Senior Chief Aviation Support Equipment Technician Augustine Ilomuanya, assigned to amphibious assault ship USS *Makin Island*, conducts dress white uniform inspection, San Diego, March 22, 2019 (U.S. Navy/Colby A. Mothershead)

A *Profession* of Arms?
Conflicting Views and the Lack of Virtue Ethics in Professional Military Education

By Thomas J. Statler

> *The nation that will insist upon drawing a broad line of demarcation between the fighting man and the thinking man is liable to find its fighting done by fools and its thinking by cowards.*
>
> —GENERAL SIR WILLIAM BUTLER

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The profession of arms is viewed in one of two ways by those who put on a military uniform. One perspective sees what they do as

an *occupation*—the principle means of making a living. From an occupational point of view, the profession of arms is a collection of technical skills, or what I call a more quantitative view, that encompasses performing the duties that are expected of them, but such performance may not necessarily be a part of their self-identity. The evaluation of their job is associated with some end result: increasing profit margin, meeting quotas, completing a mission or report, and the like. In the military, extensive training hones skills in a particular context to reach desired outcomes by higher authorities.

The second perspective on military service is more qualitative and rooted in the wording of the concept *profession of arms* itself. Don Snider outlined this perspective in a lecture at the U.S. Naval War College in 2016 where he described a *profession* as having four components. The professional thus:

- provides a vital service to the society that it cannot provide for itself, but still must have to flourish
- works with expert (abstract) knowledge developed into human expertise; does not participate in routine or repetitive work; takes years of study and experiential learning
- earns and maintains trust of his or her society by the effective and ethical application of his or her expertise; the means of social control is the ethic
- is, therefore, granted relative autonomy in the application of his art and expertise.[1]

The contrast between seeing military service as an occupation versus as a member of a profession creates a problem for *professional* military *education* (PME).[2] To be more specific, the two italicized terms in the phrase are exactly where the root of the problem lies. I will further define the problem in the first person for clarity and ease of language.

If I only see my time as a military officer as an occupation—as a specialized and highly trained job that I do and for which I get paid—then I am not likely to seek out broader knowledge and higher levels of education, including ethical education, unless I am compelled/ordered to do so by some higher authority (or a representative of that higher authority). In such cases, I am likely to view that experience as extensive training that I must accomplish to do my job as required by that higher authority. If I do attend a PME institution out of self-interest, it is to set myself up for a promotion that, in turn, leads to more income. In such circumstances, I am a highly skilled, perhaps high-ranking military technician but *not* a military professional. I have not taken seriously the moral and ethical components of being a member of the *profession* of arms and the soft power skills required for both effective staff work and leadership, and instead have only done what is necessary for my job.[3] The shared or core values of my service and the joint force are not related to the performance of my job.

This dichotomy of *occupation* versus *profession* is important because PME seems to assume that professional education is synonymous with occupational training—for example, giving officers specific skill sets like joint planning. This hypothesis stems from personal experience and cases of moral, ethical, and legal failure among a glaring minority of military officers, including field-grade and flag/general officers, who have gone through some form of PME prior to their misconduct. Such behavior suggests that the words *professional* and *education* in the acronym PME have lost their meaning to the point where it should be called *occupational* military *training* instead.[4]
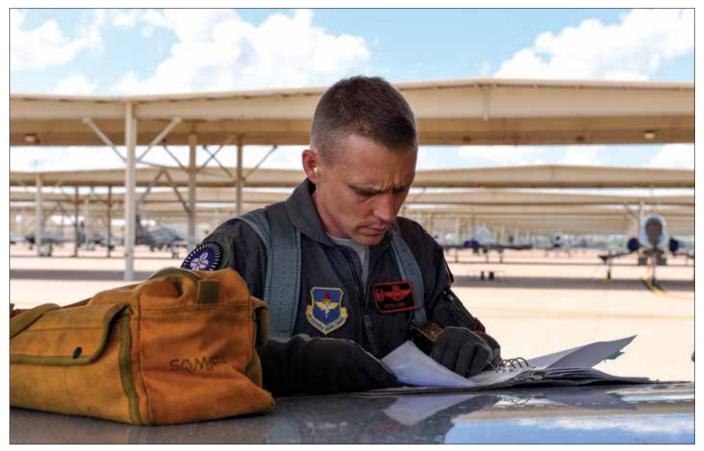
Two assumptions need to be challenged in light of leadership failures great and small as I continue to define the problem. The first is that all military officers possess positive inner character, and they maintain that ethos of shared values on their own throughout a career. Maybe some do, but such integrity of character is certainly not universal in the officer corps given the evidence that is before us. The second assumption is connected to the first. Because it is assumed military officers first possess and then secondly maintain positive inner character on their own, PME institutions can get by with minimal instruction on ethics using didactic methods, rote learning, and a meta-ethic based on action/inaction. To counter these false assumptions, I describe the proper doctrinal and philosophical grounding of the profession of arms that PME should build its ethics education on.

