

# The Moral Leadership Training Model: Addressing the Army's Dearth of Moral Leadership Training Tools

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The American people expect Army leaders to be moral leaders of exceptional character. Beyond expectations, the Army requires leaders to adhere to high standards of moral conduct throughout its doctrine and regulations. However, this fundamental requirement is exacerbated by three challenges of the future battlefield: the complexity of large-scale combat operations (LSCO), principles of Mission Command, and multi-domain battlefields. To address these issues and empower moral leaders, this paper advocates for the use of the Moral Leadership Training Model as one way to meet future demands and maintain our moral center.

First, the Army currently expects the next major conflict will be a LSCO fought against a near-peer adversary. This means the conflict will be one of large scope and complexity ripe for decentralized decision-making. Leadership in this environment will be further complicated as degraded systems lead inexorably to a reduction in the ability to control forces. The Multi-domain Battle white paper reflects the potential for degraded control. "Headquarters and subordinate units alike must be capable of operating despite severe degradation of command and control networks."<sup>3</sup> "Highly advanced potential adversaries are developing methods to counter U.S. strengths... degrading key capabilities by disrupting access to land, space, cyberspace, and the EMS [Electromagnetic Spectrum—this particularly impacts communication systems]."<sup>4</sup>

Second, the Army's doctrine of Mission command, further complicates matters. The concepts of prudent risk and disciplined initiative under the construct of a commander's intent places enormous emphasis on sound judgment. Widely dispersed, subordinate leaders, will be required to make difficult ethical decisions in the heat of battle. "With the ability to operate in degraded conditions... for extended periods... the guiding principle is that they must be able to employ multi-domain combined arms capabilities at the lowest practical echelons to enable dispersed operations."<sup>5</sup> This will not only, as the multi-domain battle white paper suggests, "Necessitate leaders, Soldiers and Marines be capable of using mission command tenets," but to do so in accord with the Army Ethic and its ethical foundation both legal and moral. How will they judge which risks are prudent and which are not? Will their commitment to the foundational moral principles of the Army Ethic be sufficient to appropriately discipline their initiative or will they take the initiative in directions inconsistent with those principles? Professor J. Thomas Whetstone highlights the importance of moral character in this kind of setting. "Flatter and geographically dispersed organizations especially need to rely upon the moral character of their managers."<sup>6</sup> Loyola University professor Al Gini might add another caveat, "The central issue of power in leadership is not will it be used; but, rather, will it be used wisely and well?"<sup>7</sup> Mission command's dependence on decentralized decision-making, initiative, and prudent risk requires flourishing moral agents at the point of decision. If these agents are not morally flourishing, decisions in contravention of Army values will take place.

Third, the multi-domain battlefield presents the reality of a fluid, constantly shifting battle space and locus for decision-making. "U.S. forces will possess the ability to rapidly refocus and capitalize on successive and/or simultaneous windows of advantage."<sup>8</sup> Change will be a constant on the multi-domain battlefield

of the future in LSCO. As Whetstone sees it, “People act ethically or unethically in the world as they face challenges that change continuously over time.”<sup>9</sup> Since the future battlespace is constantly changing, more often than not significant ethical decisions will be made at the point of contact, the lowest level, and with guidance ill-suited to the current operating environment. With the Army’s current dearth of character development tools and what Brian Michelson refers to as a “laissez-faire” approach to character development, we assume unacceptable, imprudent risk. Army leaders must become preeminently moral leaders or risk a significant number of unethical actions, even potential atrocities, which run counter to the Army profession’s common moral principles and the fundamental ethics of warfare, as a result of the challenges of LSCO, on a multi-domain battlefield, under the auspices of Mission Command.

