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Abstract

Moral Injury and the Problem of Facing Religious Authority

Why would a soldier suffer moral injury after killing an enemy combatant even when the legal and moral expectations of warfare have been met? Combatants often acknowledge that killing another human being causes them to begin a process of reconciling actions with personal convictions. Importantly, the trigger for this process is not always the knowledge of killing “someone,” but a view of the face and the impact of killing “someone” in particular. Dave Grossman describes this as trauma from a psychological perspective and Jonathan Shay explores the issue as one of morality. This paper explores the impact of killing through the religious lens of Jewish and Christian thought. In light of this, the thesis developed here is that the process of looking into the “face” of one’s enemy, fundamentally brings one into a position of responsibility for the enemy and to deny this responsibility is an ethical and religious action which is a root cause of moral injury.

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An introductory statement about using the concept of religious authority in this paper will be made followed by comments about moral injury. Attempts to define religion are notoriously problematic, not to mention that of religious authority.⁴ Nevertheless, as a boat is tethered to, and circles around its anchor, those who accept religious authority are tethered to certain precepts, around which they continually circle. For example, those in the Jewish and Christian traditions revolve around certain commands that are timeless truths to which they are accountable such as “Thou shalt not murder.”⁵ This is the concept of religious authority used here. Therefore, the *problem* of religious authority in the Judeo-Christian tradition is not a fallible “robed authority,” but the failure to face and obey the commands of God. The Pentateuch teaches that we must love our neighbor and the New Testament teaches that we are to love and

pray for our enemies.⁶ Passages such as these are not recommendations, but commands to which the faithful are “anchored” and accountable. It is this point of accountability, and specifically, the resistance of being responsible to the enemy, which will be explored here in order to appreciate the origins of moral injury with the hope that understanding the source of the problem may assist in recovery.⁷

My introduction to the topic of moral injury has been Jonathan Shay and his description of moral injury as a “betrayal of what is right.”⁸ In light of this, I wish to suggest that a withdrawal of respect and dignity from the enemy, or the inability to give respect as one may want to do during combat, is one aspect in which the “betrayal of what is right” occurs. Fighters tend to respect fighters whether they are in the ring or on the battlefield and when respect and dignity are withdrawn from one fighter to another, the actions that follow can sow the seeds of regret rather than honor long after the fight is finished and passions have subsided. Due to any number of variables in war, this “moral injury” may not be experienced by all to the same degree, but can be experienced by any combatant especially in the face of irrepressible memories of killing a specific person.⁹

Throughout the course of this paper I will suggest that the feelings of regret and guilt circle around the presence of a deep and fundamental part of the human to human encounter, i.e., the accountability of one human to another. Combat strains, challenges and often breaks this innate possibility accountability, some say an innate sense of right or wrong.¹⁰ The presenting issue of regret is deep and troubling, and depending on personal beliefs may, or may not be, tied to a religious anchor point. Therefore, an objective of this paper is to encourage an examination of what is entailed in the human to human encounter and how the withdrawal of respect is

symptomatic of a deeper concern of a responsibility that leads to an accountability of one to another.¹¹

Respect given to the enemy is usually based on the opponent's potential to kill and honor for the enemy is reserved as a post-fight ritual, if at all. Since the Napoleonic era, distinctions between the warrior class and the citizen soldier have been blurred due to the demands of war which necessitated that civilians be drafted or volunteer in mass. Preparing civilians for duty as combatants was limited to basic tactical training with little thought to mental or spiritual preparation beyond unit cohesion and the inclusion of chaplains to provide for specific religious services. By World War I, there was an expectation that the burden of national defense would be shared by citizens willing to make the supreme sacrifice¹² and as the idea of a "sacred duty" grew to serve this need, those who opposed war on moral grounds were demonized as unpatriotic.¹³ Thinkers from Europe speculated on what virtues war would bring to humanity.¹⁴ A young Ludwig Wittenstein thought that being close to death might bring him the "light of life" and wrote, "Now I might have the possibility to be a decent person, because I find myself face-to-face with death."¹⁵ Sigmund Freud saw war as the destruction of artifice and the return to the authentic: "It eliminates the layers of sediment deposited in us by civilization and it allows the primitive man to reappear."¹⁶

However, World War I produced a different and devastating reality. Wittenstein was left "speechless,"¹⁷ and widespread doubt was cast on the notion that facing death for one's country was a means of virtue. General Patton later provided a pithy new perspective and famously stated that the point of war is not to die for your country but to give the enemy a chance to die for his country.¹⁸ Interestingly, by the end of World War II, General S.L.A Marshall concluded nearly 75% of those men facing the enemy found killing to be unnatural and resisted the act of

killing another human being in combat to the point of conscientious objection despite training, orders, or even the instinct of self-preservation.¹⁹ As a result, training changed to incorporate the use of human shaped targets and reflexive fire drills to condition trainees to fire with greater frequency and accuracy boosting up the numbers to 55% of combatants firing in Korea with the intent to kill to 95% in Vietnam.²⁰

Some speculate the training has raised the numbers of combatants who suffer psychological damage and also the severity of damage.²¹ If this is the case, what is the essence of the “point of being a conscientious objector?” Grossman argues that across cultures and time, it is fundamentally the recognition of the enemy’s humanity, particularly by a view of the face, or efforts to avoid seeing the face.²² What happens when the point of conscientious objection is crossed? The combatant crosses a moral line of what is personally believed to be right or wrong by an act that refuses to be forgotten. Jonathan Shay notes that what we might call a loss of innocence in our culture is referred to as *themis* in ancient Greece, a “betrayal of what is right,” referring to the loss of an adult’s cloak of [moral] safety.²³

Both Grossman and Shay describe the psychological process used to de-humanize the enemy in order to make the affair more tolerable. For example, avoiding visual contact, using profane and de-humanizing terms, failing to respect enemy or civilian dead, intentional or unintentional misuse of lethal force can all lead some combatants to reflect upon their actions with remorse or bitterness, even if the actions were “justified” by the state.²⁴ As the realization of these events sink in over time, regret may take on greater significance in the minds of veterans as their reflections turn to thoughts of how they might be accountable. Typically, this sense of accountability is not for every instance in which the enemy was killed during a firefight, but the

one in which a particular image of the enemy's humanity recurs in memories and dreams or the case in which the humanity of the enemy was denied and therefore respect or honor withheld.²⁵