Before doing so, a less obvious facet of the problem recently came to mind as the result of a conversation I had with a student. This student stated her belief that ethics has nothing to do with morals or morality, and later revealed that, for her, morality stemmed from religiosity. Her comment reflects a belief that may be more prevalent in the military mindset than I want to believe, and the conversation reminded me that we cannot make assumptions about the meaning of ethics in a pluralistic culture like the military.

A dictionary definition of the adjective *moral* describes it as relating to principles of right and wrong in behavior, or expressing or teaching a conception of right behavior.[5] It is the community—in this case, the profession of arms for the military officers who attend PME institutions—that determines the principles of right and wrong. The adjective *just*, defined as acting or being in conformity with what is morally upright or good, could be somewhat of a synonym for moral. *Morality* is a moral discourse, statement, or lesson to members of the community, and it is closely connected to *justice*, which is the maintenance or administration of what is just or doing what is morally good. *Ethics* is defined as the discipline dealing with what is good and bad (what is moral), moral duty and obligation, and a set of moral principles or values. Acting or behaving in an *ethical* manner is simply "of or relating to ethics."

Immediately, we can see that morals are clearly connected to ethics, and that nothing is stated about the necessity of having a religious source of determining what is good and, conversely, what is bad. We can also see that ethics, and thus morality, are connected to justice. All those concepts are interrelated; without one, we do not have the others, or they are so diminished or restricted as to not have any meaning at all. When that is the case, concepts like moral, ethical, and just are relative and self-serving. If the behavior

Lieutenant Colonel Mitchell Cok, 88th Fighter Training Squadron, recognized for Profession of Arms Center of Excellence Leadership Impact Award, goes over preflight check list before Introduction to Fighter Fundamentals training sortie at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas, May 22, 2018 (U.S. Air Force/John Ingle)

of a military officer is immoral, that is to say, contrary to shared values of the profession of arms, then his or her behavior is also unethical and unjust. If, on the other hand, our individual choices, decisions, or lines of effort—all forms of human behavior—are moral, then they are by definition also ethical and just. It is an open question as to whether such a connection is conveyed to students in PME institutions. I am skeptical that those institutions have robust military ethics programs and thoughtfully consider the relationship between morality and ethics. Ethical education is not seen as grounded in military doctrine, and thus military ethics is a "nice to have" instead of a requirement for officer development.

Doctrinal Foundation for Virtue Ethics in the Profession of Arms

Joint Publication 1 (JP 1), *The Doctrine of the Armed Forces of the United States*, appendix B, "The Profession of Arms," describes a professional as having both competence *and* character. I begin with character instead of competence for two reasons. First, of the two components of the definition, character is largely ignored in military practice over a clear preference for competence.[6] Secondly, JP 1 assumes that the word *character* is positive in and of itself, and this assumption needs correction. According to JP 1, "Character refers to the aggregate of personal features and traits that form the individual nature of a person."[7] Nothing in that definition, however, assumes one's features and traits are always positive. As Aristotle put it:

For what we do in our dealings with other people makes some of us just, some unjust; what we do in terrifying situations, and the habits of fear or confidence that we acquire, make some of us brave and others cowardly. The same is true of situations involving appetites and anger; for one or another sort of conduct in these situations make some temperate and mild, others

intemperate and irascible. To sum up in a single account: a state [of character] results from [the repetition of] similar activities.[8]

Character refers to ingrained traits of an individual gained through process of socialization, and those traits then determine behavior. If such traits and behavior only lead to the betterment of the individual and/or his defined group, and not the general well-being of society or the community-at-large, then character takes on a negative connotation. In fact, character in this sense, and the behavior that stems from it, may clash with societal or communal values.

JP 1 describes adherence to shared values as "the heart of the relationship of the profession with the American people, and to each other."[9] For our ethos to have a positive meaning, and benefit others *outside* of the group as well as those *within* the group, members of the profession of arms must see themselves as connected to or in relationship with

the larger society they serve. Adherence to shared values of our society becomes a matter of rational and personal choices made over time, and they are chosen by individuals within the profession of arms because it is the right thing to choose.

