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MOVING FROM AN ETHICS OF "COMPLIANCE" TO "ASPIRATION": DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF ETHICS EDUCATION IN THE USAF

Dr. Robert S. Hinck

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Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues

University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT United Kingdom

T: +44 (0) 121 414 3602 F: +44 (0) 121 414 4875

E: jubileecentre@contacts.bham.ac.uk W: www.jubileecentre.ac.uk

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Dr. Robert S. Hinck

Assistant Professor

Air University, Maxwell AFB

Abstract

Developing strong character, or virtue, is essential for military personnel as members of the Profession of Arms. Despite going to great lengths in training, indoctrinating, and administering oaths of service, ethical lapses continue with organizational responses including formal reprimands and ever-longer policies bureaucratizing appropriate behavior. This paper argues such actions shift agency away from the individual to the penal and offers new curriculum and assessment of US Airmen's development of practical wisdom through ethical decision-making frameworks addressing ethical dilemmas. Rather than viewing ethics as a top-down, deterrent endeavor, it offers ethics as an ongoing, aspirational process rooted in personal development.

Key Words: virtue ethics, military ethics, leadership, decision-making, curriculum

Moving from an Ethics of "Compliance" to "Aspiration": Development and Assessment of Ethics Education in the USAF

The success of the USAF resides in the level of public trust it engenders, requiring its members to act in a professional manner.[1] While this is true for other professions as well, differences remain in terms of degree; not only is the USAF solely funded by public tax dollars, but also derives its legitimacy from its ability to faithfully execute orders in defense of the nation. Accordingly, the USAF goes to great lengths in training and indoctrinating its members, including administering formal oaths in which Airmen pledge to act with integrity.

Despite such attempts at ethical enculturation, instances of ethical lapses continue both in barracks and abroad, occurring at all levels of rank, including officers and enlisted.[2] Whereas renewed effort from above to hold individuals accountable for their actions continues to take place, reliance on top-down enforcement of ethical values, instead of developing personal virtue, problematically places the focus of ethical behavior within the confines of the organization, shifting attention away from the individual.[3] Further challenges to the efficacy of such top-down approaches occur during times of uncertainty; not only do soldiers face challenges during combat, with the fog and friction of war posing dilemmas with very real consequences to the

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[1] Martin Dempsey, "The Importance of Maintaining Trust: Civil-Military Relations and the Profession of Arms," June 25, 2012. U.S. National Guard. https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article-View/Article/575759/the-importance-of-maintaining-trust-civil-military-relations-and-the-profession/; U.S. Air Force, "A Profession of Arms: Our Core Values," May 16, 2022. https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/Airman_Development/BlueBook.pdf;

[2] Thomas Crosbie and Meredith Kleykamp, "Fault Lines of the American Military Profession," *Armed Forces Society* 44, no. 3 (2017); Jennifer Li, Tracy McCousland, Lawrence Hanser, Andrew Naber, and Judith LaValley, "Enhancing Professionalism in the U.S. Air Force," (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2017). https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1700/RR1721/RAND_RR1721.pdf; George Lucas, *Military Ethics: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[3] William Deresiewicz, "Solitude and Leadership," *The American Scholar Essays*, Spring 2010; Phillip McCormack, "Virtues or Values?" in Military Virtues, ed. Michael Skerker, David Whetham, and Don Carrick (Hampshire, U.K.: Howgate Publishing Limited, 2019), 127.

mission and people's lives but changing societal values and technological developments as well create novel challenges to which government policies are unlikely to keep pace. The bureaucratization of ethics alone, then, is insufficient to ensure good order and discipline while leaving individuals ill-equipped to grapple with the challenges they face today.[4]

To address these issues, this paper shares newly created curriculum designed to improve Airmen's ability to develop capacities for strategic ethical decision-making and presents the initial assessment of student learning. The curriculum chiefly focuses on *phronesis*, that is developing Airmen's practical wisdom, by introducing them to three broad ethical frameworks derived from the Western canon of ethics as a tool by which they assess ethical dilemmas, presented in the form of examples and case studies, and practice justifying their decisions through moral reasoning. The three frameworks provided include: (1) Aristotelian-based virtue ethics drawing attention to the individual agent; (2) deontological reasoning regarding the discernment of which set of rules or obligations to follow in a specific situation; and (3) consequentialist and utilitarian perspectives emphasizing the outcome of one's decisions.

