Chapter 8

The Morality of Military Ethics Education

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Introduction: Modern militarism institutionalizes an ethos of professionalism. The model is the American military, the wealthiest, history's most world-dominant. Its professionalism is an occupational spirit of self-improvement. A military is not truly professionalized without a program of Professional Military Education (PME) with two primary assignments: the acquisition and transmission of the knowledge and skills that maximize military proficiency, and the transmission and perpetuation of the ethos of professionalism -- the mission of Professional Military Ethics Education (PMEE).

American professionalism is an Enlightenment ethos. The American military is subject to the basic Enlightenment moral imperatives governing the fundamental laws of the nation it serves. A military has an inherent imperative to maximize its proficiency in attaining its military objectives. The morality of the American military is an evolving negotiation of independent imperatives from independent legitimating sources.

This essay is about the interplay of distinct, often competing imperatives within the morality of modern militarism exemplified in America's best PMEE practices: its Department of Defense (DoD) academies training officers for its Air Force (USAFA),

Army (USMA *aka* West Point) and Navy and Marine Corps (USNA *aka* Annapolis). These schools are the focus because they are the best we've got and I know them best -- from two years of continuous personal observation advising USNA administrators about their PMEE programs, and from a consequent network of contacts at all the academies.[1] Since American PMEE derived from European models and has since influenced PMEE worldwide, my observations should resonate with PMEE practitioners and participants elsewhere.[2]

Respect: Over the past half-century military culture has been revolutionizing itself, or trying to. The moral progress of military professionalism is best learned, not from its academy required courses on military ethics and military law, but from those on leadership. Oversimplifying, the ethics courses are more concerned with how to reason about exceptional situations; the leadership courses with how a leader is to act day-to-day. Future leaders are presently taught that true leaders live by some Kantianesque principle of respect.

Professionalism has taken the tyranny out of military authoritarianism. Insubordination is not met with brutality. Leadership texts teach the modern management practices predicated on current social science (organizational theory, personality theory, etc.) Officers are to be managers and leaders, not dictators. Respect is to run all down the line, as well as up.

In our current civil society, public denials of the principle of respect are beyond the pale. Military professionalism salutes the principle and declares a commitment to the Enlightenment ideals of equality, fraternity, and respect. Yet, civil society, in the USA and elsewhere, has spent two centuries in conflicts, institutional and interpersonal, over the

interpretation and application of those ideals. Still today, a million times every day, people get astonished to learn that someone else regards this or that act or utterance as disrespectful. What respect calls for in a democratic civil society will always be controversial when you get down to cases.[3] What you learn about the demands of respect in that world is unreliable guidance for success in the military world.

The military is profoundly unlike a business corporation. Successful business leaders can be disastrous Defense Department managers when they really don't get it that the military is morally unlike any civilian organization. From the outside, it is one among many component organizations comprising our communal totality, our nation, our culture. From the inside the military is its own world, a societally sanctioned semi-autonomous legal order, politically isolated, detached from our democracy. This organization has an authoritarian structure condemned by our basic constitutional principles, and by Kant's conception of a respect due all persons -- condemned everywhere except in the military. And prisons.

We all create, sustain, and certify this organization to secure our most essential goal, the survival of our nation, our lives, our homes and pussy cats. To that end, we presume ourselves entitled to empower this organization to do the most horrible, horrible, horrible things to millions of other human beings when we so direct it – and to demand that this organization evaluate and structure everything within it -- all of its equipment, practices and human relationships -- by their contribution to military proficiency. The dominant message we twitter to military managers seems to say that they are to live by the principle of maximizing military proficiency, and thus regard and treat everything under their command as a means to achieving our most elemental end. We empower these

managers to enforce compliance coercively. They are not answerable to civilian courts. The leader's word is the law of the world. Of course, getting what they want when and how they want it still takes skill. Compliance as intended is hardly automatic. Still, military directives don't risk meeting responses of "I quit; I'll work for a competitor." Open-palmed or fisted, their gloved hands are mailed. What respect down the line there demands is limited by what respect down the line is possible there.

Within this world, its new professionalism commands a new respect for the principle of respect. The venerable debasement of Privates and Plebes, once glorified, is now prohibited and sternly condemned with some consistency. That prohibition is dramatic, symbolic, and it ramifies throughout academy and armed forces culture. It nicely exemplifies much of the new leadership style. Constraining hazing and harsh training has been an evolutionary process going back to the late 19th century, taking hold in the 1950's, and accelerating in the morally anxious post-Vietnam military. The data points of the leisurely sloped learning curve are events of moral discovery, controversy and official redefinitions regarding the specific forms and degrees of humiliation and abuse deemed consistent with due respect for bottom dwellers.

Formal prohibitions from the highest authorities are impotent when stated in terms like "disrespect" or "hazing" – until some communal understanding develops regarding the relevant, specific, precise criteria determining the proper application of such terms in a particular case. What one's superiors' will deem proper may still be uncertain. Time after time leaders get dismayed by the discovery (and embarrassed if it's published) that, despite their ever-so clear, prominently-posted directives, some of their most decorated boot camp DI's or student commanders keep dishing routinized cruelties,

physical and/or psychological, with the purest devotion to sacred duty. Leaders get confounded by their trusted culprits' conduct, and even more by their sense of betrayal for being punished for their contributions to military proficiency.

What the accused or convicted say when confronted may be dishonest or self-deluded rationalizations masking ignoble motives of sadism, or callousness, or inexcusable insensitivity. Never mind. The rationalizations would not (be thought to) serve the self if they weren't (thought to be) appealing to principles recognized by the opposing perspective. Before and after conviction the condemned's defense is the argument of the old guard professionals who lost the cultural battle: to wit, however humiliating or painful, the training regimen is permissible and required insofar as it is permitted and required to maximize military proficiency.

The once honored old guard and the new culprits have lost out to new professionals who say or suppose that the military can't be entitled to deny or disregard the principle of respect. Our social contract assumes that we all have reason enough to accept our subordination to military superiors, but our consent would be crazy and incapable of legitimating anything if we allowed the military absolute and unlimited power over us as mere means to its end. Our own self-respect demands that we not authorize an organization that disregards our demand for respect. We'd lose our self-respect enlisting in a military that permits disrespect unnecessary for maximizing military proficiency.

Few old guard professionals have been so impolitic as to deny this, publicly. Most see no need to since they are certain that while of course there are limits to the harms trainers can inflict, the humiliation and suffering they've always allowed are well within

those bounds, and they are indispensable for achieving the needed discipline so essential for successful combat. Even limp-wristed new professionals must admit that they cannot absolutely prohibit all acts causing pain or humiliation. That's infeasible even in the civilian world.[4] The new guard must realize that they still permit and require trainers to inflict far greater humiliation and physical discomfort to achieve their goals than our society allows elsewhere. Old professionals say they are just as consistently respectful. The issue is never whether disrespect is justifiable, but only when and how much disrespect is needed to get the job done and fulfill their solemn duty. They'll concede the possibility of their being wrong on the facts, but their confidence has the strength and size of their enormous collective experience.

They say (in so many words): "If new professionals' sensibilities are so offended by the conduct we commend, if they honestly feel that such treatment is beyond the pale of what military proficiency can justify, we must respectfully submit that they are not entitled to risk our nation's survival just to suit their sensitivities, so to them we say 'Suck it up or get out' – unless we're given good reason for deferring to a sensibility so contrary to our near two century honored traditions, and still longer traditions of respected allies. We rest with the challenge to convince us that the limits of disrespect you lay down don't compromise our security, or, if they do, they are nonetheless limits that reasonable social contractors would unanimously demand despite their compromising their security." [5]

Some of military professionalism finest minds have been enthralled by (their understanding of) Kant's conception of the call of duty and the demands of respect. They conscientiously live by it and devote themselves to instilling this attitude in their students and their other subordinates. They may get queasy from a hasty reading of occasional

Kant comments[6], and then reassured by finding nothing they cannot reconcile with their own training practices.

However, officers who suppose Pure Reason alone can identify the specific conduct respect demands should read beyond the *Grundlegung* and consider how many of the Master's specific judgments on the matter they approve, and how many they are appalled or amused by. Apparently, though his contemporary armies allowed more brutality and servility then our own old guard could stomach, Kant wasn't moved to criticize it. Military Kantians may fairly insist that commitment to Kantian principles entails no commitment to Kant's application of them in every case. What commitments are entailed remain to be explained.

Consider: However much honest consideration is given to the feelings and wishes of a slave, what can be the character of respect of any of his master's actions as long as the master assumes himself entitled to own and control the slave as chattel? What role can the principle of respect play in military morality beyond that of a side-constraint on the principle of maximizing military proficiency setting some upper-bound on permissible acts elsewhere deemed disrespectful? If in fact that is its current role, how is the quality of respect of any individual action to be assessed in a world of human relationships whose power structure, practices and policies are fixed and certified by this ethos? Can there be any defensible, operational criteria for determining the upper bound of permissibly inflicted pain or humiliation in general or in some situations, or is the determination ultimately, irredeemably arbitrary, a function of a superior's sensibilities?

Those who violate the new standards and those who defend them are accused of sadism, savagery, cruelty. They retort with accusations of the opposite vice: the new

professionals are egregiously soft-hearted moral cowards caving in to a corrupted civilian culture, so corrupted that its respect for people's rights and liberties now entitles everyone to talk and act in ways previously regarded scandalously disrespectful. It is a culture so corrupted that its respect for women now obliges the military to jeopardize the unit cohesion and good order and discipline indispensable for combat proficiency just to the satisfy some girls' whims to play macho man. Kantians can parry that, plausibly claiming that their accommodations to cultural shifts are principled, prompted not by political expedience, but by respect for each of the great mass of recruits and plebes and their socially sanctioned conceptions of proper respect.

Assessing aspersions of ignoble motivations is a mug's game. My own sense of current military professionalism is colored by an absence of evidence of some sudden massive conversion to Kantianism. I've rarely caught officers consulting Kantian texts when they aren't teaching an ethics class. Instead I see officers imbued with the spirit of professionalism ready to guide their lives by the findings of science, including the currently dominant theories of social science. Looking at their leadership texts, it seems that the dominant motivation for the new professionals comes from their being convinced that social science has demonstrated that leadership respect down the line is absolutely essential for securing the respect up the line absolutely essential for military managers and leaders to operate effectively. But, once more, causal conjectures here are bottomless pits of controversy, and as guides for the future their value gets madly exaggerated.

The fact beyond dispute and indisputably important is that our leaders-to-be are being taught to develop and strengthen habits of respect in every direction, down the line, up it, and horizontally, just because this respect contributes to military proficiency. The

texts may have a passage or two hinting at some other rationale, but the dominant message drowning out all others is that our officers must value and enforce respect for persons because of its military utility.

Meanwhile, the rationale for requiring respect future leaders find in their ethics course Kant readings is a paradigm of impenetrable philosophical obscurity. Among the rare and precious certainties is that Kantian respect is not predicated on its managerial utility. It seems likely, if not apodictic, that a respect so motivated ultimately regards its objects as mere means to organizational ends.

