


2019

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### Recommended Citation

McConnell, Richard and Westgate, Evan (2019) "What Were You Thinking: Discovering Your Moral Philosophy Using the Forensic Approach," *The International Journal of Ethical Leadership*: Vol. 6 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/ijel/vol6/iss1/6>

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## What Were You Thinking?

Discovering your Moral Philosophy Using the Forensic Approach

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The words “live up to Army Values” are well known to any soldier who has completed initial training. This phrase is the abbreviated version of the army’s definition of honor, the fifth army value. Ask any soldier if they live an honorable life and you will most likely receive an affirmative response. However, this definition has limits in practical application. How does one know which course of action is honorable in an ethical dilemma when two or more options might qualify as morally right? Alternatively, what if a worse dilemma emerges where, of the options available, none appears entirely morally right? Making the right choice becomes increasingly important as leaders demonstrate their trustworthiness to others through consistent honorable living. A leader’s honorable or dishonorable conduct directly affects unit cohesion. Although scholars have written extensively about ethical dilemmas, many army leaders may be unaware of the mental models they use to make decisions in morally ambiguous situations. How individuals apply these mental models can be described as a person’s moral philosophy. It is that moral philosophy that drives us toward honorable or dishonorable decisions. Honorable decisions help military professionals earn the respect of the nation and the soldiers with whom they serve. A soldier demonstrates honor by living in accordance with their own moral philosophy, which is in turn shaped by the internalization of the six remaining army values: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, integrity, and personal courage. Honor serves as the unifying army value that ties all other values together as soldiers endeavor to demonstrate the values the American people expect them to display regardless

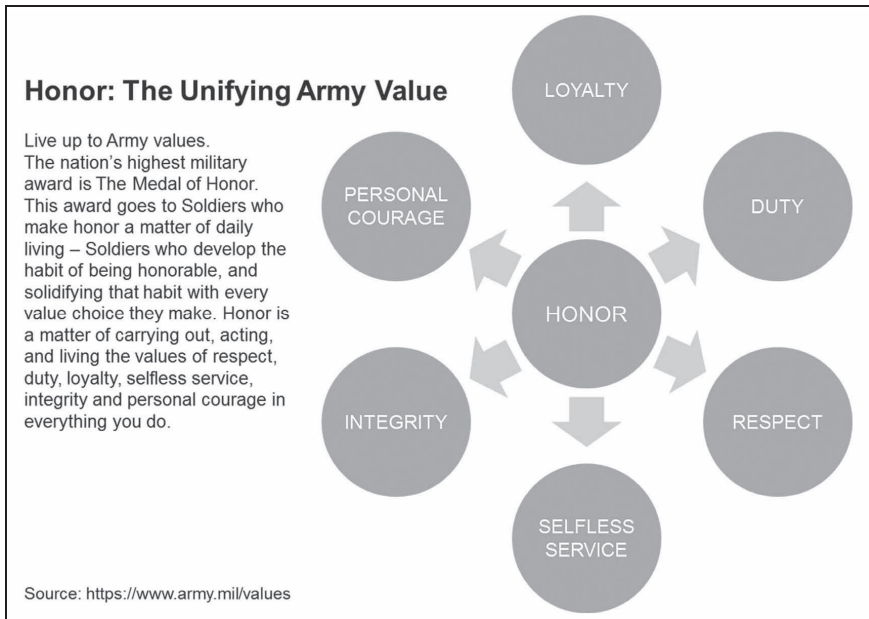


Figure 1. Honor, the unifying army value.

of the potential moral ambiguity they might experience. Perception of the importance of honorable conduct among military professionals, especially in combat, is nothing new.

In his seminal work following World War II, S. L. A Marshall described the practical application of honorable conduct. Soldiers naturally avoid danger in the effort of self-preservation but are also reluctant to let their fellow soldiers down.<sup>1</sup> The need to conduct themselves honorably under fire to demonstrate their trustworthiness not only supports unit cohesion but also that unit's survival under fire. If examining this phenomenon through the lens of the Army Values, a soldier may endeavor to do his duty in order to avoid the dishonorable display of cowardice which might cause his fellow soldiers to distrust him. This example employs both duty and personal courage but are unified by honor (see figure 1). This desire to display honor to gain trust is a basic motivation among professional combatants dating back centuries.