Recognizing the specter of atrocity and/or unethical actions summoned by the three factors mentioned above is a matter of little difficulty. Rectifying the situation and making progress in terms of developing moral leaders who demonstrate good character is substantially more complicated. Inculcating Army doctrine, implementing current Army training programs, and encouraging self-development is insufficient. As Colonel Brian Michelson concludes in an Army War College manuscript:

The Army is assuming excessive operational and institutional risk if it does not meet the challenge of developing the personal character of its leaders. The Army does an exceptional job in developing the technical and tactical abilities of its leaders. And yet, despite character being an inseparable component of successful leadership, the Army believes that individuals will develop themselves to the level desired by the Army with little or no clear guidance.<sup>10</sup>

The Army’s current methodology for developing character of leaders through self-initiated study and development, which Michelson calls, “laissez-faire,” is “[n]ot sufficiently effective to meet the challenges posed by either the implementation of mission command, or by the future operating environment.”<sup>11</sup> Additionally, as Linda Trevino points out, “In an authoritarian or mechanistic organization where roles are strictly prescribed and decisions are based on formal authority [Such as the Army], moral development may be arrested or its expression in work situations repressed.”<sup>12</sup> The bottom line: Army leaders will remain morally immature—absent a concerted, coherent, and targeted approach to developing moral leaders—leading to long-term organizational damage.

In a groundbreaking study on the relationship between ethical leadership and unethical pro-organizational behavior, professor Miao and his team found that moderate levels of ethical leadership, where ethics is talked about but is not top priority, led to the highest level of unethical pro-organizational behaviors when compared with no effort at being ethical and strong efforts at being ethical. They write:

Unethical pro-organizational behaviors are unethical actions carried out under a “pro-organizational” façade. Such behaviors are dangerous because they may easily be overlooked by management and cause great harm to the organizations reputation and legal standing in the long-term.... Only when implemented strictly and consistently is ethical leadership able to raise the ethical awareness of subordinates, regulate their unethical conduct, and reduce the likelihood of [unethical pro-organizational behavior].<sup>13</sup>

In essence, unless consistently trained otherwise, Soldiers will do unethical things they believe are good for the organization out of loyalty. For example, they might cover-up misdeeds to prevent a black-eye for the Army. If they are not trained to hold the right virtues as critical aspects of leadership, they will act unethically to prevent the organization from taking a deserved hit.

Even without the demands of the future battlefield, the American people expect Army leaders to exhibit moral behavior and lead by moral means with moral purposes. Army doctrine demands no less. It

unequivocally states that an Army leader must be a man or woman of exemplary character, as well as, one who actively persuades followers to adopt our shared fundamental moral principles. Leadership researcher Bernard Bass opines that authentic leaders, “Openly bring about changes in followers’ values by the merit and relevancy of the leader’s ideas and mission to their followers’ ultimate benefit and satisfaction.”<sup>14</sup> So, there is an acknowledged need for moral leadership even without the risks posed by LSCO conducted under mission command on a multi-domain battlefield under degraded conditions. But training, to some, is a bridge too far.

Some critics of moral leadership training might suggest that by the time the Army receives a Soldier, that Soldier’s character is unchangeably set—that no training regimen can affect real change in adults. I disagree. As management professor J. Thomas Whetstone writes, “A person’s character matters, can be developed even in adults, and developing it is a responsibility of organizations and of the individual.”<sup>15</sup> Regrettably, the recent white paper by the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic on the Army’s framework for character development finds the Army, “Lacks a deliberate, holistic approach for developing and assessing character within the process of leader development,” and it, “[l]acks effective resources to assist leaders in doing so.”<sup>16</sup> So, even if the Army desired to shape a Soldier’s character, which it does, it lacks effective tools for doing so. In the final analysis, it is clear that the highly fluid character of multi-domain battle and the inherently decentralized nature of Mission Command present the potential for significant moral failings by Army leader leaders during LSCO. This problem is exacerbated by a lack of viable corrective training options.

Army doctrine defines leadership as, “The process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.”<sup>17</sup> However, this definition is insufficient to address the issue of leading through a moral lens. In effect, one could conduct immoral actions while providing purpose, direction and motivation that accomplishes the mission and improves the organization. More importantly, leadership is never amoral because people and their just treatment are always involved. Bass says, “It is the presence or absence of such a moral foundation of the leader as a moral agent that grounds the distinction between an authentic versus a pseudo-transformational leader.”<sup>18</sup> It can then be argued that all leadership is, at its root, moral leadership because the actions of leaders necessarily impact followers and those with whom they interact. Gini concurs, “All leadership is value laden. All leadership, whether good or bad, is moral leadership.”<sup>19</sup> When the modifier “moral” is fused to leadership and, moral is assumed to reflect the idea of “morally good,” it fundamentally circumscribes the process, effectively eliminating several potential modes of behavior.