What JP 1 is describing is *trust*. In his white paper while Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey referred to two kinds of trust: an external trust we have with the citizens we serve as military professionals; and an internal trust we must have with each other within the military profession.[10] Snider describes the necessity of trust by stating that it is the currency of a profession.[11] Stephen M.R. Covey describes why trust is the lifeblood of both a profession and a healthy society:

There is one thing that is common to every individual, relationship, team, family, organization, nation, economy, and civilization throughout the world—one thing which, if removed, will destroy the most powerful government, the most successful business, the most thriving economy, the most influential leadership, the greatest friendship, the strongest character, the deepest love. On the other hand, if developed and leveraged, that one thing has the potential to create unparalleled success and prosperity in every dimension of life. Yet it is the least understood, most neglected, and most underestimated possibility of our time. That one thing is trust.[12]

JP 1 connects competence with a nontechnical, but altogether necessary skill of developing and keeping trust: "Competent performance includes both the technical competence to perform a task to standard *as well as the ability to integrate that skill with others.*"[13] Competence certainly involves technical abilities, and the assumed mentality to carry out those abilities, but PME largely ignores the deeper meaning of competence in JP 1 for reasons that have yet to be uncovered. Competence must also include the development of interpersonal skills in order to communicate with others, and such communication requires trust. Whether as a commander or a member of a staff, interpersonal skills *will* involve one's behavior; behavior, then, is

the evidence of one's inner character, and inner character is a matter for virtue ethics, which I address in the next section.

The Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP) is the other doctrinal foundation for ethical education. The OPMEP establishes the Officer Desired Leadership Attributes (DLAs).[14] The DLAs trace back to a memorandum from the Chairman issued in June 2012, where General Dempsey defined the fifth DLA as "make ethical decisions based on the shared values of the Profession of Arms."[15] It should be evident that moral and ethical decisions of military officers should *not* be based solely on an outcome (a consequentialist framework), but yet that is one predominant ethical thrust in practice at the operational and tactical levels of the military, and on rare occasions even at the strategic level.

The OPMEP appendix A to enclosure A, "Officer Professional Military Education Continuum," gives some guidance on the education of ethics, but the guidance there is a mixed message when it comes to the ethical education of military officers. In the overview of the appendix, the continuum is described as reflecting "the dynamic system of officer career education"[16] and identifies and defines areas of focus at each educational level of a military career and provides joint curriculum guidance for PME institutions: "It is a comprehensive frame of reference depicting the progressive nature of PME, guiding an officer's individual development over time."[17] Later in the appendix, PME is described as conveying "the broad knowledge and develop[ing] the habits of mind essential to the military professional's expertise in the art and science of war."[18] The art of war includes "critical and reflective thinkers who broadly view military affairs across an array of academic disciplines."[19]

What is lacking in the OPMEP is clear guidance about what role the education of ethics plays in the development of critical and reflective thinkers. Annex A to appendix A gives a graphic view of the continuum that assumes the DLAs, including DLA 5, is continued with equal intensity throughout an entire career—for general/flag officers as much

as for cadets/midshipmen. This image, however, is in contrast to the text of appendix A, where ethics of any sort is *not* mentioned as a focus of study for intermediate, senior, and general/flag officer levels of PME, and an education on core or shared values stressed in JP 1 is not in the text for *any* level of the continuum. It stands to reason that because ethics is not specified and mentioned in the text of the OPMEP's appendix A, the education of ethics is not stressed in PME. An individual's moral and ethical foundation and the habits he demonstrates as a member of the profession of arms are elements of the *art* of war, and why they are not being addressed at *all* levels of PME with equal intensity is at the heart of my critique.[20]

JP 1 and the theoretical foundation of the OPMEP make it clear that a commitment to a decision or course of action is based on a set of shared values—what the ancient Greeks called cardinal virtues and the U.S. military calls core values. This assumes that military leaders both cognitively know and affectively show those core values each and every day regardless of rank, authority, or who is watching. This assumption, an addendum to the false assumptions above, must be challenged given the moral, ethical, and legal failures of junior and senior military personnel previously mentioned. What is important to note is that most moral and ethical failures within the military never make the headlines. They are occurring, perhaps on a daily basis, at all levels of command. Officers who enter a PME institution may not cognitively know and affectively show service core values. If these failures are not addressed in PME against the standard of core values, and if members of the profession of arms who have gone through some form of PME are not held visibly accountable for their behavior, or worse, their misconduct is overlooked because of status, rank, friendship, false loyalty, or ability to produce desired outcomes, then the ethos, trust, and morale of the unit, Service, or joint force suffers. As if that were not bad enough, our trust with the citizenry we serve, and those they elect to Congress, is severely damaged.