Outside a handful of ideological war criminals, nearly all people recognize some measure of accountability to fellow humans. But many veterans also look beyond human accountability to a divine accountability such as one World War II veteran reflecting upon past actions, "The point of his bayonet was no further than you are from me when I shot him . . . I'm not a young man anymore, and soon I'll have to answer to my Maker for what I have done."²⁶ In a study on Vietnam veterans this issue of accountability was found to be significant in terms of positively seeking God for forgiveness or feeling alienated by God for various reasons.²⁷ Among the Vietnam veterans Shay worked with, he noted a crisis of authority among the veterans due to nationalism and the misinterpretation of religious authority.²⁸ And there are some such as Chris Kyle who claimed he could answer to God for every shot he took even while he suffered inner turmoil.²⁹ All of this is to simply point out that while the issues of regret can be recognized as part of moral injury, the presence of accountability to humanity, scriptural authority or both, become sensitive topics and the source of fear and anxiety despite public displays of courage.

Because this issue effects the wellbeing of those who suffer, it seems right to ask how religious authority might assist in understanding the nature of accountability that one human has to another. Toward this end, I will summarize some thoughts of Emmanuel Levinas, and Jürgen Moltmann as two voices from the Jewish and Christian traditions. Both men are serious thinkers who experienced war as combatants and POWs. They write as philosophers concerned with exploring the conditions for human recognition, although not for the purpose of describing the effects of combat per se. However, what they present demonstrates why the research of Grossman and Shay on human recognition and the face is well grounded. As individuals who

personally suffered and witnessed the suffering of war they are able to provide the “mechanics” of why feelings of regret, accountability and freedom become so acute in ways that few philosophers can. Their ideas are not unique to themselves, but come forward with a vocabulary and clarity as individuals who plumbed the depths of hardships found in war.³⁰ I cannot write as one who has mastered their methods, but only as one who views some of their conclusions on ethics as being useful to those who seek to understand the human being in combat. Furthermore, it is my hope that as I provide a synthesis of their thoughts others more knowledgeable may extend the conversation and provide further clarity.

By way of introduction, Emmanuel Levinas speaks as one who suffered and Jürgen Moltman speaks as one who caused suffering. Both men essentially make the same point from different perspectives. They demonstrate that wellbeing of the “self” is found in recognizing the face (humanity) of the “other” and in being accountable to that person. In addition, they view personal forgiveness and freedom as being directly tied with accountability to the “other.” What follows in this portion of the paper is technical but helpful in understanding why the giving of respect to the enemy as an ethical principle is a necessary aspect of being human and part of the warrior ethos and that it must be given deliberately if the conditions are to be set for individuals to appreciate rather than fear accountability for another.

Emmanuel Levinas was born to a Jewish family in Poland, made his way to France via Russia and Germany. He ended up in the French Army early in WWII and was captured. One of his key ideas harkens back to his time as a POW, “It is from the first a substitution by a hostage expiating for the violence of the persecution itself.”³¹

Levinas’ thought anchors the work of Grossman and Shay by what may be called the “ethics of the face.” Just as they observe that the face of the enemy creates a sense of

understanding of what is right and what has gone wrong, Levinas argues that personal awareness begins with a view of another's face and that it does not start with self-knowledge.³² He writes that the view of the face reveals a fundamental expression saying, "Do not kill me,"³³ and beyond that, a primordial expression from "Infinity" saying, "Thou Shalt not kill."³⁴ This visual encounter, rather than the verbal or written encounter becomes the opportunity to offer dignity and accept responsibility for one's neighbor.³⁵ By extending dignity, the goodness of the self is called into action. But if the point of war is to "totalize" the other and, as General Patton said, "make him die for his country," what happens? Levinas suggests that the task is impossible in the ultimate sense because the act of killing is not only a rejection of responsibility for one's neighbor, but a futile attempt to reject the wider fraternity of human kinship and the latent responsibility to God's command, "Thou shalt not kill."³⁶ Therefore, one may physically kill another person, but is still accountable as was Cain who acted from a solitary ethic, but lived in bondage after killing Able and therefore lost a true sense of freedom by rejecting fraternity.³⁷

Levinas continues to push his ethic further by elaborating on how the one who has suffered finds freedom. He draws inspiration from Lamentations 3:3, "To tend the cheek to the smiter and to be filled with shame,' . . . is not to draw from suffering some kind of magical redemptive virtue. In the trauma of persecution it [the self] is to pass from the outrage undergone to the responsibility for the persecutor, and, in this sense from suffering to expiation for the other."³⁸ Freedom is not gained by mastery over the "neighbor" who has wronged the self or avoiding one's neighbor and retreating into the safety of one's mind for "self-affirmation" and "self-discovery."³⁹ Just the opposite is necessary. The one who has suffered must engage the neighbor and give that person the opportunity to be responsibility for the safety of the self. As noted, this is not always safe. The neighbor may commit violence upon the self and then after

the violence, may audaciously require the one who has been offended to be forgiving.⁴⁰ In other words, Levinas argues that freedom from the bondage of suffering is not the ability to gain the upper hand over the cruel neighbor, but to care for that neighbor in the sense of removing the neighbor's sins through pardon. This is the idea behind his statement, "It is from the first a substitution by a hostage expiating for the violence of the persecution itself."

