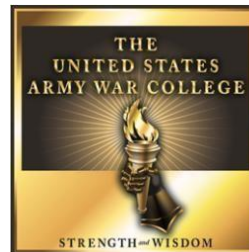


Virtus: Toward a Model for Strategic Leader Virtue

by

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Abstract

An amplification of Army values - establishing leadership virtues in leader development at all levels - is the most effective and impactful "futures" strategy for the Army in 2035. The Army and Department of Defense have openly embraced ambiguity as the most defining feature of the future world stage, as described in our new operating concept (Win in a Complex World) and leadership theory (Mission Command). What are the most reliable and enabling tools we can give tomorrow's leaders for success? This paper argues that it is virtue – humility, courage, justice, prudence, magnanimity, and temperance - that will provide the best outcomes in ambiguous situations and enable senior leaders to make appropriate decisions. We can make best guesses about technologies that target overmatch, but we must also shape the thinking and mindsets of the people who will be leading the nation's response to the world's chaos 20 years from now.

Virtus: Toward a Model for Strategic Leader Virtue

Waste no more time arguing what a good man should be. Be one.

—Marcus Aurelius¹

According to a poll taken in January 2018, military officers are the most trusted profession in the United States second only to nurses.² Medical doctors are reportedly losing the public's trust despite having once been considered an honest and respected profession.³ Trust was General Martin Dempsey's message to the West Point graduating class when he delivered the commencement address in 2015; West Point graduates are expected to build trust in service to the American people.⁴ Over four decades before General Dempsey's speech, though, when religious television personality Archbishop Fulton Sheen addressed the West Point student body, over 100 cadets were under investigation for a cheating scandal.⁵ Archbishop Sheen touted the intrinsic value of military service, going so far as to cite the military officer as "one of the last bastions of order and discipline in the United States."⁶ Ethical. Morally courageous. Virtuous. The ideal Army officer is the behavioral role model for a military organization and for America, Sheen would have us believe, and can appear countercultural when compared to the rest of society.⁷ In times fraught with ambiguity and change, when "right" answers seem elusive and vague, it is the military officer--the Centurion--who stands firm in his values and beliefs and provides a model for strategic leadership.⁸

Although the Army has espoused values since its founding in 1776 (when Baron von Steuben described an ideal Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO)), the seven Army Values were formally institutionalized and defined on January 13, 1998 when Chief of Staff of the Army, General Dennis J. Reimer, did so in FM 22-100, *Army Leadership*.⁹ As an amplification of Army values, the Army must establish leadership virtues in leader

development at all levels as the most effective and impactful *futures* strategy for the Army in 2035.

The Army and Department of Defense (DOD) have acknowledged *ambiguity* as the most defining feature of the future world, as described in our new operating concept (*Win in a Complex World*) and leadership theory (Mission Command). The most reliable and enabling tool we can give tomorrow's leaders is a career spent developing virtue--self-control, justice, courage, prudence, magnanimity, and humility. The Army can only make best guesses about the technologies needed for battlefield supremacy in 30 years, but leaders today can provide clarity and fulfillment to those who would fight on that battlefield by shaping their thinking and mindsets before they are fully immersed in the world's chaos three decades from now.

This paper will support this argument by first defining virtue citing academic, historical, and military sources to demonstrate universality and precedent; the Army need not worry that an emphasis on virtue be slanted toward a specific religion, and must believe virtuous leadership is a program for senior leaders to implement, not the chaplain. It will then explore virtue in strategy as applied to international relations theories. Finally, this paper will entertain virtue in culture and suggest ways the Army can operationalize virtue at the individual and organizational levels.

Understanding Virtue

Virtue is often confused with ethics, morals, and creeds. It is important to understand the meanings behind each because each contributes in a unique way to the comprehensive understanding of the leader.

What is the Difference Between Values and Virtues?

Morals are defined as “the various principles regarding right and wrong . . . that constitute a standard for conduct and are seen as governing the way humans are to live.”¹⁰ Similarly, ethics are “the study of how human ought to live.”¹¹ Morals and ethics are somewhat synonymous, it seems, and might be understood as good and bad things people do in their lives; an ethical person, per the definition, tends to do more good than bad.