Army National Guard Specialist Marina Grage, 890th Engineer Battalion, Mississippi National Guard, takes part in obstacle course competition at Camp Butner, North Carolina, during Region III Best Warrior, May 15, 2019 (U.S. Army National Guard/William Frye)

Philosophical Foundation for Virtue Ethics in the Profession of Arms

PME's lack of address on the ethical failures of military officers is also due to prevailing ethical frameworks at work in the military, which are not concerned about inner character and shared values. The Enlightenment brought those streams of ethical thought into being, and the most well-known ethical theories from this period used in military ethics today are Immanuel Kant's ethics of duty (deontology) and Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism (a corporate form of consequentialism that I have already mentioned above).[21]

Philosophical thought during the Enlightenment was dominated by rational thought and scientific approaches to problems in several disciplines, including ethics; hence, it is called the Age of Reason. As a result, affections or emotions were not trusted and thus marginalized, or they were eliminated from ethical thinking altogether. Deontology and utilitarianism utilize a meta-ethic on action in addition to an emphasis on reason. In other words, the rightness and wrongness of the situation depend on the nature or consequence of the act, depending on which framework one is using. As a result, those theories abstract the individual from said act. An over-emphasis on rational thought, and the consequential elimination of affections within ethics, leads to a training mentality and insistence that ethics can be taught using didactic classroom methods. It also assumes that ethics can be learned by rote and evaluated on written tests rather than by experience.[22]

Over 2,000 years before the Enlightenment, Aristotle taught a different understanding of ethics based on the morality of the person rather than the nature or consequence of the act. Referring back to the definitions I shared when defining the problem, our sense of faithfulness to the well-being of the community (what they called *eudaimonia*, or what I am referring to as morality) is tightly linked to our ability to put things right or do the right thing in our individual behavior within that community (*ethos* or ethics).[23] Aristotle defined the virtue of the moral actor in two ways: virtue of thought and virtue of character:

Virtue of thought arises and grows mostly from teaching; that is why it needs experience and time. . . . Hence, it is also clear that none of the virtues of character arises in us naturally. . . . Rather, we are by nature able to acquire them, and we are completed through habit.[24]

To acquire intellectual virtue, or virtue of thought as Aristotle put it, a community (*polis*) must invest time in its members, and those members must be willing to "experience" the process of Socratic instruction.[25]

Though informed by reason, Aristotle also acknowledged the role of affections in moral life, and this is carried forward by modern neo-Aristotelians. This balanced approach, using both cognition

and affection, is the key difference from the ethical theories of the Enlightenment and a missing element in ethical instruction in PME. Emotions are connected in powerful ways to our dispositions or our informed states of character. The avoidance of emotion leaves us well-disposed to vice or the corruption of virtue. If well-disposed to vice, then our choices and resulting behavior will not reflect virtue of character. Robert Roberts and W. Jay Wood argue that "for the knower to function properly as a knower, his will, especially as a source of emotions or affections, needs to be shaped and completed to form such . . . virtues as charity, fairness, intellectual honesty, love of knowledge (truth), perseverance, openness, caution, boldness, and humility."[26]

While Aristotle suggested that virtue of character can be modeled and experienced—and thus taught—within a community, he also made it clear that the individual bears responsibility for making virtue of character a habit in order to demonstrate moral behavior. If people lack integrity, honesty, trustworthiness, they have only themselves to blame if immoral and unethical behavior gets them in trouble because they have chosen not to not practice integrity, honesty, trustworthiness.[27] Aristotle put it this way:

Virtues, by contrast, we acquire, just as we acquire crafts, having first activated them. For we learn a craft by producing the same product that we must produce when we have learned it; we become builders, for instance, by building; and we become harpists by playing the harp. Similarly, then, we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions.[28]

In the same manner, we develop trust within the profession of arms and with the citizens we serve by being trustworthy in *both* our public and private lives.

Former Secretary of Defense James Mattis alludes to a meta-ethical focus on the military officer as a moral actor, the framework of virtue ethics, and the importance of internal and external trust in a memorandum released on August 4, 2017: "Those entrusted by our nation

Table. Examples of Aristotle's "Doctrine of the Mean"

Vice of Deficiency	Virtue of Character	Vice of Excess
Ignorance	Prudence	Manipulation
Asceticism	Temperance	Hedonism
Cowardice	Courage	Foolhardiness

with carrying out violence, those entrusted with the lives of our troops, and those entrusted with enormous sums of taxpayer money must set an honorable example in all that we do."[29] Secretary Mattis echoes and accentuates JP 1 and the theoretical foundation of the OPMEP by stressing the need for virtue of character. General Dempsey stated the same sentiment in 2012: "If we really are a profession—a group of men and women who are committed to living an uncommon life with extraordinary responsibilities and high standards—we should want to figure it out before someone else figures it out for us."[30]

Within the memorandum, the Secretary also uses a simple metaphor to describe his ethical approach—one he states that all within the Department of Defense must follow:

I expect every member of the Department to play in the ethical midfield. I need you to be aggressive and show initiative without running the ethical sidelines, where even one misstep will have you out of bounds. I want our focus to be on the essence of ethical conduct: doing what is right at all times, regardless of the circumstances or whether anyone is watching. . . . Our prior reflection and our choice to live by an ethical code will reinforce what we stand for, so we remain morally strong especially in the face of adversity.[31]

The Secretary is describing a military profession that demonstrates virtue of character, or, as he puts it, one that plays in the ethical midfield. That is precisely what Aristotle argued centuries ago in his doctrine of the mean. Vice, as moral depravity or corruption, exists on either of two extremes: one of excess of a given character trait ("too much of a good thing," as the saying goes) or one of deficiency of that same trait. The table gives examples using

three of the ancient Greek cardinal virtues. The similarities of ethical approaches between Aristotle and the Secretary are striking. For Aristotle, virtue of character is found in an ethical mean; for Mattis, it is found in the ethical midfield.