Whys: What is the motivation for our military service academies? Like many of its allies, America's expenditures for developing the character of its military officers dwarf the budgets for enhancing anyone else's virtuousness. Aside from scattered occasional efforts by local governments at lower school levels, our political and secular civilian institutions generally expend little real time and money empowering the conscience of its citizenry or its civilian professionals. There's no end to ways governmental and other public institutions, intentionally or not, influence everyone's moral thinking, but mostly it is training, indoctrination, much of it subliminal, not education. Little of it is intellectually demanding; little aspires to upgrade capacities for moral understanding and deliberation. Of the pittance we spend on training our police (our paramilitary defenders against violent domestic threats), the least fraction goes toward training its managers (lieutenants, captains, chiefs), and the education of their character rarely approaches the perfunctory semester of professional ethics sometimes mandated at nongovernmental professional schools. Our community leaves the edification of moral character to its extra-governmental institutions and agencies, which do little to take up the slack.

Meanwhile, we build and comfortably equip three large Bachelor-of-Science granting schools for the Army, Navy and Air Force – and two smaller ones for the Coast Guard and Merchant Marine, which I'll have less in mind. We tax ourselves to pay for the plant, equipment, all operating expenses, the costs of labor (management, faculty, and staff), and all the raw materials: the cadets and midshipmen who receive (tax free) schooling, food, shelter, amusements, miscellaneous amenities, and a stipend to boot. By a conservative accounting, we're investing beyond a billion dollars per annum making that raw material into the managers of our means of killing masses of people.[7]

What's it all for? Not primarily to produce leaders equipped with exquisite technical expertise. Our federal military academies are unlike professional or trade schools for dentistry, computer programming, and the like. Cadets and midshipmen endure relentless, rigorous physical conditioning and mindless chores galore while their course content differs little from that for Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) students at civilian colleges, who are commissioned like academy graduates at a fraction of taxpayer expense. Most of the technical knowledge required for commissioning is transmitted as well in a dozen weeks of Officer Candidate School (OCS). As with police lieutenants and captains, a military officer's expertise is acquired mostly post-commissioning, on the job, in the "internship" and "residency" of junior officership, and subsequent training programs, war colleges and the like.

The military trappings of America's academies are mainly ambience, mimicked at private military academies, high school and college. The martial programs and practices are mechanisms meant to mold character. The academies' chartered mission, mandated by Congress, is to produce, not military officers *simpliciter*, but specifically officers of high

moral character. Their graduates have inhabited 24/7 for 47 months a total institution (meant to be) calibrated for that mission. The closest counterparts to all this are some sect-supported seminaries and monasteries training intercessors with the higher powers. Our interests in the saintliness of our military leaders are more mundane. What are they?

One legitimate interest is self-protection. Any nation has reason to fear its military turning against it. However low the likelihood here, the possibility has been realized too often in human history ever to be prudently ignored. A society's armed forces are its *de facto* ultimate power with the might of brute physical domination and demolition. Whatever the laws and political structure, whatever the other operative forces in a society, ultimately its health and very existence are at the mercy of those commanding its military personnel and equipment. Nothing stands between their power and the usurpation or destruction of the state. More commonly, like a foreign army or fleet, a state's military may, without seizing control of the state, be beyond its control and act with impunity in small matters or large. At minimum, as happens here, a nation's military is one of many competing centers of power, each prone to perceive its own interests as coincident with the nation's interests and to distort the nation's priorities accordingly. Against all these threats, a state's last line of defense – its defense against its own defense force – is the honor and humility of its military leaders.

Also, and now more than ever, America is vulnerable to the moral failings of its military commanders, whose injustice, indifference, impatience or intolerance toward other peoples would secure us deep enmity and shame, shredding the last remnants of our leadership and moral authority. Here self-interest commends what justice commands. We'd be derelict in our relations with other peoples if we made no effort to protect them

from the power we bestow on our officers, especially when we ramp up the frequency and intrusiveness of our officers' roles in their lives. The moral training of our military leaders is a minimum gesture of respect for another people after exacting from them legal immunity for crimes against them our service people might commit.

We have legitimate interests in the protection of our world from ourselves. Our defense policy has been intent on maintaining "full spectrum dominance". Our unmatched military superiority is an inherently dangerous reality. We prefer to think of it as a force for peace and justice, but it cannot be that without being available as a force for belligerence and injustice. We have too much power and too much pride in it and too little fear of its exercise. We desperately need devices to keep from unduly indulging in violence to have our way in the world. One such device is demanding that our officers get some intellectually serious schooling in moral reasoning and understanding. As I told our ethics students: "This might seem a perilous, counter-productive policy, for such studies equip and encourage officers to consider the justice and justifiability of any armed conflict their nation orders them to wage, an this means they may question the justifiability of their obedience and service. Actually, it is a bulwark of a free, democratic society that its military leaders have an enlightened conscience. The more dominant our military becomes, the more significant this safeguard becomes for our nation and the world."[8] Only politicians bent on mischief could have anything to fear from empowering our military conscience with the analytical tools for evaluating its basic values and principles. Any attempt to abort this new mission of our service academies should be seen as a sign that some despotism is in the works.

Moral education of our military leaders serves much of our citizenry individually,

as well as members of the collectivity. The nation entrusts its military officers with near absolute subordination of fellow adult citizens, a totalistic control not countenanced in the secular, civilian world outside our prisons. Military subordinates have the vulnerability of captives, for however voluntary their entrance into service, their options for exiting are minimal, costly and can be closed at the government's pleasure. Also, military personnel lose most of the civilian employee recourse to the courts.
The control is massive, and so are the numbers controlled. Even at (relative) peace our armed forces are huge and their turnover is high. In war they may include any number of us, our friends and family. Nowhere else in a functioning democracy are so many legally competent, law-abiding citizens so much at the mercy of the moral sense of their superiors.

A further way grooming our officers' character serves the national interest is that their – and thus our – military success depends mightily on their character. Strong character is generally crucial for effective leadership in any field, and especially in the military, for warfare tests character like no other common human activity. The respect, trust, loyalty, and devotion of the troops depends on their perception of their leaders' character — as does the respect and trust of our allies and our enemies. The effectiveness of military operations depends on the former; the need for military operations on the latter.

Evidence: When the academies hawk themselves to civilians holding the purse strings, they address our democracy, where everyone knows the political costs of a politician's questioning the value of our officer corps being filled with fair minded, decent human beings we'd happily have as neighbors. When our elected purchasing

agents want to be resold on the whole academy enterprise, they want some justification for the immense extra expense of educating officers in the academies instead of ROTC, OCS and other possible paths of ascension.[9]

Academy advocates cannot convincingly claim that the products of other routes to commissioning are not and cannot be as virtuous. I once informally polled USNA officers of the highest ranks whether they would be able to identify an officer's ascension path based solely on their sense of the individual's character. None thought they could. Despite this, none wavered in his/her faith either in the academies as molders of character or in themselves as judges of character. They may acknowledge their fallibility about the effects of specific programs and policies, but they resist conceding that, if enhancement of moral virtue is the aim, the whole academy experience could well be for naught.

Faith in the efficacy of academy character education withers, I'm told, in JAGS after years prosecuting and defending transgressions by officers – committed at much the same rate whatever the commissioning history. One senior military academy clinician privately opines that the academies' principal effect on personality is infantilization due to lost independence and decreased range of responsibility. (Such regression soon enough evaporates after graduation and assumption of "real world" responsibilities.) The anecdotal evidence is not encouraging.

Neither is the only credible relevant research, the 2006 USMA review of a recent decade stretch of Army officer records of separation for misconduct sorted by sources of commission. The findings are not well known. Official announcements cherry pick the evidence. The probability of an unprodded publication of the raw data is not high. The numbers say that West Point graduates have somewhat better misconduct records than

officers from the non-collegiate OCS path, but not significantly better than officers from all other sources combined, and not at all better than the most comparable group, full scholarship ROTC. (Reluctance to release the research has been premised on statistical circumspection: the sample size, some 50,000 records, has been declared too small to be probative. Defenders of their own research have been dealt with predictably.)

Despite discouraging data, faith in the academy system stays robust in some quarters. Perhaps faith in the efficacy of the military regimen as molder of moral character is akin to faith in the unique efficacy of capital punishment as a deterrent of crime, and of torture as an elicitor of information. Such beliefs are notoriously popular and powerful. They have been for ages before there was evidence that could explain and justify any certainty. Passionate certainty motivates searches for evidence to justify itself. People are certain because they want to feel certain because they need their world to be normatively ordered, a world they can make sense of, where things are as they should be, and doing good things, like respecting people, pays, especially when it's deserved, and doing bad things to the bad people deserving it is necessary to get the best results.

We live our lives and run our world on pet hunches. We've had little better to go on. Now things grow direr. Our common sense conception of character is being subjected to unnerving critiques deriving from recent empirical and analytical studies.[10] We're getting better and better reasons to worry that we are all far more clueless or flat out mistaken about these matters than we dare imagine. Currently, while faith in the academies as moral character factories might not be wholly misplaced, confidence in that costly system is not warranted by any facsimile of scientifically respectable evidence.

The academies are to be commended for recently recognizing this, and taking the

first baby steps toward remedying it. Are they prepared to recognize the magnitude of the task they've set themselves? Are they willing to commit themselves to pursue seriously the creation of intellectually respectable measures of character? The task is tantamount to a Manhattan Project in psychology and ethics -- and in this case it's not unlikely that the military may learn lots it doesn't want to hear -- so optimism for the near term looks ludicrous.

My own native pessimism was reinforced during my last act as ethics advisor dissuading the USNA leadership from committing to a perfectly preposterous "character assessment measure" promoted by a three-year special subcommittee (2/3 clueless how to evaluate any such animal, but pressed by an impatient Superintendent for results). Sparks of optimism survive when the High Command listens to reason. Despair settles in when the organizational mindset hampers its mission. Despite – or because of – all the mind-numbing encomia of character, military minds seem to suffer some diminished capacity for grasping the challenges of the epistemology of character assessment.[11]

Though obvious, it is too rarely noted that the difficulties of measuring character and its development differ considerably, in degree and kind, depending on the trait. To take a pointed instance, when assessing the utility of officers studying moral reasoning, in the academies or elsewhere, the first question must be what traits it is likely to influence. Having Marines muddle through moral theories is often abruptly dismissed as worthless, patently irrelevant to the military's mission. All bridges from such refined cerebration to enhanced vaunted military virtues (courage, discipline, loyalty, honor, integrity, selflessness, perseverance) are all too rickety. The payoff of a proper intro ethics course is looked for in the wrong places.

Evidently, the disvaluation of instruction in moral reasoning betokens the disvaluation, endemic in the military, of humility. The benefits of participation in well regulated Socratic battles, though less regular than the effects of sunshine on seeds, are frequent and manifest. Competent ethics instructors live on the common, dramatic occasions when it comes as a revelation to some students that their moral beliefs are not mere opinions invulnerable to all contradiction, that they are subject to and at the mercy of reasoning that literally *compels* assent or at least respect, and that their embarrassment by a compelling argument opposing their beliefs is only compounded by dismissively declaring, "Well, that's just your opinion". Retreat to that redoubt is not an option, not when the argument's premises match your own beliefs, and its inferences run the same rails as your own rationality. The longer you brazenly resist, the more humbling the surrender when you've spent your last clip. Experiencing that a time or two tends to leave lasting, measurable effects on a person's openness to other people's "opinions". [12]

Another testable benefit: education in moral reasoning enhances skills leaders need for explaining the reasonableness of their decisions to superiors, peers and subordinates, and therewith securing the respect, trust and confidence requisite for effective leadership.[13]

Some military leaders display such skills and propensities. They are open to the idea of a character assessment project. They see that they command an unmatched laboratory for longitudinal studies, from academy to retirement. The potential boon for civilian society doesn't excite them. Their conception of the profit for the military is inchoate so their enthusiasm is tempered. Presently they seem ambivalent, less from skepticism of success, and more from a reluctance to recognize fully that without an

answer to the question of how to measure character, reason can never control practice or be truly practical. Without a reliable measure of results, talk of ends and means is idle uplift.