From the earliest combat formations, warriors, through their conduct, either won the trust of their fellow warriors or shattered it. Therefore, a soldier's desire to conduct himself honorably could be motivated by a desire to avoid shame, losing the confidence of others, and damaging the

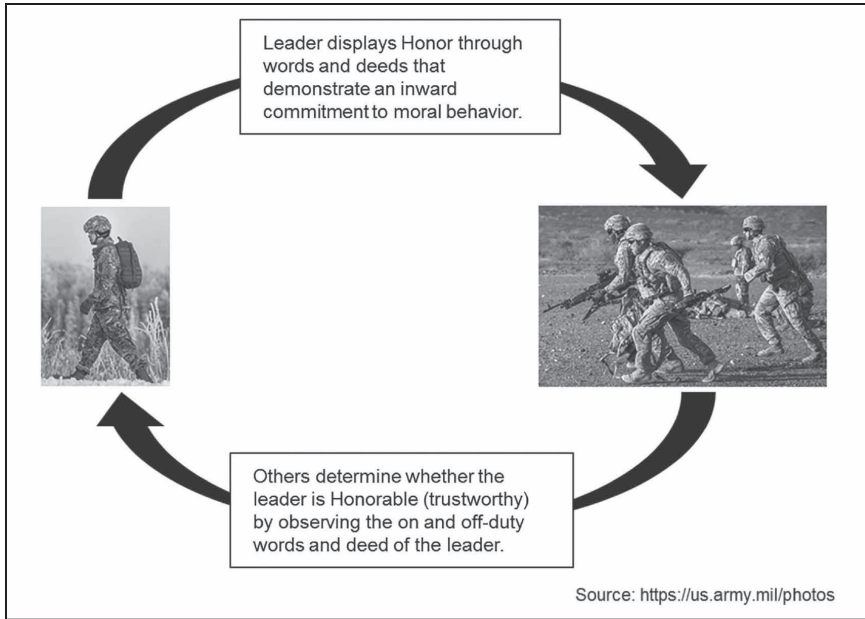


Figure 2. Honor defined through action.

chances of survival of the organization.<sup>2</sup> Such a description of honor casts this value as a practical tool soldiers could use to judge the trustworthiness of fellow soldiers and their leaders. Soldiers observe the words and deeds of those with whom they serve, evaluating how the moral philosophies of those individuals play out in real time. In this way, honorable behavior becomes an outward evidence of an individual’s moral philosophy. Thus, an honorable person could be defined as someone whose words and deeds provide evidence that they are trustworthy (see figure 2).

The problem is that for many individuals, although they have made difficult moral choices which demonstrated honor, they remain unaware of how they did so. The field of ethics appears to many to be the realm of the scholar with little practical application. However, the field of ethics is a form of discovery learning that is an eminently practical process of determining right from wrong and making moral decisions.<sup>3,4</sup> The field of ethics can assist individuals with making moral choices that directly affect how they are perceived by others. This allows others to determine that the person making the moral choice is trustworthy. What follows is a brief literature review providing descriptions supporting a practical understanding of the field of ethics which support the formulation of moral philosophies.

### Brief literature review:

*The Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib.* The field of ethics and the use of a moral philosophy seem to be noticed only in the aftermath of instances where morality seemed abandoned. The events leading up to the atrocities at the prison of Abu Ghraib serve as a cautionary tale. Years prior, legal opinions covering what was called enhanced interrogation practices set the stage for conduct that in other cases might have been considered unacceptable.<sup>5</sup> Waterboarding has been discontinued, leaving a national conversation in its wake seeking to understand how Americans justified this practice. Some have argued that the law was misused to justify immoral behavior that ultimately led to the excesses of Abu Ghraib. This source is relevant to the discussion of ethics and moral philosophies because practices were considered using legal review as a means for justification. Therefore, this source could encourage the question: What behaviors cross the line of my moral philosophy, rules of conduct, or support for the better good?

*Military Ethics and Virtues: An Interdisciplinary Approach for the 21st Century.* If honor is the unifying concept of the Army Values, then how individuals define honor is central to this discussion. The military Academy at West Point is famous for educating young leaders to pursue the ethos of, “duty, honor, country.”<sup>6</sup> In the pursuit of this ethos, West Point’s honor code states: “a cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do.” The definition of the honor code is informative as it emphasizes specific actions such as lying, cheating, stealing, and the toleration of those who commit these acts. This source is relevant to the discussion of ethics and moral philosophies because it describes specific parameters for how honorable people should behave. Therefore, this source could encourage the question: How do I define honorable conduct and how might that definition influence my behavior?

*On Bullshit.* Moral philosophies are influenced by how individuals interpret certain values such as integrity. Some scholars have argued that there is a difference between lying and bullshit.<sup>7</sup> For some, lying is an effort to deceive for a specific purpose, such as preventing others from knowing an unflattering truth about themselves. Bullshit, on the other hand, may be a proclivity to stretch the truth or not be overly concerned about that which is truthful. The inverse of this argument is that all lying is deception that empirically presents something that is just not so regardless of the purpose such deception serves. This source is relevant to the discussion of ethics and moral philosophies because it presents an alternative interpretation of

one of the army values: integrity. Therefore, this source could encourage the question: How do I define lying versus the honorable pursuit of truth?

*Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Military Profession.* The army demands that all soldiers live with integrity, but closer inspection into day to day duty performance reveals that lying is a common, routine practice.<sup>8</sup> The army has only begun to address a culture where leaders are actually encouraged to lie. Units are required to complete more tasks than are physically possible, and leaders are required to report completion of each of these tasks regardless of their actual completion. In this environment, documentation often becomes a substitute for performance. This source is relevant to the discussion of ethics and moral philosophy because it illustrates that individuals who consider themselves honorable may lie when it is encouraged by their institution. This source could encourage the questions: Under what circumstances is lying acceptable? Is there a difference between a “big lie” and a “little lie”?

*Closing the Candor Chasm: The Missing Element of Army Professionalism.* Sometimes, honorable living requires accepting personal risk in an effort to do the right thing. Honorable leaders speak truth to power. Leaders should display the courage of their convictions to speak up if something is wrong.<sup>9</sup> In army culture, it can be difficult for leaders to express “contrarian views” because the leaders who ultimately determine future promotion prospects often value a positive, can-do attitude. Those who toe the line get ahead, while those who offer an honest but pessimistic assessment are left behind. The personal risk of candor is illustrated by the fate of former Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki, who offered congressional testimony (later proven accurate by the events of our more recent campaign in Iraq) that a sizable army footprint would be required to stabilize Iraq after the removal of Saddam Hussein’s government. Shinseki provided candor, his honest assessment, even though it was not in line with the opinions of his superiors. This source is relevant to the discussion of ethics and moral philosophy because it could encourage the question: When does duty require that I display the personal courage to speak out, even though what I have to say might not be popular and could even jeopardize my career and livelihood?

*The Command of the Air.* Like many of his contemporaries, Italian military thinker Giulio Douhet was wrestling with several ideas in the aftermath of the unprecedented carnage of World War I. Douhet attempted to develop an airpower doctrine that would avoid the protracted and devastating stalemate that developed in the trenches of Europe.<sup>10</sup> In his paper, he proposed that bombers target the cities and population centers of the enemy using “tons

of high-explosive, incendiary, and gas bombs.” These weapons would cause so much death and destruction that “by the following day the life of the city would be suspended.” He surmised that, although this action would be “a frightful cataclysm” and a horrible atrocity, it would in fact be merciful because it would be quick and decisive, and prevent millions from dying in the mud and trenches of no-man’s land. This source is relevant to the discussion of ethics and moral philosophy because it addresses the ideas of just and honorable conduct of war and also foreshadows the awesome power and responsibility of nuclear weapons. When is it important to adhere to the ideals of discrimination and proportionality? Was it dishonorable to employ nuclear weapons against Japan, and in what cases would it be honorable to accept collateral damage in order to save soldiers’ lives?

*Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character.* A way honor might be depicted is how combatants treat each other, directly displaying the character or morality of opponents. In his seminal work on posttraumatic stress, Jonathan Shay uses the example of Achilles at Troy and the ancient Greek perceptions of honor to describe the effects of morally questionable behavior on veterans after combat.<sup>11</sup> Shay describes combatants who violate their inner definition of honor as individuals placed in an untenable position psychologically. In such cases honorable behavior could be viewed as enlightened self-interest as the damaging of a person’s character/honor might be detrimental. This source is relevant to the discussion of ethics and moral philosophies because it provides a description of what might happen to individuals willing to compromise their honor. Therefore, this source could encourage the question: How might the violation of my code of honor result in long-term psychological damage?

*Morals under the Gun: The Cardinal Virtues, Military Ethics, and American Society.* If dishonorable conduct might harm individuals long-term, how might honorable conduct influence how individuals choose to live their lives? In the film *Saving Private Ryan*, a fictional character is saved from the perils of combat through the efforts of a squad of soldiers, of which all but two are killed in the effort.<sup>12</sup> As the captain leading the squad lies dying, he charges Private Ryan to earn the efforts of the men who died to save him. Years later, as an older man, Private Ryan asks his wife if he had earned what he was given—had he “led a good, decent life”?<sup>13</sup> Such narratives are central to the desire to live an honorable life. This source is relevant to the discussion of ethics and moral philosophies because it provides a rich description of the motivation for displaying honor through a life of goodness and decency.