Moral leadership is essentially leading with a conscious moral bent driven by an ethical system that provides a strong foundation for the actions a leader takes. It is virtuous leadership driven by deeper concerns of humanity, like human dignity and flourishing, which far exceed mission accomplishment. It upholds the virtue of leaders whilst developing the follower towards virtuousness as its purpose; organizational success is a side benefit. It moves beyond behavior modification (what one does) to shaping a person’s true self (who one is). Bass suggests that leadership “Is motivational and enabling, highlighting a new realization and transformation of the person.”<sup>20</sup> In the Moral Leadership Training Model, I propose the definition that Moral Leadership is leading by demonstrating virtue in thought and action that is both exemplary and actively persuasive in its execution. It is exemplary because the leader willingly sets himself/ herself up as a role model. It is actively persuasive because the leader carries a personal and professional burden to engender foundational organizational beliefs and values in the follower. S. Duane Hansen, professor of business at Weber State University, and his team back up this concept when they “[d]efine ethical leadership as the *demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions* [Exemplary] in interpersonal relationships and the *promotion of such conduct* [Actively Persuasive] to followers through communication, reinforcement and decision-making.”<sup>21</sup> (Emphasis added.) Essentially, moral leadership means certain values are “baked into” the leader in such a way that they manifest these

virtues in the natural course of their leading. Morality is fundamentally part of a moral leader's leadership DNA. Al Gini reiterates the depth of morality as follows: "Character... refers to the enduring marks, engravings or etched-in factors in our personality."<sup>22</sup>

Educational leadership expert, John West-Burnham, describing moral leadership writes, "Leadership behavior which is consistent with personal and organizational values which are in turn derived from a coherent ethical system."<sup>23</sup> The Army requires moral leadership at all levels which we typically describe as good character. One could argue that virtues are essentially the descriptors of such goodness, or as Gabriel Flynn puts it in "The Virtuous Manager", "In common parlance, a virtue is a trait of character or intellect, which is morally laudable."<sup>24</sup> It is the exercise of these virtues, when observed, that we label good character. Moral leadership, however, goes beneath the surface. While character development extends only to that which is observed, moral leadership brings into focus the idea of "promoting goodness for its own sake."<sup>25</sup> As professor Kim Cameron's research characterizes it, "Rather than being an instrumentally motivated action or emotion valued only because of what it produces, however, virtuousness... Refers to the most ennobling behaviors and outcomes, the excellence in essence of humankind, the best of the human condition, and the highest aspirations of humanity."<sup>26</sup> This excellence in essence is the motivation of the moral leader. Considering the Army's lack of resources to address development, we are unlikely to develop the kind of moral leaders we desperately need. Perhaps, it would help to amplify the Army's definition of leadership, in a moral sense.

In the Army context, moral leadership is the process of influencing people by providing moral purpose (the *what* of seeking a moral good end), moral direction (*how* one should act—through morally justifiable means), and moral motivation (the *why* or inspiration for action—the creation of an aspiration to an ethical standard which causes followers to demonstrate virtue). The result of this type of leadership is mission accomplishment through morally justifiable means for a greater moral purpose leading to an organization that improves not simply in competency or success but in moral standing. This view more closely accords with the Just War Tradition and the moral spirit of Army doctrine. As Army Doctrinal Publication 1 *The Army* (ADP 1) puts it, "The support of the American people has been, and will remain, paramount to our success. We remain mindful of their trust in us to get the mission accomplished in a way that brings credit to us and to the nation."<sup>27</sup> Whetstone's research helpfully adds, "Moral character and technical competence are viewed as being equally important for managerial excellence... whereas immorality was the most often mentioned attribute of the least admired managers, technical incompetence was rarely mentioned."<sup>28</sup> Exceptional leaders are perceptibly moral and competent, whereas the poorest leaders are labeled, "poorest," even when perceived as technically competent. This affirms Army doctrine's emphasis on being both ethical *and* efficient.