A creed is “a set of beliefs or aims that guide someone’s actions.”¹² To live by a creed, then, is to follow a set of norms that could be good or bad. An ethos, on the other hand, is “the guiding beliefs, standards, or ideals that characterize . . . a group . . . or an ideology.”¹³

Said another way, a creed could be a list of morals and ethics embraced by an organization and the people in it. In a group that strives to live by this creed, they operationalize their creed and transform it into an ethos.

Where does virtue fit into all of this? The *Pocket Dictionary of Ethics* defines virtue as “an inner disposition to perform morally; a tendency to act rightly by habit in a particular manner.”¹⁴ Note the use of the words *moral* and *act*--another way to understand virtue may be that it is comprised of morals and also set in motion by them. Therefore, virtues are operationalized morals, ethics, creeds, and ethos.

Values can shape a person’s way of acting with some practice and commitment. Values become virtue when a person *chooses* to behave according to those values, especially when his choice is natural and recurring as if normative within his personality.¹⁵ Values can describe ways to live and interact with the world, and with

practice they can amplify a person's character by becoming virtue. If values, ethics, and creeds were an airplane, virtues are that airplane in flight.

The impact of virtue, though, is deeper than that. Rosalind Hursthouse defines virtue as "a character trait a human being needs . . . to flourish or live well."¹⁶ D. P. Simpson asserts that virtue is reflected in a person's behaviors and emanates from a person's character.¹⁷

Philosopher Roger Crisp explains that transforming values into virtues is what creates resilience, and that the way virtues fit into the contours of everyday life is its own justification--it can be considered a kind of readiness for whatever events occur in one's life. In the ambiguous strategic scenarios individuals face now--or 30 years from now--virtue provides the lens that gives purpose to life.¹⁸ A virtuous person is more likely to lead resiliently in the midst of chaos.

Virtue in Academics

Philosophers throughout human history have described virtue and have emphasized its importance for personal greatness. Their writings have encouraged people to strive for personal excellence, and continue to do so today.

Plato and Aristotle both discussed four virtues that have come to be known as the Cardinal Virtues given their centrality to redeemable human behavior: courage, temperance (the opposite of self-indulgence), humility, and justice (a sense of fairness and equality).¹⁹ Alexandre Havard, who insists that a person's character determines a person's leadership, affirms the Cardinal Virtues and adds two more that are key for strategic leaders: magnanimity and humility.²⁰ These virtues, as will be demonstrated, can be found in contemporary military leadership competencies.

A person's character is directly related to his inner strength, and strong character finds ways to integrate diverse skills and perspectives into an effective team.²¹ Ancient Rome used the word *virtus* (from which we get the modern *virtue*) to describe the ideal leader, especially their emperor, whose God-given character was evident in his every decision and action.²² The concept of *pietas* (from which we get the modern *piety*) described a person who carefully followed the laws of the state and of religion and balanced commitments to family, friends, and politics.²³ A pious person today is someone considered consistently prayerful rather than the Roman ideal of living a disciplined, deliberate life. A virtuous person today is someone considered conservative rather than the Roman ideal of righteously powerful. *Virtus* loosely translates into *power*. Whereas many have heard the phrase, "Knowledge is power," one can argue that it simply is not true. To the ancients, knowledge is powerful, but virtue is (literally) power.²⁴ It is this spirit of *virtus* that informs the ideal leadership of human beings put into violent and uncertain situations. *Virtus* describes leaders who are humble, courageous, prudent, just, magnanimous, and temperate.

A closer look at Thucydides, who postulated that nations go to war for fear, honor, and interests, can reveal virtue as a key ingredient on maintaining the peace or going to war. Courage helps leaders overcome fear, honor helps leaders overcome corruption and greed, and prudence or justice helps leaders identify and prioritize appropriate interests. Moreover, before a nation chooses to go to war, a virtuous leader is more likely to tolerate an adversary who does not--the continuing tolerance of North Korean leaders, whose bellicose rhetoric and neglect of the North Korean people, could

be an example of American virtue. The moral high ground is the best ground, as they say.