The three ethical frameworks are placed into the context of the US Profession of Arms and include discussion on the presence of different moral values from culturally and cognitively diverse Airmen throughout different periods of their careers. Importantly, the three ethical frames are offered as ways to discern competing demands individuals face when confronted with ethical dilemmas. The intended outcome is to shift Airmen away from viewing discussion of ethics as merely a top-down driven action through the form of "thou shalt not's" and punishments, and instead a process of inquiry that is ongoing, developmental, and aspirational;

[4] McCormack, "Virtues or Values?"; Kenneth Tatum, Laura Parson, Jessica Weise, Megan Allison, and Joel Farrell, "Leadership and Ethics across the Continuum of Learning: The Ethical Leadership Framework," *Air & Space Power Journal* 33, no. 4 (2019): 42-57.

driven by the individual's desire to cultivate personal virtue, while still responsive to situational demands, and aware of the broader consequence of their actions onto others.

This essay unfolds by first arguing for the importance of virtue-based ethical decision-making education in the context of the US Air Force's Profession of Arms; second, describing the curriculum developed for improving Airmen's ethical decision-making capacities; and concludes by sharing the preliminary self-assessment data regarding improvement in Airmen's confidence in ethical decision-making.

The Importance of Virtue in the Profession of Arms

Ethics is vitally important for professional militaries. As members of the Profession of Arms, military service personnel are granted special rights and privileges: most notably, the right to use lethal force, and the training—funded by the public—to administer such force. In return, the public expects its military service members not only to defend the nation but act in manner reflective of its highest ideals. As retired US General Martin Dempsey explains, the Profession of Arms is the foundation of the US military, setting the moral standards its members are to uphold, regardless of the situation.[5]

And yet, despite the importance of ethics, numerous reports of ethical infractions within the American military abound.[6] Some of the specific causes for such lapses include organizationally induced incentives for dishonesty[7] and failures to maintain standards by

[5] Martin Dempsey, "America's Military: A Profession of Arms," *Joint Chiefs of Staff,* July 16, 2012. https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/documents/micp_docs/Topical/OSD001895-15_FOD_Final.pdf.
[6] Brett Weigle and Charles Allen, "Keeping David from Bathsheba: The Four-Star General's Staff as Nathan," *Journal of Military Ethics* 16, no. 1-2 (2017): 94-113; Crosbie and Kleykamp, "Fault Lines"; Li et al "Enhancing Professionalism"*;* Inspector General: U.S. Department of Defense*,* "Report of Investigation." https://media.defense.gov/2019/Apr/25/2002120979/-1/-1/1/DODIG-%202019-082.PDF.
[7] Leonard Wong and Stephen Gerras, *Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, 2015).

commanders and professional military education programs.[8] Others point more broadly, however, to the unique nature of the military and its relationship with civil society. As Crosbie and Kleykamp argue, following in the tradition of Samuel Huntington and Morris Janowitz, ethical issues in the US military arise from its dual identity as a bureaucratic organization and a profession.[9] Within this context, bureaucratic pathologies and specialization of skills and expertise can undermine one's military ethic, including the promotion of toxic leaders.[10] As retired US General Martin Dempsey stated, ethical lapses and moral failures among officers and enlisted constitute one of the gravest crises he faces daily.[11]

Addressing ethical misconduct is paramount for military services. While renewed demands by the US public for institutional accountability are warranted, as Dempsey explains, it ultimately falls upon the individual members of the US armed forces to ensure its ethic is held up and enforced.[12] This includes maintaining the public's sacred trust in the Profession both externally and internally by conducting military operations in accordance with US values and international law and treating its own members with the highest degree of respect and fairness.[13] Trust then becomes a defining element, one that "is earned not given, through deeds not words."[14]

How such trust is maintained through educational training and development within the US military is subject to debate. While some public reporting places blame on senior leaders,

