to' the office.

The professions as we take the term are in the communication business, meaning that they explain, cajole, occasionally browbeat, and in general educate their clients as a matter of course in serving them. It is a duty 'of' the 'professional societies' to directly and indirectly ensure correct and sufficient education. It has tended to be the case that the professions themselves are typically unwilling, because wary, of offering what does not seem direct to the immediate welfare of practitioners. The result, for example, is that law students frequently encounter 'culture shock' for having had such false expectations of law growing up. The topic of culture theory is avoided in part because there is a fear of offending whole societies, and so on across the board. Recognizing that truths should not be delivered from the working end of a shot gun, they are never to be short-shrifted in an academic setting.

The ultimate downside of our collective ignorance was reported by two Princeton researchers in 2014. The university released a study in which it was convincingly argued that the United States is no longer a democracy but an oligarchy.

Thus the report sent shock waves throughout the informed public. The authors reported (Gilens and Page, abstract) as follows:

Multivariate analysis indicates that economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence. The results provide substantial support for theories of Economic-Elite Domination....

Keeping power accountable is not, however, what Americans are about, and they have a long history at proving the assertion. Allen (1957, p.154) illustrates the issue. After the Harding scandals broke, “the harshest condemnation on the part of the press and the public was reserved, not for those who had defrauded the government, but for those who insisted on bringing the facts to light.” There was insufficient pressure on Congress to keep up their investigations. As for the wrongdoers themselves (p.155), “Substantial businessmen solemnly informed one another that mistakes might have been made but that it was unpatriotic to condemn them and thus to ‘caste discredit on the Government....’” And the likely reason for these results? “The public was in a mood to forgive every sin committed in the holy name of business” (p.169). To examine the trouble we collectively make for whistleblowers, we can’t say that much has changed. Those successful, even at getting away with ill-got gains, escape public wrath. Just let them be successful and they will have immunities.

What is curious in all of this has been and remains the role of the Supreme Court. It has been of late a steadfast devotee of the aristocratic mindset aback a goodly number of our dignity cults. As a matter of legal philosophy, the Court has always given free rein to institutionalized offices, especially the professions. The rationale is questionable: though the Court must never pretend to know a profession as well as the professionals, they are nonetheless burdened with stewardship requirements, failing which negatively impacts service to the clients in a way that will typically place them at not insignificant risk of harm, a concern of law if ever there was one.

6. The Civic Bureaucracy

This section concentrates on observable behaviors from which contempt or arrogance is not only imputable but with the context gives the burden to others to prove that the office(s) concerned are *not* actual cults of dignity. The discussion is restricted to serious ‘conversions’ in which officeholders ‘convert’ concern for clients to their own private or party concerns. These are both presumptuous and of widespread influence, qualified in our estimation to presuppose a cult of dignity.

For our purposes ‘civic bureaucracy’ pertains both to appointive and elective officeholding. One of the worst breaches of stewardship was earlier known to bailment law (Story, 1832 – take a trip through the Table of Contents) as ‘conversion’, often a felony offense, and appropriately named for referring to behavior of an officer who ‘converts’ the obligation to clients into a private or party-based use that is found to result in injury to the client. This is formally a breach of one’s duties ‘to’ the office but clearly it interferes with the specified duties ‘of’ the office as well. The extent to which it is classed as the latter is directly correlated to the likelihood and degree of damage caused.

This conception of conversion is the most frequent and dangerous of breaches we see in our system of governance. The attitude as well as results on the ground are those of the cult of dignity. One serious breach that is actually institutionalized is that of lobbying, American-style, where accepting favors reduces the input of the populace and converts the obligation to represent all into a favored representation of the powerful and positioned. The legislation passed reflects the same but makes the conversion far more likely to be damaging. Akin to lobbying, working on the selfsame breach of stewardship, is the financing of elective office by ‘interested’ parties who fully expect the candidate to convert allegiance in the direction of the donor interests.