The thrust of Levinas' thought is that viewing the face of the other indicates that the self is not the focal point of the ethical encounter but is responsible for the care of the other. This care is a sense of being accountable for the dignity to the other even to the point of being a substitute for their sins.⁴¹ To manipulate or ignore this process through the course of violent encounter is a rejection of responsibility which will lead to the type of bondage Grossman and Shay describe in their observations of combatants who struggle with trauma and moral injury.⁴²

Jürgen Moltmann was from Germany and served in the German air defense as a teenager before being transferred to the western front where he was captured toward the end of WWII. By the time he was captured the war was coming to a close and he remained a POW in Scotland until 1948. He later wrote, "I always became painfully aware of the barbed wire round the prisoner-of-war camp when a transport left to go home. Then we smelled a whiff of liberty, and it made us totally ill. When freedom is near the chains begin to chafe."⁴³

Moltmann's work is important because he sought to understand how he and his fellow countrymen could live in freedom after having initiated violence against so many and had become "imprisoned" by guilt in the post war years. He considered this problem as one who had been the persecutor. Could forgiveness be possible for him or others in his position? Moltmann writes, "Victims have long memories, but those who caused suffering have short memories. They don't know what they have done and don't want to know. So the perpetrators are dependent on

the victims if they want to turn away from death.” Essentially, he lands on issues similar to Levinas by acknowledging that both understanding, and the pardon for a guilt free life, revolves around the recognition of the other. But even as Moltmann argues that perpetrators are dependent upon the victims for their life, he differs from Levinas and writes that, victims “have no right either to condemn them or forgive them.”⁴⁴ This does not mean there is no desire for it, but the authority of a victim is limited only to helping the perpetrator see himself or herself for who he or she is. In cases of violence such as killing on a mass scale, how then will the perpetrators ever come to recognize themselves and step out of “death” and into “life” since the victims are gone? Whereas Levinas addresses this problem by drawing from his Jewish background which teaches forgiveness for sin by substitution, Moltmann contributes as a Christian thinker and uses the concepts of substitution and forgiveness in trinitarian terms.

Moltmann thought of Christianity in terms of hope. This was important for him as he struggled with how perpetrators could step out of guilt and into “life.” As a result, his thoughts became more eschatological in terms of understanding that Christianity is inspired by an object that is hoped for, the object being Jesus Christ. However, Moltmann presents Christ to those who have tortured others as the one who was himself tortured. Whereas Levinas leads one to consider that the hostage be the substitute for the violent neighbor, Moltmann argues that it is the recognition of the incarnate and tortured Jesus who is the substitute for the face of the victims. This recognition becomes the moment of truth - “The mask falls. The torturer recognizes himself for what he is.” Yet hope is gained and not lost because the authority of that “judge” is based in the one ‘who bears the sins of the world.’ It is in this moment that “justice creates new life.”⁴⁵ By placing the offending humans in a position to view himself, Christ carries the religious authority

of Colossians 1:27 (He is our hope). By doing so, he brings life to a group of people that were trapped in the death of guilt because there was no possibility they could ever face their victims.⁴⁶

Moltmann's perspective is similar to Levinas in that it is necessary for the persecutor to see the face of the persecuted in order to gain true understanding of the self just as the Apostle Peter didn't truly understand his offense until he looked Jesus in the eye after denying him. Additionally, it is only when the other (Christ) is recognized as the persecuted that accountability can be understood. It is in this role as the persecuted that Christ represents all those who were persecuted while becoming responsible and accountable for the sins of the persecutor. In this way the guilt and fear of accountability that is held by the persecutor is resolved.

In summary, both Levinas and Moltmann describe the self as one who *primarily* encounters the other and is accountable to that person. Because of their Judeo-Christian roots, this accountability also extends to God as well, or as Levinas states, "the glory of the infinite."⁴⁷ The value these perspectives provide in understanding the ethics of the face provides us an understanding of how and why we are accountable in two ways. First, those suffering from moral injury generally fall into the categories of the one who has suffered, or the one who believes he has caused suffering. Secondly, there is the tendency to think of accountability towards the enemy who is especially violent differently. I will handle each of these issues in turn.

The insight of Levinas can help the one who has suffered either emotional or physical wounding understand why the similar feelings of regret and accountability may be applied to a range of situations such as Survivors guilt.⁴⁸ In these cases the "neighbor" is a friend, and the giving and receiving of responsibility and accountability for the safety is cut off by death leaving the survivor with feelings of guilty thoughts such as, "It should have been me." Many survivors hold themselves accountable and sadly, depression and suicide sometimes become the means of

paying for the “sin” of survival. Accountability must be reestablished and Levinas’s suggestion of offering a pardon to the enemy is counter intuitive, but it leads to a renewed sense of responsibility by once again engaging in an ethic that looks to the other. This is hard and it is for this reason that Levinas states that he had to pass through suffering and outrage in order to live.

Some combatants have feelings similar to Moltmann and feel they are the “offenders.” Any number of things may have happened in combat that create regret due to the betrayal of what was believed to be right. The wrong people, civilians or even children, may have been killed. A car coming through a traffic control point because the brakes failed results in tragedy. Sometimes non-combatants become lost and confused in combat and literally end up in the wrong place at the wrong time. Young combatants may try to shake these events off at the moment and say, “It’s tough to be them,” but the regret and growing need to be accountable to someone for their actions often becomes undeniable.⁴⁹ Furthermore, in all these circumstances the combatants may be well within the rules of engagement and even engage the right people, but as accounts from combatants such as CPT Kudo point out, death and killing in combat cannot be reduced to a legal matter when in fact it is a moral matter.⁵⁰ Making it a legal matter is appealing, for then accountability can be assumed by lawyers as noted by Dr. Meagher.⁵¹ Being personally accountable for violence creates anxiety, but Moltmann presents accountability as accessible within a theological method of hope both for those who made an honest mistake and for those who acted out of anger, negligence or hate.

The second reason for taking the time to consider the theories of these men is because of the tendency to think that accountability is different when involved with an enemy who is legitimately violent. It is true that levels of responsibility may vary widely but the human to human encounter is still a matter of accountability. The circumstances mentioned in the

paragraph above are all as understandable as they are tragic, but the arrival of a genuinely violent person on the battlefield is a different matter and unfortunately, no war seems to be complete without them. Theoretically, the legal and personal justifications for killing these people in combat come together in such a way that one's conscious should be free from guilt by killing the worst of the worst. Such is a line of inquiry that leads to Just War theory. However, the intent here is not to re-look Just War theory but to explain why it is necessary to give respect to this enemy as a matter of morality and personal wellbeing.