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[8] Charles Allen, "Assessing the Army Profession," *Parameters* 41, no. 3 (2011): 73-86; Joan Johnson-Freese, *Educating America's Military* (London, UK: Routledge, 2012).
[9] Crosbie and Kleykamp, "Fault Lines"; Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (Glencoe, Scotland: The Free Press, 1960); Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957).
[10] Scott Gregg, *Beyond Core Values: Developing Officers of Character through Virtue-Based Leadership* (Maxwell AFB, Air War College: Professional Studies Paper, 2022).
[11] Dempsey, "America's Military"
[12] Dempsey "America's Military"
[13] Martin Cook, "Moral Foundations of Military Service," *Parameters* 30, No. Spring (2000): 117-129.
[14] Dempsey "America's Military" p 4.

others point to cultural problems within the US military.[15] US service branches, in response, have reviewed their policies and attempted to emphasize values that are more inclusive of others. Critics maintain, however, that emphasis on organizational values, instead of individual virtues, provides a shaky moral foundation for its members; one whereby ethical concepts can become easily forgotten, substantively malleable, and politically transformed without much social awareness as to why or how.[16] Further, challenges to such values-based approaches emerge from organizational hierarchies. Here the values military service personnel are expected to internalize are created by those at the top to be sent down. Changes in political leadership can thus result in new values promulgated, creating moral inconsistencies—risking apathy from those below, and centering ethical decision-making within the organization. As McCormack concludes, "Militaries that rely solely upon a 'values' based approach to preparing personnel for operational service in complex, contested environments do their Service personnel a huge disservice."[17]

In contrast, virtue-based ethics places agency within the individual. According to Aristotle, individuals' character manifests itself through their habituated behavior.[18] Virtue-based ethics thus encourages individuals to incorporate moral habits in their everyday behavior, placing them into a larger and more holistic framework in pursuit of a life well-lived.[19] While moral virtues take time to develop and become habituated, virtue-based ethical training provides a

[15] Kenneth Williams, "Toxic Culture: Enabling Incivility in the U.S. Military and What to Do About It," *Joint Force Quarterly* 87, no. 4 (2017): 57-63; Stephen Losey, "Maj. Gen. Dunlop Created Toxic Environment in Top Secret Office, IG Finds," *Air Force Times,* August 17, 2020. https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2020/08/17/maj-gen-dunlop-created-toxic-environment-in-top-secret-program-office-ig-finds/; David Roza, "'If He was on the Battlefield, He Probably Would've been Shot in the Back' – Inside the Toxic Command of Lt. Gen. Lee Levy," *Task and Purpose,* December 3, 2019. https://taskandpurpose.com/news/air-force-general-lee-levy/.
[16] McCormack, "Virtues or Values?"
[17] McCormack, "Virtues or Values?" p. 25
[18] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Karl Ameriks and Desmond Clarke. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
[19] McCormack, "Virtues or Values?"

framework whereby individual agents are recognized as possessing the capacity for ethical decision-making as the means to develop their character, as reflected by their actions.

While virtue-based ethics offers much promise as a framework for promoting ethical conduct and maintaining trust in the Profession of Arms, questions remain as to what virtues military members should pursue. Whereas the Greek philosophers established prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance as the four cardinal virtues for all to follow, martial virtues have tended to emphasize more of a warrior ethos, including elements such as courage, honor, and loyalty, among others. Within the US service branches, for instance, the Army has developed its own ethic emphasizing honor, expertise, and stewardship.[20] Currently, the US Air Force is developing its own ethic, one that distinguishes itself from other branches.

Whereas different service branches may opt to emphasize different virtue development within their personnel, the importance of *phronesis* (prudence) or practical wisdom, is shared. As a virtue, prudence implies both good judgment and excellence of character, thereby distinguishing itself as a fundamental virtue necessary for military leaders and their enlisted members. In this regard one's capacity for proper decision-making, or prudence, both reflects an individual's cognitive capacity for discerning right and serve as a product of their character, manifested through their behavioral choices and actions taken. Concerning itself with knowing what the right thing is to do, in the right way, and at the right time, prudence becomes the cornerstone by which other virtues stand.[21] As Rick Rubel explains, whereas one might have all the right moral virtues, and thus know what ends to pursue, without prudence "that person will not know how to set about pursuing the right ends."[22]