The ‘spoils’ system whereby the victor expects to favor a political party interest over the competing party becomes a cultist practice when the result is clearly damaging to the public interest or amounts to a direct affront to the expectations of office. By and large the spoils system is, on the face of it, a breach if only because a failure to be proactive in preventing precisely what the spoils system makes so very easy and likely, namely the aforementioned conversion of allegiance.

What, then, are we to think (and what should be done) when the Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, in league with Republican leaders of rust-belt states, secretly proposed widespread legislation preventing labor unions from supporting political candidates? The evidence is certainly there, enough for a judge to have slapped a restraint on Walker. But while we have equity jurisdiction in our courts, judges are loath to go up against power or against unlikely appellate rulings. So the law goes without respect and harms are done to the broader community by way of serious conversion.

The result of Walker's (et al.) policies would leave Republican organizations as the only ones able to raise money for their candidates. This is the equivalent of Gerrymandering districts in its subtle but effective goals. Everyone loses when our system cannot find its way to use the law it has on the books and in its long customary past. Think now of what sort of attitude it takes to pull off such a stunt across several states. This was a great illustration of the dignity cult at work. It was sold as if by an advertising firm: Everything is just and beautiful in a Republican-controlled world.

The down-the-road impact of these practices are in two major classes of effect. Congress now so favors incumbents that only ten to fifteen percent of seats are at issue in any given national election. Gerrymandering, in the presence of a winner-takes-the-spoils mentality, results in a conversion to the present as well as future well-being of Party at the expense of the public. The second group of effects result from concentrations of power pursuant to the rampant favoritism inherent to our governance as witnessed by our elitist and oligarchic leadership (which now includes corporate America). Together these effects make far more likely still more serious potentialities.

Retired Supreme Court Justice David Souter offered prescient thoughts in a 2012 address. Representative of his theme is the following:

What I worry about is that when problems are not addressed, people will not know who is responsible. And when the problems get bad enough, as they might do, for example, with another serious terrorist attack, as they might do with another financial meltdown, some one person will come forward and say, 'Give me total power and I will solve this problem.'

If we know who is responsible, I have enough faith in the American people to demand performance from those responsible. If we don't know, we will stay away from the polls. We will not demand it. And the day will come when somebody will come forward and we and the government will in effect say, 'Take the ball and run with it. Do what you have to do.'

Apart from history's verdict on the American people's ability to hold leaders accountable, and thus to the somewhat sanguine hopes of Souter that when people know who the bad apples are they will resolve the matter, the recent election of Donald Trump does not ease one's worries, at least for the near term as this is written. But the same fears, if not of the same magnitude, are realized when an agency or other office is governed by an arrogant person with too much power and influence. What Graeber (2011, p.240) recounts from history is certainly possible in today's offices, if in less relief.

Shang was harsher than most of his fellow [Chinese] legalists in that he believed that widespread prosperity would ultimately harm the ruler's ability to mobilize his people for war, and therefore terror was the most efficient instrument of governance, but even he insisted that this regime be clothed as a regime of law and justice.

The cult shouts all the politically correct slogans from the pulpit or rooftop but their actions betray this as hypocrisy. Our government has established several offices without even a minimum of accountability. The worries over NSA activities were discovered to have been well founded. But then the worries over any number of agencies have been shown to be correct. Over the period 2004-2009 the Union of Concerned Scientists embarked on a research project aimed at examining instances of the government influencing scientific findings. A very few examples will suggest the character of the problem:

- Grazing Regulations Include Doctored Environmental Analysis
- Pressure Not to Diagnose PTSD at the U.S. Army and Department of Veterans Affairs
- Coal Slurry Spill Investigation Suppressed
- Analysis on Airborne Bacteria Suppressed
- Chemical Industry Pressures EPA to Protect Herbicide, not Wildlife
- Agencies Pressured Not to Warn Mechanics about Asbestos
- Safety Agency Hides Danger of All-Terrain Vehicles
- EPA Library Closings Limit Researchers' Access to Information
- Hushing Up the Health Hazards of Climate Change
- Designated Spokesperson Required for Polar Bear Travels
- Agricultural Brochure Cancelled Due to Climate Implications
- Evidence on Iraq's Aluminum Tubes Misrepresented

For offices designed to protect scientific findings and the promotion of truth, these instances demonstrate a clear conversion to political uses by the reigning power at the time. It takes a great deal of arrogance to insert the

government into these affairs in the first place. The fact that a few words from a President can upturn the policies of governmental agencies is beyond believability were it not so usual to hear of these abuses.