As stated in ADP 1, "Membership in the Army profession carries with it significant responsibility—the effective and ethical application combat power."<sup>29</sup> Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 1 *The Army Profession* (ADRP 1) states,

The office which Army professionals enter upon taking their oath is not a physical workspace; it is a moral workspace. This unique workspace involves our subordination to the moral responsibilities of the profession. Specifically, Army professionals are stewards of the sacred trust with the American people."<sup>30</sup>

Further highlighting the key concepts of role modeling and active persuasion, Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 6-22 *Army Leadership* (ADRP 6-22) states, "An ideal Army leader has strong intellect, physical presence, professional competence, moral character, and serves as a role model.... Their personal example and actions carry tremendous moral force."<sup>31</sup> ADRP 6-22 continues, "The Army relies on leaders of integrity who possess high moral standards."<sup>32</sup> The preponderance of doctrine points to the conclusion that training to

make Army leaders “morally complete” is necessary. ADRP 6-22 makes it abundantly clear that, “Conflicts between personal and Army values should be resolved before a leader can expect to become a complete Army leader.”<sup>33</sup>

The Moral Leadership Training Model (MLTM) presents one way to move Army leaders towards moral completeness. The MLTM is an eight-module training toolkit which equips Unit Ministry Teams to provide moral leadership training. It employs the Army Values as a framework of Superintending Virtues supported by 68 Associated Virtues. Cultivating the 68 virtues the MLTM associates with the Army Values: through small-group discussion, Individualized Moral Leadership Development Worksheets—which encourage the practice of the virtues in both personal and professional settings—and a continuous assessment process catalyzes the flourishing of Soldiers as leaders and moral agents.<sup>34</sup>

The MLTM is a virtues based approach consistent with Army leadership and profession doctrine. Beginning with the idea that moral leadership is, “Leadership behavior which is consistent with personal and organizational values which are in turn derived from a coherent ethical system,” the MLTM lays a broad foundation for moral leadership. It follows by erecting a superstructure consisting of the Army Values, considered as superintending virtues, and finishing that frame by demonstrating how understanding groups of virtues associated with each Army Value leads to both a fuller understanding of how to exemplify the Army Values in leadership and how to actively persuade others to do so as well. The MLTM is strongly tied to the Army Values because as preeminent ethicist Alasdair McIntyre notes, “Since the Enlightenment there has been an inability to agree upon a catalog of the virtues, and, even more fundamentally, an inability to agree upon the relative importance of the virtue concepts that moral scheme in which notions of rights and of utility also have a key place.”<sup>35</sup> In a sense, using the Army Values as the superintending framework alleviates the need to develop a catalog. It represents an organizationally pre-approved catalog. Whetstone sees this enculturation of the framework as fundamental to effective implementation. “Cultural milieu does matter; institutionalizing virtue ethics does require a process of customization in light of the role and organizational culture... They cannot be understood apart from the reflexive interrelationships of act, outcome and actor within the context of situation and culture.”<sup>36</sup>

The MLTM is designed as a practical, adaptive approach to address weakness in moral leadership across the Army. This weakness is driven by a divergence of American cultural values from Army Values, resulting in indiscipline, and a high number of prominent Army leaders failing to lead morally. The MLTM is designed to be implemented by battalion-level Unit Ministry Teams as an integrated system of flexible training events centered on small-group discussion and application of virtues associated with each Army Value. This is in accord with the Army Learning Model and Army Regulation 165-1 *Army Chaplain Corps Activities* (AR 165-1) designation of the Chaplain Corps as the proponent for moral leadership training. Battalion Unit Ministry Teams will be trained to instruct the foundational set of eight modules by skilled trainers sanctioned by the MLTM developer. The entire course of eight modules is intended to be taught over the course of 16 to 24 months. This allows sufficient time for the virtues brought into focus in each module to be practiced and adopted by students. The goal is for Soldiers to have sufficient time between each module to develop the virtues introduced in a previous module before introducing more in a follow-on module. Each module, aside from module one, uses an Individual Moral Leadership Development Worksheet allowing Soldiers to build a written plan to implement and practice three virtues, associated with the module, across both personal and professional domains between training sessions. This is consistent with Army doctrine as:

Leaders of integrity adhere to values that are part of their personal identity and set a standard for their followers to emulate.... Living and leading from an identity that is not integrated, meaning one that places one’s personal morality outside the scope of professional ethics, drawing then on each one on a situational basis, does not comport with Army leadership doctrines and will quickly be recognized by followers as inauthentic.<sup>37</sup>