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[20] "The Army Ethic." Center for the Army Profession and Ethic. https://api.army.mil/e2/c/downloads/356486.pdf
[21] Rick Rubel, "Wisdom," in *Military Virtues*, ed. Michael Skerker, David Whetham, and Don Carrick (Hampshire, UK: Howgate Publishing Limited, 2019), 127.
[22] Rubel, "Wisdom"

The development of *phronesis* is vitally important given the nature of war and the bureaucratic elements of professional militaries. First, in a Platonian sense, prudence can be seen as a form of courage; that is knowledge, gained through education and inculcated by law, about what sorts of things are to be feared above others.[23] Placed into a military context, service members are required to not only know how to follow orders, but also when to challenge them;[24] their duties require them to take extraordinary acts in service to the defense of their nation, as well as its interests, but also knowing when such actions threaten to undermine the very principles their community purports to uphold.[25]

Second, the development of *phronesis* can protect against the bureaucratic pressures of military organizations. As Alexandre Havard explains, prudence comes from cultivating and applying professional knowledge in combination with one's life experience.[26] William Deresiewicz warns, speaking to a class at West Point, that bureaucracies encourage conformity, resulting in leaders who are excellent "hoop jumpers" but ill-equipped to respond to the tough circumstances and decisions military service members will face. According to Deresiewicz, the US military faces a crisis of leadership caused by a decline in independent thinking. Asking students how they will "find the strength and wisdom to challenge an unwise order or question a wrongheaded policy" he suggests they begin thinking through these issues now, as waiting until they face them in practice will be too late.[27]

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[23] Plato, "Laches," translated by Rosamond Sprague in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 664.
[24] Pauline Kaurin, *On Obedience: Contrasting Philosophies for the Military, Citizenry, and Community* (Annapolis, Maryland, Naval Institute Press: 2020).
[25] Malham Wakin, "The Ethics of Leadership" *American Behavioral Scientist 19* no. 5 (1976): 567-588.
[26] Alexandre Havard, *Virtuous Leadership* (New York: Scepter Publishers, Inc., 2014), 58-59.
[27] Deresiewicz, "Solitude and Leadership," p 10.

The Development of Air University's Ethical Decision-Making Workshop

Given the importance of developing ethical leaders, and as part of its accreditation process, Air University (AU) chose to focus on strategic ethical leadership for the subject of its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The QEP is a five-year forward-looking process by which institutions focus on enhancing the curriculum of their choosing. AU decided upon three core elements of ethical leadership, ethical decision-making being one. As part of this process, AU's QEP team met with course directors at five different schools within AU to review their curriculum on ethical decision-making. In support of these efforts, the AU QEP team also developed a new workshop program specifically designed to help Airmen of all ranks, including enlisted and officers, in developing their ethical decision-making skills.

Whereas virtue-based leadership development programs are common,[28] results from such curricula have received mixed findings.[29] Unfortunately, within the context of the Air Force, discussions on ethics tend to focus on lapses in ethical judgment, rather than developing corrective skills and virtues preventing such instances moving forward. Despite attempts at indoctrination and mass briefings intended to promote ethical conduct, such learning mechanisms have shown to be insufficient to ensure ethical conduct.[30] Further challenges to virtue-based curriculum arise from individuals' varying moral beliefs to which specific organizational values and virtues cannot be forced upon them during the learning process.[31]

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[28] Tatum et al., "Leadership and Ethics"; Hugo Asencio, Theodore Byrne, and Edin Mujkic, "Ethics Training for US Military Leaders: Challenging the Conventional Approach," *Public Integrity* 19, no. 5 (2017): 415-428.

[29] Laura Parks-Leduc, Leigh Mulligan, and Matthew Rutherford, "Can Ethics be Taught? Examining the Impact of Distributed Ethical Training and Individual Characteristics on Ethical Decision-Making," *Journal of Management Learning & Education* 20, no. 1 (2021): 30-49.

[30] George Mastroianni, "The Person–Situation Debate: Implications for Military Leadership and Civilian–Military Relations," *Journal of Military Ethics* 10, no. 1 (2011): 2-16.