ROI: Despite an undistinguished record for instilling righteousness, no service chief dare abandon the academies and alienate their proud alumni, who dominate the senior staff and top ranks throughout the services. The academies' official *raison d'etre* has resided in that very circumstance. The academy superintendents' favorite power-pointed apologia is that academy graduates tend to stay in service longer than officers of other ascensions, and fill the highest ranks at a greater rate. The higher the rank, the higher the percent of academy alumni. Officer retention rates constantly fluctuate for all kinds of reasons, but the academies' relative success remains the highest. Amortize the training investment over a career and the academies appear to have a comfortably high Return on Investment (ROI). Or so it is said.

The superintendents' case for cost-effectiveness had better be good. The academies would be extravagant failures if they produced first-rate ensigns and lieutenants without thereby producing first-rate career officers serving 20-30 years and becoming captains, admirals, colonels or generals. Recent analyses of the data suggest that the superintendents' case is getting steadily less compelling, so it now convinces few but the converted.[14]

Obviously, whatever the raw numbers regarding retention and rank, their explanation must recognize diverse factors. One such is self-selection. Those willing to serve a short term to finance a college education and not needing a total subsidy might see ROTC as the best deal, while someone eager for or open to a military career may be

more amenable to the rigors and privations of academy life. Also, old boy networks are unlikely to have a lesser role in the military than elsewhere. And more than likely the politics of retention and promotion is aggravated by our military's policy of requiring steady promotion for retention. (One officer, upon becoming a Navy Captain, was counseled by his superior: "This is the last promotion you'll receive based on merit." Readers will have their own hunches how much of that is dismissible exaggeration betraying disgruntlement.)[15]

All the statistical niceties of ROI analysis may be a sideshow. No analysis can be politically decisive when so many intangibles merit consideration and the prospects for agreement on a metric are so grim. Anyway, whether or not it's factored into the ROI, one consideration will swamp all others. Grant the high likelihood that ROTC and OCS and other options could be sufficiently developed to produce all the needed fully proficient officers. We'll never really know since it is not going to happen. Until all the world's lions lie with its lambs, we are not going to suffer a national trauma of losing the academies, and work thru a shaky time regaining our level of confidence in our officers and our whole military.

I sense that many Americans -- and foreigners too --would *feel* threatened by shuttering the academies: it would assault the national and international certainty of the professionalism of this military. The prestige of those schools is self-perpetuating. What we want from our military (and our police) is security. What we want even more is a feeling of security. We want to be feeling comforted when we think about our military. Our nation justifiably enjoys its confidence in its professionalized military. We don't much doubt that ROTC and OCS grads are sufficiently competent, but, in my experience,

even the proud ROTC and OCS grads commonly share the civilians' sense that the academies are the true font of our military's professionalism. If we knew how to price America's – and its allies' and enemies' -- confidence in this military's professionalism we might conclude that at a billion a year the academies are a bargain.[16]

Commitment: Whatever their success, the intent of the academies is explicit. The official "purpose" of USNA: *To provide the Naval Service with leaders of character who will serve the nation in peace and war.* Its stated "mission": *To provide graduates who are dedicated to a career of naval service.…* The Navy's "core values" make it emphatic: *Honor, Courage, Commitment*. Each service branch and academy has its own motto, mission statement, core values, or the like, but every item is saluted at all. In response to the precipitous drop in officer retention in previous decades, the West Point mission statement was revised last decade by its new Superintendent to further emphasize this goal: "to educate, train, and *inspire* the corps of cadets for a career as an officer in the United States Army."

What the nation wants from these schools sits oddly with what the students want. Students aren't being enticed by intimations that their peculiar post-secondary education will induce an abiding penchant to remain till pension time in the military. I have yet to meet any midshipmen (current or graduate) who say they welcomed the privations of their undergraduate years in the hope that this route to a commission would secure them a perduring proclivity for military life. Predictably, their motivations are all over the map. Some come with career uncertainties and hopes that they'll like the regimen well enough to be more settled of mind. Some don't come that way, but come away glad the academy had that effect. Many come with clenched intent to be a careerist, with no need for the

academy to encourage the ambition, other than not discouraging it. They'd head for ROTC or OCS if the academies hadn't picked them – or didn't exist. Taxpayers might wonder whether their money is wasted on them.

Tax dollars may seem more misspent on the many midshipmen and cadets who come with no inclination to pursue a military career, and never share the nation's goals for their academy attendance. No such motivation is required of them. No commitment to service is made until the third year, and a mere 5-year obligation may suffice. No disposition for dedication to the service is demanded for academy admission or commissioning. The services dare not do more than encourage career ambitions for fear of losing too many of the most promising candidates. Among our best and brightest, there is no surplus of interest in a military career – and we dare not let any but our best and brightest command so much power.

The academies continue to attract a comfortably high caliber of students. The minimum physical requirements are unthinkable at any other college. Academy entrants are the swiftest and strongest, the most physically fit and athletic of any freshmen class and the differential grows over four years. They are hardly just jocks. No school admissions process more stringently scrutinizes applicant character. However crude our indicia of character, it's a safe bet that academy students on average have more strength of character and altruism than any other student body. So while they don't rank highest for pure intellect (average SAT's 1300-1350), among all the able-bodied, earnest and decent young men and women in our land, they are an exceptionally bright lot. [17]

Demanding more passion for service from prospective (or actual) officers would be pointless and counterproductive. An adequate devotion to duty need not be a love of

duty, a yearning for its continuance. Absent a surplus of credible candidates, efficiency prefers aptitude over proclivity. Wasting some dollars training gifted prospects who'll never want a career from it costs less than settling for ambitious second-rate talent. Demanding career commitment is impracticable. Encouraging it is necessary and unobjectionable, within limits,

Glorification: The military's self-valorization is among the more audible and visible contrasts between professionalism in the military and elsewhere. Our military's exaltation of a military career and glorification of warriors and particularly their commanders are deliberately beyond what other professions would dare. (The deliberateness is manifested in exaltations of such exaltation, praising the praising, honoring the honoring.) A service career is valued as noble, and so are the aspiration and dedication to it. Any honest workman regards his work as honorable, in the minimal sense of being respectable, not dishonorable. The warrior ethos aggressively glorifies warrior work, regarding it honorable in the most robust sense of being a noble calling, worthy of honoring with the highest honors of the nation - a nation grateful for its men and women willing to risk limb and life, saving it from oppression, or conquering others, winning wealth, power, and glory for the whole nation. No other profession is more celebrated or bears such an exalted self-conception. The most estimable of dentists, teachers, accountants and attorneys get no ticker tape parade, and don't dream of professional exploits deserving one.

Professionalism elsewhere does not urge practitioners to bethink themselves a breed apart. The best respected doctors and teachers get off the pedestals their clients keep putting under their feet. They create a human relationship fit for open, honest

communication. Here the consistency of the military ethos with our civic culture gets strained.

Our civilian-military relations are notoriously subject to tensions, mutual suspicions, and sharp conflicts of values and ideals. The strains can have diverse sources. The military's legal and political subordination entails some kind of respect for the basic principles and values of the civic culture it serves, but the mission it is assigned drives it to develop and enforce a profoundly different ethos that proudly promotes pride in itself, its values and standards. There are real sources of real oppositions, and real obstacles to mutual comprehension. Conflicts are commonly misconceived in counter-productive terms of military versus civilian when actually the alleged disagreements may appear within one or both sides as well as between them. Both sides can be victims of stereotypes of their opponents and themselves by supposing that some belief or attitude is an essential fixture of a perspective when actually military professionalism is not committed to that belief or attitude, and civilian culture is not committed to its opposite. Some military professionals insist that the military conceive itself as subject to "higher" standards than civilians, a conception suggesting some competition and moral superiority that some civilians think ominous and arrogant -- and some military professionals deride.[18]

The ROI on our military and civilian practices of glorification of military service and of commitment and dedication to that service must certainly be huge. We'd be radically confounded – we could not know what to believe about human motivation -- if we somehow discovered that all of our cheering has no tendency to raise the likelihood that some of us will be willing to have their brains blown out just so the rest of us remain

brained.

But, stopping there aborts the ROI. No human activity is totally riskless and costless. Yet an ROI "measurement" of the risks and costs of all our glorification of military service now sounds near oxymoronic. We are profoundly fractionated in our attitudes about the military and its glorification. Many civilians feel certain that a republican liberal culture is imperiled by the glorification of the warrior typical of other cultures. (Never mind that the certainty certainly exceeds anyone's ability to specify the kinds and degrees of excessive glorification and consequent kinds of costs and benefits and persuasively measure them and the risks.) While measurement is beyond us, it still seems reasonable to worry whether our indiscriminate honoring of devotion to dubious purposes carries more terrible risks and costs than we're willing to admit.

Just what social status of the military is consistent with the evolving liberal egalitarianism of our democratic tradition is up for grabs. This whole subject is made more puzzling, and maybe paradoxical, because we cannot evaluate our activity of evaluating and glorifying the military in ROI terms alone. We are not really glorifying if we are doing so only because of a belief in its utility. The glorifiers must and do suppose that the service, and dedication, and glorifying have some significant value apart from keeping them safer. What could that value be?

It seems to be an intrinsic value in one respect: Its value seems independent of any effect on the quality of job performance. Many of the most dedicated may be incompetent, while others who wish they were elsewhere may perform impeccably. Yet, dedication is not an unconditional good. Its value varies with the value of its object. And also with the person's motivations and character. Dedication to the US Marine Corps may

be an admirable trait when possessed by someone of good character. In the lives of the vicious and brutal there may be nothing in their dedication to esteem or respect. The dedication is unworthy of encouragement unless subordinate to a dedication to serving one's country, a commitment to substantial selflessness for the sake of one's own people, or the like. There's reason to doubt that a military organization can be in itself a legitimating object of dedication that makes dedication to it commendable apart from a dedication to some intrinsic good.[19]

Presumably the glorification of military service is due to the basic, supreme value it serves along with the great risks and costs of the service. All that transfers to the glorification of dedication to the service. Professionals generally respect dedication to their profession; their glorifications of it are low key. Our military's need of it is like no other. The job of a standing armed force is to stay on the job. Its job to secure our safety, now , next Tuesday, and perpetually. That is not the performance of some action like a surgical operation or a lecture. We want a standing army to just stand there and stay put. Their job is to be dedicated.

