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MORAL GUARDIANSHIP: BUILDING AUTHENTIC TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS;
A PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

by

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Biography

Lieutenant Colonel Anthony R. Hernandez is a United States Air Force officer enrolled in the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. He has served in a variety of operations and acquisition roles at the wing, major command and Air Staff level and is a two-time graduated squadron commander in both combat and mobility Air Force units. Lieutenant Colonel Hernandez graduated from New Mexico State University in 1991 with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Finance, the University of Phoenix in 2000 with a Master of Arts degree in Organizational Management, and Air Command and Staff College, Air University in 2005 with a Master of Operational Art and Science degree. He was recently selected for promotion to Colonel.

Abstract

Transformational leadership is an elusive concept that has intrigued academics, drawn popular media attention, and enchanted millions of admirers as we yearn for genuine leaders. The style is very compelling, yet difficult to emulate. Unfortunately, mastering this leadership dimension does not always result in virtuous leaders nor guarantee ethical ends, ways and means in its application. Leaders often confront a fine line between moral probity and deceptive manipulation. This is especially true for strategic military leaders given their rank and power of command. Because the power of transformational leadership can attract immoral and unethical dimensions, a strong moral foundation must be established and maintained at the institutional level in order to foster the proper moral conviction required of military professionals in defense of American ideals.

This paper analyzes the immoral and unethical dimensions of unprincipled transformational leadership, drawing a distinction between authentic- and pseudo-transformational leadership. The paper also demonstrates how personal vice can easily corrupt the authentic form and takes a look at various cultural tendencies and structural constraints that improperly edify morally weak leaders and hide character flaws. Finally, the paper examines ways to build a strong moral foundation via a liberal education and intellectual debate.

The overall recommendation calls for a robust program of moral instruction versus the usual institutional means. Given its profession of arms, the institution must lead in terms of building better citizens and leaders in a nihilistic age. Thus, a morally rich professional military educational environment is necessary to overcome the susceptibility of transformational leadership toward immoral and unethical dimensions, while properly developing succeeding generations of moral guardians to accomplish the mission and protect society's inner core.

Introduction

"The crisis of leadership today is the mediocrity or irresponsibility of so many of the men and women in power, but leadership rarely rises to the full need for it. The fundamental crisis underlying mediocrity is intellectual."

— James MacGregor Burns
Author of <u>Leadership</u>

Transformational leadership is an elusive concept that has intrigued academics, drawn popular media attention, and enchanted millions of admirers as we yearn for genuine leaders in our society. Even the military, despite its heavy emphasis on a transactional leadership style, has sought to inculcate transformational leadership values within its ranks. The main reason behind the allure of transformational leadership is it remains a potent form of leadership as distinguished by its charismatic influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.[1] The style is very compelling, yet difficult to emulate. Unfortunately, mastering this leadership dimension does not always result in virtuous leaders nor guarantee ethical ends, ways and means in its application. Leaders often confront a fine line between moral probity and deceptive manipulation. This is especially true for strategic military leaders given their rank and power of command. Because the power of transformational leadership can attract immoral and unethical dimensions, a strong moral foundation must be established and maintained at the institutional level in order to foster the proper moral conviction required of military professionals in defense of American ideals.

The purpose of this paper is, first, to analyze the immoral and unethical dimensions of unprincipled transformational leadership, drawing a distinction between authentic- and pseudo-transformational leadership, and demonstrating how personal vice can easily corrupt the

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authentic form toward a more sinister end. Second, the paper will examine ways in which a strong moral foundation can be nurtured and maintained throughout one's military career. In doing so, this paper will address and make practical recommendations and offer detailed examples on how to tackle various cultural tendencies and structural constraints that improperly edify morally weak leaders and hide character flaws.