[31] Eva van Baarle et al., "Moral Dilemmas in a Military Context. A Case Study of a Train the Trainer Course on Military Ethics," *Journal of Moral Education* 44, no. 4 (2015): 457-478; Eva Wortel and Jolanda Bosch, "Strengthening Moral Competence: A 'Train the Trainer' Course on Military Ethics," *Journal of Military Ethics* 10, no. 1 (2011): 17–35.

To mitigate these issues, AU's ethical decision-making workshop specifically aims to engage students in their own *phronesis* development skills through personal reflection, content introducing them to the basics of ethical decision-making, and scenarios to apply their skills. The workshop can vary in length, depending on the amount of time available and the number of scenarios programs are interested in discussing. This essay thus presents the core elements of the curriculum.

Overview of Workshop Content

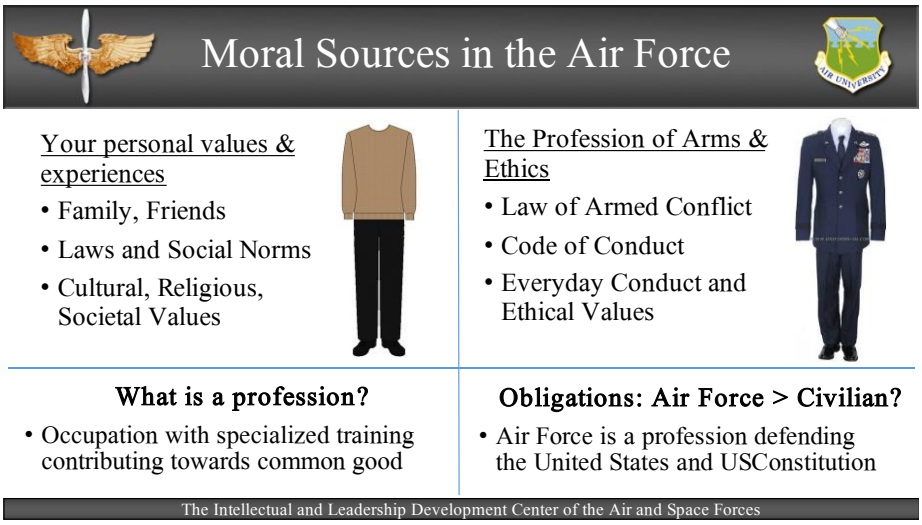
AU's Ethical Decision-Making workshop has four key components. The first is a lengthy introduction designed to reframe the issue of ethical behavior within the context of the Air Force. Instructors began by noting how Air Force discussions on ethics tend to emphasize the problem of unethical behavior as simply, "stop doing bad things." To support this claim, students are provided with two examples, one from junior officers caught in a cheating scandal and another by a Chief Master Sergeant found guilty of abusing his power by pursuing inappropriate relations with his subordinates. In both cases, the response by the Air Force is shown as following a twofold pattern in which punishments are administered to the offenders, intended to deter future ethical misconduct, while creating new guidance detailing ever more specific policies by which individuals are supposed to conduct themselves. Students are then invited to critique this approach, asked whether they feel "inspired" to act ethically from it and what limitations they see when policy does not fully stipulate what course of action is to be taken.

After this initial discussion, instructors offer students the thesis for the workshop. This includes the belief that: 1) in general, people know right from wrong but nonetheless face ethical dilemmas, both small and large, throughout their career with risks of ethical drift over time resulting from their decisions; 2) that Airmen will inevitably confront competing demands,

including, at times, contradictory orders and policies that they will ultimately have to personally adjudicate; while 3) facing changing social, technological, and global circumstances requiring their ability to wade through the potential impacts and consequences of their decisions. Taken together, such messaging is intended to empower students to begin thinking about their own moral beliefs, rather than relying solely on policies or procedures. In support of this, instructors then present students with the objective of the workshop: moving Airmen away from understanding ethics as merely "compliance" towards a view and appreciation of ethics as an "aspirational" endeavor by "practicing deliberate, reflective, and thoughtful ethical decision making," or *phronesis*.