Our civic culture's core values are threatened when our glorification of the military suggests some disparagement of dedication to other forms of community service. And while some amongst us might wish it otherwise, our nation cannot officially stigmatize a life lacking any such dedication, a life markedly more spontaneous. Such lives may be lived badly and wasted, as may lives of unflagging dedication. A nation may properly encourage a longing to serve it with a lifetime in the military. It may honor the service and the longing, but our best traditions don't derogate citizens devoid of any wish for membership in the nation's military. No eagerness for such service is necessary for

being a good citizen. Suffice that citizens be willing to serve when the nation needs them. Society and its state may wish to encourage more, but penalizing its lack is antithetical to the individualism this nation prizes.

A deficiency or absence of dedication is not readily regarded a vice. Dedication is not perseverance, a trait whose potential for contribution to job performance is evident, and whose absence can be costly. Motivations like dedication and pride don't improve job performance like other virtues. It's rather that pride motivates the production of its justification; ambitions and aspirations are themselves means to their own attainment. Yet, again, the drive to have a distinguished career does not strictly correlate with success. When job performance is faultless, faulting someone's dedicational deficiencies seems senseless, and perhaps self-defeating. And when the absence of a trait is not regarded a vice, regarding the trait as a virtue is subject to instabilities.

Propaganda?: The academies are tasked with commissioning a high rate of their Plebes, and thus with nurturing and fostering a passion for commitment and dedication to military service. Elsewhere, conceptions of respect set some limits to the methods and means of persuasion. So there's room for worry whether and when the academies' control over the informational environment may fail to fully respect the autonomy of the students making life choices.

Armed combat calls for extreme selflessness, a willingness to die for comrades and countrymen. The academies need and want to nurture this. They call upon students by appealing to their love of country, loyalty to their mates, sense of duty, their personal honor and other selfless springs of virtue to motivate conduct endangering the self. Yet, students willing to shed their life's blood in the line of duty can get resentful and

rebellious when made to sacrifice some hours to the gnawing boredom of the ceaseless, omnipresent character training they're subjected to. To pleas that they selflessly submit themselves to hours of torment listening to prattling about the beauty of selflessness they might listen obediently, but incredulously. Instead they are told to value this training for its contribution to their character development. In turn, the character development is to be valued for its contribution to their career.

Students swim in a steady stream of stories of the utility of virtue for victory and career advancement. They are taught the 1001 ways that leaders and mangers benefit by respecting subordinates. The constant refrain (rarely sung by philosophically trained faculty, military or civilian) is that success as officers and leaders comes from character, particularly integrity, the pole star of a constellation of moral virtues validating trust and vindicating obedience. Moral virtues (and the training developing them) are valued for their contributions to an officer's proficiency, and thus to professional success; their contribution to the military's proficiency is assumed, but left in the background.

That sales pitch is popular -- echoed at business schools and elsewhere -- and, not coincidentally, simplistic. It is so pervasive even among leaders who better know better as to merit a few paragraph excursus into the heart of daylight.

In the absence of any objective, operational measures of character, its correlations with anything else are moot. Currently our evidence is a rag bag of anecdotes. On that basis, while the moral virtues of military leaders appear to frequently and importantly affect their professional success, only blind or bad faith would infer that nice leaders *always* finish first and nasty ones last. Elsewhere sometimes a John Wooden wins; sometimes a Bobby Knight; sometimes a Leonard Bernstein leads his troops to musical

success; other times Toscanini-like tyrants triumph. Bradleys, Marshalls and like models of military rectitude reap victories and honors, and so do monsters of horrific cruelty toward the enemy or subordinates or anyone in their path.

The ancient idea that virtue is essential for happiness has some truth, but it is not that a leader deficient in moral rectitude must be disadvantaged in mortal combat. Common sense says that different leaders succeed in different circumstances. In some, good character is a great asset; in others, priceless. But, sometimes vices are assets. Vanity has its costs, and is specially liable to be lethal in the military, yet the rank, renown, and charisma of a Patton or MacArthur are often more consequences of vanity than causes of it. (Vanity amongst the cleverest philosophers is no less endemic.)

The virtue-success equation must be complex, varying with the virtue and the circumstances. Physical courage is called for and displayed on the front lines; valor is less tested in senior strategists continents away from the fray today. Circumstances call on specific virtues, and virtues call for specific rewards: compassion and cooperativeness don't occasion the same awe and respect as bravery or garner the most coveted medals. A virtue's rewards have variant contingencies; the risks run vary with the vice. The tests of integrity, courage, truthfulness, and loyalty are *relatively* uncontroversial once the bare empirical facts are known, while the tests of justice are liable to more variant interpretations and evaluations, so the just man's rewards are more subject to luck. Academy catechism says that integrity is the key virtue of military executives: their leadership rests on it, so the organization must value it, and tend to reward it. The same cannot be said about justice, not as confidently and convincingly. Accordingly, though not denied, it is less said at the academies. The trouble is: integrity without justice may win

honors and admiration while its ethical value is suspect or nil.

When what we really care about is simply victory, a success specified without moral notions, the officers and traits we promote come with all kinds of vices. Where and how ethical virtues have a role in professional success depends mainly on how much we really admire the nobility of those traits, not just their utility, and how well we secure their utility by institutional and cultural constraints, incentives and sanctions.

Often the best sanctions seem natural by being effects of extra-institutional norms or rules adopted for other reasons. Leadership by instilling respect and trust rather than raw fear may meet more success when the troops come from an egalitarian culture inhospitable to servility. Also, forswearing conscription encourages an institutional culture valorizing ethical leadership. Moral concern for the welfare of subordinates may wane when their service is voluntary, but political pressure waxes, for the ranks must be filled. When service jobs compete in a free market of employment, enlistment and reenlistment are jeopardized by maltreatment of subordinates. This is among the best, if less cited, reasons for all-volunteer armed forces.[20] Another is that abjuring conscription may brake resorts to military force to attain a nation's ends.[21] Among the most heinous and resented mistreatments of subordinates is commanding them to use violence against other people for an unworthy or dubious cause. (The ever popular idea that universal conscription would make America more pacific defies history and horse sense.) Here and elsewhere the reward rate for virtue reflects the fairness of background conditions.

Any post-adolescent who denies such patent truisms risks being suspected of dishonesty by many mature adults. Science suggests an alternative hypothesis. Anthropology tells us that notions of immanent justice structure primitive people's

perception of reality. Piagetian developmental research adds that infantile convictions of the regularity of virtue's worldly success commonly persist and permeate the thinking of well-educated young adults. It does seem that, despite all their professed cynicism, cadets and midshipmen generally profess or betray some such simple faith in a straight line dependence of effective officership on good character. Many return to preach the word to later classes with evident conviction.

Perhaps faith in the perfect utility of virtue is a necessary ladder, best thrown away later. Evidence of damage done by this conviction tends to be equivocal. Still, insofar as PMEE is owned and operated by officers whose conception of its mission relevance is predicated on this juvenile hope, some anxieties about PMEE's intellectual and moral integrity might be appropriate. There are at least two causes of concern here.

First, trust in the academies' honesty is tested by moralizing that tends to pretend that the sanctions for moral failings are natural and inevitable, when that is rarely true anywhere and less so in the military, where formal and informal norms of secrecy and loyalty present formidable obstacles to the exposure of wrongdoing and effective enforcement. What's inevitable is that the virtue-reward relation in the military is prone to perversion by politics and public relations. Academy moralizing is mocked by the reality of pervasive hypocrisy -- by Pentagon and political leaders' fabricating a heroic death for Cpl. Pat Tillman, and doing nothing (or damn little) to discourage the media glorification of the misadventures of Pfc. Jessica Lynch, while still doing near nothing to encourage the national recognition and glorification due the awesome, humbling heroism of CWO Hugh Thompson at My Lai. Add on to this our nation's doing near nothing to dishonor and punish "our boys" who commit military atrocities (e.g., bombing civilian

water facilities and disabled enemy soldiers) while screaming "war crime" at the least infraction by any enemy (e.g., broadcasting POW photos.) Compounding it further, the enemy war criminals we go after are, rightly, the leadership, while our own war criminals we prosecute (successfully or at all) are the lowest ranked involved. All this makes an exquisite recipe nourishing cynicism or self-deception.

The academies' treatment of such matters is nearly as discouraging as it is encouraging – and it is stupendously encouraging. Our academies deserve to be publicly honored and glorified for honoring and glorifying Hugh Thompson, and requiring its future officer to contemplate the horror of My Lai – and commanding a gunship to kill the next fellow American who tries adding to the horror. The academies are among the rare places in this military and this nation where Thompson gets some bits of his due recognition; this is one of the many ways the moral tenor of the academies surpasses the rest of the military culture and our public culture. But, this denial of Thompson's due elsewhere is not dwelt upon at the academies. The institutional moral courage gets strained when talk turns to the treatment our government and our military have given to members of our military whose conduct causes them some embarrassment. Students are not much made to ponder Thompson's fate at the hands of Congress, the DoD and down the line – or the fate of the officers responsible for the massacre. Students are not discouraged from it, but neither are they encouraged to consider the incidents and patterns of injustice by politicians, Pentagon, and public, befalling our blackest sheep, and whistleblowers and moral heroes who embarrass our nation and its military. However understandable and justifiable, it is dispiriting to observe a pattern of avoiding full discussion of the dispiriting realities of the career to which these students are to commit

themselves.

Character: The other worry about all the attention on the profits of virtue is a worry about the operative morality of military professionalism. If we are aiming to nurture *moral* virtue, do we need to inculcate a faith that we make our fighting forces more effective by denying their managers the option of flogging insubordinate subordinates? Shouldn't our leaders-to-be instead be learning to be willing to accept the consequences of abjuring cruelty and callousness? Shouldn't the "take away" be that brutality is not a legitimate leadership style, however effective?[22]

Absolutely. And not necessarily. There's no impropriety in our military impressing upon its future leaders that respecting subordinates is necessary for their respecting the leader. There's no impropriety in a leader being moved to be respectful by the fact of its utility. But, first, what that motivates is only the respect necessary to receive the respect necessary for mission accomplishment. Determining the bounds of the respect thus required is beyond the capacity of current social science. And, second, implicit in that, it matters mightily what motivational system that reason fits into and where,

Most people are moved by much the same reasons. We differ mainly in the ordering and prioritizing of our motives. Military professionalism may root itself in some contractualist self-conception premised on equal respect and mutual consent to impose a maximization of military proficiency where necessary for survival. Where and how respect constrains maximization is debatable. Instead, a military professional might be a Sidgwickian esoteric rule consequentialist whose secret deepest principle is military proficiency maximization, which motivates an organization to institutionalize a public

morality in which respect constrains the maximizing principle -- but is constrained by the deeper principle when pushed to the wall. And, if the empirical assumptions are right, another military professional might be an egoist officer who profits by running his life according to any of the above possibilities.

These contrasting structures of principles and reasons may come to similar judgments about specific actions, but the character of persons depends profoundly on the structuring of their motivations, and the content of their most basic reasons and dominant principles.

The character of military professionalism is most fully expressed in the character PMEE promotes. The character the academies aspire to inspire is more specific and peculiar than a set of ethical virtues we all have reason to want in any fellow member of our community. Even coupled with technical proficiency, the moral virtues of a decent human being don't suffice for competence, let alone excellence, as a military leader. In the military, some traits like hardiness become vital; for leaders, still other traits like decisiveness are crucial. The distinctively military virtues include higher degrees of toughness (physical and emotional), self-confidence, and earnestness. The toughness risks running to callousness, the self-confidence is liable to arrogant imperiousness, and the earnestness is a susceptibility to sanctimoniousness. (A ready sense of absurdity is an asset in military life, but is not officially classified a virtue.)