Five Ethical Criticisms of Transformational Leadership

The immoral and unethical dimensions that result in pseudo-transformational leadership are definite causes for concern given the decrease in genuine leadership and the effects of mass media and a celebrity culture that accelerate this decline. In fact, given a host of such poor, "celebrity leadership," the entire style of transformational leadership is suspect. As such, there are five ethical criticisms of transformational leadership that are increasingly evident in today's culture. First, the charismatic aspects of transformational leadership lend themselves to a form of "amoral puffery" via the rise of impression management, public relations strategy, and image control. Second, transformational leadership is highly susceptible to the proverbial "savior" syndrome instead of fostering a culture of organizational learning and development. Third, transformational leadership can be used to exploit emotions and channel institutional actions toward irrational or evil ends. Fourth, unethical leaders can lead followers to lose more than they gain by masking ulterior motives in simple slogans and cultural artifacts. Finally, unlike transactional leadership, there are few structural checks and balances that protect the minority or allow for the removal of abusive leaders in the absence of strong moral convictions within the leader in question or their superiors.[2] An in-depth look at each of these five criticisms follows.

Charismatic leaders have been emulated in society since the age of Homer. As such, attempts to duplicate charismatic behavior is now a cottage industry; including the daily

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mannerisms of transformational leaders. Impression management remains an interesting topic in senior leader "charm" schools, contemporary literature, and in most mentoring sessions. Unfortunately, unskilled leaders tend to rely on impression management techniques as the sole basis for their prestige. Worse, pseudo-transformational leaders are extremely adept at disguising hollow character traits and masking their lack of solid convictions via these same techniques. All it takes for a pseudo-transformational leader to deceive others is a little knowledge, some polished rhetorical skills, and the ability of publicity agents and spin doctors to create hype and celebrity status.[3] Moreover, since this façade is easily amplified in today's mass media culture, there is a steady market for such shortcuts. There are many books which lend themselves toward developing a strong leadership image. For example, D.A Benton's <u>Lions Don't Need to Roar</u> and Chip and Dan Heath's <u>Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die</u> are two excellent books for projecting personal power and articulating a powerful message. They each contain valuable insight that will work for any leader. Yet, despite their positive message, these books can be misused by the pseudo-transformational leader. Thus, "amoral puffery" is a well-founded criticism of transformational leadership.

The second criticism looks at the proverbial "savior syndrome" that people place on transformational leaders. In times of crisis, society often confers savior status on individuals in recognition of their deeds and also as a means to teach the young. Unfortunately, there are always ambitious individuals who will attempt to create a crisis in search of this honor. The military is no different. Among its members, there is a strong desire to be the "go-to-person;" particularly amid those who intend to rise rapidly within the ranks. For some, establishing a reputation for striding into poorly led units and fixing broken processes is very alluring. Others are eager to lead others in combat in order to achieve amazing feats of glory. Yet, this behavior

can be very destructive in organizations. The tendency of pseudo-transformational leaders to ensconce themselves in the "savior" syndrome prevents long-term organizational learning and development. Healthy organizational concepts such as shared leadership, equality of responsibility, and consensus or participative decision-making all suffer as a result.[4] The failure to arrest this tendency has negative institutional effects since pseudo-transformational behavior is often rewarded in terms of early promotion. Results outweigh the means. Consequently, this syndrome spreads to other units as behaviors are emulated in an effort to duplicate results. Over time, a weaker institution is left in the wake of such leaders as followers await the next savior or charlatan to emerge.

The third criticism looks at how transformational leadership can exploit individual emotions and channel actions toward irrational or evil ends. Since mankind is a social creature, there is a strong tendency for individuals to obey authority. This duty to obey provides fertile ground for exploitation. While a transactional leadership style imposes obedience through fear and coercion, pseudo-transformational leadership is much more menacing since it easily masks sinister ends, ways and means through existing social values and customs. Under this form, people choose to accept irrational means and ends. There are a number of ways this happens. Modern conservatism offers a convincing argument that explains this tendency, particularly among the liberally-minded.