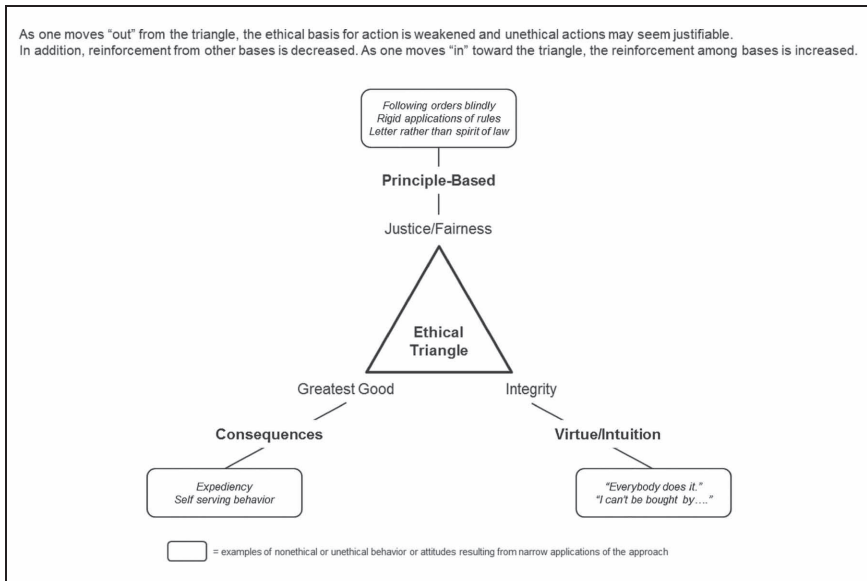


Figure 3. The ethical triangle by James Svava.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, this source could encourage the question: If I were charged to earn the good actions on my behalf by others, could I do so by my behavior—could I claim to be an honorable person?

*Outliers: The Story of Success.* Although the title of this book clearly is discussing success, one’s definition of honor can be attributed to the culture in which one grew up. These cultural predispositions may cause individuals to fail especially when moral issues are at stake.<sup>15</sup> Gladwell discusses honor culture, describing how certain societies emphasize concepts of honor that might drive individuals to behave in certain dishonorable ways. For example, the feuds of the Hatfields versus the McCoys in the 1800s resulted in numerous murders, all in an attempt to protect someone’s concept of their honor. In certain eastern cultures, the concept of an honor killing exists where members of the family might kill a female member for dishonoring their tribe. This source is relevant to the discussion of the army value of honor because honor cultures are distinctly different from the unifying army value of honor. The term “honor culture” is a noun describing societies that produce individuals who dogmatically protect honor often through dishonorable acts such as murder. Alternatively, the unifying army value of honor is a verb displayed through actions providing much-needed information to others regarding



the moral philosophy of the person they are observing. As discussed earlier, this information helps others decide who is trustworthy by observing their honorable behavior.

*The Ethical Triangle:* Ultimately the pursuit of living a good and honorable life requires some kind of plan of action in order to make that goal attainable. Individuals often make ethical decisions in their daily lives without understanding how they do so. Gaining a deep understanding of the three major ethical frames—principles, consequences, and virtues (figure 3)—and how they might be used in building a moral philosophy could be informative. Individuals who begin their ethical decision making process by evaluating if there are rules governing their decision may have a principle-based moral philosophy. Individuals who begin their ethical decision making process by evaluating how good and honorable people might behave might have a virtue-based moral philosophy. Individuals who begin their ethical decision making process by evaluating and weighing the consequences with an eye toward the greatest good for the most people might have a consequence-based moral philosophy.<sup>16</sup> Most useful in moral philosophy formulation is the note at the top of figure 3 cautioning against overdependence on one construct alone. The closer to the center of the triangle one stays in their moral philosophy, the less likely it will be that they may make errors. Most often, the use of more points of the triangle is better. This source is relevant to the discussion of ethics and moral philosophies because it provides a roadmap for evaluating how to make decisions based on a moral philosophy. Therefore, this source could encourage the question: How have I made moral and ethical decisions in my life and how might I pass on to protégés how to develop their own moral philosophies?

This brief literature review should have provided a description of some of the writings in the field of ethical and moral decisions including those in a military context. Such sources are informative but ultimately moral philosophies must be applied in a practical way. What follows is a discussion of specific cases drawn from films as a way to describe what we call the forensic approach to moral philosophy formulation. Like forensic scientists, we can autopsy moral decisions. By observing how people make moral decisions, we might be able to surmise the moral philosophy of the decision maker. This discussion can be informative for individuals attempting to build their own moral philosophy.

