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### Uncertain Definitions of Grace in Baltasar Gracián

In Baltasar Gracián's El Héroe (Pocket Mirror for Heroes), *despejo* is a word used to describe a certain kind of grace that adorns talent, or skill.

*El despejo, alma de toda prenda, vida de toda perfección, gallardía de las acciones, gracia de las palabras y hechizo de todo buen gusto, lisonjea la inteligencia y extraña la explicación* (Gracián, El Héroe, 29).

By this passage, Gracián gives weight to the word *despejo* by setting it higher than a number of other words. It is the soul of *prenda*, which can mean a pledge or, when pluralized, alludes to talents or gifts. It is the life of *perfección*, a cognate exactly equivalent to the word it looks like in English. It is the bravery that enhances deeds, the grace that enhances words and the charm that enhances all good taste. It flatters the intelligence and evades explanation. The kind of grace that Gracián is talking about, *el despejo*, would approach the sublime, in that when anything is adorned by it, *el despejo* allows anything to achieve a transcendent beauty the encounter with which causes human reality to be altered, to transcend the boundaries of humanity itself.

*Despejo* is described by Gracián in such a way that it is a surely unattainable yet decidedly uncertain concept. As such, even its appearance can be deceptive, like a prism that catches the light different each time it is turned. Gracián is confronted with the task of using language to paint a picture of an ideal form, something superhuman, and as we do not paint with words, Gracián cannot use language or any of the human sense to describe it. In my paper I hope to describe the vague, unclear, unattainable nature of the word *despejo* as Gracián tries to define it, and how the concept of *el despejo* problematizes a text in its encounter with the reader.