Edmund Burke (1729-1797), the father of modern conservatism posited that human beings tend to base a majority of their conduct on a powerful sense of loyalty, duty, and affection to their respective families, community associations, and ultimately to their society and national state. Consequently, humans acquire their identity and fulfill their roles by participating in their native traditions, customs, and national heritage.[5] Transformational leaders innately understand

these undercurrents and use them as a means to establish their credibility. Transformational leaders are also skilled in making an appeal to abstract values such as justice, liberty, and brotherhood. Unfortunately, these values can be easily twisted in ways that contradict family or local values. As a result, exposure to broader values often redefines personal aspirations and sense of gratification as followers stake their claim in new, program-oriented social movements.[6] In fact, rapid exposure to new social movements can create dissonance in terms of proper obedience to authority. The most extreme example is Nazi Germany and its ability to sway the German people into committing severe abuses of human rights. There are also other lesser examples such as the Ford Motor Company's corporate culture which made it socially acceptable to ignore deadly errors in the Ford Pinto's fuel tank. Similarly, Morton-Thiokol's executive culture encouraged negligent behavior in dealing with dangerous "O-ring" temperatures that resulted in the loss of the Space Shuttle Columbia.[7] Finally, Stanley Milgram's 1965 studies offer chilling insights into how individuals respond to organizational culture and are socialized into evil doing.[8] The acculturation process can happen very quickly. James Clavell's <u>The Children's Story</u> provides a haunting picture of systematic brainwashing that could easily happen in any school or job site. Alternatively, the change can be subtle, even in the United States. Amity Schlaes' <u>The Forgotten Man, A New History of the Great Depression</u> exposes the vast amount of deception used to enact Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" which has largely been brushed over in American classrooms despite its overall failure. Friedrich Hayek's <u>The Road to Serfdom</u> offers insights into how intellectuals can be easily misled by the concentration of socialist thought in academia. A common theme in each case is a strong inclination for people to obey authority, follow the crowd, and avoid ridicule and censure.

The fourth criticism involves people being duped by to lose more than they gain by supporting a particular cause. Simple slogans and cultural artifacts are very powerful. Usually followers are misled into committing an enormous amount of effort toward vaguely-worded ideals found in common vision statements. Sadly, these same followers hold most of risk when things go bad or are exposed as evil plots. Even something as simple as the Air Force core values of "Integrity," "Service Before Self," and "Excellence In All We Do" can be easily distorted by pseudo-transformational leaders. In his article, "The Core Values: Framing and Resolving Ethical Issues For the Air Force," Colonel Charles R. Myers expertly demonstrates how these values can be exploited. Absent any discussion on what these values truly represent, the moral structure underpinning the Core Values can be easily reduced to nothing more than "truthful reporting," "working selflessly," and "obtaining the best results possible." Once these values are discounted, they become an easy means for achieving evil ends.[9] In terms of followers losing more than they gain, there is an additional and pernicious effect that results from strict adherence to these values. The Core Values are impossible to meet if they are truly objective standards by which all members can be judged. There is no room for human fallibility in telling the whole truth at all times, no time for pressing family and personal issues, nor room for charity in the fact that no one can succeed at everything all of the time. In other words, all members will eventually fail to meet the "zero defect" standard that are implied within each of the core values.[10]

Further, when leaders are allowed to make subjective assessments of one's adherence to core values, a malicious power relationship can ensue. This is why pseudo-transformational leaders often get away with espousing vague ideals. Followers are enticed to act toward evil ends, then simply discarded when they fail to meet an endlessly redefined standard or mirage of

perfection. As a final insult, these types of leaders are rarely held to account for the actions of their followers since vague ideals can always be reframed to cover underlying motives and harmful actions. Plausible deniability is now an artform.