A different kind of presidential message was provided by the travails of Bill Clinton. During the entire affair exposing Clinton's bipolar personality, everything was stressed before the public's keen attention except for the one fact that was truly germane to the impeachment hearings. By way of contrast, Ronald Reagan donned a suit and tie whenever in the Oval Office. Clinton held sexual trysts in the same room. *This* and not the sex per se, is the violation of office and is the only legitimate reason for the impeachment – the modern version of Roman public law. While the Senate was judge and jury it was certainly influenced by a public impression that was probably not as well informed as it could have been. 'It was just a little sexual 'thing'.'

7. The Ad Hoc Offices

These offices reflect their name well; they are sporadic, coming to life upon select circumstances. They are not at all well understood despite being endemic. The actors involved can be private persons or federal agencies, along with the various professions. Because the ad hoc office features the need to make moral or policy decisions at arm's length from existing rules or guidelines, there is ample room for mischief. We present instances of both success and failure. Abuse of the ad hoc office is a good testament to a cult of dignity in the same way as conversions presuppose a violated trust.

The athlete has no office normative to him or her. But let that athlete become a household word with international fame and it will be a commonplace that both the athlete and his/her public will expect an ad hoc office which reflects the desire of the public to identify with the athlete's success. In such an office the athlete is obliged to maintain exemplary conduct on and off the field; to take part in kids' programs affiliated with sport and ethics. The 'First Tee' in golf reflects these ideas wonderfully well.

Times were when many or most of these offices were at the behest of law rather than personal conscience. Thus if in Medieval England a cow broke through a fence, the next door neighbor, on the mere sight this cow, entered upon an office directed entirely through legal obligation. Thus they were to take the animal, hold it and feed it for three days in an effort to be equitable toward the owner. Besides, it could happen to anybody. Today we have a few holdovers; after a car accident the able driver is responsible for offering care or assistance to injured parties. To flee is essentially a complete conversion of his ad hoc duty, and is chargeable at law ('leaving the scene of an accident'). But this rule of assistance also applies to police (AELE, 2009) who by their primary duties 'of' office should seemingly not have to worry over such actions. And yet they must so take care, as an ad hoc office, within the context of their primary office.

Physicians are required by conscience, oath and occasionally law (mainly abroad) to render aid to accident victims even when they are no part of the accident themselves. Of interest is the legal side, which in principle should not be required, professional oaths being what they are. But as the medical profession does battle with the legal and governmental control of liability and its high cost, some, occasionally a large majority, of doctors took (and still do take) matters into their own hands and refused to obey their oaths to treat all comers. Thus a person prone to lung infections and pneumonia calls his doctor to request antibiotics only to find that his doctor is out of town. This doctor's partner in practice refuses to so much as see this person, telling him that if matters get serious he should just go to the emergency room. Telling words – and the person ended up driving himself to the emergency room, with pneumonia, afraid he couldn't wait for an ambulance.

I cannot easily see how a doctor can avoid the plain intent of their oaths. There is no question but there was an oath-based ad hoc office, a requirement for the partner to see this patient. This patient's medical records were already there. Only one reason accounts for his refusal. Liability. In this particular – and spectacular – violation of medical oath the entire profession has been a party to secrecy and silence (I have spoken to only one doctor willing to acknowledge the truth in the last fifteen years). Failing insurance, patients require to pay up front; and not all doctors will accept Medicaid patients. The result of the liability/malpractice imbroglio some few decades ago, was a resort of the poorer 25 million people to use the emergency room as their regular doctor's office. This was the result of a purposeful policy of the medical profession in reaction to having failed to succeed in their demands with legislators and lawyers.

As for lawyers, they have at least three potential ad hoc offices. One of them is ceremoniously titled 'pro bono'. It is perhaps not as useful in the larger scheme of things compared to 'legal aid' groups, but clearly solo and small firms do an appreciable amount within that category (Hopkins, 2012).