There is an internal tension when living in the virtuous midfield as forces of vice pull us toward one sideline or the other, and that tension is something that a meta-ethic on action cannot address. Consequently, it does not get addressed in current ethical education within PME. This is the case because the dissonance is affective as well as cognitive, and the Enlightenment theories mentioned herein will not address the affective domain of learning. The tension, and the maturity that comes by dealing with that tension, is never relieved simply by classroom teaching, reaching a certain age, or obtaining a particular status in the profession. That ethical tension and emotional and cognitive dissonance do not magically go away; they must be internally examined by looking at one's character and choices of behavior and then externally sharing those realizations in experiential learning in order to keep oneself in the ethical midfield. An occupational military training approach to the education of ethics will not give students the time in a structured educational environment to analyze that tension, understand their personal ethical constitution, and realize how their behavior affects others.

There is another reason maintaining an ethical balance, or staying in the ethical midfield, is difficult, and it is a factor that, again, PME does not take into consideration. Grady Scott Davis writes:

What is less frequently recognized is that the virtues of human character are, of their nature, fragile. This fragility is not an unfortunate happenstance but an essential aspect of what it means to be a

Air Force General Paul J. Selva embraces surviving family member after Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors Grand Banquet at 23rd TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp in Arlington, Virginia, May 27, 2017 (DOD/James K. McCann)

virtue. For virtues are always begging [to be] *tested, and they frequently require reaffirming our resolve and reminding ourselves of where our true love lies. There is no rest in the past achievements of virtue, any more than there is for the competitive athlete or concert musician. Like any other skill or art, it will weaken and eventually vanish if not regularly employed. The most common enemies of virtue are indifference, self-indulgence, and despair, which persuades someone that something needn't be done, or not just now, or can't possibly be accomplished anyway.*[32]

It is hard work to stay in the ethical midfield, and PME has a key role in providing the intellectual and professional white space to find an ethical center of gravity (COG)—a concept I have borrowed from my joint PME education and described in other essays as the inward or spiritual ability to maintain a

virtuous mean.[33] Bruce Birch and Larry Rasmussen explain why a meta-ethic focused on the moral actor, and virtue ethics as the predominant theory of ethical instruction, is important in education as a whole and PME in particular:

Vexing moral problems and innumerable issues of social justice arose for the ancient Greeks, of course, as they have for every people. Yet the work of morality was directed less to the resolution of moral quandaries ("what would you do if . . .") than to deliberation of how we should live, with special concern for the sorts of persons we should be. This side of the moral life brings moral formation to the fore and accentuates moral education and training for the good life as key elements of ethics. The formation and ordering of society [are] *crucial in this, since society is both the tutor and the living environment of morality. Society is both the teacher and classroom for character formation.*[34]

William F. May puts it more bluntly: "[The] field of ethics does not reduce to the utilitarian concern for producing good. Ethics must deal with virtues as well as principles of action, with *being* good as well as *producing* good."[35]

Results were important to the ancient Greeks, as they certainly are for modern institutions like the military, but those outcomes should not ignore or passively degrade the ethos and morale of the individuals who embody the institution in order to achieve particular outcomes. PME has a role to play in correcting the meta-ethical approach to the education of ethics. When the meta-ethical question changes to what kind of officers we should become, and ethical education addresses that internal development, then moral and ethical conduct as virtuous members of the profession of arms and of society should naturally follow.[36] John Maxwell writes, "Our character

represents who we are on the inside. And the good news is that if you focus on being better on the inside than on the outside, over time you will also become better on the outside."[37] That is the proactive and timeless approach of virtue ethics. It is the difference between ounces of prevention, which focus on the morality of the actor, and pounds of cure, which focus on immoral, unethical, or illegal action. If military officers are *not* willing to be *both* involved in the reinforcement, recalibration, or replacement of their moral compass *and* exhibit the virtue of character as Aristotle taught, then their choice says everything about what kind of character they possess—and their view of military service as a job rather than as a profession.