Yet, again, our military ethos is supposed to be consistent with our civic culture and to depart from it only in its context-appropriate accentuations. The character of modern professionals is, I take it, a compromise, wherein distinctively military traits are to be substantially constrained by a civilian enlightenment ethos – in evolving ways and

degrees. Finding the right balance is challenging. Our prized virtues, traits and ideals can collide.

Discipline: USNA declares that its mission must "… *imbue [academy students] with the highest ideals of duty, honor and loyalty.*" Actually, not every ideal of duty, honor and loyalty inspires a dedication to military service. The ethos the academies aim to instill (what the military considers "the highest ideals") is supposed to inspire such dedication. An ethos is more than universal ethical principles and values.

USNA further specifies its mission to be: *To inspire and develop outstanding young men and women to become … officers with knowledge, character, and discipline.* Discipline is itself a character trait. This double counting of discipline expresses the military's distinctive conception of the best character.

"Discipline" is a noun naming a trait presumed to be developed by an activity named by the verb. Civilians value the trait as a form of self-control, a capacity for staying focused, unfazed by distractions, impervious to impulse. The military values that too, but its emphasis has long been on fixed habits of obedience and the automaticity of compliance with commands.

The name of the activity developing the trait is sometimes synonymous with 'punish'. The activity is normally impermissible unless performed by someone entitled to control its object. It is a stern regimen difficult to maintain outside a closely controlled environment. All of the distinctive features of the whole military regimen, and thus the whole academy regimen appear to be premised on the assumption that the primary trait, throughout the troops, essential for military proficiency, that the military can much control, is discipline. The prioritization of discipline is the academy's fundamental

contrast with civilian colleges.

The regimen has long been liable to influences by the military value of other traits (especially loyalty), but any reform imperiling discipline is suspect. The recent relaxation of the regime may indicate that the trait is now less valued, its value less absolutely dominant. It may indicate instead or in addition a reconception of that trait.

The academies tout their regimen as contributing to an officer's character, not just the trait of discipline, but the whole complex of desired character traits: justice, honesty, integrity, etc. Upon reflection, this seems *prima facie* implausible. I suggest that they have inherited an honored traditional regimen well-enough designed to maximize discipline, with a well-enough documented record of success. They must promote other traits contributing to military proficiency, but just how this regimen would further the development of most moral virtues is a mystery, while the potential for retarding the development of some prized traits seems evident.

The newly softened regimen may increase the proficiency of the resulting discipline, but however softened it is a form of behavioral conditioning designed to effect a reflexive response to a stimulus. Discipline is not conscientiousness, a disposition to be moved by the call of duty. Discipline responds directly to a command; the sacredness of duty is out of sight. This disposition is unlike the propensities we commonly consider moral virtues, and the differences seem morally significant. Paradigm moral virtues like justice, honesty, self-control and courage seem to be dispositions regulated by some kind of practical wisdom which finely adjusts behavior to respond to situational variables affecting the contextual significance of specific actions.

The hey-day of Skinnerian behaviorism is long past. The extravagance of its

claims of the pedagogical powers of behavioral conditioning is widely recognized. If there be a causal chain from the blunt conditioning to the fine modulations of a moral virtue, the links remain opaque or invisible.

The military wants to avoid instilling habits imperiling military proficiency --like compliance with commands so automatic that the agent is incapable of intelligently responding to an evident catastrophe. The fine-tuning of discipline to get just the right balance of situationally appropriate automaticity and situationally appropriate circumspection has yet to be mastered by our learning theories. The possibilities for collisions of competing dispositions here are not remote hypotheticals. And the problems of installing the right dispositions are compounded by our pervasive disagreements in particular cases as to just which conduct is proper, optimal or acceptable. Those disagreements are nowhere more prevalent than in the contexts of questioning the propriety of questioning authority.

Liberation: The academies evidence an admirable interest in promoting liberated thought -- up to a point. The academies make efforts to avoid producing "good Prussian soldiers" who robotically render unthinking obedience. They want officers to be thoughtful followers because they want thoughtful leaders, capable of independent, critical judgment.

There is authentic concern that what is billed as a philosophy course toward a baccalaureate degree not be a bully pulpit for indoctrination into the conventional code: "the Navy (Army/Air Force) way". Rather than teaching the right answers and testing for recall, the intent is to improve the students' powers of thoughtfulness, and perhaps their propensity for thoughtfulness of some intellectual sophistication. They teach future

leaders to listen with some open-mindedness to dissenting opinions of subordinates, and to question authority – when appropriate. They don't want officers who park their conscience when they don a uniform. They have students study M. L. King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" advocating civil disobedience. They teach that obedience to an illegal order is itself illegal, and that an officer retains the ultimate moral responsibility for his/her obeying an immoral order, and that refusal to obey may be morally appropriate or required.

The motivation for liberating thought is, of course, to improve military proficiency. The academies teach that training for proficiency at routine procedures is insufficient preparation for officers, and that rigidly authoritarian systems risk suffering significant and sometimes calamitous inefficiencies. That rationale is fine as far as it goes, but it stands alone, unchecked, and that is consequential because teaching pious platitudes takes no thought or courage. The devil is in the details of what, when, how much questioning is appropriate or allowable, and whether refusal of an order is required. Such matters tend to be controversial. The military settles such controversies by considerations of military proficiency.

The wisdom of the new enlightened leadership style is readily illustrated with stories of superiors operating with misconceptions of plain fact or disregard of black letter law. The wisdom of welcoming a subordinate's questioning one's values or basic principles may be less obvious. That practice is less warmly recommended.

What is recommended and practiced is a standing presumption, for factual and value judgments alike, that a superior's decision is to be trusted and acted upon. With all the bold extolling of independence of thought, in practice officers bethink themselves

required to presume that their superiors (civilian and military) work with the best information available and would not be deliberately commanding anything illegal or immoral. Some such presumption could be sound. It becomes willful naiveté when (as happens even at the highest ranks) the presumption is rendered indefeasible via such popular supplementary suppositions as that the leadership must have classified information justifying decisions and policies which appear unwise, unjust or irresponsible by unprejudiced study of public information.

Such supporting presumptions may be made more palatable by weakening the claim of infallibility and necessity ('they *must* know'), and acknowledging the real possibility of competing, unflattering explanations of a leader's decision. The epistemic grounds for such acknowledgment are conceded. There's no scandal in teaching that soldiers and sailors have done some horrible things following orders of their military or civilian leaders. Many academy instructors (more frequently but far from exclusively civilians) would admit that the ratio of righteous warring by this or any powerful democracy is not encouraging: it is not patently better than the ratio of right choices by leaders in other domains, where professionals don't encourage habits of blinkered confidence in their leadership. Midshipmen are warned against indulging themselves in delusional patriotism. They read the wisdom of Admiral James Stockdale, wrought from brutal experience, that POW's nurtured on patriotic myth are especially vulnerable to being turned by being disabused of their historical naiveté.

So much for their sense of the past. Understandably, academy leaders do not invite the inductive leap to the present. They have seemed unprepared and unwilling to openly grapple with the issues of the integrity of PMEE at a national military academy

under a regime acting with evident contempt for the principles of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* taught in their military ethics textbooks. When coupled with the regime's evident contempt for its highest commanders, PMEE can become mission impossible.

I know more than a few academy officers and instructors privately disapproved of our invasion of Iraq in various ways and degrees. They were outraged or exasperated or depressed -- and that was before being shamed, agonized by obscene prison interrogations by the Army they had dedicated their lives to.Even among those sympathetic with the Bush Crusade (before learning of the intelligence fiasco or fraud) their bellicosity hadn't the politicos' enthusiastic pitch. Overall, whether for the invasion or against, their responses to 9-11 were markedly more tempered and measured -- enough so that I began ruing the civilian control over our military, an attitude I'd never have imagined my ever entertaining.

However, the faculty's mature, educated misgivings were not as freely or forcefully aired as at secular civilian colleges and universities, and at most all but our more dogmatic religious schools. That was hardly because their worries could go without saying. Not when, in the commons room of the USNA Professional Development Division (housing the Department of Leadership, Ethics and Law), the TV stayed tuned to a rabid FOX News. And not when the students, whose acculturation is a work in progress, are far more prone to whoop it up with the politicians and the revenge-ridden public they come from.

The most depressing and hopeful moment of my academy stay was a Western Lit class in March, 2003 diverted to responding to earnest student requests to help them comprehend how any reasonable, decent American could possibly oppose our up-coming

invasion of Iraq. The hopeful part is that their incomprehension of so many of their countrymen really worried them. These future military leaders are teachable, reachable, and more open to rigorous independent reasoning than prevalent stereotypes predict. In one USMA military ethics class I've heard of, 80% of the papers argued, unprompted, that our Iraq invasion violated *jus ad bellum* principles.

Yet, informed public debate on any issue of such intense, immediate concern is, if not quite censored, not encouraged, as doubtless it will be when the issues are safely past and innocuously academic. Frank conversations with USNA leaders disclosed unembarrassed fears that serious debate on issues touching the students' current or likely imminent decisions might end in "bad" choices.

That attitude is alien to other secular colleges and professional schools. There, such an occasion, when students are primed by intense personal involvement to dig deep into questions of immense complexity would likely be greeted as a supreme "teachable moment". When better to fully engage students intellectually, emotionally, morally, as whole persons? At intellectually serious schools, an instructor, however confident in his/her own convictions, is pedagogically obliged to challenge students to wrestle with responsible opposed ideas. And after all, when it comes to moral education and character development, what point could there be to a study of principles and the past if it is not to be brought to bear on a student's own present decisions?

But then, other schools do not have a comparable investment in their students. They do not run any comparable risk of losing it all in a single decision that defeats the institution's essential mission and its responsibilities to the citizenry. Other school administrators are not nearly so properly susceptible to paternalism. Given the totality

and intimacy of academy leadership control over the lives of people they care about, staying their natural parental dispositions is an act of heroism.

Academy ethics education programs could not blithely ignore the 800 lb. gorilla looming over their shoulders. Thanks to its compliant military, the government had triumphed over a sizeable (crippled) monster, and did not take kindly to any tarnishing of its glory. Academy instructors might be discreetly close-mouthed about the caricature of leadership role-modeled by their Commander-in-Chief. But academy ethics (and law) instructors can't well finesse questions about their government's official military policy and its (re)conception of the basic principles of *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello* and *jus post bellum*, policies whose implementation looms as the lot of their students. How is a coherent explanation of the military's professional ethos to proceed when its basic principles are being violated, clipped, shaved and/or explicitly (if not publicly) contradicted by its current leaders? That hypothetical is an "academic question" with a vengeance. It has not been asked with the urgency it merits.