Each module is intended to be standalone, interchangeable, and scalable. In practice, whatever amount of the program the Soldier gets will be beneficial and won't feel incomplete without the others. Each module reminds students of the larger purpose outlined in module one, and allows customization to the current needs of the unit. In other words, a Unit Ministry Team that knows their unit struggles with virtues associated with integrity, for example, can shift the order to frontload instruction on that particular Army Value. Modules two through seven can be taught in any order. In addition, the training time for each module is not fixed and can be customized to easily fit any training schedule. Some modules will be naturally longer and others shorter. Modules can be taught in a traditional classroom or they can be taught in an off-site or field setting. Each trainer customizes their instruction to fit the needs of their unit while retaining the core content. Each module, again excepting module one, also includes a review of the students Individualized Moral Leadership Development Worksheet from the previous module to cement learning, evaluate efficacy, and mitigate a Soldier's failure to stick to his or her plan. Practice is critical because as Flynn explains, "Virtues, then, are dispositions engendered in us through practice or habituation."<sup>38</sup> As part of the in-module review process, the impact of previously attended modules is captured using the Quick Take Assessment for further development and evaluation of the MLTM. Lastly, each module ends with a "hot wash" to collect immediate feedback from participants.

The MLTM's foundational modules employ a variety of teaching processes. This variety is beneficial, keeping materials fresh and reducing a feeling of redundancy. Unit Ministry Teams customize MLTM modules and provide developmental feedback on concepts and products for the continuous development of future iterations while retaining core elements. Teams then use this feedback to build a centralized repository of developmental ideas that foster subsequent renditions of the modules. As a collaborative endeavor, the repository permits those most talented in curriculum development to drive a synergistic effect, as their products provide a wider range of options for those pressed for time or whose talents lie in other areas.

Having introduced the basics of the MLTM, the remainder of this paper will focus on answering a variety of questions regarding the focus and implementation of the model.

### **Question 1: What is the MLTM's goal?**

In simple terms, the MLTM is dedicated to moving students towards holistic flourishing as moral leaders who maintain the trust of the American People and are best equipped to meet the challenges raised by the challenges of mission command, multi-domain battle, and large-scale combat operations. Whetstone's vision for servant leadership is similar, "The servant leader formulation attempts to bring together the conceptual and intuitive levels of ethics, offering a focus on developing people fit to make the ethical choices and to implement them one-by-one—while continuing to improve over time."<sup>39</sup>

Continual self-improvement is another critical goal of the MLTM because as Trevino and her colleagues explain, "Most adults in industrialized societies are at [Lawrence Kohlberg's] 'conventional' level of cognitive moral development, and less than twenty percent of adults ever reach the 'principled' level where thinking is more autonomous and principle-based."<sup>40</sup> The potential for casualties, collateral damage, or even atrocity means Army leaders must be capable of making decisions at the principled level of Kohlberg's scale. The MLTM begins this development process focused on shared ideals (virtues) to engender a spirit of aspiration toward higher level moral development. Bernard Bass regards this as the preeminent task of leadership. "Perhaps the greatest challenge of leadership is precisely to bridge ethical relativism by forging a platform of common values and stimulating alignment and congruence of interests."<sup>41</sup> In the MLTM, the Army Values provide just such a platform of common values and by considering their broader implications through the Associated Virtues construct, MLTM seeks to bring a unified drive towards living the Army Values in and out of uniform. The MLTM calls students to, as Paul Robinson suggests in *Parameters*, "Engage in sustained normative reflections and... engage in sustained critical thinking about complex problems."<sup>42</sup> The focus is training "Soldiers who act ethically, not because they have been told to, or

because they think it will make them look good, but because they themselves have determined that it is the right thing to do.”<sup>43</sup> The MLTM seeks to make leaders whose thinking and actions reflect an instinctively normative morality. The model is primarily interested in morally developing leaders, not reducing numerical indicators of indiscipline. It is likely that more moral leaders will result in the reduction of such measurable acts of indiscipline, but this is a side benefit, not the main thrust of the model. In an ultimate sense, it is worth considering Trevino’s thought that “It can be argued that the continuing moral development of organizational members is a desired end in and of itself.”<sup>44</sup>

## **Question 2: Why use a virtues/values approach?**

A virtues approach is congruent with both Army doctrine and Framework for Character Development. As Professor Whetstone points out, “A virtues perspective can provide a learning process highlighting the continuous dynamic of action and development of the motivational dispositions of human persons to act within the broad environmental community context. The normative aim is to move towards the standard set by a concept of the good organization.”<sup>45</sup> The Army Values and profession doctrine, along with the Framework, represent our concept of a good organization.