If the treatment of these individuals could be different on moral grounds, our two POWs would have little to offer in their theories other than interesting war stories and religious authorities (the robed ones) would only need to give out loving hugs. However, because the truly violent are human, our POWs challenge the temptation of assuming that one can ever be in a position personal pride or superiority over violent actors. Any encounter, with any human being, is ethically important because encounter leads to responsibility and responsibility leads to accountability for that person. Secondly, to deny this ethic is to deny the humanity of the enemy, and potentially leads to the bondage and guilt that comes from an ethic of self-sovereignty.

There are several responses to this. One response is to reject the theory, honestly accept a position of personal safety and deal with any emotional consequences at a later date. A second response comes from a philosopher named Maurice Merleau-Ponty who served during World War II, and also believed that human recognition created an intrinsic responsibility to love the other while refusing the self any permission to gain autonomy over the other.⁵² In a statement of honesty he laments his inability to sacrificially love the other as he might wish, and reflects with regret to times in which he presumably killed the enemy by calling in artillery strikes during combat.⁵³ His regret does not include a necessary link or accountability to God, but is sincere

keeping the other in a position of priority.⁵⁴ A third response would essentially be to treat regret and questions over a necessary engagement with the enemy as actions from a position of humility, or soberness of thought, that recognizes the “fallen” and “sinful” state of the world. Therefore, the morality of one’s actions depend upon the intent of one’s heart with trust in the grace of God to be a merciful arbitrator of what is right and wrong. All three responses fall within the limits of the Army values, but they also accommodate the conditions for moral injury because they fail to be accountable to the enemy from either a secular or sacred standpoint.

At this point the problem of facing religious authority may be addressed. The iconic commands of religious authority continually command those of faith to “Love your neighbor” without an apology for circumstances. However advantageous it may seem to ignore these commands, it only exasperates the problem and sets the conditions for combatants to “kill themselves from the inside out” by preferring something else such as theory of Just War that tends to confuse, if not emphasize, the legal over the moral and human concerns as described by Dr. Meagher by pushing the humanity out of the enemy *and* oneself.⁵⁵ Facing religious authority is challenging, for if it is hard to face and place a neighbor, friend, or stranger in a position of priority over oneself, how much more an enemy?

Jewish tradition summarizes the extent of this command by stating, “Love thy neighbor is one of the great principles in the Torah.”⁵⁶ Hillel states, “If I am not for myself, who is for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?”⁵⁷ In positive terms, the command to “love your neighbor” or “love your enemy” can also become a means to recognize God in the Jewish faith.⁵⁸ For those of the Christian faith this scope is summarized by the first and second greatest commandments, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and the second is like unto it, love your neighbor as yourself.”⁵⁹ This religious authority is not

perceived to be a problem when the “other” is God, a friend, or even a stranger. But when one’s neighbor becomes an enemy, the gravity of religious authority becomes apparent once it is grasped that loving one’s neighbor as oneself ‘*is like unto*’ loving God with all your heart. This is profound and speaking as a Christian, the failure to consider the whole of this command is the first step in compartmentalizing religious authority, consigning either God or certain neighbors (especially the bad ones) to abstract terms, obscuring their humanity and reducing religious authority to an absolution for sins.⁶⁰ The problem of religious authority within the Christian tradition, has always been, and still is, a selective application of this command which in essence is a refusal or inability to face the enemy and is similar in nature to the prophetic word which states, “We hid as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”⁶¹ The problem of religious authority for any who professes faith is that the enemy must be faced, literally or figuratively, and must be recognized as being squarely within the boundaries of religious action as a recipient of prayer and love. To remove the enemy outside those boundaries is not just a matter misunderstanding, but of sin against the enemy and God because of being accountable to both. This obviously requires wisdom and discernment and invites the tension of doing both the right, or the wrong things at any given time. Accountability in these circumstances can be a fearful and uncertain status. However, where accountability is accepted, there is the possibility of reconciliation, and where one finds reconciliation there lies the essence of religious authority, not as a tool to be mastered, but as paradigm of humility that leads hope that challenges and dismantles the grip of fear. Ignoring or avoiding the tension for a perceived sense of state or divine approval is dangerous, for as Jürgen Moltmann’s writes, “It is not the evil he does, but the good he does not do, not his misdeeds but his omissions, that accuse him.”⁶²

Without question, the command to love and pray for the enemy is an individual duty that engenders responsibility to the enemy and even if that becomes lost during the confusion of combat, it at least maintains a view of the enemy's humanity. According to Shay and Grossman, this step alone might mitigate a dangerous aspect of moral injury, if for no other reason than because it places meaning upon the events surrounding death in combat rather than making allowances for dehumanizing the enemy who may simply have been fulfilling his duty.⁶³ To use the terms and concepts previously employed in this paper; where these commands and principles are obeyed, freedom follows, but where they are set aside, the potential for bondage abounds, *regardless* of whether one believes in God or not. I believe this to be true because the refusal to face and be accountable to the enemy is rooted in fear. In day to day life we hedge our bets by extending a measure of responsibility to nearly everyone we meet, assume accountability for those we can. Combat does not permit this natural process to take place and the quickest solution to avoiding any possibility of accountability is by temporarily denying humanity of the enemy for the protection of one's own conscious.⁶⁴ To violate the natural order of the human to human encounter not only creates regret and anxiousness over the issue of accountability it inhibits one's ability to "reconnect" with loved ones, the very ones to whom combatants feel the most accountable. Furthermore, the trauma of war often leads to an overt anger towards the ones who combatants believed were accountable for their personal wellbeing, typically God or political leaders. Dr. Meagher points out that the emotions of regret and the desire to "make up" for things done in combat leads back to the Greek term *metagnonai* or repentance. However, the classical terms refers more to "make over."⁶⁵ Although the purpose of this paper is to identify a root cause of moral injury, he has hit on a concept that is consistent with a human need also addressed in the Jewish and Christian traditions of restoring relationships once moral injury as

occurred. Perhaps I could say that the need is that one might be able “make accountability over again” with others as a form of repentance, i.e., healing.