The lawyer is accepted by his/her profession as 'an officer of the court'. Legal ethics (ABA, rule 3.3) acknowledges the requirement "to present the client's case with persuasive force." But as an officer of the court, the lawyer has "an absolute ethical duty to tell judges the truth, including avoiding dishonesty or evasion about reasons the attorney or his/her client is not appearing, the location of documents and other matters related to conduct of the courts"

(LAW.COM). Whereas the first is a duty 'of' their offices, the truth-telling as an officer of the court is effectively the duty of a second ad hoc office since it comes up only sporadically and incidentally. Otherwise it would be a duty 'to' the lawyer's office: "This Rule sets forth the special duties of lawyers as officers of the court to avoid conduct that undermines the integrity of the adjudicative process" (op. cit, ABA.).

The third ad hoc office occurs in private practice when, for example, a corporation wants to know how to get around a legal provision. We know what the lawyer is supposed to do, and we are pretty sure this is shoved aside in too many cases. And we can well imagine the cause: executives acting under the guidelines of the dignity cult. But apart from this last example, the ad hoc office has been of exemplary service to the legal community.

As a very good rule, academics will help no scholar with whom they have no 'experience'. There is no effort on the part of any university to have tenure-wannabe candidates to offer free classes on journal writing and the navigation of the publication process. It is simply assumed that the independent scholar hasn't paid his/her dues and is beyond triggering an ad hoc office among the academicians. About the only reason why independent scholars get published is because they are degreed and/or can show they are in retirement from academe. The publisher should not, but too often does, request a C.V. if there is any question as to experience. As an independent scholar myself, I can attest to having been approached by a well-regarded legal publisher willing to include my article 'Common Denominators in White-Collar Crime' in a collection on the general white collar crime rubric. All was fine until it was discovered that I was not a member of the tribe.

A special class of ad hoc offices pertains to private citizens who adopt a code of conduct within the context of an association or a self-understood social class. But considering class as a social phenomenon suggests that we add specifically social attributes bespeaking ideas translated into common, identifiable and consistent conduct. Thus the moneyed and propertied set (a descriptive class), in order to be an example of a cult of dignity, will be distinguished largely by its social attributes: the de facto membership (they usually needn't apply to qualify) has operated individually and collectively to accomplish what preserves and promotes the class privileges, often and notably in violation of stated objectives.

Suppose that the same descriptive class of moneyed and propertied folk were instead declared to be an honor cult. They would constitute a group that felt that their power and privilege, while useful, should be held accountable, that their conduct should meet certain standards. Such a group would be redolent of an ideal form of aristocracy.

Similarly, patriotic youth submit to drills and a hundred other rigors and learn a style of conduct befitting their military station. As a class it is descriptive (soldiers) and carries social attributes (national pride and patriotism). They are also exposed to decisions flowing from their superiors who respond to ad hoc offices of their own.

There is no such thing as a regulation specifying when a doctor is qualified to practice in accord with military pressure to save money, get rid of unwanted soldiers or evade sanctions for sexual harassment. When these sorts of issues crop up they place officers into a special ad hoc office. There is nothing that guides decisions apart from their conscience and knowledge of military ethics – and their bipolar personalities with that touch of arrogance that goes with the territory. The results have been reported, often widely (UCS, 2008; Dao, 2012; Camp and Norman, 2015; Morral et al., 2016).

8. Ameliorating Influences

Gorer's (1948: 68) observation is truer than he knows: "America seems to speak with two voices, the one proclaiming high ideals, the other negating them with the most unenlightened self-interest." The story of cultural development in America is one of dignity replacing honor as the cultural desideratum. Such advancement (we presume it as such) can be, but in our case has not tended to be, legislative. Our court system has been curiously active in the area, affording many of the leading decisions that have paved the way for various civil rights predicated upon inherent dignity (a term which some jurists felt was inappropriate in a court decision; e.g., Bork, 1990). So much so is this generally the case throughout the world that Dupré (2011), writing in the *Guardian*, claimed that "Human dignity has therefore emerged as an entirely judge-made concept with an uncertain normative basis and definition, generally located somewhere between the prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment ... and the right to privacy"