Additionally, Army Professionals desire this kind of training to enhance their leadership qualities. The Army Profession Campaign Annual Report 2012 confirms this:

Army Professionals are looking for the Army to refocus on professional values. Army Professionals voiced broad support for developing, training, and educating specific institutional characteristics that define the Army as a profession, as well as listing the individual attributes that identify Army personnel as professional.<sup>46</sup>

Beyond the desire of Army Professionals for discussions in this area, it best reflects our pluralistic culture. Bernard Bass is instructive here. “An approach to ethics based upon moral character and virtue enjoys an extraordinarily broad cross-cultural base.”<sup>47</sup> Further research by Schwartz, Lin, Rosemont, and Ames, finds, “The moral life rests upon foundations of individual virtue and that the individually virtuous person transforms others as well as the social environment.”<sup>48</sup> So instilling virtue in individuals positively impacts the organizations to which they belong by extension.

Lastly, as Author Kim Cameron so cogently points out, a set of agreed upon, fixed principles are an irreplaceable navigational aid to leaders. “Disorientation afflicts individuals and organizations in situations where there are no unchanging references. When nothing is stable—no clear fixed points or undisputed guiding principles exist—leaders are left with nothing by which to steer.”<sup>49</sup> Beyond that, according to Whetstone, educating for virtues is effective in creating positive change.

Virtues are not static; they are corrective. They help guide, motivate, or correct moral deliberation and behavior. By promoting and facilitating methods of moral education, character development, and emotional well-being of the actor, an ethic of virtue can serve as a framework for implementing positive change in behavior.”<sup>50</sup>

In the end, by positively focusing on who a leader should be as opposed to what a leader should not do, the MLTM supplies a set of fixed reference points by which to judge not only the observable character of a leader, but their internal motivations as well. As Paul Robinson states, “While negative cases can make a contribution, it would be more useful to the inculcation of appropriate responses if more positive examples were used.”<sup>51</sup> Don Snider chimes in, “While both forms of motivation have their uses, it is common sense, as well as Army doctrine, to prefer transformational leadership that draws on the moral foundations and inspires Army professionals to honorable service over motivation that is based punitively on law and regulations.”<sup>52</sup>

### **Question 3: How does learning about virtues associated with the Army values produce change in the learner?**

There is a distinct difference between creating good order through compliance means and striving to create good people. Compliance does not drive character, but character can drive compliance. As Whetstone sees it, “Having a good moral character suggests the presence of virtues or moral excellences and the absence of vices. [These are] beneficial to personal actors and to the others affected by their acts.”<sup>53</sup> This approach ultimately leads to good order by means of internal commitment. Paul Robinson quoting Hilliard Aronovitch in a 2007 *Parameters* article stating, “Effective fighters are also ethical fighters, good soldiers in the one sense are also good soldiers in the other sense.... Hence, good soldiers must in certain ways be good persons as well.”<sup>54</sup> Commitment outcomes are by nature superior to compliance outcomes. The MLTM intends to launch a dialog between and within the students to lead them to commitment. As Bass points out this is, “Predicated upon the inner dynamics of a freely embraced change of heart in the realm of core values and motivation, upon open-ended intellectual stimulation and a commitment to treating people as ends not merely means.”<sup>55</sup> The creators of MTML designed it as a discussion and investigation launchpad augmented by the Individualized Moral Leadership Development Worksheets. Participant and facilitator discussion lead to learning through discovery. This is especially so when students are introduced to other viewpoints, even when in error. For this reason, Army doctrinal definitions are not introduced in an authoritative sense early in each module and are not the sole focus of the training. Rather, the group explores possibilities together to achieve greater moral vision. As Corvig and his colleagues comment, “Saying yes to an invitation to hear someone else’s moral thinking is not an acknowledgment that they are right; it is being open enough to hear them out.”<sup>56</sup> In fact, this sort of thinking reflects the emphasis on the 21<sup>st</sup> century soldier competency of critical thought. The concept of interacting with opposing opinions using critical thought to arrive at valid conclusions is far from new. Furthermore, Corvig and his colleagues demonstrate this by quoting early 20<sup>th</sup> century educational professional Ellen White who wrote:

The men [and women] in whom this power [critical thinking] is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought.<sup>57</sup>

The impetus to develop comes when ideas are wrestled with. As Robinson points out however, “It is one thing to say soldiers will have to undergo ethics training, it is quite another to ensure that they learn the right lessons.”<sup>58</sup> This is why it is essential to take this broad virtues approach to moral leadership training and root it in the sound underpinnings of the Army Values.