Conclusion and Recommendations: If the military community is to be a profession in its conduct of war, is there not a moral imperative to be professionally responsible to the enemy in addition to the legal responsibility of the Rules of Engagement, especially if we are serious about addressing moral injury? Pete Kilner believes we should teach ethical decision making prior to combat,⁶⁶ and LTCs Fromm, Pryor and Cutright write that Army values sometimes only extend as far as other U.S. personnel and not to the enemy.⁶⁷ Additionally, they have suggested that humility be added as a value for the Army.⁶⁸ I like their thinking, for if the only consideration in our values is for “me and mine,” we fail to address a core issue of the human to human encounter in combat. But this only one side of the coin. The purpose of presenting the POWs and their slice of the Judeo-Christian thought is to briefly demonstrate that ethics can only develop by clearly facing the other. One way to move in this direction is to teach respect for the enemy as a means of responsibility that holds the enemy within the boundaries of humanity. It also holds us accountable to the existence of that relationship, which can seem abstract until it suddenly becomes visible and violent.

Once again, fighters should respect fighters, but that respect needs to be trained for athletes and soldiers alike precisely because of unplanned encounters. An anecdotal story from Madeleine L'Engle brings forward this truism along with the theory presented in this paper.

“Father's war was not like our wars today. In his war the enemy still had a face. Once, a good many years after the war, my parents were eating dinner in a Spanish inn, and suddenly Father got up from the table in great excitement and rushed across the dining room to a man who, in his turn, was hurrying to greet Father. The two men embraced warmly, and Father brought his friend over to the table to meet Mother: the man was a German; he had been an officer in the Kaiser's army; he and Father had fought against each other at the front. It is difficult to understand such an incident today. These two

‘enemies’ were genuinely happy to see each other; they had shared an extraordinary experience; they respected and honored each other. I wonder if that can happen today.”⁶⁹

My point is not to throw a romantic light upon the nature of combat or minimize the perniciousness of certain members of the enemy, but to illustrate respect as aspect of the warrior ethos that has the possibility to maintain a perspective of accountability to the humans we fight even if we never meet them in person. Young men enter combat far more interested in protecting one another and meeting the test of combat than in dehumanizing the enemy. Some may engage in face to face combat as stated in ADP 1.⁷⁰ Hearing a leader state, “There is your enemy. Respect him or die.” communicates a tone and resolve necessary to keep a young combatant *responsibly* alert on multiple levels physically, emotionally and spiritually

Therefore, I recommend that the core Army Value of respected be re-considered to include the respect for the enemy.⁷¹ For example, the definition could be changed to read, “Treat people as they should be treated. In the Soldier’s Code, we pledge to “treat others with dignity and respect to include those whom we engage in combat.” Respect is what allows us to appreciate the best in other people. . . .”

Such wording would be consistent with the military branches such as the Army which already calls its members to a higher level of conduct and moral leadership than is expected of civilians. Furthermore, an approach such as this could be easily implemented as an institutional value, as MOS specific value, and as individual values.

Humans are not designed to easily accept the physical, emotional and moral destruction found in war and will suffer moral injury when sent to war. This is why we must be seek to understand the effects of war and look beyond a purpose that revolves around winning to an ethic that defends the defenseless, the human dignity of U.S. service members, and those we engage

in.⁷² This will not mean soldiers will never fire weapons in anger, or lose their sense of humanity in combat, but perhaps they may train for war in such a way that they enter combat having been encouraged to consider an accountability beyond themselves. And perhaps they may deploy with an understanding that casually or deliberately denying the enemy humanity and respect during combat leads to a slow death even if the physical fight is won.⁷³

I'm sure nearly all of us who have deployed have witnessed various individuals treat the "enemy" with respect and seen very positive effects and relationships improved at the personal level even though larger political problems complicated specific efforts or goals. We should not weary in doing good, or hesitate to translate personal efforts into an Army value that prepares the next generation of soldiers and marines, so that in terms of respect, and with respect for the enemy, it should come as no surprise when they also see that, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

1 David Grossman. *On Killing*. New York: Little, Brown & Co. 1995. 119. Print. “As men draw near it becomes extremely difficult to deny their humanity. Looking in a man’s face, seeing his eyes and his fear, eliminate denial. Instead of shooting at a uniform and killing a generalized enemy, now the killer must shoot at a person and kill a specific individual.”

2 Ibid., Grossman. 28,29 “This (refusal to fire) indicates a previously undiscovered psychological force. A force stronger than drill, stronger than peer pressure, even stronger than the self-preservation instinct.” “If a soldier goes up and looks at his kill – a common occurrence when the tactical situation permits – the trauma grows even worse, since some of the psychological buffer created by a midrange kill disappears upon seeing the victim at close range. Also see page: 78.

3 Jonathan Shay. *Achillies in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*. New York: Scribner. 1994. 4-5. Print.

4 Jonathan Z. Smith “Religion, Religions, Religious in Critical Terms for Religious Studies.” *Relating Religion*: Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2004. 184. Print. Smith discusses the process of transposing religion from a supernatural to a natural history, from a theological to an anthropological category and then discusses various methods of how religion can be understood throughout the remainder of the chapter.

William T. Cavanaugh. *The Myth of Religious Violence*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2009. Print. Cavanaugh develops his discussion in chapter 2 by discusses how religion is often defined in either substantivist or functionalist terms, but that religion as a term is concept that constructs and is constructed by different kinds of political configurations therefore giving it multiple expressions.

Tomoko Masuzawa. *The Invention of World Religions; or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) 319. Print. “This concept of religion as a general, transcultural phenomenon, yet also as a distinct sphere in its own right . . . is patently groundless.” She notes the tendency in the west to create history and the “science of religion” and as such the discourse about religions was also a discourse about secularization as a result of categorizing topics of study such as economics, political science and sociology. This has resulted in dozens and dozens of different definitions for religions.