Quite apart from the occasional, circumstantial, external political pressures, the interplay of moral principles, military rules and policies, and pedagogical goals poses endless nice moral and pedagogical challenges for PMEE. For example, many a moral issue is ill-suited for academy ethics courses because the military has answered the question. There are sensible institutional rules that need to be impressed upon students since so many outstanding, upstanding young Americans enter the academies with scary assumptions. From Day 1 as Plebes onward they are told a few thousand times that all lying within the military is *verboten*. They don't dare dispute that, yet in six or so sophomore ethics classes I had polled, never less than 50% and often almost 80%

thought it fine for the military to paternalistically lie to the press and Congress ("They can't handle the truth" or be trusted with it.) Getting through to student skeptics and cynics that the Navy *really* condemns categorically lying in those contexts is beyond the most talented civilian instructor. It takes a trusted Navy Captain or Admiral to give the official policy credence. Delivering such important messages is wasted time in a philosophy course. Of course philosophical questions can still be asked here, but to what pedagogical end? Military professionalism encourages independent thought, but officers are not encouraged to think lying to Congress a live option, a proper object of deliberation any time one is called to the Capitol.[23]

Philosophy: One pervasive constraint, perhaps the greatest handicap PMEE labors under, is the fault, not of the military or its ethos or external pressures, but of philosophers. The available intellectual resources for PMEE seem to me in a sorry state. Compared to other areas of applied ethics, the literature of military ethics has been intellectually underwhelming, despite having originated centuries earlier. The available relevant theories, concepts, distinctions, analyses, arguments and counter-arguments thus far are not exemplars of philosophical depth, rigor, insight or sophistication. I see little hope for their utility as a guide for professionals perplexed by serious moral dilemmas not resolvable by applications of moral common sense. (All the dilemmas derive from common sense; untying the knots takes an uncommonly nimble mind.)

Our ethical theories are all written within and about civilian society. They are preoccupied with the opposition of self and other, I versus everyone else. The military cannot sponsor that perspective. It subordinates the self, and legitimates only oppositions relating to military affiliation – the others versus my nation, my corps, my ship, crew,

mates, comrades. Military affiliations are moral bonds, assigned, not chosen. Loyalties with your comrade, squad, ship, service, nation are axioms of practical reasoning. An officer's daily moral dilemmas are conflicts, not of Prudence versus Justice (or Morality in general) but of Loyalty vs Justice or Honesty or some other impartial virtue. On many matters of special concern for PMEE, much of the best work is quite recent and remains to be tested. Meanwhile academy instructors must be forgiven their fumbling attempts to navigate students through the moral reefs when esteemed ethicists supply charts calling to mind 14th century cartography.

There is a pressing need for morally thoughtful military professionals with substantial intellectual abilities – the officers who, hopefully, attain the highest ranks – to join with ethical theorists and start reconsidering matters of military ethics with greater seriousness, openness, and sustained reflection. We're seeing a new wave of rigorous, scholarly assaults on the simplistic absolutism of prevailing dogma. Writings like those in this volume and others are presently but a ripple lapping the distant shores of academia, rarely reaching the mainland of the military and mass media. That's how intellectual movements always begin, including the ones that eventually drive social and political revolutions. Noticed or not, the worrisome truth is that those academic arguments are not readily rebutted and dismissed. They have in fact already demolished all the old defenses walled with bluff and bluster. Immediate refortification is a strategic imperative. Right now, the armory of the professional military conscience is exposed, its last bulwark a faith increasingly threatened with becoming blatantly delusional.

Competence: The failings in PMEE are not philosophers' alone. Though rarer than in the public at large, some active officers, in the academies as well as outside, have

a tenuous grasp of the basic ideas of Jeffersonian liberalism. With some, the intellectual grip is sufficiently tight, but their sympathies lie elsewhere.[24] With others, the sympathies are sincere enough, but they haven't much taste or talent for critical analysis of basic values and principles.

USNA has lagged behind its sister academies because its core ethics course, the prime opportunity for "free" thought interrupting indoctrination, has never been turned over to instructors versed in this intellectually daunting subject. Instead, senior officers, most with hardly more preparation than their students, remain in close control, ill-trained and ill-disposed to lead their charges in thinking through departures from right-think more radical than center-left Democrats. For all their very considerable native intelligence, they are under-equipped for much rigorous, dispassionate re-examination of their profession's moral axioms. The explanation for this may be more crass than sinister: in the judgment of some well-placed senior officers, the academy has run the course on the cheap. Penny-wise, pound-foolish economizing imperils the whole mission.

The native intelligence of such instructors is ample (though likely below the self-assessments of successful careerists), but intelligence comes in many kinds, many not helpful here, and some talent is needed, and more knowledge than any instructor's summer training course can provide. Only occasionally do any have near the tiny training expected of officer ethics instructors at USMA and USAFA. USNA's tendency to discount this and suppose that years of personal experience as a commander making momentous decisions will (more than?) compensate for a lack of book-learning is itself evidence of ignorance of the subject matter and its intellectual demands: a case of not knowing what you don't know.

Take one pervasive deficiency especially threatening at a military school. Far more than at secular civilian schools, academy ethics courses are rightly concerned that their encouragement of critical thought about fundamental principles not encourage the spread of moral relativism or subjectivism from the culture to the campus. With its responsibility for life and death, the military's mood is too grave, too earnest (too much given to sanctimoniousness) to brook indulgence in any attenuated sense of righteousness, or doubts of the reality of duty or the sanctity of honor. And mere belief in there being right answers isn't enough. Our military wants its personnel to believe that the answers it supplies are right, or, in any case, what comes to the same, those answers are to be acted upon.

But to belay the students' (justifiable or excusable) suspicions of being graded on giving the moral answers matching their instructors' beliefs, they are reassured over and over that "there are no right or wrong answers here". The trouble is, to say that (and worse, to make a mantra of it) is to leave the students baffled how there could be any value in their moral reasoning course: How could reasoning be improved when all conclusions are equally good? Warning neophyte instructors against self-defeating reassurances is easy enough, but insufficient, for this is a philosophically delicate matter. Considerable sophistication is needed to keep the intelligibility and credibility of moral objectivism afloat while piloting 20+ hours of moral debates through treacherous minefields of reasonable moral disagreement trailing translucent tripwires.

The problems here get depressingly resolved in the academy extracurricular character development programs which are supposed to complement the required curricular ethics course taught, or at least overseen, by philosophically trained instructors.

At all the academies, responsibility for the extracurricular programs is given to earnest officers having minimal philosophical sophistication and thus prey to the attractions of popularized instructional materials by patently second- and third-rate ethicists -- moral cookbooks with nifty mnemonic aids, short order recipes a 10 year old can follow, indigestible distortions of moral concepts, obliterations of crucial distinctions, etc. Here the reassurances that no answer is right or wrong constantly risk exposure as fraudulent by the instructors' not-so-subtle steering of discussion toward a preferred conclusion.

Some of this is rectifiable by sponsoring further faculty education. The benefits might well be substantial. They are likely to be limited. Liberating the moral and conceptual imagination of a mind that's made the grade with 10- 20-30+ years of habituated rigidities is a Herculean task. That mindset is not designed for teaching reasoning about the matters most threatening for military professionals. In class and out, senior officers of impeccable integrity, fully deserving all the respect due their rank, who elsewhere may display estimable intellectual agility, commonly become dogmatic (and testy) about simplistic moral absolutes. They may obdurately refuse to reconsider the legalistic rule that, when faced with a directive they deem morally unconscionable, officers must first exhaust official channels, and failing that, then the sole legitimate alternatives are compliance or resignation. They resist contemplating circumstances where compliance is morally impossible and resignation is morally irresponsible—where it's just not good enough to just walk away.

Our academies exhibit astonishing moral seriousness and fearlessness in making their students ponder the propriety of the German generals' attempted assassination of Hitler. Too often the exercise is wasted, for their mentors seem not so much flummoxed

as incapable of wrapping their minds around the conundrum. Commanders may prefer to believe that they have no real need to consider seriously such circumstances. Perhaps, God willing, unless they play with abstract theory, it would do them no good to think of such things. Would that they could rest confident that God is on our side, now and forever.

The academies repeatedly display surprising boldness in the questions they make students consider, but the boldness gets vitiated and the surprise turns to disappointment, when instructors rely on the dodgy answers. Academy teaching stresses that, unlike an enlistee who swears to obey the chief executive, midshipmen, cadets and officers vow to uphold and defend the Constitution. So, it's alleged, their allegiance is to the Constitution, not to a chief executive's orders that may conflict with it. Serious moral thought does not end there. When the government will not recognize any such conflict is this legalism any better than a transparent fig leaf? Within the academies and without, it seems too little considered (perhaps it's too dispiriting) that the price of the purity and completeness of our officers' *de jure* political neutrality is their being *de jure* and *de facto* pawns of the political party led by their Commander-in-Chief.

Was it really a live option for a general or admiral to refuse to direct his troops to participate in the invasion of Iraq (Grenada, Panama, whatever) on the grounds of the illegality of the chief executive's order? The premises of such refusals cannot but be controversial, but they needn't be unreasonable or mistaken. Yet, however reasonable the claim in theory, does it matter when in fact no Supreme Court would dare question an executive directive to use American troops against another people – unless perhaps the directive blatantly contravened some contemporaneous Congressional limitation of

military action? Short of that, while a subsequent Court might reverse it, no Supreme Court would stand alone against a current Presidential military adventure. (Expecting more moral integrity from our military than from our courts is symptomatic of psychotic political naïveté.)

Consider a case straddling the border between *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*: Could U.S. Air Force Major Hal Knight have successfully defended disobeying his secretly delivered orders from Nixon/Kissinger (to execute the illegal bombing of Cambodia without the knowledge of the Strategic Air Command) on the grounds that the orders were not a Constitutionally authorized exercise of executive power? More to the point: Would it have been reasonable for Knight to stake his career on the hope that he would prevail in the Courts? Perhaps he could have harbored some hope that after (long after) the war a Court might vindicate him, but is an unfounded hope of eventual cold comfort enough to sustain a sense of dishonor in getting along by going along?

Knight faced a 2 x 3 decision matrix. I've seen each of Knight's six options find sincere defenders in a room of 30+ morally earnest senior U.S. Naval and Marine officers. To my mind, such disunity and confusion are healthy, hopeful symptoms of the progress of military professionalism. Midshipmen are made to mull over this matrix. Debates amongst themselves are encouraged, but they are not made privy to their mentors' disarray. On the contrary, I saw no effort to have midshipmen directly observe the moral disarray among senior officers on this matter or any other. What I saw looked like an unspoken policy of muffling such exhibitions and maintaining some illusion of a uniform understanding and acceptance of this military's moral code.

Honesty: Military professionalism subserves military proficiency, so it

permits and promotes independent thought only insofar as a departure from uniform thought contributes to military proficiency. That holds across the academy. Academy leaders worry about heresy. They especially worry about the prevalence of student accusations of institutional hypocrisy. They appreciate that nothing so undermines their efforts at ethos inculcation than the rife, frank student cynicism fed by perceptions of inconsistencies in the regulations, or their applications, or between official preachments and actual practice. The leaders strive for a single, consistent message delivered, in word and deed, by every staff member up and down the line, civilian and military.

