

The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen

By Kwame Anthony Appiah

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"[Appiah's] work reveals the heart and sensitivity of a novelist. . . .Fascinating, erudite and beautifully written."?*The New York Times Book Review*

In this groundbreaking work, Kwame Anthony Appiah, hailed as "one of the most relevant philosophers today" (*New York Times Book Review*), changes the way we understand human behavior and the way social reform is brought about. In brilliantly arguing that new democratic movements over the last century have not been driven by legislation from above, Appiah explores the end of the duel in aristocratic England, the tumultuous struggles over footbinding in nineteenth-century China, the uprising of ordinary people against Atlantic slavery, and the horrors of "honor killing" in contemporary Pakistan. Intertwining philosophy and historical narrative, he has created "a fascinating study of moral evolution" (*Philadelphia Inquirer*) that demonstrates the critical role honor plays a in the struggle against man's inhumanity to man.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Rooting his analysis firmly in historical manifestations of honor, Appiah (Cosmopolitanism), a professor of philosophy at Princeton, offers four case studies in what he calls moral revolutions, attesting to how altering notions of honor can provoke positive changes in social behavior. Codes of honor surrounding dueling, Chinese foot binding, the Atlantic slave trade, and the ongoing practice of honor killing in contemporary Pakistan are all examined to reveal the various dimensions of honor as it relates to notions of respect, shame, and dignity. Appiah argues for a distinction between honor and morality that underpins how and why abhorrent practices so often continue despite their criminalization. While the author devotes too much space to basic historical narrative and not nearly enough to the complex issues of how honor relates to morality and how it can be distinguished from the constellation of notions like respect that he draws on, it is nonetheless a compelling read and represents a refreshingly concrete solution to the question of how to alter deeply objectionable, deeply intractable human practices.
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Review
“What causes moral progress? In this brilliant book, Appiah casts light on the role played by honor. Even though it's sometimes distorted, as with honor killings in Pakistan, this classical concept can be a lode star in guiding us to a better future. It's an amazing and fascinating insight. This is an indispensable book for both moral philosophers and honorable citizens.” (Walter Isaacson, author of Einstein: His Life and Universe)

“Appiah lays out a concept that is not only compelling in its own right but also suggests a connection that may in time help to collate biological and cultural exploration of human morality.” (Edward O. Wilson, author of Sociobiology)

“A deeply insightful exposition of the dangers, the potential and the (perhaps) ineradicable role of the human sense of honor.” (Charles Taylor, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, McGill University)

“This book is essential for us?inescapable in its urgent relevance to the embattled human morality we live within our codes of the present.” (Nadine Gordimer, author of Telling Times)

From the Inside Flap
How does moral progress happen? How are societies brought to repudiate immoral customs they have long accepted? In *The Honor Code*, Kwame Anthony Appiah explores a long-neglected engine of reform. Examining moral revolutions in the past--and campaigns against abhorrent practices today--he shows that appeals to reason, morality, or religion aren't enough to ring in reform. Practices are eradicated only when they come into conflict with honor.

In gripping detail, Appiah begins his work with a portrait of the often-deadly world of aristocratic Britain, where for centuries gentlemen challenged each other to duels. Recounting one of the last significant duels in that world--between a British prime minister and an eccentric earl--Appiah shows a society at the precipice of abrupt change. Turning to the other side of the world, Appiah investigates the end of footbinding in China. The practice had flourished for a thousand years, despite imperial attempts at prohibition, yet was extinguished in a generation. Appiah brings to life this turbulent era and shows how change finally came not from imposing edicts from above, but from harnessing the ancient power of honor from within.

In even more intricate ways, Appiah demonstrates how ideas of honor helped drive one of history's most significant moral revolutions--the fast-forming social consensus that led to the abolition of slavery throughout the British empire, and recruited ordinary men and women to the cause. Yet his interest isn't just historical. Appiah considers the horrifying persistence of "honor killing" in places like Pakistan, despite religious and moral condemnation, and the prospects for bringing it to an end by mobilizing a sense of collective honor--and of shame.

With a storyteller's flair and a philosopher's rigor, *The Honor Code* represents a new approach toward moral inquiry. Ranging from a great mandarin's abandonment of an ancient Chinese tradition to Frederick Douglass's meetings with Abolitionist leaders in London, Appiah reveals how moral revolutions really succeed.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Dwight Case:

Have you spare time to get a day? What do you do when you have much more or little spare time? Yes, you can choose the suitable activity intended for spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a move, shopping, or went to the particular Mall. How about open or even read a book allowed The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen? Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You understand beside you can spend your time using your favorite's book, you can wiser than before. Do you agree with it has the opinion or you have other opinion?

Bessie Barrett:

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Timothy Montgomery:

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