**Virtuous Soldiers: A Role for the Liberal Arts?**

Matthew Beard - University of Notre Dame, Australia

Abstract

The modern soldier is faced with a complex moral and psychological landscape. As Nancy Sherman puts it, "soldiers go to war to fight external enemies ... but most fight inner wars as well." The modern soldier is no longer simply a warrior: he (or she) is at once a peacekeeper, diplomat, leader, sibling and friend.

In the face of such challenges, some responsible for the teaching of soldiers have endeavoured to incorporate a character-based training program for soldiers; designed to develop virtues which will assist soldiers in fulfilling the multiple roles required of them. However, these training programs are stymied by the dearth of virtue-based discussion within the most influential guide to the moral conduct of soldiers, Just War Theory (JWT). JWT remains a primarily deontic, system in which rights, duties and law are generally perceived as the most important considerations. Virtue ethics has a great deal to offer both JWT and military education programs.

However, earlier instantiations of JWT had in mind a specific role for the virtues in the conduct of just war; the virtues were indeed the foundation of JWT. This approach saw the type of actions a soldier or political leader was likely to perform as intimately linked to the type of person that soldier or leader was. The best guarantee of just warfare, therefore, was to ensure it was fought by just men and women.

In the first section of this paper I will describe JWT as overwhelmingly rights-interested, and argue that the omission of virtue discussion from JWT is a both serious problem for both the moral theory itself, and for the actual practice of soldiering and historically inconsistent with the origins of JWT. A virtue ethics approach to JWT will be shown to serve the basis of the modern-day deontic approach by giving deeper meaning to the rights, laws and duties it espouses; as well as complimenting the deontic theory by providing a suitable psychological explanation of the best circumstances for adherence to its requirements.

In the second section I will review a number of examples of virtue-based educational methods suggested for military education. These approaches, the best of which focus on enabling capacities such as autonomy, responsibility and critical thinking, will be shown to be easily complemented by the liberal arts approach to education's formative interest in the development of moral and intellectual virtues within its students. A broad, liberal arts-inspired education would facilitate the moral virtues and thus encourage greater rule adherence; and by fostering intellectual virtues, empower soldiers to seriously consider the justice of the causes for which they fight.

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