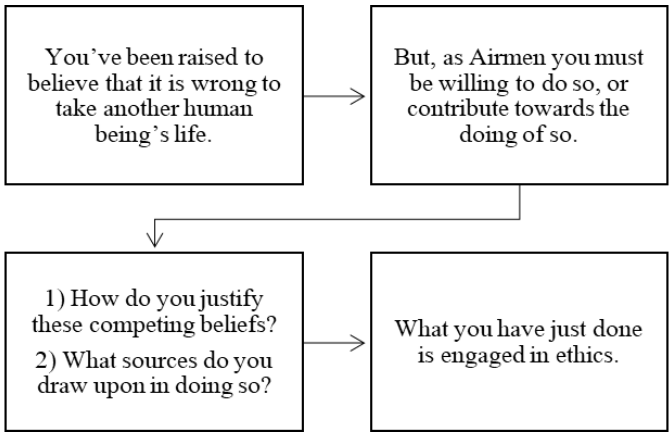
After offering the attention-getter, the lesson moves into defining morals and ethics by first asking students what each concept means to them. Morals are then presented as sets of beliefs about right and wrong which emerge from specific moral sources presented to individuals throughout their lives. Students are asked to share examples of moral beliefs they hold and identify what sources provided them with these lessons. After recognizing both the differences and similarities of some of their individually held moral beliefs, students are presented with examples of moral sources that emerge from their training and entrance into the Profession of Arms, helping connect them to the idea that the Air Force as an institution also furnishes its members with moral beliefs shaping how they understand their role and membership within the Profession of Arms (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Connecting Personal and Professional Moral Sources



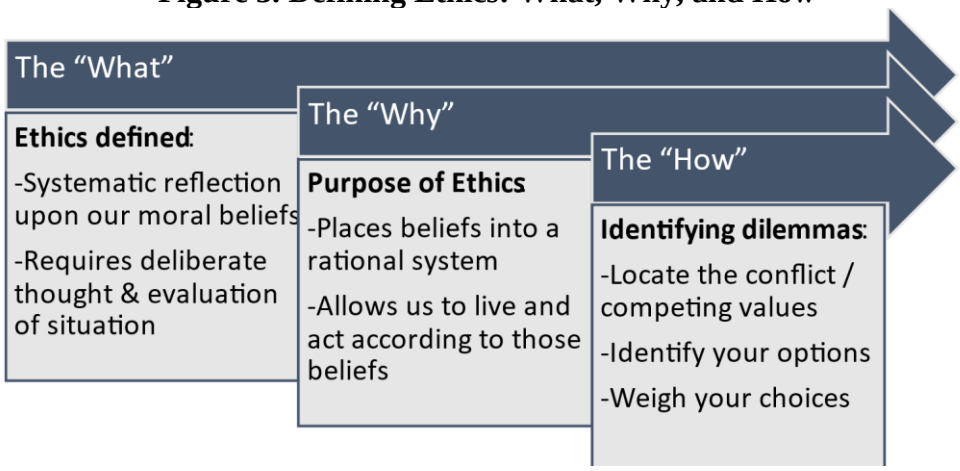
From this discussion, the lesson transitions from morals to ethics. Before defining ethics, students are presented with the following series of questions. First, students are asked if they were taught whether it was wrong to take another human being's life. Next, they are then presented with the dilemma upon which their membership within the Profession of Arms presents them: the contribution towards, or taking direct actions, resulting in the death or harm of others. Students are then asked how they justify their willingness to do so as members of the Air Force and the moral sources they rely upon in doing so (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Introducing Students to Ethical Dilemma in AF Service



From this entry into ethical thinking, students are offered a definition of ethics as "the systemic reflection upon one's moral beliefs, which requires deliberate thought and evaluation of their situation." The curriculum thus separates ethics and morality as separate concepts, with the former addressing the manner in which one determines what moral beliefs supersede others with the reasoning justifying one's resulting hierarchy of moral beliefs forming their ethical worldview. Instructors then offer an explanation as to why we engage in ethical thinking, noting that we all do it to some extent, whether cognitively of it or not. Here the "why" behind ethics is framed as a means by which we take action which requires us to know what we believe is most important or "good" in a given situation. Thus, rather than framing ethics as a purely intellectual activity, the curriculum conceptualizes ethics as rooted in everyday action, allowing individuals to place their beliefs into a rational system allowing them to live and act accordingly to such beliefs. Finally, the discussion turns to how one adjudicates ethical dilemmas, that is situations where two or more competing goods present themselves to which no clearly correct answer is present. In these circumstances, students are told that they should locate the competing values present, identify their options, weigh those options, and offer an argument justifying the best course of action.