Perhaps, it is significant to mention that a language of virtues and vices is the language of leaders. Whetstone’s research into grocery store management led him to the following conclusion:

[While] practicing managers are not schooled in philosophy, certainly not in the classical traditions and language of virtue. Nevertheless, the empirical exploration of the language managers actually use [revealed it as]... Essentially one of virtues and vices, not quite that of ancient Greek or medieval philosophers, but one suited to the society and culture of the contemporary organization.<sup>59</sup>

### **Question 4: Why use Unit Ministry Teams as the primary instructors?**

Army Regulation 165-1 clearly designates the Army Chaplain Corps as the proponent agency for moral leadership training. Additionally, chaplains are among the most well-trained speakers and teachers in the Army. We need our most skilled presenters to inspire development since, as Robinson points out, “The

ability of military institutions to indirectly influence the character of their members has declined.”<sup>60</sup> Employing Unit Ministry Teams as lead instructors also allows sensitivity to particular unit needs, schedules, and challenges. It permits greater flexibility and decentralizes training which boosts effectiveness. As Robinson elucidates, “Giving a leading role in ethics training to those of lower levels of the chain of command, and allowing for differences between units [and even service branches] is one way of overcoming such perceptions [that this kind of training is simply check the block].”<sup>61</sup> Ultimately, as Snider and Shine conclude, “Moral leadership is best applied under mission command when the profession’s culture is meritocratic and self-policing at each level rather than imposed from above, and when a broad diversity of personal moralities is leveraged to the effectiveness of the profession.”<sup>62</sup> In the end, the Chaplain Corps is better trained—opposed to other branches—to understand the moral and spiritual plurality of our force.

**Question 5: Why does the model take so long? What if soldiers cannot complete all eight modules? Why not just point students towards Army doctrine, make them familiar with it, and let them develop themselves?**

Corvig tells us, “Modern scholarship on followership strongly indicates that there is often a moral weakness and followers.”<sup>63</sup> Correcting this weakness is difficult. Developing Moral Leaders and building a climate and culture of moral leadership is time intensive. It cannot and will not be created overnight. In Corvig’s view, “Moral leadership is a rich cultural process of engaged dialogue that leads to better mature thinking. That is messy, time-consuming, and the temptation to reign in that process is always present.”<sup>64</sup> To accomplish the goals of the MLTM takes time, effort and strong resistance to organizational entropy, the natural tendency of organizations to lose their devotion to foundational principles over time. As Whetstone puts it, “The virtue ethics perspective attempts to help the person as actor understand himself and develop the moral capacities to live and work well in situations both ordinary ones and crises.”<sup>65</sup> There is no shortcut to this destination. For example, in another article based on research done with grocery store managers, he further elucidates, “Managers are not merely lists of qualities, but humans striving to reach goals that can conflict under multiple pressures within a dynamic and very complex social and cultural environment.”<sup>66</sup> If this is true of grocery store managers, how much more so of Army leaders who are, within the LSCO environment, concerned with vastly more dynamic and complex situations than the price of lettuce or providing adequate time off for employees?

Although completing the full eight modules would be time consuming, a Soldier need not complete all to begin developing. Developing will always be an ongoing process. The more a Soldier experiences the model, the more catalyzed the process. Yet, leaders never arrive at a “trained” status in terms of moral leadership, they always aspire to move further along.