Virtue in the U.S. Military

Any discussion of the military's profession of arms almost always includes some elements of virtue. Ancient Greek philosophers taught that virtue was a person's "capacity or power," and that one's virtue indicated his "value" and "distinctive excellence."²⁵ The *Army Strong* recruiting campaign reflected this; those commercials explained how it was more desirable than just being *regular strong*:

It is a strength like none other. It is a physical strength. It is an emotional strength. It is strength of character. It is strength of purpose. The strength to do good today, and the strength to do well tomorrow. The strength to obey, and the strength to command. The strength to build, and the strength to tear down. The strength to get yourself over, and the strength to get over yourself.²⁶

If these words are meant not only as a recruiting slogan but also a unique way of life, then Soldiers pursue *strength* their entire careers. Physical strength is included here and is the most obvious correlation with strength, but the commercial also talks about resilience (emotional strength), leaderships (strength of character), magnanimity (strength of purpose), discipline (strength to do good today), commitment (strength to do well tomorrow), trust (strength to obey), and justice (strength to command). It describes vision (strength to build), violence (strength to tear down), courage (strength to get yourself over), and humility (strength to get over yourself). The *Army Strong* commercial was describing *virtus*.

Each of the military services has their own published set of values. Soldiers in basic training learn loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage from day one. Sailors and Marines are taught that honor, courage, and

commitment are the cornerstones of service. Similarly, the Coast Guard teaches honor, respect, and devotion to duty. The Air Force preaches integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do.²⁷ Clearly, military service demands adherence to values that characterize what some might call *heroic virtue*.

There are similarities among the services. The Army, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard all include the concept of *honor*. The Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Air Force use different words for *duty* (commitment, devotion to duty, excellence in all we do). Interestingly, the word *country* seems to be missing (from the West Point adage, *duty, honor, country*).

Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines are taught their service values during initial entry training. As these young people develop new habits and new skills within the context of their military occupational specialty, the institutional military hopes that they internalize service values; success means a uniformed Service Member exudes values in their own behaviors, through their habits, and commit to a lifelong way of living wherein values can evolve into virtues.²⁸

Values, ethics, and creeds are at the heart of an officer's military service, too. The National Defense University's *The Armed Forces Officer* identifies "[f]our basic virtues [that] are central to the character of Armed Forces officers: discipline, courage, competence, and self-sacrifice (sometimes called selfless service)."²⁹ A military officer's oath of office, which dedicates one in service to the U.S. Constitution, espouses "the virtues of patriotism, valor, fidelity, and abilities."³⁰

The Army has promoted its leadership values--loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, personal courage--for over two decades. Additionally, and in

the spirit of the profession of arms, several groups within the Army have developed their own creeds.³¹ Existing values, creeds, ethics, and morals are therefore codified, and include the leader virtues humility, courage, prudence, justice, magnanimity, and temperance.

Whether in garrison or deployed, in peace or in war, practicing these virtues is a lifelong pursuit. In combat, where the rules of engagement dictate right from wrong, virtue could be a leader's defense against ethical disagreement on the battlefield.³² In ambiguous and intense situations humility, courage, prudence, justice, magnanimity and temperance can provide the necessary foundation for success in ambiguous and intense situations.³³

What, then, are the services missing that strategic leader virtues can offer? In his book *Just War Reconsidered*, General (retired) James Dubik argues that contemporary just war theorists limit ethical treatment of war to fighting only; decisions to enter into hostilities are made by policymakers, informed by senior leaders, and all should be guided by ethics and values.³⁴ Similarly, Tony Pfaff contends that leaders should address the moral burdens of today's battlefield not just in mission orders but also in policy.³⁵ The heroic, patriotic ethic proclaimed by the Services certainly stirs valor and reduces fear in combat. Virtue includes all that and more by addressing the whole person--rather than just addressing what to be, virtue prescribes what to know and do. Virtue completes and strengthens the Army's leadership concept of Be, Know, Do.

Recommended Senior Leader Virtues

The services have promoted values, ethics, creeds and ethos throughout their histories. Transforming them into leader virtues requires a deeper examination of each

virtue to understand how it can be weaponized for military service. Virtues at the strategic leader, particularly,

Virtue is uniquely important at the strategic level for senior leaders to be effective. Strategic leaders are the stewards for their organization's professional identity and reputation.³⁶ At the senior level of leadership, having spent decades demonstrating their values through ethical behaviors and counsel, senior leaders develop trust and strengthen relationships with civilian partners and political leaders through their virtue.³⁷ This virtue can bridge the civil-military gaps and ensure decision makers enter into meaningful dialogue with their military advisors. General Dubik pointed out that senior military leaders who do not shape the policy decision and, instead, only focus on policy execution do their positions and their profession a disservice.³⁸ Keeping the President from making a bad decision could be a senior military leader's most important contribution to national security; it is leader's virtue that will have built the trust necessary to have been invited into the conversation in the first place.