## Recommended film clips to facilitate student introspection to their own moral philosophy:

*Band of Brothers*, “The Last Patrol.”<sup>17</sup> In this clip, which takes place in the closing months of World War II, Dick Winters, a battalion commander in the 101st Airborne Division, orders his men to forgo executing a risky nighttime patrol that he believes is pointless. He also asks them to report in the morning that they conducted the patrol but failed to capture any prisoners (a lie). In this scenario, the protagonist appears to follow a virtue-based philosophy, trying to find what he perceives as the best course of action in a difficult scenario. He is potentially falling short in the army value of loyalty, however, by demonstrating stronger loyalty to his men than to his higher headquarters and, by extension, the nation. In this case, it would appear that the moral philosophy of Major Dick Winters is a combination of virtue and consequential ethics which allows him to break rules to demonstrate loyalty to the soldiers of Easy Company.

*Lone Survivor*, the Goat Herders.<sup>18</sup> Lt. Michael Murphy and his four-man SEAL reconnaissance team encounter three local goat herders while on a surveillance mission in northeast Afghanistan. They must decide whether to kill the Afghans or to let them go free. The SEALs know that the goat herders will most likely reveal their location to the local Taliban, leaving their team significantly outnumbered and outgunned. The ensuing debate reveals that some of the SEALs approach this dilemma from a consequence-based perspective: let the herders go and risk death, or kill them and risk becoming a war criminal. Interestingly, service principles and a desire to live with virtue and honor are not featured in the discussion. In this case, it would appear that Lt. Murphy’s moral philosophy is a combination of virtue and principle/rule-based as he decides not to kill the captured Afghans in spite of the potential outcome.

*Zero Dark Thirty*, Waterboarding.<sup>19</sup> In the days following the September 11 attacks, CIA agent “Maya” witnesses fellow agents subjecting a detainee to waterboarding. She is clearly uncomfortable with the situation, but takes no action to confront her fellow operatives about their behavior. This scenario leaves her motivations up to viewer interpretation. Does she fail to intervene because she is using a consequence-based ethical approach? Is obtaining intelligence on Osama Bin Laden worth abandoning the long held principles of the United States? Conversely, it could be a failure in personal courage to challenge her peers’ behavior, not wanting to demonstrate to her peers that she doesn’t have the stomach to do what is necessary in an ugly job. In

this case, Maya's moral philosophy seems to flirt with virtue ethics as she seems repulsed by the methods used by her colleague but ultimately favors consequentialism to justify a potential misuse of interrogation techniques.

*Eye In the Sky*, Collateral Damage.<sup>20</sup> 2LT Watts, a drone pilot, is observing several terrorists who are plotting a suicide bombing in Nairobi, Kenya. He is ordered by his superiors to engage the target with a hellfire missile, but observes a local girl enter the kill zone and set up a stand to sell bread. Watts hesitates due to the risk of collateral damage, and his superior officer again commands him to fire. Watts is approaching this dilemma from a virtue-based approach while the superior officer is approaching the dilemma from a consequence-based approach. The army value of integrity could guide Watts to "do what is right, legally and morally." In this case, 2LT Watts' moral philosophy seems to be a combination of virtue, principle/rule-based, and consequentialism causing him to be reluctant to follow his orders as given.

"Interview with Edward Snowden."<sup>21</sup> Edward Snowden leaked classified material from the National Security Agency in 2013, and subsequently fled the United States to avoid arrest and prosecution. Snowden justifies his actions in this clip by saying "you have to have a greater commitment to justice than you do a fear of the law." Assuming Snowden is being honest about his motives, he is following a virtue-based ethical decision making process. He subordinated the consequences of his actions to others and his duty to follow rules and regulations to do what he felt was his moral obligation to do the right thing, accepting significant personal hardship in the process. In this case, Snowden's internal intent is difficult to surmise causing difficulty in establishing his moral philosophy. If he is being honest, his moral philosophy appears virtue-based. How could his actions be honorable, however, if they resulted in the deaths of others, which is entirely possible? If he is not being honest, perhaps his actions were the result of something entirely disconnected from a moral philosophy. This case illustrates that one's moral philosophy (or lack of one) leads to actions that others will use to judge that person's trustworthiness. Most would agree that even if they admire what Snowden did, they would be reluctant to trust him with sensitive information. What does that say about his moral philosophy?

*Crimson Tide*, Officers' Mess.<sup>22</sup> While dining with the officers on the nuclear missile submarine, USS *Alabama*, Captain Ramsey and Lieutenant Commander Hunter debate the ethics of launching a nuclear strike. For Ramsey, his responsibility is clear. He sees his job as to simply "push the

button” when given the order. This shows he follows a principle-based approach. Hunter, on the other hand, follows a virtue-based approach combined with the other two points of the triangle. He believes that his job is more nuanced, but it is clear he will avoid employing nuclear weapons until it is the last resort. Hunter knows that sailors must be able to live with the things they do, even when ordered to do them. This case is the clash of moral philosophies establishing the importance of triangulation. Captain Ramsey’s moral philosophy seems a simple application of the rules without any question. Lieutenant Commander Hunter is indeed more complicated in his views. Hunter’s moral philosophy appears to be virtue-based but he is aware of the rules while also considering the wider consequences of nuclear war. Hunter’s approach employs triangulation in his moral philosophy while Ramsey favors the simplicity of one ethical paradigm without employing others as a confirmation step. This scene in the officers’ mess sets the stage for the later dilemma surrounding the potential nuclear missile launch. For further reflection on case 6, refer to appendices A–C for proposed examples of how Ramsey and Hunter might describe their moral philosophies.

