

ETHICS IN THE MIDDLE



NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL

Aren't all leaders ethical?

⇒ Remember

- Politicians, e.g., Bill Clinton and Richard Nixon
- Executives, e.g., Ken Lay and Dennis Kozlowski
- Military officers, e.g., Ollie North and NPS students

⇒ Presumptions

- Mid-grade officers are rarely moral bankrupts
- Slippery slopes and unintended / unforeseen consequences lead to groundings and collisions
- Hard moral choices are between 2 goods or 2 evils

Overview

➔ Scanning the Horizon – 7 Constellations

1. Honesty/integrity
2. Just war
3. Use and abuse of power
4. Responsibility for money and things
5. Administration of justice
6. Instrument of social change
7. Leadership

➔ Viewing Platforms: 3 Approaches to Ethics

- A Caveat
- Preventative Medicine

1) Honesty and Integrity

⇒ Honesty: Survey

⇒ Loyalty

- Midshipman: Will you “rat” out a classmate?

- Unit/group

⇒ With whom are you completely honest?

- Self? Are you the same person 24x7?

- Others?

2) Just War

- ⇒ Not should we fight, but how to fight
- ⇒ Principles (for the warfighters!)

- Reasonable chance of success

“I have not yet begun to fight”

OR

“Live to fight another day”

- Non-combatant immunity (Discrimination)
 - Missile emplacement in school or hospital
 - Human shields
 - John Paul Jones: a terrorist?
- Proportionality

3) Use and Abuse of Power

- ⇒ Privilege of position
 - Arnheiter affair
- ⇒ Taking responsibility
 - "Own" your mistakes
 - Do you intervene when you observe a wrong?
 - By subordinates
 - By seniors?
- ⇒ "Bending" the rules
 - Gun decking logs and PQS
 - Fraternalization with subordinates

4) Responsibility for Money and Things

⇒ Responsible for equipment and people

- Osprey

- Iowa

⇒ DUTY

- Primary virtue for military personnel. Duty to Constitution overrides other duties. Military subordinate to civilian authority yet Navy has institutional history of deceit.

5) Administration of Justice

⇒ We investigate

- Investigation implies guilt
- Who should investigate?

⇒ We administer NJP

- What is equal treatment?
- Justice versus Mercy

⇒ We evaluate

- Subordinate with moral failure -- FITREPs
- Actions to block career not match words of praise -- Evals
- Favoritism -- sea daddies

6) Instrument of Social Change

- ⇒ Integration of racial minorities
 - How complete? Look at this group
 - Persistence of racism
- ⇒ Integration of women
 - Stonewalling, continued prejudice, power of language
 - Private opinion contrary to public policy
 - Impact of pregnancy rates on operational readiness
- ⇒ Gays: Don't ask, don't tell

7) Leadership

⇒ Personal success at what price?

- Careerism

- Spin: best face for whom?
- Ticket punching
- Desired answer or real answer

- Distributed responsibility (Kobar towers; policy formulation)

⇒ Mission accomplishment vs. people

- Operational, personnel and training tempo
- Little Round Top

⇒ Training/fiscal realities vs. Environmental issues

Viewing Platforms

- ⇒ Law establishes ethical minimum not moral excellence
- ⇒ Making moral choices
 - Is this allowed?
 - What will happen if we do this?
 - Would a person I respect do this?

Rule based – “Is it allowed?”

Basis

- A rule says the action is inherently right/wrong
- Legal authority
- Sacred traditions
- Culture

Ethical Theories

- Laws/Directives/Orders
- Duty (Deontological)
- Divine Command
- Mores/Common Morality

Result based – “What will happen?”

Basis

- Will it produce a desired result?
- Identify/predict goals, results and benefits
- Teleological: end justifies the means

Ethical Theories

- Consequentialism – balancing good and bad outcomes
- Utilitarian – maximize benefit for greatest number
- Egoism – do whatever is best for me and only me
- Pragmatism – what works must be right

Person based – “... a person I respect...”

Basis

- How treated, what they would say, their example
- Rights: Individual or Group
- Relationships
- Character

Ethical Theories

- Liberal Individualism – maximize individual rights
- Communitarianism – priority of community
- Ethics of Care – commitment to relationships
- Virtue – habits of choosing right; build moral character

Rules based

Legal
Religious
Cultural

Result based

Goals

Possible results

Person based

Respect rights?
Respect relationships?
Virtuous?



A Caveat – Moral Risk Factors

- ⇒ Urgent personal goal
- ⇒ Critical juncture
- ⇒ Unexpected and unwanted event
- ⇒ Negative role model
- ⇒ Possible way out
- ⇒ Stress
- ⇒ Time constraints

Preventative Medicine

- ⇒ Establish accountability
- ⇒ Making time for moral health
 - Spirituality
 - Reflection
 - Family

Where we've focused

- ⇒ Scanning 7 Constellations of ethical issues
 - Honesty
 - Just war
 - Power
 - Taking leadership
 - Money and things
 - Administration of justice
 - Social change
- ⇒ 3 Viewing Platforms for Ethical Decision Making
 - Rules
 - Results
 - Persons – Rights, Relationships, Character
- ⇒ Risk Factors and Preventative Medicine

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⇒ NS4903 Tough Choices
– Ethics in the Middle
offered Fall and Spring

⇒ NS4904 Ethics Across
Cultures -- Comparative
Ethics and Religions
offered Winter and
Summer



Case studies

Two most critical issues in your case:
honesty, use of power, war, caring for
what is entrusted, rights, justice,
leadership, etc.