Talal Asad. “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological category,” in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 54. Electronic Copy. Asad discusses the difficulties of authority and power associated with religion by writing, “My aim has been to problematize the idea of an anthropological definition of religion by assigning that endeavor to a particular history of knowledge and power out of which the modern world has been constructed.

5 Exodus 20:13. The sixth commandment is commonly remembered as “Thou shalt not kill” but is more properly translated, “Thou shalt not murder” from biblical Hebrew as done in the NIV and NET. Killing is translated as (harag) and murder (rasah). The words both have different moral connotations, harag refers to killing in combat, but the commandment uses the word rasah, which means murder and also encompasses the meaning of careless or neglectful killing.

While many civilians assume the sixth commandment is the one they have kept, combatants assume this is the one have broken. Two things need to be said here. First, because of the use of words for killing and murder in the Old Testament combatants must keep the moral issues of both in view and refrain from reducing the vocabulary of harag as permissible in terms of being “legal” as a way of artificially “keeping” the commandment for personal or societal accountability. Secondly, killing in combat happens, but it does not lead to good because it is a process that indicating that not all is well in the world during war. One’s innate hopes for what is right or good as described by C.S. Lewis can quickly be lost and violated in what is a “fallen” sinful world.

6 Matthew 5:43-48

7 My line of thought is that just as Alcoholics Anonymous maintains that the first step towards recovery is acknowledging the problem, understanding the issues of accountability may be a step forward in recovery for those struggling with moral injury.

8 Grossman. *On Killing*. 117. An example of regret as a starting point for moral injury is the follow: “This was the first time I had killed anybody and when things quieted down I went and looked at a German I knew I had shot. I remember thinking that he looked old enough to have a family and I felt very sorry.

9 Grossman, *On Killing*. 74. “We thought we had managed all right,” he told Holmes, “kept the awful things out of our minds, but now I’m an old man and they come out from where I hid them. Every night.”

10 Grossman. *On Killing*. 39. Glenn Gray, driven by his own personal guilt and anguish resulting from his WWII experiences, cries out with the pain of every self-aware soldier who has thought this matter through: “I, too, belong to this species. I am ashamed not only of my own deeds, not only of my nation’s deeds, but of human deeds as well. I am ashamed to be a man.” This, says Gray, “is the culmination of a passionate logic which begins in warfare with the questioning of some act the soldier has been ordered to perform contrary to his conscience.

11 Grossman. *On Killing*. 39. In discussion the nature and source of the resistance to kill, Grossman touches on this aspect of mutual accountability. “in killing the grunts of North Vietnam, the grunts of America had killed a part of themselves.”

12 Peter Paret. *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Mchiavelli to the Nuclear Age*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1986. 513. Print.

13 Perry Bush. *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1998. 28. Print.

14 Domenico Losurdo. *Heidegger and the Ideology of War*. New York. Humanity Books. 2001. 18. Print. Edmund Husserl Nov. 1917 stated in a lecture “. . . Death has once again regained its original sacred right. It is here again to remind one of eternity. And thus again we have developed organs to see German idealism.” Scheler theorized that, “War reestablishes in our consciousness the true, realistic relationship between life and death.” Thomas Mann argued, “In this sense, the result of war can well be a “superior humanity” an “elevation, a maturity, a nobilization of the human.” . . .” Despite its horrors, war can produce “freedom, freedom and religious serenity, a detached attitude toward life, and the ability to hover above fear and hope, which is undoubtedly the opposite of moral degradation, and thus, the overcoming of death.”

15 Losurdo. 22.

16 Losurdo. 18.

17 Wesley Cecil. *Wittenstein His Life and Philosophy*. Published on Youtube on Aug 30, 2012. A lecture covering the life and philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein. 5 March 2015.

18 Speech By General George S. Patton. 3rd Army Speech - England 31 May 1944. 6th Armored Division. <http://www.wjpr.com/patton.html>. 14 March 2015.

19 Grossman. *On Killing*. 30. S.L.A. Marshall studied why most Soldiers failed to fire their weapons concluded that “the average and healthy individual . . . has such an inner and usually unrealized resistance towards killing a fellow man that he will not of his own volition take life if it is possible to turn away from that responsibility . . . At the vital point,” says Marshall, the soldier “becomes a conscientious objector.”

John Whiteclay Chambers II. S.L.A. Marshall’s Men against Fire: New Evidence Regarding Fire Ratios. Parameters. Autumn 2003. 120. Electronic Copy. Chambers suggests that Marshall’s claim that only 25% of his soldiers fired their weapons is at best a guess based on Marshall’s interview methods.

20 David Grossman. “Aggression and Violence.” Oxford Press. 2000. http://www.killology.com/article_agress&viol.htm. 14 March 2015.

21 Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini. *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War*. (Boston: Beacon Press). 2012. Xvii. The testimony that some “veterans have made about shooting unarmed civilians in a split second, without making a conscious decision to take a life” has been attributed to the conditioning of reflexive fire drills.

22 Grossman. *On Killing*. 28 & 29. This lack of enthusiasm for killing the enemy causes many soldiers to posture, submit, or flee, rather than fight; it represents a powerful psychological force on the battle field; and it is a force that is discernible throughout the history of man. The application and understanding of this force can lend new insight to military history, the nature of war, and the nature of man. 128. The eyes are the window of the soul, and if one does not have to look into the eyes when killing, it is much easier to deny the humanity of the victim. The eyes bulging out “like prawns” and blood shooting out of the mouth are not

seen. The victim remains faceless, and one never needs to know one's victim as a person. And the price most killers have to pay for a close-range kill – the memory of the “face terrible, twisted in pain and hate, yes such hate” – this price need never be paid if we can simply avoid looking at our victim's face.” 117. “Later I walked over to take another look at the VC I had shot. He was still alive and looking at me with those eyes. The flies were beginning to get all over him. I put a blanket over him and rubbed water from my canteen onto his lips. That hard stare started to leave his eyes. He wanted to talk but was too far gone . . .”