The preceding six cases have been an attempt to illustrate how ethical principles may be applied in practical contexts. Table 1 illustrates how the literature review applies to the cases presented above.

All types of soldiers make decisions. Many of these decisions are easy, a clear choice between right and wrong. In such cases of clear right and wrong, the honorable decisions might be more obvious. As leaders advance in rank and responsibility, however, the decisions they are faced with will likely become more complex. Often, these decisions will become ethical dilemmas, a choice between two “rights.” Svava’s ethical triangle model provides a good framework for describing the choices found in these ethical dilemmas. The competing “rights” of principles, consequences, and virtues can cloud a leader’s perception, often making the path to the honorable course of action murky and unclear. An application of the unifying value of honor, illuminated by the six remaining army values, could serve to help leaders decide which leg of the ethical triangle should take primacy in a given situation. The authors of this paper intended to provide a means to exercise the mental muscles leaders need to make honorable decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas. Personal, introspective analysis of the dilemmas and choices presented in the recommended scenarios will allow individual leaders to examine and define their own moral philosophy. The ultimate objective of this paper is to provide a vehicle for leaders to improve their ethical decision making ability by developing their own moral philosophy. Leaders who understand

their own moral philosophy will be better equipped to mentor and coach others to develop their own. This will allow leaders and those they develop to make honorable choices that they, their soldiers, and the American people can respect, ultimately enhancing their leadership. A proactive approach to honorable ethical decision making, fostered through a commitment to leader development that is grounded in the Army Values, may reduce the need for a reactive approach focused on punishing leaders who make the wrong decision.

**Table 1. Interactions between recommended scenarios and literature review.**

Interactions between recommended scenarios and literature review				
Literature	Scenario			
<i>The Torture Papers</i>	<i>Zero Dark Thirty</i>			
<i>Military Ethics and Virtues: An Interdisciplinary Approach for the 21st Century</i>	<i>Band of Brothers</i>	<i>Lone Survivor</i>		
<i>On Bullshit</i>	“Interview with Edward Snowden”	<i>Band of Brothers</i>		
<i>Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Military Profession</i>	<i>Band of Brothers</i>	“Interview with Edward Snowden”		
<i>Closing the Candor Chasm: The Missing Element of Army Professionalism</i>	<i>Zero Dark Thirty</i>	<i>Band of Brothers</i>	“Interview with Edward Snowden”	
<i>The Command of the Air</i>	<i>Crimson Tide</i>	<i>Lone Survivor</i>	<i>Eye in the Sky</i>	
<i>Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character</i>	<i>Eye in the Sky</i>	<i>Lone Survivor</i>	<i>Crimson Tide</i>	
<i>Morals under the Gun: The Cardinal Values, Military Ethics, and American Society</i>	<i>Zero Dark Thirty</i>	<i>Eye in the Sky</i>	<i>Crimson Tide</i>	<i>Lone Survivor</i>
<i>Ethical Decision Making: Using the “Ethical Triangle”</i>	All Scenarios			

## Notes

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14. James Svara H., "The Ethical Triangle," in *Combating Corruption, Encouraging Ethics: A Practical Guide to Management Ethics* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007).
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16. Svara, 22–28.
17. Phil Alden Robinson et al., *Band of Brothers*, "The Last Patrol," (HBO Home Entertainment, 2001).
18. Peter Berg, *Lone Survivor*, Drama (Universal Pictures, 2003).
19. Katherine Bigelow, *Zero Dark Thirty*, Drama (Columbia Pictures, 2012).
20. Gavin Hood, *Eye in the Sky*, Drama (Entertainment One, 2015).
21. "Interview with Edward Snowden: The Ethics of Whistleblowing—Hero or Traitor," *Philosophy Talk*, July 12, 2015.
22. Scott Hunter, *Crimson Tide* (Buena Vista Pictures, 1995). Meal Scene: 21:15–24:09; Launch Dilemma: 54:56–1:09.

## Appendix A: Moral Philosophy Worksheet

Moral philosophy of \_\_\_\_\_

**Moral dilemma:** (Choose one life event where you were required to make a tough moral choice. What was the choice, how was it expressed, and who was affected by it?)