Humility

Rooted in a person's capacity for self-control, humility in the classical sense describes a person who is able "to overcome selfishness and serve others habitually."³⁹ Philosophical circles might point to the Sikh religious concept of *sewa*, wherein a person does things for others without any hope of compensation or reward.⁴⁰

Whereas leaders are taught to have unit pride, humility for an individual leader is empowering. A humble leader knows that his own strengths are not enough, but that his strengths are necessary for the team's strength overall.⁴¹

A leader practicing humility tries not to let achievements and promotions ever bring an end to learning.⁴² He remains grounded in spite of his success, avoids

shortcuts, and readily admits to not knowing everything.⁴³ He ensures he, his peers, and his organization learn from failure and strives not to repeat mistakes.⁴⁴ Humility equips a leader with adaptability in any environment without degrading his service to those he leads.⁴⁵

Humility is not the same thing as meekness or bashfulness. Humility indicates a leader who performs her responsibilities fully and appropriately, to the standard, for the purpose of making life better for the people entrusted to her leadership. Humility includes the Army values selfless service (“welfare of others before your own”), loyalty (“to the Army and your unit”), duty (“fulfilling obligations”), respect (“treating others appropriately”), and personal courage (“facing adversity”).⁴⁶ Humility is leadership and, therefore, is perfectly suited for strategic leaders.

At the strategic level, humility instills trust in senior leaders. During the Vicksburg Campaign, Union Soldiers came to appreciate General Ulysses S. Grant’s humility as he remained in the dust with them, visibly present and personally encouraging them to keep up; their trust in him is evident in the uncanny speed and maneuver during the final weeks of the campaign.⁴⁷ His eventual victory brought the Mississippi River completely into Union control, cutting the Confederacy in half and robbing them of a vital line of communication, creating political space for President Lincoln to continue the war.

Courage

Courage, an attribute more commonly associated with military service, has a deeper meaning when internalized as a virtue. In a world that overvalues comfort and convenience, true courage deals with a person’s innate fear of pain and places pain--discomfort, humiliation, struggle, inconvenience--“in the service of a genuine good.”⁴⁸ A

courageous leader approaches a new heroism, persevering in his internal struggle and growing stronger with every private, internal victory.⁴⁹

A leader who practices courage by showing responsible behaviors. He works hard, puts his organization's needs ahead of his own, competes with the standard, and finds ways to generate results in every context.⁵⁰

A courageous leader persists without giving into the myriad stressors around her.⁵¹ The obvious corresponding Army value is personal courage, but the virtue of courage also includes loyalty ("standing up for others"), duty ("resisting shortcuts"), selfless service ("commitment to your team"), honor ("making good choices"), and integrity ("doing what's right").⁵² This is servant leadership in its purest form.⁵³

Courage at the strategic level enables senior leaders to lead meaningful change by persisting. Robert Gates, in *A Passion for Leadership*, describes his efforts to provide reconnaissance imagery to forward-deployed units.⁵⁴ His concept met stiff resistance from the Central Intelligence Agency and other strategic leaders but, eventually, his courage and persistent advocacy at the strategic level led to the creation of the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency. Considering the speed with which the world and threats to U.S. interests change, strategic leaders imbued with the virtue of courage are more likely to endure and lead meaningful change.

Prudence

Noted theorist and Catholic Saint Thomas Aquinas, in his revered *Summa Theologica*, describes a commander being morally empowered by prudence on the battlefield.⁵⁵ Prudent senior leaders will form meaningful, deliberately created strategies and resist short-sightedness and expediency.⁵⁶ A prudent leader will strike an appropriate balance in his life, avoiding excesses and moderating his physical and

emotional fitness.⁵⁷ Senior leaders who combine virtue and experience are likely to be prudent.⁵⁸

A leader can practice prudence by having a good work ethic, continually seeking self-improvement, exceeding his leaders' expectations, and consistently following-through on tasks and promises.⁵⁹

Within prudence one can see elements of the Army values loyalty (choosing to "support leadership"), duty (choosing teamwork), respect (deciding to "trust others"), selfless service (deciding to "commit to the team"), honor (choosing values-based actions), integrity (choosing the hard right over the easy wrong), and personal courage (deciding to "face moral fear").⁶⁰ Making the right decisions is the goal of every leader, no matter the rank.⁶¹

Senior leaders who are prudent at the strategic level tend to make logical decisions rather than emotional ones. In November 1989, General Colin Powell helped keep the United States from making a strategic error when he advised President Bush to exercise restraint when responding to an attempted coup in the Philippines.⁶² His prudent advice to leverage proportional, responsible military power saved lives and preserved the Philippine government without firing a single shot.