The goal may be worthy. Its attainment is a fantasy when self-deception reigns. The hardest thing is to recognize, let alone appreciate, that the higher the standard, the lower the tolerance for shortfall, the more likely that the standard setter, like everyone else, will trip up and fall short, or seem to do so in some eyes -- and also the more likely he won't see it. The standards we avow are the damnedest things. They're sure to bite us in our but's. We don't know how to formulate fool proof rules, particularly moral ones. We keep finding new exceptions, or making them, 'but' by 'but'. Whatever we may think, we cannot survey all that they imply. We don't see everywhere they'll take us, and least of all how it will look to others. The more rigorist we are, the more we resist apologizing for running afoul of our own rules, and resist acknowledging that we've done anything of the sort. We're aided and abetted in persuading ourselves and others by the endless options for alternative interpretation and rationalization supplied by logic and language. Meanwhile that supplier works against us by providing unanticipated possibilities of "misinterpretations" of our actions and intentions.

No school matches the academies' concern with fidelity, truthfulness, honesty. No

civilian organization is as insistent about it as the military with its demands for automatic, absolute trust up and down every command chain. Dishonesty and distrust in the military can be fatal, disastrous. Of course, since the military has vital secrets to keep, and enemies to deceive, and Presidential politics to serve, and so on, military leaders must deal with all sorts of dicey questions about candor, not all of which are neatly solved by silence. Of more immediate interest to the future officers it trains are the conundrums about candor at the academies.

The costs of dishonesty in its ranks understandably dispose the military to insist on honesty where civilians regard the matter as more morally ambiguous – or not really the heavy-duty moral issue the academies make of it. The academies have great difficulty (and mostly don't try) avoiding being moralistic when their real concern is with "good order and discipline" and what they consider the proper functioning of the organization. They create an intensely regimented life, with all kinds of petty rules and restrictions inconceivable at civilian schools. There may be good enough reason for all or most of it, even though infractions are generally utterly harmless actions in themselves and their natural consequences. And there may be reason enough for the academies to demand not only compliance with the regulations, however arbitrary they be, but also complete truthfulness about any noncompliance, whether by a student or by any classmate. The stage is thus set for dramas, played again and again, between the institution and its students, who are naturally appalled by the prospect of ratting on classmates and close friends for their harmless peccadilloes. To their imperfectly acculturated minds, the higher-ups are demanding full disclosure about matters of no importance were it not for the rules, despite the searing breach of loyalty and the consequences of betrayal. (Even

minor infractions can have decidedly unpleasant sanctions, including, if repeated, expulsion.) To the authoritarian mind, the only conflict is between a higher loyalty to the institution, the whole over any of its parts vs. a misplaced loyalty to the miscreant, who cannot be a real friend, a truly loyal classmate, when he puts you in a position where you must lie to protect him. (At other times and places the authority's attitude is called blaming the victim.)

When an institution raises the standards this high, it invites charges of hypocrisy, for bullshit from bureaucrats is inevitably as routine here as elsewhere. As at other schools, whether addressing students or staff, Deans and other officials regularly avoid frank representations of the real reasons for their decisions when those reasons are unpopular or embarrassing. No doubt their flexibility with the truth is often well-meaning: being upfront can be painful, even brutal, and to little good effect. Elsewhere we welcome the costs of the conventional facades, where all but the most naïve know (and know that each other knows) that what is said is other than truth unvarnished. But those conventions have heavier costs in a culture of highly moralized truth telling. (So does grade inflation in classrooms and in fitness reports in the fleet.) The rampant cynicism of cadets and midshipmen about such matters is infamous and unmatched at any civilian school I've heard of

As elsewhere, officials often avoid outright lies by evasion, stealth, subterfuge and secrecy. Far more than elsewhere, the academies have felt needs and real powers to keep truth from coming to light. The usual concerns about institutional repute are magnified in the military, where whistle-blowing risks being taken for a breach of national security and bad-mouthing sounds downright unpatriotic. Our military

academies are, like no other, the schools of this nation, so their PR anxieties rim paranoia. (The fretting becomes comedic at the academy imperiled by proximity to Capitol Hill and the national press corps.) As elsewhere, some institutional self-protectiveness may be reasonable and defensible. It bears special risks and costs when constrained candor must be reconciled with denying cadets and midshipmen any right to stay silent to protect the mates with whom mutual loyalty is a must.

Humility: Among the more ironic instances of institutional looseness with the truth is the puffery, deemed A-OK, indeed *de rigueur* from the CNO down to Associate Deans, of proclaiming the Naval Academy to be, not merely fit and proper schooling for future officers, nor merely very good, but nothing short of the very finest college education in this or any nation. School officials everywhere indulge in exaggerations, but none I've heard in my many semesters and campuses comes close to the self-congratulatory excesses of the naval leadership. They seem captive to a fragile vanity, terrified that, unless the school's excellence in every dimension is unmatched, its graduates – and Naval service and nation - could not be properly proud of the school. USMA and USAFA, I gather, exercise no greater modesty.

Meanwhile, faculty (who weren't educated at the academy) are not so self-deluded to bethink themselves stellar, or any better than competent and respectable. (Predictably, studies akin to weapons engineering have more exceptional faculty.) Rarely are academy instructors besieged by offers from research universities like Stanford or elite small college like Haverford. Some have competent judges say nice things about their work, but seldom are words like 'world class' used of them by the very best in their field. They take pride in their teaching without delusions of their upper level classes

being marvels of erudition and acuity. Their pedagogical strengths and shortcomings are well suited for their students' needs and capabilities. They know the intellectual quality of what they give their students isn't world class, and so neither is what the students give back. What else could be expected when the native talents of the students, while well above national norms, are like those of their faculty: few have the raw brainpower of their peers at Cal Tech? What else could be expected when traits other than intelligence are, quite properly, weighted more in academy admissions, and (the flip side of that) when brilliant high schoolers are generally bright enough to know that the academies are not where you go if your priorities are primarily intellectual? Exam periods excepted, academy libraries are lonely halls.

Some lapses from strict veracity about themselves might be excused as of a piece with the hyperbolic bravado befitting a profession where finishing less than first is fatal. That excuse looks lame when the leaders behave as though they actually believed their public boasts, when they roll out their defenses (a favorite being that classes at elite schools are taught by graduate students, not the prestigious professors) -- reasoning inducing slack-jawed wonderment at whom these leaders spend their days talking to if they don't know or don't care when they insult their audience's intelligence.[25] (Authoritarian organizations are always at risk of having institutional authority kidnap epistemic authority.)

How can anyone with the acuity of senior military officers believe that the intellectual vitality of student life at our premier civilian schools could be attained and maintained after laying on the entire student body all of the academies' required hours of physical training and military activity, from marching to shoe shining and daily room

cleaning? How can one imagine that that miracle could be managed with a student body whose native intellect measures at the low end of the brighter student bodies, and a faculty of little intellectual distinction? Those questions are serious, not rhetorical.[26]

My own (decidedly unidiosyncratic) sense is that academy leaders indulge in too much mutual back-slapping and institutionalized self-delusion. It's not a coincidence that those in charge are academy alums with no personal experience of civilian undergraduate education, and usually no more than a year or so at a civilian graduate school. Mostly they are clueless what it's like to spend years of semesters with a teacher or three of truly world-class brilliance. (ROTC graduates of civilian schools are scarce above academy middle management.) Their efforts to remedy their nescience compete with self-protective proclivities and policies like foregoing external peer review for faculty retention, promotion and tenure. When a Provost confidently insists that they (unlike other schools?) need no such data, one can only bite one's tongue to keep from disingenuously asking: But, but sir, how would it hurt to get this extra, inexpensive, independent info? This admiral gets testy when pressed.[27]

All this puffery may be hardly more heinous than the local hamburger shack billing itself as the home of the best burgers in town, or the nation, or the cosmos. Still, our academies boast of being houses of the highest standards of honor, so it would be fitting and proper if they settled for less extravagant boosterisms. They cannot compete with Miami in football or Chicago in economics, but they have no need to. The academies do not, as whole institutions, compete against civilian schools, no more than Walla Walla vies with Wharton. The bald truth about these schools is plenty to be proud of. The undergraduate education is better than civilian professors might expect. It could

be better still, and the nation would do well to support it. That's not going to happen if the academies aren't more honest with themselves and the public.

If they are to be duly proud of the integrity and honesty they aspire to inspire in their graduates, it behooves them to embody those virtues even at the cost of due humility in their other accomplishments. If there was ever a time and place for a people to resist the deadliest sins of pride and vanity, it is now and here, in this nation and its military. There is no better place than the academies to begin teaching those virtues so unnatural for warriors: modesty and humility about one's wisdom, goodness, powers and value. [28]

[1] This whole volume and particularly my own writings owe much to many people. Few anthologists have been so blessed to have each contributor be a paragon of anthological virtue, prompt in response, cooperative in revision, punctual in manuscript delivery, and supererogatory in comment on my own essays. I insert my acknowledgements here because I have been helped here most of all. This essay is written from the peculiar perspective of a professional ethicist hired to advise an institution on its ethics education programs. It is designed to inform and engage a general public about matters that concern them of which they are ignorant, but it is addressed to my client (and other administrators of PMEE programs) as a consultant's final report on his findings. So, it takes an occasional tangent off the central theme of conflicting imperatives to report some related matter of importance. So too, as an advisor's report, it takes liberties in its tone and trappings sure to scandalize scholars. Where possible and appropriate, scholarly canons are sometimes met, but mostly the essay is riddled with reports from unnamed sources, and controversial opinions unsupported by due documentation. Skeptical readers have only my assurance that my provocative claims have been properly vetted by very well positioned participants at all three academies, who would happily have my expressions of gratitude remain private. While some needling judgments have not met unanimous assent, not a word here is my opinion alone. Certainly, my confidantes often become so because of our shared sympathies, so my sources are skewed and some judgments represent minority opinions, but none are dismissibly tiny minorities. I am most indebted to my most severe critics, especially my erstwhile office-mate, Adm. Hank Chiles, USN (ret), for his extraordinary patience and generosity with his time, effort, and informational resources trying to rectify what he deemed so defective. I am grateful for his saving me from numerous embarrassing errors, and regretful that so much remains so disagreeable. Likewise, I am nearly as indebted to George Lucas for all his many objections, patience, and generosity. The support, encouragement and counsel of Lara Denis and Bredo Johnsen have, as always, been essential.

[2] This essay is written to be understandable on its own but it is better understood with the background of "The Moral Singularity of Military Professionalism", the preceding chapter here. That essay

articulates my understanding of the historical context and motivational structure of military professionalism-- an understanding here guiding what I think worth looking at, and how I look at it, and represent it. If my lens here looks off kilter, check the prior chapter.

[3] See my review of Alan Donagan's *The Theory of Morality* in *Nous,* May, 1983, 303-08.

[4] Feeling humbled by a course grade 'F' is not unusual or pathological; for some of us, a midterm 'C' or 'B' is due cause for shame and humiliation. The point here is only a reminder that these matters have more complexity than we realize at first thought.

[5] To sharpen the conflict, the dialectic in the text conflates distinct issues: What specific trait(s) in an officer maximize his professional proficiency? What regimen most effectively induces that trait. Regimen relaxation derived significantly from an altered assessment of the optimal leadership and managerial traits, traits better developed by regimen relaxation. The text collapses the different ways demands of respect enter and impact these issues.