**Relate the Ethical triangle to the above moral dilemma:** (ethical triangle: principles (rules), consequences, and virtues; relate these elements to the above moral dilemma.)

**What actions or occurrences demonstrated how those ethical triangle elements were important?:** (How did the ethical triangle elements become apparent to you as key drivers of your moral choices during this dilemma?)

**One sentence moral philosophy assertion:** (How would you describe your moral philosophy as succinctly as possible?)

**How my moral philosophy manifests itself in my daily life:** (What daily evidence do you observe of your moral philosophy in action? In other words, if someone attempted to convict you of being a moral person, what would be the evidence they could use?)

**How this moral philosophy enables me to assist others to identify their moral philosophy i.e. how they make moral choices in their daily lives:** (How would you use your journey to your moral philosophy to help others determine theirs?)

## Appendix B: Moral Philosophy Worksheet

### Moral philosophy of Captain Ramsey

**Moral dilemma:** (Choose one life event where you were required to make a tough moral choice. What was the choice, how was it expressed, and who was affected by it?)

*On November 1, the setting of Condition 1SQ for strategic missile launch aboard the USS Alabama when my executive officer (Lieutenant Commander Hunter) refused to echo my commands because he wanted to confirm the launch order based on an incomplete message fragment that inferred the launch message might have a subsequent transmission. This disagreement led to a mutiny aboard the USS Alabama.*

**Relate the Ethical triangle to the above moral dilemma:** (ethical triangle: principles (rules), consequences, and virtues; relate these elements to the above moral dilemma.)

*The naval regulations regarding strategic missile launch are explicit and contain no ambiguity. When given the order to launch, we were supposed to use the last order in hand and launch. Hunter was disobeying the rules because he thought he could substitute his judgment for those who sent the order. This was a clear violation of established principles (rules).*

**What actions or occurrences demonstrated how those ethical triangle elements were important?:** (How did the ethical triangle elements become apparent to you as key drivers of your moral choices during this dilemma?)

*Hunter wanted to confirm our order, but I realized that this message fragment could be a fake and we were under attack, which underscored our need to follow naval regulations with dispatch and do our duty, which was our honorable obligation clearly articulated in our oath to “well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter: So help me God.” The longer we delayed launch, the more urgent our situation became. The time to doubt the system for LCDR Hunter should have been long before this incident. If he could not follow naval regulations he should have resigned.*

**One sentence moral philosophy assertion:** (How would you describe your moral philosophy as succinctly as possible?)

*My moral philosophy consists of honorably living up to my obligations by following the regulations put in place by competent authorities in the support of protecting the*



*Constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic without any mental reservations or purpose of evasion.*

**How my moral philosophy manifests itself in my daily life:** (What daily evidence do you observe of your moral philosophy in action? In other words, if someone attempted to convict you of being a moral person, what would be the evidence they could use?)

*I run my ship as I run my life: straight and by the book. I have dedicated my life to defending my country in one of the most dangerous pursuits possible to modern warfare: nuclear missiles. My country has placed trust and confidence in me. That trust indicates that the American people can trust me to follow the rules which are an absolute necessity in the governing of nuclear weapons. How could the American people trust me if they thought I would use my own judgement to interpret if I should follow each and every order I receive?*

**How this moral philosophy enables me to assist others to identify their moral philosophy i.e. how they make moral choices in their daily lives:** (How would you use your journey to your moral philosophy to help others determine theirs?)

*The world of nuclear weapons control is complex and the making of mistakes cannot be tolerated. Like learning how to master the complexities of navigation in the dangerous environment of the ocean, nuclear weapons control can benefit from the imposing of rules and regulations. My journey to an understanding of my moral philosophy helped me learn the rules and practice them to the point of second nature in their application. Therefore, I relentlessly drill my crew and all my subordinate leaders to the point where they can execute their jobs flawlessly within the rules which is their honorable duty. My intent is to produce leaders who know the rules by heart, can apply them in any situation, and thus demonstrate their trustworthiness to the American people.*

## Appendix C: Moral Philosophy Worksheet

### Moral philosophy of Lieutenant Commander Hunter

**Moral dilemma:** (Choose one life event where you were required to make a tough moral choice. What was the choice, how was it expressed, and who was affected by it?)