Intellectual Humility and Civic Virtue in the Profession of Arms

The ability to stay in the ethical midfield through a clear understanding of the profession's values as they relate to one's own values requires another cardinal virtue that has received recent review. *Intellectual humility* has the flexibility to address fluid and complex situations facing military leaders and planners today and is a key component to civic virtue—the trust we have with the citizens we serve.[38]

Humility is the state of *not* being proud, haughty, assertive, or rude. The definition does not suggest a sense of weakness or passivity that is usually associated with the virtue. Rather, it suggests that humility is the strength to resist an impulsive reaction to external stimuli and, at the same time, a refusal to submit to the reactions of others. In other words, humility is an Aristotelian mean or virtuous balance between the vice of *arrogance*, a deficiency of humility, and the vice of *timidity*, or excess of humility. When one is arrogant, he thinks too highly of himself and ceases to listen to others. He then becomes close-minded, perhaps tyrannical, and exhibits a serious lack of ethical wisdom by not heeding the advice of others around him, including those in subordinate positions. Such officers, to some degree or another, too often step out of bounds morally and ethically.

On the other extreme, a timid person thinks too little of herself. Such a person runs the risk of listening to too many voices around her, particularly those who are the loudest, the most influential, or the last one to have her ear. When the vice of timidity is in play, there is a lack of moral courage to state original thoughts and sentiments, stand one's moral ground, and propose unpopular alternatives, especially in the presence of intimidating personalities and/or groupthink dynamics.

Combining the character trait of humility with the adjective *intellectual* is in keeping with the virtues Aristotle put forth many centuries ago and gives humility a needed dimension that is missing in common, and less positive, interpretations of the virtue in religious and philosophical discourse. Taken together, intellectual humility conveys an emotional strength and rational capability in order not to be arrogant in our interactions with others, both in and out of uniform and, in the same moment, not lose integrity and be subverted by others in the interpersonal dynamics of groupthink and intimidation. Intellectual humility is also open-mindedness to other perspectives, even those that are different from the viewpoints and values one firmly holds. Even in disagreement, intellectual humility conveys a moral courage to say to oneself and others, "That is a valid point; let's discuss it more," "I was wrong and need to approach the issue differently," or "With all due respect, I disagree, and here is why."

Intellectual humility is a state of being that is in the ethical midfield that Secretary Mattis stressed in his memo. Those who possess and demonstrate intellectual humility can see value in disagreement and leverage the ensuing discussion as a means of seeking the best solution.[39] This is in stark contrast to those who see disagreement with their perspective, opinion, or assessment as an insult—or worse, as a threat. It is more than fair to say that nobody wants to work with, or for such individuals. While not specifically mentioning intellectual humility, Dallas Willard alludes to it as he describes a reasonable person:

The main point in all of this, to my mind, is simply that the reasonable person—the one who acts in accordance with reason in life as well as in their academic or other profession—is the one who governs his or her beliefs and assertions by insight into truth and logical relations. In particular, they are not mastered by how they want things to be, by the beliefs they happen to have, or by styles or currents of thought and action around them. If they advance claims as true or justified they do so on a basis of such insight, and are very careful to be sure that that basis is really there. The difficulty of securing such a basis will make any reasonable person quite humble in their claims and willing (indeed, happy, even solicitous) to be corrected when they are mistaken. Thus the reasonable person is not close-minded or dogmatic, or insistent on having their own way, but just the opposite.[40]

Willard's description also describes someone who possesses civic virtue. Robert Audi describes civic virtue and ties it back to our earlier discussion of the virtue of character:

Virtuous citizens . . . try to contribute in some way to the welfare of others, including others beyond their immediate community. In a society that is complex, pluralistic, and so, inevitably, somewhat divided, civic virtue implies trying to take reasonable positions on important issues, voting, discussing problems with others, and more. Civic virtue in a liberal democracy implies a degree of responsible political participation. . . . I would stress that insofar as we are thinking of the advocacy or other public behavior as supposed to be action from virtue, we should look not just at what kind of act it is and what can be said for it abstractly, but also at how it is grounded in the agent's character.[41]

Summary

Training in the military is necessary, but it is singular in focus—preparing Servicemembers to do specific things in specific contexts and for a specific reason. Professional military education should be much more encompassing than occupational military training. It must involve a multidisciplinary

U.S. Army Specialist Emma Archut, 328th Military Police Company, winces in pain from shoulder spasms after completing timed 12-mile ruck march during New Jersey National Guard's Best Warrior Competition, April 11, 2019 (U.S. Air National Guard/Matt Hecht)

approach to topics, including those, like ethics, *not* directly related to achieving some defined outcome or product. Within PME, however, the processes of training and education are confused at the risk of becoming synonymous, and the width and depth of military study in general and the education of ethics in particular suffer as a result.