Finally, unlike transactional leadership, there are no structural checks and balances that protect the minority or allow for the removal of abusive leaders. Only a person's strong moral convictions regulate behaviors and guide the actions of a transformational leader. Part of the reason lies in the fact that transformational leadership succeeds in convincing people they share common or universal goals. Although individuals usually possess a wide range of interests and goals, they unwittingly abandon these in the name of a "greater" cause and limit vital dissention that would alter the ends, ways and means of a particular policy. Normally, individual interests are balanced through compromise and negotiation which are hallmarks of transactional leadership.[11] However, transformational leadership bypasses this bargaining process and replaces compromise and consensus with sheer social momentum. Usually, transformational leaders frame choices in "win-win" terms and use their charisma to cement the deal.[12] However, not all leaders guide these efforts with a moral compass since human nature is always a mix of virtue and vice. Unfortunately, without any limits on the power of transformational leaders, even the most resolute leaders are susceptible to taking dangerous shortcuts. Aristotle's Politics recognized that "even the best of men in authority are liable to be corrupted by passion."[13] The age-old question is how to build proper moral character so that society can guard against the immoral and unethical dimensions within each of the five criticisms.

Developing Authentic Transformation Leadership

To begin developing authentic transformational leadership character, a sound liberal education is needed.   In addition to military operational art and science, this education should

have an impetus towards moral development, coupled with high levels of reflection and mentorship. The end result should focus on a process of relentless moral inquiry in order to create a suitable defense against corrupt influences. The heart of this authentic leadership development points towards a comprehensive philosophy, centering around two basic questions: First, what does it mean to be an excellent leader? Second, what tools can one use to resolve the inevitable moral dilemmas leaders face every day and in times of great crisis? Answering these questions promotes a philosophical approach which cannot be self-guided. It must be taught in classrooms and reinforced in ongoing mentoring sessions.

First, understanding the meaning of "excellence in leadership" reaches as far back as Plato's dialogues in both Apology and Crito. Plato's dialogues reveal both the depth and wide-ranging implications of what is meant by asking this question and the journey of discovery that ensues in undertaking this enquiry. Socratic aphorisms such as "the unexamined life is not worth living" and "we should set the highest value, not on living, but on living well" illustrate this self-discovery.[14] They also indicate a lifelong process of critical reading, review, and reflection in pursuing moral excellence. Any leader unwilling to undergo this lifelong process is simply looking for shortcuts as explained in each of the five criticisms.

Second, history also indicates authentic leadership is not to be confused with occupying an official position or reliving past glories and honors. Although Homeric traditions of leadership placed great value on external factors such as "warlike prowess" and "public esteem," these heroes had moral limitations.[15] For instance, Aristides and Themistocles were both heroes in the Homeric tradition who rose to become premier leaders in ancient Athens. However, both became exceedingly arrogant and scornful, eventually resulting in their exile via the ancient Greek custom of ostracism.[16] To avoid such pitfalls, the study of leadership should highlight

such historical examples and include discussions of sophistry, pretense and impression management as detractors of leadership excellence or authenticity.[17] Authentic leaders can overcome temptations of superiority and arrogance by examining themselves and submitting to mentors. This can only happen after gaining an understanding of what leadership excellence means and what it does not. This discussion thrives in a formal classroom environment.

Another way to examine and build leadership excellence is to appraise ethical values embedded in the leader's articulation of a vision or mission.[18] The emphasis must focus on whether the actual message derives from the leader's internal values, which will serve to guide the conscience of the crowd.[19] Additionally, the leader's deeds must match his or her words in order to limit any dissonance. Plato introduced Socrates' method of questioning, or *elenchus,* as a way of questioning prospective leaders to see if they hold any contradictions in their statements, which would undermine their authenticity.[20] This method can best be implemented via a lifelong mentoring process. Even senior leaders continually need mentors to ask "mentoring questions" instead of providing gentle reassurances. As such, mentors must challenge their protégés to assess espoused leadership values, using penetrating insights that expose blind spots in personal values and related actions as they build authentic leaders.[21] Hence, when these leaders articulate a vision, it will resonate with the moral character in both the leader and the crowd.

Finally, it is important to understand how modern Western ethics centers on the interaction of individuals, organizational units, and society as a whole with emphasis on the various transactions between each group in terms of distributive justice and liberal ideals.[22] As leaders develop their moral authority, it is enormously beneficial to study ancient and contemporary philosophy to understand political relationships as leaders interact with society.