Justice

The virtue of justice speaks to a leader's moral obligation to protect others, especially the vulnerable and victimized. Justice is a virtue and "imparts harmony and friendship."⁶³ The ancient Roman term *pater familias* described a virtuous person's complete responsibility and moral contract to safeguard his family.⁶⁴ Justice is the lens through which a person accurately sees his relationships with other people and judges

those relationships based on the merit of their innate goodness rather than material wealth.⁶⁵

A leader can practice justice by opting for logic over emotion, looking for root causes to problems, verifying his instincts and strengthening those instincts by gaining more experience.⁶⁶ A just leader negates his impulses and ensures reparation from each person and in each situation.⁶⁷

The virtue of justice draws from the Army values loyalty (“stands up for fellow Soldiers”), duty (“fulfills obligations”), respect (“appreciate the best in other people”), selfless service (“look a little closer to see how he can add to the effort”), honor (“living the values in everything you do”), integrity (“affecting relationships” positively), and personal courage (“continuing forward on the right path”).⁶⁸

A just leader strives to do the most good in every aspect and role of his life, in every minute of the day, with a consistent and committed application of self. At the strategic level, the virtue of justice translates into balancing one’s energies for the greater good. Winston Churchill mastered his time by apportioning it effectively to the myriad requirements demanding his attention.⁶⁹ He fostered a meaningful relationship with U.S. President Roosevelt, wrote prolifically, and reflected on the long-term cause and effects necessary to defeat Nazi Germany and restore peace to the European continent. A sense of justice at the strategic level, coupled with the virtues of temperance, humility, and prudence, elicits the focused thought that gives birth to true wisdom.

Magnanimity

Army leaders are charged with providing “purpose, direction, motivation and vision” to the organizations they lead, from the fire team to the Corps.⁷⁰ Delivered in a

compelling way, a team is more likely to reach its potential and exceed its own expectations if it “holds a shared vision.”⁷¹ Magnanimity is a leader’s consistent generation of that vision.⁷²

A leader can practice magnanimity by choosing a positive attitude in every circumstance and letting it determine his actions, maintaining a positive attitude and watching for others to mimic that positivity.⁷³

Magnanimity is having a compelling vision and generating the energy to build buy-in.⁷⁴ Harvard argues that the combination of magnanimity and humility is what defines a leader through their vision and service to others.⁷⁵ Magnanimity draws from the Army values duty (“constant motion” and “building”), selfless service (“larger than just one person”), and fosters honor (“solidifying habits”) and personal courage (“facing physical or moral danger”).⁷⁶

A leader who sets lofty goals and challenges himself and others to reach them is magnanimous. A strategic leader who embodies magnanimity creates teams and garners support. In 1989, new Commanding General H. Norman Schwarzkopf quickly assessed a strategic vulnerability in U.S. policy and planning for operations in the Middle East.⁷⁷ He created a synergy between regional experts, military staff, and political decision makers that helped create remarkable success and international buy-in during Operation Desert Storm. Schwarzkopf’s magnanimity created a sense of urgency and vision enabled one of the most dominant military operations in history.

Temperance

There is an old saying that to be a good leader one must first be a good follower. Said another way, a person must lead himself well before he is able to lead others well.⁷⁸ A leader who acts impulsively is more likely to make mistakes at the strategic

level for not having fully understood a given situation. A career of successful decisions can shape a strong instinct, but a flawed, intemperate character will breed toxicity and undermine trust.