If PME is a process of achieving milestones in an individual's military career without reinforcing, or perhaps fundamentally changing the moral constitution of a given officer, then it is ignoring clear strategic direction. Perhaps this is the condition to which Secretary Mattis refers in the National Defense Strategy:

PME has stagnated, focused more on the accomplishment of mandatory credit at the expense of lethality and ingenuity. We will emphasize intellectual leadership and military professionalism in the art and science of warfighting, deepening our knowledge of history while embracing new technology and techniques to counter competitors. PME will emphasize independence of action in warfighting concepts to lessen the impact of degraded/lost communications in combat. PME is to be used as a strategic asset to build trust and interoperability across the Joint Forces and with allied and partner forces.[42]

To move beyond just getting a military education for what Mattis called "mandatory credit," JP 1 clearly dictates educational instruction on virtue ethics in PME across the entire continuum of a military career, with the goal of producing military professionals who possess independence of thought and action through intellectual humility and thus build trust in whatever billet they fill. That, it seems, is what the Secretary desires. Voluntary adherence to core values, and a relationship of trust with each other and the American people through our oath to the Constitution, separates a highly qualified military *technician* with high rank from a military *professional* of any rank who can fully comprehend and apply what it means to be a member of the profession of arms. Consequently, I have suggested that virtue ethics is the philosophical foundation of the profession of arms and not Enlightenment theories currently in place.

To accomplish the educational mission that is being demanded by Secretary Mattis and PME doctrine, a review of the ethical education based on virtue of character is necessary while the current OPMEP is under revision. Don Snider states why this must take place: "The current scope of moral corrosion from the past decade of war shows that our services have taken for too long a *laissez faire* approach to the development of the moral character of our warriors. Our forces are superbly trained and equipped, but in the moral domain the recent record shows they are far weaker than their leaders believe."[43]

In the *Apology*, Socrates claimed to be wiser than other men not because of what he knew but rather because of what he did *not* know. Many of the Socratic dialogues, in fact, end in uncertainty, and the characters in those dialogues reacted to that uncertainty in different ways—some well, others not so well.[44] The aim of PME then should be to give military officers the educational and ethical white space within any given curriculum to think critically, seek out what they do *not* know with intellectual humility and civic virtue, and react to uncertainty with an affective internalization of military core values in conjunction with other skills gained through PME in order to find solutions to current and complex problems. **JFQ**

Notes

[1] Don Snider, "The Military Profession of the Future," U.S. Naval War College lecture, December 2016, available at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZEtR_F-NRO>.

[2] My use of the acronym *PME* in this chapter includes joint PME (JPME).

[3] Joseph S. Nye, Jr., is credited with coining the term *soft power* in 1990 in his book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004). He described how a nation state like the United States could use soft power to frame relationships with other nation-states, and he argued that soft power is more effective in the long term in the geopolitical world over and against hard or kinetic power. I have borrowed his concept but applied it to interpersonal relationships—in particular, that of a leader to subordinates rather than relationships between nation-states.

[4] There is a spectrum of ethical failure—most of which does not make the news but is equally damaging to the morale of a unit. Some, maybe most, of these failures are captured in Department of Defense (DOD), Standards of Conduct Office, *Encyclopedia of Ethical Failure* (Washington, DC: DOD, updated October 2014). None of the cases in the encyclopedia involve dereliction of duty or incompetence, only behavior based in a poor or nonexistent grasp of personal virtue. Many

more cases from the past 3 years could be added. For one Service's account of moral and ethical failure, see Mark Light, "The Navy's Moral Compass: Commanding Officers and Personal Conduct," *Naval War College Review* 65, no. 3 (Summer 2012). Captain Light is a member of the Department of Command, Leadership, and Management at the U.S. Naval War College.

[5] The definitions in this paragraph come from *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*.

[6] John Maxwell puts it like this in his book *How Successful People Grow: 15 Ways to Get Ahead in Life* (New York: Center Street, 2014): "Most people focus too much on competence and too little on character" (76). My thesis is that the same is true in PME.

[7] Joint Publication (JP) 1, *The Doctrine of the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, March 25, 2013, incorporating Change 1, July 12, 2017), B-1.

[8] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publish Co., 1999), 19.

[9] JP 1, B-1.

[10] Martin Dempsey, *America's Military— The Profession of Arms* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, February 23, 2012), available at <www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/aprofessionofarms.pdf>. General Dempsey was the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) at the time. His paper directly parallels JP 1.

[11] Snider, "The Military Profession of the Future."

[12] Stephen M.R. Covey, *The Speed of Trust* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 1.

[13] JP 1, B-1. Emphasis added.

[14] CJCS Instruction 1800.01E, *Officer Professional Military Education Policy* (OPMEP) (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, May 29, 2015), paragraph 7, "Summary of Changes," § e, available at <www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Library/Instructions/1800_01a.pdf>.

[15] Martin E. Dempsey, "Desired Leader Attributes for Joint Force 2020," CJCS Memorandum for Chiefs of the Military Services; Commanders of the Combatant Commands; Chief, National Guard Bureau; and Directors of the Joint Staff Directorates, CM-0166-13, June 28, 2013, available at <www.ndu.edu/Portals/59/Documents/BOV_Documents/2014/CJCS%20Joint%20Education%20Review%20Implementation%20Memo%20only.pdf>.