Trevino, referencing Lawrence Kohlberg’s work, suggests that “[t]he cognitive moral development model logically leads to prescriptions for moral education as a way to a higher maturity stage.”<sup>67</sup> One challenge is that encouraging self-development efforts and our own organizational model don’t make it easier. On the one hand, there is the challenge of moral cruise control as Corvig, Ongo, and Ledsma assert, “Power accumulation and centralization tempts followers to put their own moral and spiritual thinking on cruise control and let others decide.”<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, there is a challenge presented by those who come into the Army with strong personal moralities as well. As Snider makes clear, “In the event of a clash between a Soldier’s personal morality and his or her understanding of responsibility under the Army’s Ethic or directives, he or she cannot in good conscience simply jettison the personal ethic to support that of the Army.”<sup>69</sup> In the final analysis, every Soldier must conduct some form of hybridizing where personal and organizational morality and ethics are acceptably congruent in order to serve in good conscience. Soldiers need interpretative assistance to successfully navigate this hybridizing process.

## **Question 6: Why are design for development and intentional customization part of the model?**

Al Gini points out a static, one-size-fits-all approach is a failure waiting to happen. “Leadership is never tidy. ‘Any attempt to describe a social process complex as leadership inevitably makes it seem more orderly than it is.’”<sup>70</sup> It would be astoundingly arrogant to assume that the pilot modules of the MLTM, if they remained static or in a singular format, would suffice to address the moral leadership development needs of Soldiers across the Army long-term. Only a model that adapts its methods to changing conditions while refining content, fights organizational entropy, furthers collaboration, catalyzes innovation, and complements future components in the Army’s moral leadership/character development programing allows for sustainable implementation.

## **Question 7: How does MLTM begin to answer the moral challenges of the Army both on and off the battlefield?**

Firstly, as demonstrated by John Cullen and his associates, deriving guidance from internalized principles is how true professional lead.

Professionals are expected to internalize professional principles and give them priority over organizational norms. As such, it seems likely that when organizations develop principled climates they are more likely to be congruent with internalized professional norms and values, which should lead to greater levels of organizational commitment.”<sup>71</sup>

Second, The MLTM benefits both individual Soldiers and the Army as an organization by developing effective, trustworthy leaders who take the organization towards the destination envisioned by the American people long-term. Hansen’s team writes:

Strong ethical leaders are, therefore likely to be more effective than weak ethical leaders at maintaining the trust of key stakeholders vital for the realization of long-term, strategic organizational objectives. By placing a high priority on long-term stakeholder trust via their adherence to high moral standards, strong ethical leaders demonstrate commitment to their organization’s long-term success. They also create environments of trust were subordinates are likely to develop similarly committed behavior patterns.<sup>72</sup>

Third, it is the best way to guide subordinates’ behaviors beyond self-benefit. Hansen’s study continues,

Organizational ethical leaders have a stronger impact on employee commitment... Being an ethical leader will not only positively impact subordinate ethical behavior; it will also positively impact a broad range of behaviors that are beneficial to the supervisor, the workgroup, and the organization.<sup>73</sup>

The day-to-day behavior of moral leaders can change the face of our Army from moral ambivalence to moral consistency. Professor David Mayer sums it up. “When leaders are moral people (e.g., integrity, concern for others, just, trustworthy) and moral managers (e.g., communicating, rewarding, punishing, emphasizing ethical standards, role modeling ethical behavior) they’re better equipped to create an environment in which doing the right thing is valued.”<sup>74</sup> Potential benefits abound according to Professor Miao of Zhejiang University, whose international team of researchers believe, “Ethical leadership enhances employee work attitudes such as job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment, job performance, voice behavior, and organizational citizenship behavior... Reducing subordinates’ misconduct, deviant behaviors, and organizational bullying in the workplace.”<sup>75</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In a future characterized by near-peer, Large-Scale Combat Operations, across a multi-domain battle field, under the doctrine of mission command, our Army must be replete with moral leaders. Historian Anne Loveland quotes President Truman as saying, “The spiritual and moral health of our Armed Forces is a vital element of our national security.”<sup>76</sup> Our leaders must model behavior anyone would be proud to emulate. Further, they must be convincing leaders, persuading the leaders of the future to lead through the same kind of moral action they themselves do today. Cultivating a richer and more life-integrated approach to the Army Values through the understanding of other virtues, which shed light on their nuances, and finding ways to practice those virtues both in and out of uniform can lead Soldiers to become fully flourishing moral agents. The Moral Leadership Training Model addresses many of the concerns detailed throughout this essay and provides the Army a desperately needed weapon in its character development arsenal.

## End Notes

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