Temperance depends on the virtues of courage and justice--a person must have the aptitude to persist and discount selfish desires for greater influence, wealth, or gratification.⁷⁹ A leader can practice temperance by creating and pursuing only what is important, making self-discipline a personal goal, ignoring the urge to make excuses, and remaining focused on outcomes.⁸⁰ Marcus Aurelius summed temperance up with four simple words: "be master of yourself."⁸¹

Temperance draws from the Army Values loyalty ("devotion to something or someone"), duty (resisting "shortcuts"), respect ("treating others with dignity and respect"), selfless service (persisting in adversity), honor ("carrying out values"), integrity ("acting legally and morally"), and personal courage ("facing fear").⁸²

A temperate leader is less impulsive and driven by logic instead of emotion to maintain a level-head in chaotic situations. At the strategic level, where some might argue chaos reigns, a temperate leader's level headedness can be the difference between victory and defeat. Whereas General Dwight D. Eisenhower's battlefield generalship has been questioned and criticized, there are few who argue against his ability to selflessly forge relationships and develop mutual trust.⁸³ Whereas his tactics may be suspect, Eisenhower's temperance empowered him to make strategic decisions on behalf of the Allies rather than a specific member nation.

Toward a Virtuous Identity

The great Greek philosophers' teachings on virtue have resonated throughout history and are especially applicable to the contemporary U.S. Army. Virtues are

foundational to all behaviors and attitudes and capture all of the services' values, ethics, and creeds. The Army should amplify leader virtues as the pinnacle of senior leadership. Tactical operations entail values, operational actions necessitate creeds--by the time a leader assumes the mantle of strategic operations, her behaviors must demonstrate virtue - humility, courage, justice, prudence, magnanimity, and temperance.

But these virtues are not only valuable in the context of military leaders' identities, but also in the exercise of their unique responsibilities. One unique responsibility is to commit to practicing the virtues daily, both on and off duty, as a way to build trust and steward the military profession. The next section investigates how to implement change throughout the Army using John Kotter's framework for leading change.

Developing Virtue

How can the Army train its Soldiers, Civilians, NCOs and Officers to have virtue? Archbishop Fulton Sheen's speech at West Point, described at the beginning of this paper, included in the audience several key leaders who achieved prominence and criticism leading the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. A former U.S. Army War College Commandant had suggested that the Army's top ranking generals were the problem, and that they should retire so their outdated ideas can be replaced.⁸⁴

The Army can train people to have virtue in the same way it trains people to perform a battle drill: repetition. A virtue comes out in a person through Aristotle's *praxeis* (as they do).⁸⁵ In mimicking an instructor or leader when learning a skill, a young officer or recruit learns obedience for all military and leadership tasks by following commands and examples repeatedly.⁸⁶

But is repetition really the key to harnessing the power of virtue to improve the Army's culture and climate? John Kotter, in his seminal work *Leading Change*, offers a more detailed framework for implementing leader virtues in the Army.

Kotter's First Step: "Establish a Sense of Urgency"⁸⁷

The Army should have a sense of urgency given senior leader misconduct over the past decade. A Deputy Assistant to the Secretary of Defense was terminated from his job after an investigation proved he had been having an affair with a DOD contractor who served as his executive assistant.⁸⁸ A four-star General who led U.S. forces in Korea was allowed to retire at a lower grade after having received over \$5,000 in gifts and cash from a South Korean businessman.⁸⁹ Even at West Point, a three-star general received a written memorandum of concern for having misused his office by having his staff provide driving lessons, feed neighbors' cats, and work at private dinners.⁹⁰ Whereas these infractions represent a small percentage of misbehavior among the senior ranks, the repercussions are amplified considering the trust given by the U.S. government in exchange for rank and responsibility.

Kotter's Second Step: "Create a Guiding Coalition"⁹¹

A guiding coalition must come from those who are genuinely adept at strategic thinking and are willing to positively role model virtuous leadership. Some believe the Army is doing a poor job creating strategic leaders because it selects and promotes those who prove themselves tactically and operationally, and emphasize that tactical and strategic leadership are very different.⁹² If it is true that values and ethics begin at the tactical level, then it must also be true that there is something more--a culmination of sorts--wherein values and ethics mature with age and experience into something different.⁹³

General Omar Bradley once said, “Leadership is intangible, and therefore no weapon ever designed can replace it.”⁹⁴ Successfully implementing leader virtues in Army culture will rely mostly on the example of mid-level leaders and junior officers, but must be driven by a guiding coalition of strategically-minded colonels and sergeants major to provide senior leader mentorship that inspires personal excellence and virtue.⁹⁵