For example, a constructive concept can be taken from Plato's <u>Republic</u> and his notion for developing "philosopher-kings" or a ruling "aristocracy."[23]   Another relevant philosophical concept is taken from Aristotle's <u>Metaphysics</u> and his theory on the space between actuality and potentiality.[24] Similarly, contemporary philosophers offer many conceptual tools to consider in developing senior leaders. Theocentric, anthropocentric, liberal and conservative schools of thought combine to provide a solid basis for developing one's philosophical core and help organize arguments in support of ideals. Each school provides a moral compass for directing future actions in support of a particular vision. Thus, liberal courses in philosophy offer senior leaders an opportunity to craft, reflect and employ applicable concepts in forming sound leadership principles. In turn, these principles help guide and analyze ways, means and ends for use in times of great crisis.

Recommended Tools for Developing Better Transformational Leaders

Analysis of ways, means, and ends leads to the second question central in building authentic leadership. Senior leaders must ask, "What tools can one use to resolve the inevitable moral dilemmas leaders face every day and in times of great crisis?" Answering this question starts with three types of tools that are of great value to senior military leaders. The first two tools range from teaching simple virtue ethics in helping leaders make better choices to a better understanding in a range of philosophical subjects oriented toward developing better warriors. The last tool is incorporating an extensive discussion of classic and contemporary literature which is uniquely suited to sharpen the military mind for greater roles in Western society. The last tool requires a bit more explanation and several illuminating examples as it involves a regimen that is often misapplied. A look at the first two tools follows.

<u>Virtue Ethics</u>

As guardians of Western society, senior military leaders must increasingly understand the bond between virtue and character. Given the implications of decision-making in crisis situations, this impetus is more pronounced. As such, virtue ethics must make a robust return as a core course of study in all professional military education colleges. Virtue ethics is how leaders decide on certain courses of action and exemplifies behaviors they wish to be emulated.[25] It is a complex field of study requiring more than a cursory two-hour seminar. A simple illustration of this complexity involves two competing methods for leaders to make ethical decisions and a third way that bridges the divide between the two methods.

The first method derives from John Stuart Mills' principle of "utilitarianism." Essentially the principle states that moral judgments can be made and justified after evaluating which of the feasible alternatives presented to the leader is likely to result in the greater good for society. Although this approach places heavy emphasis on results, it tends to neglect underlying motives and ignores evil ways and means used to achieve those results.[26] Yet, Mills' also used a number of qualitative factors in constructing his philosophy that are necessary for leaders to understand in adopting this approach. This is where the concept becomes more complex.

Alternatively, leaders can also use the second form of Immanuel Kant's "categorical imperative" to make moral judgments regarding actions. Essentially this method develops the idea that an action derives its moral worth not from its form, or the act itself, but from its underlying intention.[27] In other words, Kant's method in determining moral worth simply measures the intent of an action and discounts the end result. Yet, Kant had much more to say with respect to one's moral actions. A course in virtue ethics discusses these at length. In any

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case, operating from either Mill's utilitarianism or Kant's categorical imperative will sharply conflict with each other causing an ethical divide and paralysis in decision making.

To bridge this divide, Aristotle's virtue ethics offers a third way in terms of creating moral habits that continually balances the desired results (i.e., Mill's utilitarianism) with the kinds of actions a leaders needs to embrace or avoid in achieving those results (i.e., Kant's categorical imperatives).[28] To do this, Aristotle uses essentially the same solution proposed in his Nicomachean Ethics via the concept of a "golden mean." The "golden mean" is simply the ideal point between two extremes of some given quality or desirable characteristic that represents the perfect balance in character. For example, the desirable quality of having "courage" lies somewhere between exhibiting "cowardice" on one extreme and engaging in "recklessness" on the other. Similarly, a person who displays "modesty" is somewhere between the extremes of "humility" and "pride."[29] Thus, the pursuit of moral excellence targets the mean between two conflicting principles. Yet, military professional education simply rushes through hypothetical scenarios without ever explaining the underlying philosophy or how to make informed tradeoffs. This needs to change.