Herrman (2017a) summarized the path of America back to her dignity-based roots:

If we look to a specific event as a tipping point inspiring a truly dignity-based attitude throughout the north, we could not do better than Abraham Lincoln's response to the Civil War. For the first years of the war the anti-slavery groups in the north were viewed as little more than crackpots; but the Southern attitudes and methods made manifest throughout the war gradually convinced northerners that there was clearly a deep fault line separating the two halves of the common country. Lincoln, aware of this as few others could have been, relied on

it in his famous Gettysburg Address in which he couched the entire affair as one of aspiration toward the dignity introduced by the founding fathers.

In freeing the slaves he had more in mind merely than tactical or strategic motives, though they were certainly present. Lincoln's rationale, made clear in some of his letters, was as simple as honest: neither the founding fathers who wrote the founding documents, nor those fighting the war of independence, ever seriously intended slavery to mark the spirit of a country as the stain that it in fact became; hence it was only fitting to take the nearest opportunity to remove the application of what so symbolically denied dignity as a backdrop to the national conversation or indeed its spirit. He saw the Constitution strictly in terms of the Declaration and Preamble, documents that spoke to dignity as nothing else had before or has since.

The chief source of difficulty in attaining to the dignity-based goods has been (for about a century) and remains the Republican Party, *far more a culture than a political party*. Despite this evident reality, however, there are two subsets, one taking an 'all things business' attitude, the other a Calvinistic sub-type, the 'cosmopolitan' person, combining aspects both of individualism and collectivism. Speaking in the context of two other scholars, Triandis (1995: 15) explains the type:

They form unassimilated pockets in larger communities, holding Calvinist values (Puritan self-denial, Spartan private lives, opposition to the corrupt elites they compete with), and their major concern is economic success. ... They never stop thinking about what they do not have. They are individualists in their motivational structure, yet collectivists in the way they relate to each other and their competitors.

Thus one group never had a bad thing to say of business or businessmen, the other wants business but with restrictions that amount to stewardship. An example of a comparatively 'unassimilated pocket' within the larger society is in fact the business community itself, always honor-based. At its best it counsels honesty, trustworthiness, considerateness, belief in competition, equitable assistance to the lesser amongst us, giving back to the community, and an opposition to unfair or even marginal business practices, within which they are conservative, risk-averse, and ruled by fiduciary regulations punctiliously embraced. Of course the actual reality is quite different.

We can expect Republicans in common with dignity cultists to privately deprecate the 'man in the street' while professing all of their rights. During the Occupy Movement, Wall Streeters were known to suggest that the activists just didn't 'get it'. It simply never occurred to them that their views were born in, and expressive of, arrogance. The great philosopher Kant had at one time a similar view of things until offered cogent reasons to modify it (in Cassirer, 1979: 58):

There was a time when I believed that all this [philosophical work] could effect the glory of humanity and I despised the mob, which knows nothing. Rousseau has set me right. This deluded superiority is disappearing; I am learning to respect human beings, and would find myself more useless than the common worker if I did not believe that this observation is able to give a value to all others in establishing the rights of humanity.

It is, however, questionable whether Rousseau could be as effective with today's Republican leaders. Their isolation from the concerns of their 'base' resulted in Donald Trump, who assuredly has no truck with Rousseau. But there are, certainly among the so-called Calvinist types, a mindset willing to discuss matters. Many of this persuasion have adopted mindsets not dissimilar to John Mackey's 'Conscious Capitalism' (Herrman, 2016a).

But on the whole there is so much stress of traditional culture at stake that Republicans cannot be counted on to make real headway in the furtherance of dignity despite their Christian leanings. It falls to the rest of the country to advocate for dignitarian policies, for only these will ultimately result in an acceptance of stewardship requirements throughout corporate America and our governments. And only such policies will stem the abuse of which we are all victims. The cults of dignity will have to be swept away from within, from a dignitarian attitude endemic to the culture as a whole (Fuller, 2006).

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