*On November 1, I was serving as the XO of the Ballistic Missile Submarine USS Alabama. Our ship received an authenticated order from the National Command Authority to launch a preemptive nuclear strike against rebel held nuclear missile installations in Russia. Subsequently, we received another message that was interrupted by an attack by an enemy submarine. I suspected that the message fragment we did receive could be an order to cancel our missile launch. I then asked Captain Ramsey (Alabama's Commanding Officer) to delay the launch—which was not in accordance with naval regulation—in order to try to determine the full contents of the second message. Captain Ramsey subsequently refused to delay the launch. My confirmation of the launch order was required to complete the launch sequence, and I refused to confirm Captain Ramsey's order. Also in conflict with naval regulation, Captain Ramsey then threatened to replace me with another officer. Since we could not come to an agreement, I ordered that Captain Ramsey be relieved and took command of the USS Alabama.*

**Relate the Ethical triangle to the above moral dilemma:** (ethical triangle: principles (rules), consequences, and virtues; relate these elements to the above moral dilemma.)

*Although the naval regulation clearly required that we execute the missile launch based on the last authenticated order we received, I felt that it was my duty to use my own my own moral judgement in this case. The awesome destructive power of nuclear weapons and the risk that the Russian government would retaliate in kind required that we be absolutely sure of our orders. We did not know the full contents of the second message because its receipt was interrupted by an attack by an enemy submarine. I felt that it was my duty to delay the missile launch until we could confirm or deny whether that message contained orders to cancel our launch or change our target package. I utilized all three elements of the ethical triangle in making my decision to relieve Captain Ramsey of command in order to delay the launch. Using a principle-based approach, I believed I was following naval regulation by refusing to confirm Captain Ramsey's launch order. The need for the executive officer to confirm the captain's launch order provides an important safeguard. The captain's desire for me to simply rubber stamp his order or step aside when I disagreed was a clear violation of the regulation. My*

*desire to delay the launch until we could confirm the order demonstrates a value-based approach. I was still willing to execute the launch as ordered, but I felt that it was my duty to ensure we were aware of the contents of the second message. It could have been an order to change our target package or cancel our strike altogether. Finally, I was using a consequence-based approach by ensuring that nuclear weapons were used only as a last resort. Launching our nuclear weapons would kill hundreds of thousands of people in Russia, and almost certainly result in a massive retaliation against the United States. For this reason, I felt it was my duty to delay the launch until our orders were confirmed and a launch was absolutely necessary. I was able to use all three elements of the ethical triangle to make my decision, which I feel was the most honorable given the situation.*

**What actions or occurrences demonstrated how those ethical triangle elements were important?:** (How did the ethical triangle elements become apparent to you as key drivers of your moral choices during this dilemma?)  
*Although naval regulations clearly stated that we should launch, it was necessary to delay the launch in this situation. Officers cannot be simply button pushers. Executing orders like an automaton, without thought or consideration of principles, values, or consequences can have dangerous outcomes. Some perpetrators of atrocities in the past have claimed that “they were just following orders.” Captain Ramsey was wrong when he expected me to confirm the order despite my serious misgivings. Although Ramsey was my superior, naval regulations required that I do my duty and refuse to confirm the launch order until I was absolutely sure that it was the right thing to do. The awesome power of nuclear weapons requires that these safeguards are in place in order to ensure that they are not used mistakenly.*

**One sentence moral philosophy assertion:** (How would you describe your moral philosophy as succinctly as possible?)

*My moral philosophy: I will honorably apply virtues, principles, and consequences when doing my duty to support and defend the US Constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic, and I will faithfully execute my duties even when it could potentially damage my career as a US naval officer.*

**How my moral philosophy manifests itself in my daily life:** (What daily evidence do you observe of your moral philosophy in action? In other words, if someone attempted to convict you of being a moral person, what would be the evidence they could use?)

*I utilize all three elements of the ethical triangle when making decisions. I am not simply a button pusher, I will use my education and training to navigate ethical dilemmas,*

*making what I feel is the most honorable decision in each unique circumstance. As a custodian of America's submarine nuclear deterrence, I will order the employment of the awesome weapons in my charge only after careful consideration and as a last resort.*

**How this moral philosophy enables me to assist others to identify their moral philosophy i.e. how they make moral choices in their daily lives: (How would you use your journey to your moral philosophy to help others determine theirs?)**

*Many members of the navy, including my commanding officer, Captain Ramsey, are uncomfortable with my decision to attend Harvard and receive additional academic education. I believe this education has helped me understand the true nature of war and the danger of nuclear weapons. While some feel that my careful consideration of the situation creates unnecessary delays, our awesome responsibility requires that we be absolutely sure before launching our missiles. Once they are launched, they cannot be recalled and will likely lead to the deaths of millions of people in both Russia and the United States. For this reason, I will ensure that my subordinates understand that we must use the framework of principles, virtues, and consequences in each of our moral decisions. If I am chosen to command a submarine, I will ensure that my relationship with my executive officer is one where he can openly communicate with me. I will create a command climate where my XO understands that we must both be completely sure that it is the correct thing to do, within naval regulation, before we execute a nuclear weapon launch.*