[6] Some moral sweating may be induced by passages like the third prescription of "Toward Perpetual Peace" that standing armies be abolished "in time" – and some stomach knotting at its clause saying that being hired to kill or be killed "seems to involve" using people as mere means. Still, Kant does not issue an unequivocal categorical condemnation of military service. Most pertinent here, Kant's comments *directly* on the condition of freedom within the military structure provoke no worries about our current practices, except, perhaps, at the margins: e.g., some current constraints on an officer's public political speech seem to restrict the broad use of "public reason" by officers advocated in "What is Enlightenment?".

[7] The figures from the "Annual Report to GAO; Office of Institutional Research, U.S. Naval Academy" are: for 2003, costs per USNA midshipman: $291,289; per USAFA cadet: $346,652; per USMA cadet $383,042. With approximately 4200 enrolled at each academy, the four year totals are: USNA-$1,223,413,800; USAFA-$1,455,938,400; USMA-$1,608,785,600. Yearly overall total:

$1,072,034,400. Why does it cost us over 20% more to produce Air Force officers than Navy/Marine officers? and over 33% more for Army officers than Navy/Marine officers? Nice questions for which I have yet discovered no sensible answers. Caveat: The 2004 DoD commissioned study by the Tench Francis School of Business, *Comparative Analysis of ROTC, OCS and Service Academies as Commissioning Sources*, notes that such numbers, and others reported in the study and cited below, are problematic.

[8] Introduction to the chapter on *jus ad bellum* in the USNA course text *Ethics for Military Leaders*, Pearson Custom Publishers, Boston, 2002.

[9] Just as this book's manuscript was readied for delivery to the publisher, the internet was filling with reactions to a Thomas E. Ricks' column, "Why We Should Get Rid of West Point", *Washington Post*, April 16, 2009 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp- dyn/content/article/2009/04/16/ AR2009041603483 .html>. Ricks argues, like others before, that, compared to ROTC and OCS, all the academies are woefully cost-ineffective producers of officers. Reader reactions, pro and con, heated and humorous, are rich with anecdotes, and some new data is coming to light as I write. I learned of the Tench Francis study cited above and below from a response to Ricks' critics by Bruce Fleming, a USNA civilian professor notorious for unflattering publications about his employer, yet previously unknown to me.

http://ricks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/04/27/usna_prof_to_usma_flack_ricks_is_basically_right .

[10] See John M. Doris' *Lack of Character* (Cambridge, 2002). Doris and his allies may be exaggerating the philosophical and moral significance of some socio-psychological research. See John Sabini and Maury Silver, "Lack of Character? Situationism Critiqued," *Ethics* 115 (April 2005) for criticism and a bibliography of a growing debate that aspiring molders of character better ponder carefully.

[11] Despite yearly teaching a couple classes about Aristotle on virtue, officers don't balk at research proposals declaring that virtues are *abilities*, and failures to act virtuously are due solely to a deficiency of moral courage. They listen respectfully to "experts" selling assessments of academy character

development programs using the same kind of tests used for assessing academic programs. They do not readily appreciate the import of the few basic certainties: e.g., propensities and abilities are metaphysically and epistemologically disparate things; virtues are peculiar propensities: behavior in one situation apparently exhibiting a virtue is an unreliable predictor of the person's passing a "test" of that virtue in some other kind of situation. A perspicuous specification of virtue propensities eludes us.

[12] Academy leadership textbooks do commend due humility, but it ranks way down the list of traits regularly emphasized. Hopes of our military's appreciating the military value of "a degree of intellectual humility" would be more encouraged if its current golden boy could manage a tad more enthusiasm than: "not at all a bad quality in those who may be charged in the future with some very weighty responsibilities." (David H. Petraeus, "Beyond the Cloister", http://www.the-american-interest.com/article.cfm?piece=290.) Actually, in context his backhanded understatement is plainly tamping down the preachiness of his message about a matter he thinks of great importance.

[13] A disposition to consider the opposing opinions of others, and an ability to prevail in open debate that encourages the disposition are relatively readily measured (compared to traits like courage, honesty, integrity, justice.) Factoring for influences is challenging. We may reasonably assume, but cannot readily demonstrate, that these benefits are affected less by the institutional setting of instruction and more by the instruction's quality (an attribute not easily measured apart from such effects). Still, a fair conjecture is that the better civilian schools whose philosophy faculty's PhD training enhances the necessary (but not sufficient) Socratic skills for teaching moral reasoning may have an edge over military schools where fewer ethics instructors have near as much essential training.

[14] Turgay Demirel concluded that "the magnitude differences in retention between the five major commissioning sources often are not large. Moreover, the direction of the retention effect often varies across the services for each commissioning program." ("Abstract", *A Statistical Analysis of Officer Retention in the U.S. Military*, Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2002.) Later, Zafer Kizikaya concluded that, for those commissioned in the period 1981-2001, USMA "graduates

have the lowest retention rates, whereas OCS graduates have the highest retention rates". Yet, USMA "graduates are more likely to be promoted to Lieutenant Colonel than those from other sources." ("Abstract", *An Analysis of the Effect of Commissioning Sources on Retention and Promotion of U.S. Army Officers*, Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2004.) The 2004 Tench Francis study cited above mentions many of the obstacles to forming a meaningful ROI measure for comparing the academies with ROTC and OCS, but provides some of the pertinent data, including evidence that the advantage of academy graduates in attaining the general/flag officer ranks has diminished. See also <http://www.truthout.org/article/west-point-grads-exit-service-high-rate> for a 2007 news report on the sharp drop in USMA graduate retention rates. After their 5 year commitment, 35% of the classes of 2000 and 2001 got out.

[15] Other factors affecting promotion may be surprising. Ibrahim Korkmaz found that "commissioning source has significant strong effect on survival rates with Naval Academy graduates have [sic] a better survival rate than other commissioning sources." ("Abstract", *Analysis of the Survival Patterns of United States Naval Officers*, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2005).

[16] This analysis may supply the needed missing premises for the conclusion of Robert L. Goldich, *The DoD Service Academies: Issues for Congress*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, February 6, 1997.

[17]They'd be still brighter if our academies shed the penchants of civilian schools. How exactly the academies' mission is furthered by recruiting athletes is not obvious when the academic admission scores of almost half of them are in the lower 30% of their class, a predictor of a lower graduation rate. (Data reported in GAO-03-1000, "Military Education: DOD Needs to Enhance Performance Goals and Measures to Improve Oversight of Military Academies," released September 10, 2003.)

[18] The dialectical options are endless, when, for example, many military personnel and civilians insist that our founding documents are products of their current conception of Christianity rather than expressions of nonsectarian Enlightenment principles.

[19] This may be entailed by the moral precariousness of the military, See Ch 7 herein.

[20]See Erik Eckholm, "As Recruiting Suffers, Military Reins In Abuses at Boot Camp", *New York Times*, July 26, 2005 <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/26/national/26training.html>.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22]That lesson needn't be a simplistic absolutism banning exceptional acts in exceptional circumstances. Military honor might not be tarnished by resort to drastic punishments to keep some crew of brutish conscripts in line sufficiently for mission accomplishment. If we want officers of truly high moral character, we've got to habituate them to complex, nuanced reasoning, not sound-bite moral slogans. This is hard enough to teach anywhere. Teaching it in the military is harder for reasons that make the teaching more important.

[23] The distribution of labor within academy PMEE that might seem somewhat suspicious may result from reasonable curricular preferences or inattention. The core philosophy courses on ethics devote significant time to virtues and character traits like honesty, loyalty, justice and courage, whose valuations in the military are more similar to than different from civilian valuations. Inculcation of the values, ideals and virtues that are far more distinctively military virtues and prized traits – like discipline, commitment, toughness, leadership traits, etc. – are left to other academy programs. Such matters are not subjected to philosophical reflection. They might be vindicated by such reflection, but I've sensed no interest in putting them to the test.

[24] That comes out in the still too frequent incidents of military officers, including academy administrators, allowing their religious convictions to color their commands or the esprit they aim to instill. The 2004-7 reports of coercive evangelizing at USAFA are exceptional mainly in the notoriety they achieved. Even among the more thoughtful leaders, there linger hankerings for greater "spirituality" in the military and its academies. Their reassurances that they mean some nonsectarian notion of spirituality lose credibility when they prove incapable of articulating a conception inoffensive

to nonbelievers. Their attitude is reminiscent of Dwight D. Eisenhower's: "Our government makes no sense unless it is founded on a deeply felt religious faith – and I don't care what it is."

[25] Just for starters, for those entirely ignorant of such matters: (I) The academies are properly compared, not to public universities with 30,000-50,000+ students, but to respected colleges with 3000-5000 students where graduate student teachers are exceptional, and (II) the grad student teaching assistants at respected research universities generally (1) teach only one of the weekly three hours of classes, (2) have more interest in, talent for, and training in their subject matter than many academy officer instructors (who rarely have more than the M.A. training many grad student teachers have, and often lack the undergraduate major in their subject normally needed for graduate admission), (3) are not burdened by responsibilities unrelated to their teaching remotely as massive as academy officer instructors'.

[26] Many respondents to Ricks (*op. cit.*) ridicule him for referring to Gen. David Petraeus while likening West Point to a community college. They are all cock-sure that the Petraeus Princeton graduate degree after his West Point studies is proof positive of West Point's academic excellence. Their certainty bespeaks ignorance of Petraeus' perceptions (*op. cit*.) What reads as the most heartfelt part of a heartfelt essay promoting the value of civilian graduate studies for military officers is his report of the humbling responses (e.g., D) the Princeton professors gave the first papers of this top West Point scholar, who'd just won the "white briefcase" as first of some thousand students at Army's Command and General Staff College. His morality tale of learning some intellectual humility sits prominently in an essay meriting required reading at the academies and elsewhere. Readers may conjecture that other lessons were learned as well. Petraeus writes more diplomatically than I need to, yet candidly for someone in his position: e.g., "Being part of a wide-open culture of discovery can be a very stimulating, challenging experience for those of us who attended West Point, which (tongue in cheek) we felt represented 150 years of tradition unhampered by progress. Of course, West Point has changed enormously over the years and it is a true national treasure, but despite the varied curriculum and

experiences it provides, it is not an institution that puts creativity, individuality and discovery before all else."

[27] Some sixty years ago, Adm. James L. Holloway III – who authored the Holloway Plan that transformed Naval education, then served as USNA Superintendent and later as CNO – dreamt of making what had been a military trade school into "MIT on the Severn" (the river by the campus). USNA is rightly proud of its leagues of academic and cultural progress by its "Academic Revolution" and "Professional Revolution" of the 1960's and subsequent efforts. No one is well served when Holloway's successors now run this ship under the Bush-era banner: "Mission Accomplished". (See Todd A. Forney, *The Midshipman Culture and Educational Reform: The U.S. Naval Academy: 1946-76*, University of Delaware Press, 2004; H. Michael Gelfand , *Sea Change at Annapolis: The United States Naval Academy*, 1949–2000, University of North Carolina Press, 2006.)

[28] Though not a large or random sample, it is worth reporting that vet respondents to Ricks (*op. cit.*) reporting personal experience preponderantly favor fresh academy graduates over their ROTC peers as better prepared to be junior officers. Few report differences of competence persisting among senior officers sorted by commissioning path. Differences in character are seldom mentioned, with one notable exception. Repeatedly, academy graduates are alleged to be hampered as young officers by a snobbish attitude of superiority.