

## Honor

Honor, like loyalty, appears to fall in and out of fashion. Neither of these concepts will prevail in a culture for which the implicit demands of personal responsibility are unreliable and not to be trusted. It is our habit, nowadays, to assume that our culture is not one of those marked by a great sensibility to personal obligation. We look back on the days of the Old Wild West, when a man's handshake was as good as his honor. We shake our heads soberly, mourning the passage of all that used to be so honorable, good, and trustworthy in our society.

Are we in fact correct, about the disappearance of honor? Of course not--and each of us could, if he or she put his heart to it, recall from somewhere the anecdote of the man who left his bill--stuffed wallet on a restaurant table in Osaka, to return and find it untouched, three days later.

We have not lost the skill of honor, on a worldwide basis, but we may well be losing, perhaps globally, the senses of care, accuracy, and precision which coincide in the life lived with attention; and that, my friends, is the kind of life that would find snitching money a disagreeable disorder in the balance of things. In other words we may no longer live in a society in which we would make large cash transactions with a dash of the pen. But who cares, in short, whether or not I have your signed affidavit in my back pocket, when I have your agreement in my digital files?

When we return to that wallet in Osaka, I submit, nowadays most of us will leave it alone. It is not that we are adepts of the honor system, or knights in blue jeans. It is that we have shaped out some new value points for ourselves. We know that we have a new value world on our hands—on the edge, hey, of a culture which sees even reading and writing as part of the long human journey to cognitive empowerment. We are pragmatic enough to play thought and construction games when they count and not to stumble through the brush like shackled bird dogs. We don't care so much about the Medal of Honor as about the satisfaction of putting pieces of our world in their proper order and place.