23 Shay. *Achillies in Vietnam*. 4, 5 & 193. Themis – betrayal of what is right. 193. The social morality of “what's right,” what Homer called themis, is the normal adult's cloak of safety.

24. Grossman. *On Killing*. “. . . In each of these instances the presence of the hood or blindfold ensures that the execution is completed and serves to protect the mental health of the executioners. Not having to look at the face of the victim provides a form of psychological distance that enables the execution party and assists in their subsequent denial and the rationalization and acceptance of having killed a fellow human being.

Shay. *Achillies in Vietnam* 4 & 5. Such as giving awards such as bronze stars and CIBs for killing even after it was recognized that they were civilians. 9. And the discussion of the failure of state authority and the betrayal of what is right.

25 Shay. *Achillies in Vietnam* 110., 118-119.

26 Grossman. *On Killing*. 157.

27 Donna Carla Bailey. *Religious coping, trait forgiveness, and meaning as protective barriers for soldiers*. Iowa State University. Graduate College. 2009. 34-53. Electronic Copy. Although this study is mainly concerned with religion and forgiveness after a traumatic event it made a research distinction is made between those who had a positive religious coping which included a forgiveness trait and a negative religious coping. Those who had a positive religious coping marked by turning to God, helping others and religious forgiveness were less likely to suffer from psychological stress than those with negative coping felt alienated view of God, and viewed God as punishing and uncaring and therefore had difficulty reconciling faith with their Vietnam experiences.

28 Shay. *Achillies in Vietnam* 115 & 148.

29 Chris Kyle. *American Sniper*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. 2013. 430,431. Print.

30 Paul Ricoeur. *Ones Self as another*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1992. 165-168. Print. Paul Ricoeur is also a combat veteran and POW who believed that accountability to and for another had priority over the Self. He discusses the distinction between self-consistency and self-constancy, the latter being responsibility which is the sum of “counting on” and “being accountable for.” This effectively results in a response which is basically the “ethical primacy of the other than the self over the self.”

31 Emmanuel Levinas. *Otherwise Than Being*. Pittsburg Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press. 1981. 127. Print.

32 In the words of Levinas, “ethics precedes ontology.”

33 Emmanuel Levinas. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press. 1979. 199. Print.

34 Levinas. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. 199. Levinas capitalizes “Other” in this case to indicate humanity at large.

35 Paul Ricoeur makes a similar argument that the nonviolent testimony of a victim creates an ethic that leads the reader of a text or verbal testimony to lift up the priority of the other and to be accountable for their care.

36 Levinas. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. 198, 199 and 214. “Society must be a fraternal community . . .

Monotheism signifies this human kinship, this idea of a human race that refers back to the approach of the Other in the face, in a dimension of height, in responsibility for oneself and for the Other.”

37 Levinas. *Otherwise Than Being* 10.

38 Levinas. *Otherwise Than Being* 111. The parenthesis is mine. Levinas uses the term ‘subject.’

39 Paul Ricoeur. “The Memory of Suffering” *Figuring the Sacred*, Fortress Press: Minneapolis. 1995. 120. Print. Levinas puts forward the idea of substitution as a way of undercutting any return to the “self-affirmation of some clandestine and concealed freedom.” Ricoeur notes on page 120 that Levinas is concerned with the reality that a pursuit of self-discovering leads to and engenders a forgetfulness of the other.

40 Levinas. *Otherwise than Being*. 118. To put it in Levinas' words, “the offender who, as offender, requires no less of me [the persecuted] than the gesture of pardon, of expiation.”

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- 41 Levinas. *Otherwise than Being*. 144. Substituting itself for the other, a responsibility ordered to the first one on the scene, a responsibility for the neighbor, inspired by the other, I, the same, am torn up from my beginning in myself, my equality with myself. The glory of the Infinite is glorified in this responsibility.”
- 42 Shay. *Achillies in Vietnam*. 9. 36 & 37. Shay refers to combat as competing attempts to enslave and that the world of war itself creates the conditions that add up to captivity and enslavement.
- Grossman. *On Killing*. 37. Regarding the tendency to ignore this issue, Grossman quotes Glenn Gray who observes, “This is especially true of men in war. The great god Mars tries to blind us when we enter his realm, and when we leave he gives us a generous cup of the waters of Lethe to drink.” On page 39 which discusses the nature and source of the resistance to kill, Grossman touches on this aspect of mutual accountability, “In killing the grunts of North Vietnam, the grunts of America had killed a part of themselves.”
- 43 Jürgen Moltmann. *Jesus Christ for Today’s World*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis.1994. 70. Print.
- 44 Moltmann. *Jesus Christ for Today’s World*. 69.
- 45 Moltmann. *Jesus Christ for Today’s World*. 69.
46. Moltmann. *Jesus Christ for Today’s World*. 68.
- Moltmann. *Theology of Hope*. 17.
- 47 Levinas. *Otherwise than Being*. 144,145.
- 48 Daniel Shay. *Odysseus in America*. New York: Scribner. 2003. 93. Print. “But Doc, the only one not hit, felt then and until he killed himself, that he should have kept his two dead buddies alive.”
- 49Dexter Filkins. “Atonement: A troubled Iraq veteran seeks out the family he harmed.” *The New Yorker*. October 29, 2012. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/10/29/atonement> 21 March 2015. This is a very insightful article of a story that developed over the course of ten years as Lu Lobello sought to reconcile with the survivors of an Iraqi family who lost three members to his squad in 2003.
- 50Timothy Kudo. “How We Learned to Kill.” *The New York Times*. Sunday Review. 27 February 2015.
- 51 Robert Meagher. *Killing from the Inside Out: Moral Injury and Just War*. Eugene, Oreon: Cascade Books. 2014. 106,107ff. Print.
- 52 Moran, Dermot & Timothy Mooney. *The Phenomenology Reader. Maurice Merleau-Ponty and "The Primacy of Perception."* New York: Routledge. 2002. 438. Print.
- 53 Merleau-Ponty.*The Primacy of Perception*. 454.
- 54 Kascha Semonovitch, Neal DeRoo, editors. *Merleau-Ponty at the Limits of Art, Religion, and Perception*. New York, NY. Continuum International Publishing Group. 2010. 179. Print. As translated by the Alexandrian Bible *ego eimi ho on*. He is suspicious of the theory of Judea-Christian ontology represented in Exodus 31:5 by “I am the one who is” and only holds to the possibility of the “fragile perfume of transcendence” as a new dawn of the divine.
- 55 Robert Meagher. *Killing from the Inside Out: Moral Injury and Just War*. Oregon: Cascade Books. 142. 2014. Print. See Dr. Meagher’s preface. Also, Dr. Meagher argues “Just War Theory” cannot be relied upon to spare particular individuals from moral injury because of a shifting moral terrain that desensitizes combatants to “push the humanity out of themselves and the enemy.”
- 56 Sifra 2:12. Leviticus 19:18.
- 57 Pirqe Aboth. Chapter 1. www.sacred-texts.com/jud/sjf/sjf03.htm. 17 March 2015.
- 58 Rabbi Elliot Dorff. “God in Modern Jewish Thought.” *The Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies*. Bel Air, California: American Jewish University & the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and the Rabbinical Assembly. 98. 2007. Electronic Copy. For example, Martin Buber speaks of the practical and pragmatic “I-It” relationship that people have with one another, “However, if that is the only kind of relationship that we have with other human beings, we have lost what is distinctly human in us – namely, the ability to relate to others for the sake of the relationship itself. He calls this “I-Thou” relationships. The only absolutely pure I-Thou relationship that humans can have is with God. . . .We learn to have such relationships through the I-Thou encounters we have with other human beings (“Every particular Thou is a glimpse through to the eternal Thou”) and through reading the ways in which other people had true encounters with God . . .”
- 59 Matthew 22:36-40
- 60 The imperative to love God and one’s neighbor casts a moral characteristic upon all actions in the Jewish and Christian traditions placing each individual before God in a state of guilt or innocence, shame or honor. This requires a substitution such as the proverbial scapegoat or a sacrificial lamb to expiate sin in order to bring one into right standing with God. Those of the Jewish faith typically recognize the forms of various prayer to be symbolic of this process and Christians recognize Jesus to be the historical substitute and means of forgiveness. But religious authority cannot be defined solely by the call to seek forgiveness of sins.