Kotter’s Third Step: “Develop a Vision and Strategy”⁹⁶

Colin Powell urges leaders to “Have a vision. Be demanding.”⁹⁷ In the context of virtue, an effective vision and strategy means that Soldiers must be taught that their contribution is more than simple, repeatable tasks. Implementing virtue requires the Army to patiently acknowledge that virtuous leadership is a lifelong struggle and spans an entire military career.⁹⁸

A strong vision and strategy should continually put values, creeds, and ethics at the core of entry-level leadership, and it should culminate at the senior level after a career of practice. In basic training and the basic officer leader course--perhaps even in Reserve Officer Training Corps--the Army should plant the seeds of a moral ecology that encourages young leaders to regularly reflect on these questions: “Toward what should I orient my life? Who am I and what is my nature? How do I mold my nature to make it gradually better day by day? What virtues are the most important to cultivate and what weaknesses should I fear the most?”⁹⁹ A solid vision and strategy encourages virtue early in a Soldier’s or officer’s career will set tomorrow’s leaders on the path to success as strategic leaders.

Kotter’s Fourth Step: “Communicate the Change Vision”¹⁰⁰

An effective change vision will help the Army understand how to weaponize virtue. Leaders at all levels are subjected to ethical dilemmas throughout their careers.

Having virtue is *hard*, but the struggle in and of itself goes hand-in-hand with the struggle a Soldier might endure standing at attention in the rain, paying appropriate respects to the flag at a football game, or ignoring a fear of heights while helping his team scale a wall. This self-discipline basically comes down to choosing mission over comfort and convenience, and a habit of self-mastery can amplify the intrinsic value of one's life.¹⁰¹

Generating buy in from subordinates will require widespread and personable interaction. Perhaps in developmental counseling or in a mentorship conversation, a senior leader can discuss observed virtues as gleaned from attitudes, influence, consistency, and mutual trust.¹⁰² Frequent conversations of this type, between leader and led, are necessary to create a culture wherein the Army's new norms of leader virtues shape an organization's collective norms.¹⁰³

This change vision must visibly proliferate from the top down. Young leaders appreciate impactful, creative uses of their time. A Brigade Commander leading a Leader Professional Development session about the military profession is more likely to hold his or her audience's interest by discussing character and consequence rather than operations orders and joining the officers club.¹⁰⁴ Even informally, senior leaders who engage first-term Soldiers and lieutenants with topics of professionalism, who share stories of their own growth through experience, are likely to instill behavioral rigor to the benefit of the entire organization.¹⁰⁵ An effective change vision demonstrated by leader support is more likely to endure in Army culture.

Kotter's Fifth Step: "Empower Broad-Based Action"¹⁰⁶

Broad-based action from the Department of the Army will further encourage leader virtue. Within the past decade, the Army added its Army Values to the NCO and

Officer Evaluation Reports. And Army leaders might think that makes sense for virtue, too. Rather than adjusting officer or NCO evaluation reports, the Army should develop a supplemental counseling form that facilitates a virtues discussion. Rather than looking for virtues violations or struggling to find confirmative actions--when could a person show they were just?--a new emphasis on leader virtues should be something leaders coach their subordinates to strive to achieve.

Virtue requires consistency, both on and off duty, both deployed and in garrison. A private conversation, personal vignettes, identifying a virtuous act on the spot--all of these could generate a subtle momentum that helps reshape Army culture. An observer/controller might find an opportunity to teach a young platoon leader the difference between prudence and risk taking as she prepared for a platoon live fire exercise. A command sergeant major could coach a group of first sergeants to be magnanimous as they prepared their Soldiers for a lengthy deployment. Colonels and general officers can share their experiences in ambiguous situations where virtue prevailed (or did not).

Finally, the Army could implement virtue in applicable regulations, doctrine, and directives to further support and encourage broad-based action.

Kotter's Sixth Step: "Generate Short Term Wins"¹⁰⁷

Once vision, actions, and strategies are implemented, Army leaders will want to measure the impact that virtues are having on the formation. A recent online article from a junior officer posited that, "There's a difference between being good and looking good, and we'd prefer the former."¹⁰⁸ His message, in this context, amplifies the impact that senior leaders can have in creating virtue within the ranks.¹⁰⁹ If mission command requires mutual trust, then it is in a leader's best interest to teach subordinates how to

think instead of what to *do*. The actions and habits of senior leaders directly influences the way subordinates see, understand, and interact with the world around them.¹¹⁰ Even those who openly criticize a leader's decisions or statements are likely to value and draw strength from a senior leader's "moral energy" and are likely to mimic that leader's goodness.¹¹¹

Short term wins could include new career models that visualize growth in virtue, Professional Military Education focus that corresponds with the level of leadership, and online articles from mid-level leaders who are aspiring to live virtuous lives.