Study of Broad Philosophical Subjects

Second, senior leaders should study a variety of philosophical subjects in order to develop as better warrior-leaders. For example, just war theory deals with criteria for deciding whether to use armed force and how to use that force once it is unleashed. Prominent philosophers in just war theory are St. Thomas Aquinas, Francisco de Vitoria, and Francisco Suarez.[30] Likewise, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Edmund Burke, Georg Hegel and Thomas Hill Green offer additional perspectives in terms of ideology and its application towards war. At

a minimum, military leaders should understand these philosophies before leading people into a war in support of nefarious purposes.

Another philosophical subject that should be studied carefully is stoicism and how military culture derives its strength from application of this particular philosophy. In her book, Stoic Warriors, Dr. Nancy Sherman highlights the teachings of Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Lucius Annaeus Seneca and Marcus Tullius Cicero in demonstrating how the philosophy of stoicism forms a solid basis for guiding warriors given a harsh military culture and combat environment. Yet, it is interesting to note that Dr. Sherman also recommends a "gentle" stoicism in using select elements of the philosophy that allows leaders to nurture a warrior's humanity in building more resilient combat warriors.[31] Senior leaders ought to know why this makes sense. With respect to transformational leaders, it is clear Dr. Sherman's view reinforces the aspect of individualized consideration over the implied demands of military life. Without a liberal education, rising transformational leaders would fail to see the link.

Finally, moral probity is always a concern for leadership development. From Plato's "philosopher king" and Confucius' "superior person" to Dr. Bernard Bass' concept of transformational leadership, virtue plays a heavy role in leadership development.[32] Yet, somewhere this emphasis was lost. Dr. James Toner's "Excursus" in True Faith and Allegiance: The Burden of Military Ethics, Robert Sandin's The Rehabilitation of Virtue: Foundations of Moral Education, and even William Kilpatrick's Why Johnny Can't Tell Right From Wrong offer compelling arguments and propose solutions for emphasizing moral development. From the intellectual stimulation aspect of authentic transformational leadership, prospective leaders can glean important insights from each of these books. Taken together, virtue ethics, just war theory, stoicism, and the development of moral character offer important tools which make better

warrior-leaders.   Unfortunately, current curriculum requirements leave no room for such education to the detriment of the institution. Hence, the institution gets exactly what it pays for.

<u>Study of Literature</u>

Finally, a program that exposes officers to many of the great works of literature can illuminate rich philosophical concepts via literary themes, morals, motifs and symbols. This may seem frivolous given the military's technological culture. However, debate and discussion of both classic and contemporary literature provides senior leaders the exact kind of "Socratic environment" to elicit rational thought, subjects these thoughts to critical enquiry, and helps form sensible models for the employment of technological weapons and as future guardians of Western society.

For instance, Ayn Rand's <u>Anthem</u>, is a book that stimulates intellectual discussion using the concept of man's ego to attack David Hume's fact-value dichotomy. Ayn Rand's resonant use of themes such as the primacy of the individual, the value of martyrdom, and the impotence of the collective is very effective in centering her objectivist argument as it boldly integrates facts with values rather than separate them as Hume does.[33, 34] Although there are pros and cons associated with Ayn Rand's philosophy of objectivism, it is useful for leaders to understand these concepts for several reasons. First, Hume's fact-value dichotomy separates arguments which are valid through reason alone (i.e., what can be discovered by science, philosophy or reason) from those where rationality is limited to describing a collective opinion be (i.e., a judgment which can be agreed upon by consensus).[35] Thus, "universal laws" become a product of sentiment, absent any true reason, which can be changed on the whims of society. As such, this dichotomy is easy to exploit by the psuedo-transformational leader. Second, Rand's objectivism dismisses Hume's concept and portrays man as an heroic being with his own

happiness and productive achievement as the moral purpose of his life.[36] Philosophically

speaking, "the fact that a living entity *is* determines what it *ought* to do."[37] This "liberal" idea

buttresses classic American liberal ideals, fitting in perfectly with John Stuart Mill's On Liberty

and John Locke's Two Treatises of Government, which form the basis of the United States

Constitution.[38, 39, 40] Yet, it is surprising how few military officers fully grasp the basic tenets of

the constitution due to a lack of liberal education. When military leaders neglect their oaths and

are easily swayed by pseudo-transformational leaders under a banner of "hope" or "change,"

their purpose in moral guardianship no longer exists. This is why Ayn Rand's book is so useful.