[16] CJCS Instruction 1800.01E, enclosure A, A-1.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] It is an intellectual curiosity that the current OPMEP, with its lack of direction on the instruction of ethics and core values, was written after General Dempsey's white paper on profession of arms.

[21] Jeremy Bentham's work on utilitarianism—seeking what is best for "us"—was further developed in the 19th century by a more well-known proponent of the theory, and follower of Bentham, John Stuart Mill. An individual form of consequentialism is psychological and ethical egoism—both proposing that morality is found in what is best for "me" by denying that altruism exists.

[22] One-third of my career as a military chaplain (6 years) has been spent in the Navy Chaplain Corps program Chaplains Religious Enrichment and Development Operation. The model used in the program's resilience retreats and workshops is experiential learning using dyad, triad, and small group discussion.

[23] N. Thomas Wright, "Letter to the Romans—Introduction," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck, vol. X (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 404. Writing as a theologian, Wright states that the Reformation as well as the Enlightenment separated *righteousness* (covenant faithfulness, morality, theology) from *justice* (putting things right, ethics, politics), to which I add that we have since institutionalized that separation and lived with the negative consequences in human interaction.

[24] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 18.

[25] Another key word in Aristotle's definition is *habit* or the continual practice of the virtue of character in one's life, and the importance of that part of the virtue of character I address in this chapter's summary.

[26] Robert C. Roberts and W. Jay Wood, "Proper Function, Emotion, and Virtues of the Intellect," *Faith and Philosophy* 21, no. 1 (January 2004), 21–22.

[27] Unfortunately, some do not accept responsibility. M. Scott Peck described such individuals as *character disordered*. Unlike neurotics who take on too much responsibility, he writes, character disordered individuals do not take on too little responsibility. In short, they blame their problems on someone or something else, and never take responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

[28] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 18.

[29] James N. Mattis, "Ethical Standards for All Hands," Memorandum for All Department of Defense Employees, August 4, 2017, available at <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/Ethical-Standards-for-All-Hands-SecDef-04-Aug-17.pdf>.

[30] General Dempsey as quoted by Don Snider in "The Moral Corrosion Within Our Military Professions," lecture given at the Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, November 27, 2012, available at <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/index.cfm/articles/The-Moral-Corrosion-within-Our-Military-Professions/2012/11/27>.

[31] Mattis, "Ethical Standards for All Hands."

[32] Grady Scott Davis, *Warcraft and the Fragility of Virtue: An Essay on Aristotelian Ethics* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1992), 85.

[33] For the sake of brevity, one's inner or spiritual center of gravity is not dependent on a religious belief system. I free the concept from that domain where now it simply involves all the intangible, untouchable aspects of being human that are centered on one's emotional center (heart, gut) and cognitive center (mind). Thus understood, spirituality is something *all* human beings have; it then becomes a matter of what is not allowing a person to think or feel in harmony with others around him. Spirituality is the necessary counterbalance to our physicality or physical aspects that are centered on our bodies and our environment, but one affects the other, sometimes in profound ways.

[34] Bruce C. Birch and Larry L. Rasmussen, *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 45.

[35] William F. May, "The Virtues in a Professional Setting," *The Annual Journal of Christian Ethics* 4 (1984), 71–91, available at <www.jstor.org/stable/23559367>.

[36] There are always exceptions to any rule, so it stands to reason that even if professional military education adopts this approach to the education of ethics, there is no guarantee that there will not be moral and ethical failure. What I hope is that the trend of moral, ethical, and legal failure I have mentioned will show a downward direction over time.

[37] Maxwell, *How Successful People Grow*, 77.

[38] I first saw the concept of intellectual humility in Nick Romeo's article, "Platonically Irrational," *Aeon*, May 15, 2017, available at <https://aeon.co/essays/what-plato-knew-about-behavioural-economics-a-lot>. Romeo does not define the concept, but ample peer-reviewed research is available on intellectual humility.

[39] Tim Alberta, "Americans Are Being Held Hostage and Terrorized by the Fringes," *Politico*, May 13, 2018, available at <www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/05/13/arthur-brooks-american-enterprise-institute-interview-218364>. At the time of the writing, Arthur Brooks was the outgoing president of the American Enterprise Institute.

[40] Dallas Willard, "How Reason Can Survive the Modern University: The Moral Foundations of Rationality," in *Faith, Scholarship, and Culture in the 21st Century*, ed. Alice Ramos and Marie I. George (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 185.

[41] Robert Audi, "Liberal Democracy and Religion in Politics," in *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Convictions in Political Debate*, ed. Robert Audi and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), 16, 32–33.

[42] *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018).

[43] Snider, "The Moral Corrosion Within Our Military Professions."

[44] Romeo, "Platonically Irrational."