



Is Our Military Becoming an Army of Immorality?

After being given the choice between reform school and the military, a juvenile delinquent of years past would sometimes be told, “The army will make a man out of you.” But today, critics may say, we can’t be sure what the army would make out of him — or what to make out of the army.

As to this, the *Army Times* [writes](#), “Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel stunned many at the Pentagon recently by suggesting the military has a ‘deep’ ethical problem. His top spokesman, Rear Adm. John Kirby, used the word ‘systemic.’”



Complaining about how cheating, fraud, lying, stealing, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual assault, and extra-marital affairs are apparently rampant in today’s military, Hagel said “he will appoint a new ethics ‘czar,’ a general or flag officer who will focus on this specific issue,” writes the *Times*.

For sure, these are not your grandfather’s armed forces. Homosexual and straight servicemen stationed at the Kadena Air Base in Japan performed in “what is believed to be [the] first drag queen and king show on an American military base,” [writes](#) *The Week*. And Business Insider reported in 2011 that an FBI gang assessment study “says the military has seen members from 53 gangs and 100 regions in the U.S. enlist in every branch of the armed forces. Members of every major street gang, some prison gangs, and outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMGs) have been reported on both U.S. and international military installations.”

Yet is adding an “ethics czar” the solution? Some critics point out that our problems are deeper. As the *Army Times* also reports, “‘In many ways, this is just a reflection of what is happening across our society,’ said Jack London, ... author of a new book, ‘Character: The Ultimate Success Factor.’ London pointed to mounting misconduct in the private sector, from the crimes that fueled the Enron scandal, Wall Street banking scandal and the fraud in the mortgage industry that helped lead to the recent real estate meltdown.”

Without a doubt, to paraphrase cultural critic and TV personality Fr. George Rutler, “We’re not going to understand these problems if we see them as disconnected social accidents; they are all part of a deep cultural malaise.”

Writing on how this malaise factors into military immorality, David L. Goetsch at PatriotUpdate.com blames liberals such as Hagel himself, [saying](#) that they are “crying out in protest against the very problems they have caused.” Touching on the heart of the matter, Goetsch writes:



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on March 5, 2014

Liberals have used the public schools, entertainment industry, and mainstream media to promote the concept of moral relativism; a concept that recognizes no absolute rights or wrongs. The moral relativist believes that individuals should make their own decisions about right and wrong. The best summary of the philosophy of moral relativism is this: *if it feels good do it*.

For Americans who grew up in an era when traditional moral training and positive character shaping were thought to be passé and even scoffed at, what feels good to them is often bad — for them and society. Choices based on moral-relativism lead inevitably to cheating, lying, stealing, and the other character problems that are plaguing the Army. On the other hand, moral relativism is a convenient philosophy for hedonistic people who don't want to follow society's historic rules of decency and behavior....

The Army is a reflection of American society....

This echoes C.S. Lewis' famous quotation, "We make men without chests and expect from them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst." And ever since the modern world started living the Protagorean notion "Man is the measure of all things," many thinkers have sounded this alarm. Ravi Zacharias said, "With no fact as a referent, what is normative is purely a matter of preference." Rebecca Manley Pippert wrote, "If you say there is no such thing as morality in absolute terms, then child abuse is not evil, it just may not happen to be your thing." And Michael Novak lamented, "'There is no such thing as truth,' they teach even the little ones. 'Truth is bondage. Believe what seems right to you. There are as many truths as there are individuals. Follow your feelings. Do as you please. Get in touch with yourself. Do what feels comfortable.' Those who speak in this way prepare the jails of the twenty-first century. They do the work of tyrants."

This is bold talk. But how is it that the root cause of all our most serious problems could be an ism most people can't even define? As I [explained](#) at *The New American* in 2012:

Every single entity or endeavor must be governed by rules. If you want to have a game, for instance, it cannot work without adherence to a set of them. And using baseball as an example, imagine that the players fell victim to "Baseball Relativism" and concluded that, as far as the rules go, if it feels good, do it. At first some pitchers might decide that two strikes sounds better than three, while some batters might prefer four. Some players might want to disallow stealing while others might want to start tackling. Of course, the variety of ways to play would only be as limited as man's desires and tastes, and, if things degenerated enough, the players might end up feeling that their bats could better win the day if used on noggins instead of baseballs.

Of course, while cheaters do exist, the above doesn't happen because those who take exception to baseball's rules can simply avoid playing the game; besides, people don't usually have a strong vested interest in rationalizing away the infield-fly rule. Barring suicide, however, playing the game of life isn't optional, and people who want to justify their behavior have a strong vested interest in rationalizing away moral principles that condemn it. And when a civilization embraces moral relativism — the notion that "The Rules" don't exist — as the ultimate rationalization (i.e., your actions can't be wrong if there is no right and wrong), it is the same as in the baseball analogy: The number of ways of playing the game of life will be limited only by human taste and imagination. The result is a fractured society.

And fracturing is precisely what's befalling the military, with the burgeoning of "values" sets, sub-cultures (e.g., the aforementioned gangs), and brands of religion; as to the last thing — which involves



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First Things — a few years ago the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, spent \$80,000 of taxpayer money erecting a Stonehenge-like outdoor [chapel for pagans](#), and the military may soon have Wiccan chaplains. As astute observers may ask, however, why not? If everything is relative, how could Christianity be any better or worse than Bahá'í, Buddha, or Beelzebub?

Just as “Public virtue cannot exist in a nation without private [virtue],” as John Adams observed, it follows that military virtue cannot exist in a nation without civilian virtue. And about all of it we should ask: Can a people believe morality is illusory without finding moral behavior elusive?



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