Similarly, objectivist arguments can be debated in classical literature such as Mary

Shelley's Frankenstein and Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels, which are essentially protests

against modernity.[41, 42] Likewise, Francis Bacon's Novum Organum and development of the

scientific method provides a basis for understanding Neil Postman's contemporary warnings in

his book, Technopoly.[43, 44] What makes these books relevant is all four books provide and

provoke critical thought in light of the military's technological culture.

Balancing Ayn Rand's objectivism is Fyodor Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov,

which features mankind's struggle to comprehend both God's existence and the immortality of

man's soul as the basis for humanity's greater good.[45] In other words, a person's "faith" or

belief in God is vital to our sense of social order. American military leaders such as George

Washington understood this principle without any reservations. Sadly, this principle has been

de-emphasized over time. Moreover, literary discussion and debate help form arguments which

counter opposing views such as Thomas Hobbes' anthropocentric natural law and its implied

atheism.[46] Similar anthropocentric views can be debated, such as those of Rene Descartes, who

advanced the decline of the church as the arbiter of truth, giving rise to the primacy of technology and setting off intense debate via his classic dualism.[47]

Additionally, leaders should learn how to properly frame Friedrich Nietzsche's romantic philosophy, which goes a step further and proudly declares that "God is dead," and replaces objective truth with Perspectivism, or worse, Nihilism. In replacing God, Nietzsche introduces his concept of the "superman."[48] Remarkably, this concept is strangely familiar to Plato's "philosopher-king" and Confucius' "superior man" which all seem like types of transformational leaders. The only difference is Nietzsche's "superman" has no objective truth to base his authority since "anything goes" in a nihilistic word. Thus, within this belief system, the U. S. Constitution is not really worth defending. To avoid these dangers, a return to moral guardianship or a "gallant atavism" is needed as Dr. James Toner suggests in his article regarding military ethics in nihilistic age.[49]

Circling back to Dostoyevsky, his character, Ivan Karamazov, sees the same danger in separating faith from virtue via this same philosophy. The same can be said throughout the literary classics as each story spurs ethical debate. Thus, literature, when added to relentless moral inquiry, focused debate, and *elenchus* becomes a potent means for building good leaders. Without these tools, "gallant atavism" within the military institution becomes more remote which leads to a crisis in leadership.

Conclusion

This paper opened with a quote on the crisis of leadership in terms of mediocrity and irresponsibility stating that "the fundamental crisis underlying mediocrity is intellectual."[50] A similar exhortation can be found in "The World of Epictetus," by Vice Admiral James Stockdale, and Dr. James Toner's "Excursus" in True Faith and Allegiance. Both are prime examples of

this call to intellectualism as each offers comparable arguments and methods for teaching and learning military ethics. This paper echoes Burns, Stockdale and Toner and attempts to further demonstrate how to encourage debate and arrive at ethical conclusions in defense of transformational leadership. There remains a great need for this type of instruction as the institution faces greater challenges in an increasingly nihilistic world. Now, more than ever, the profession of arms requires authentic leadership at every level of command.

Yet, if the institution is serious about developing authentic leadership, it cannot assume morality will simply happen by recommending a few books on the Chief of Staff's reading list, offering a two-hour block of instruction in professional military schools, or implementing an online certification program via the service portal. The recommendations in this paper point to a robust program of moral instruction as a means for building stronger moral guardians. The reason is clear; securing the border and preserving the national interest mean very little if society decays within. Hence, the institution must lead in terms of building better citizens and leaders. A morally rich, professional military educational environment is necessary to overcome the susceptibility of transformational leadership toward immoral and unethical dimensions, while properly developing succeeding generations of moral guardians to accomplish the mission and protect society's inner core.

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