61 Isaiah 53:3. The King James Version.

62 Moltmann. *Theology of Hope*. 23.

63 Shay. *Achillies in Vietnam*. 110, 118 & 119. On these pages Shay describes the damage done by a failure to honor the enemy, how debasing the enemy endangers the lives of Soldiers while they fight. And finally that impulse to dehumanize and disrespect the enemy must be resisted, whether its basis is religious, nationalistic or racist. The Soldiers physical and psychological survival is at stake.

Grossman. *On Killing*. 214. "Perhaps denial of mass atrocity is tied to our innate resistance to killing. Just as one hesitates to kill in the face of extreme pressure and despite the threat of violence, one has difficulty imagining – and believing – the existence of atrocity despite the existence of facts. . . . And this simple, naïve tendency to disbelieve or look the other way is, possibly more than any other factor, responsible for the perpetuation of atrocity and horror in our world today. 117. Here Shay describes how a soldier found comfort in his care of the enemy dead. "The "honored guest" was an enemy Soldier that visited the U.S. Soldier in his dreams. He had taken the time to put that VC Soldier in a body bag and send him back with the U.S. Soldier who had been killed."

64 This is why a staple training for hostage situations teaches that if at all possible, the hostage should attempt to establish his or her humanity with the captors so that the process of recognition, responsibility and accountability might have a chance to develop.

65 Meagher. *Killing from the Inside Out*. 8.

66 Pete Kilner. "A Moral Justification for Killing in War." *Army* 60.2 (Feb 2010): 55-58,60. Perhaps no argument will assuage their regret, but looking into their eyes and telling them, "You made the right moral decision with the information you had at hand" can only help. The vocabulary of rights and bubbles can help our soldiers make and justify their judgment calls, not only to 15-6 investigators but, more importantly, to their own consciences.

Killing someone, even justifiably, is upsetting at some level. That's normal and healthy. If the killing is morally unjustified, the psychological impact will likely be much greater.

67 Peter Fromm, Douglas Pryer, Kevin Cutright. "The Myths We Soldiers Tell Ourselves (and the harm These Myths Do)." *Military Review*. September-October 2013. 64

68 "The Myths We Soldiers Tell Ourselves." 66.

69 L'Engle, Madeleine. *The Summer of the Great-Grandmother*. The Seabury Press: New York, 1974. 112. Print.

70 ADP 1 *The Army*. ADP 1-15. 1-6. 17 September 2012. http://armypubs.army.mil/doctrine/dr_pubs/ "If the enemy cannot be defeated from a distance using Army and joint capabilities, then Soldiers close with and destroy the enemy—room to room, face to face."

71 <http://www.army.mil/values/> 7 March 2015. Respect: Treat people as they should be treated. In the Soldier's Code, we pledge to "treat others with dignity and respect while expecting others to do the same." Respect is what allows us to appreciate the best in other people. Respect is trusting that all people have done their jobs and fulfilled their duty. And self-respect is a vital ingredient with the Army value of respect, which results from knowing you have put forth your best effort. The Army is one team and each of us has something to contribute.

72 Sean Wead. "Ethics, Combat, and a Soldier's Decision to Kill." *Military Review*. March-April 2015. 73-74. Victory over honor.

73 "Atonement: A troubled Iraq veteran seeks out the family he harmed." Lu Lobello speaks to the difficulty of seeing a fellow Marine get shot, be engaged in a fire fight, and then witness the approach of cars which were engaged only to find it was a family of civilians, other Marines yell "Cease Fire!" but not before three of the men in the family are killed. What happened in a matter of minutes turned into years of anguish for Lobello and his squad members.

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