Kotter's Seventh Step: "Consolidate Gains and Produce More Change"¹¹²

Once the regulations are updated and leader virtues are codified in Army doctrine, the force may look for indicators that leader virtues are indeed behaviors to which future leaders should aspire. If Army culture is truly to change, producing more change is most likely to occur in mission command.

Mission command is, at its core, trust and empowerment.¹¹³ In combat, mission command is most obvious at the tactical level, and an adept leader can encourage virtuous behavior through honest feedback and thoughtful conversation. Mutual trust infers that the senior and subordinate view one another as generally a *good* person, a perception that is created through observed behaviors. A consistently temperate person will almost always be perceived as "constant and dependable."¹¹⁴

War College students also learn the theories of the great Prussian General, Karl von Clausewitz, who some say shows the importance of morality when describing creative spirit and reason in his paradoxical trinity.¹¹⁵ If Aristotle had read Clausewitz, he might have argued that a person's virtue is also that person's center of gravity, the source of that person's strength and power.

By having these types of discussions in the Basic Officer Leader Course, Captains Career Course, Command and General Staff College, and Senior Service College the Army will consolidate gains and produce more change. It will become a part of the profession of arms.

Kotter's Eighth Step: "Anchor New Approaches in the Culture"¹¹⁶

Finally, implementing leadership virtues in Army culture needs a firm anchor. Organizational culture is much harder to comprehend because it resides in nonverbal actions, attitudes, and organizational behaviors.¹¹⁷ Seeing such indicators through the lens of virtue is a way to positively impact culture.

How can leaders know if their Soldiers are striving for the leader virtues? According to Aristotle, "[p]leasure in doing virtuous acts is a sign that the virtuous disposition has been acquired."¹¹⁸ Virtuous leaders use their magnanimity to create enthusiasm and trust as an anchor for a strong command climate.¹¹⁹ Within that culture, others will strive to adopt the new cultural norms, accepting behaviors and attitudes that the group encourages, discourages, accepts, and rejects.¹²⁰ Once the leaders are self-correcting and holding each other accountable, their personal values tend to adjust and the organization is more focused toward shared success.¹²¹ Virtue, then, promotes resilience and readiness, the Chief of Staff of the Army's top priority.

Applying Kotter

Kotter's model for creating major change frames a challenging pathway to introduce leader virtue meaningfully and impactfully. Virtue is not taught through books so much as it is taught by example.¹²² Virtue is not so much about what people should *do*, but about what people should *be*.¹²³ Being virtuous is a decision that stems from comprehension and experience.¹²⁴ Hence, a virtuous person is a wise person, both

internally and externally. All people have a natural “tendency toward selfishness and overconfidence,”¹²⁵ but the Army’s infusion of leader virtues into the culture can help leaders tap into their full potential by building character both on and off duty.¹²⁶ A commitment to developing personal character is its own incentive.¹²⁷

Conclusion

The virtues of humility, courage, justice, prudence, magnanimity, and temperance are applicable to today’s Army strategic leader but require lifelong practice and commitment. A career spent pursuing virtue creates habits that will shape how leaders make decisions. It equips tomorrow’s leaders to make the best choices in situations fraught with ambiguity and chaos. For a virtuous leader, there is no situation for which he is unprepared.

The Army should adopt *virtus*, the ideal expressed in ancient Rome, as a strategy for professional development that enables the human dimension to win in a complex world. An excellent person becomes an excellent leader creates an excellent climate--and all of this creates an excellent organization.

Although one cannot numerically measure virtue or character, the Army can expect to see it in other areas that may be measureable. The best leaders will find opportunities to explore those areas developmentally and will encourage virtue through coaching and counseling.

It is the responsibility of today’s senior leaders to live up to America’s expectations and, quite frankly, to exceed them. Virtue is a leader’s power to act *well*¹²⁸ and directly contributes to organizational climate and culture.

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