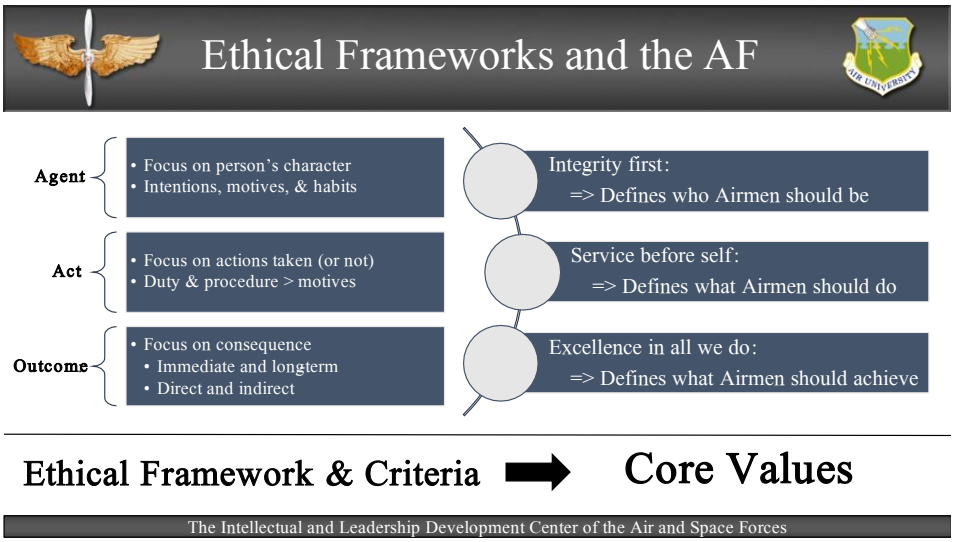
Figure 3. Defining Ethics: What, Why, and How



The third part of the curriculum introduces students to three simplified schools of ethical thought, offered as different "lenses" by which they might view a situation (see Appendix A). These three schools include virtue ethics, focusing on the character and actions of the individual; duty-based ethics focusing on rules and obligations owed to others; and consequentialist ethics emphasizing the results or outcomes of one's actions. In each case, students are provided with a statement defining the underlining assumption and goals of the three frameworks or lenses, including an exaggerated example illustrating it within the context of their profession. During the discussion of each ethical framework, students are asked to what extent they agree with the perspective, why, and what pitfalls or challenges they perceive emerging from it. Thus, despite offering three different schools of ethical thought, the purpose is not to persuade students to adhere to any one of them, but instead to draw their attention to developing the ability to discern which framework might best apply to specific situations based upon their professional expertise. To further illustrate this, the three frameworks are connected together with the Air Force's Core Values; in this sense, "Integrity First" is argued to reflect the importance of virtue-based ethics; "Service before Self" emphasizes duty-based ethics and obligations towards others; and "Excellence in all we do" related to consequentialist frameworks[32] (see Figure 4).

[32] Ethics article with core values

Figure 4. Connecting Ethical Frameworks to AF Core Values



Finally, the fourth component of the curriculum is where students are presented with multiple examples and case studies to discuss and apply the three different ethical frameworks provided. In each case, the scenarios are intentionally designed to point towards some dilemma by which no one answer is clearly better than others. While some of the scenarios are tailored to the specific audience, all participants are given one simplified example to first practice their comprehension of the content provided to this point. In this scenario, students are asked to locate the competing values and the subsequent ethical lenses they relate to before then offering what they believe is the best course of action and why. In doing so, they are asked to interpret the scenario within the context of their specific career field, imagining how the scenario might play out in their unit (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Basic Application Practice Scenario

An employee under your leadership…

1. Failed to complete an item on a safety checklist, violating mandatory safety protocols.
2. Luckily, it was caught before any harm occurred.
3. But, the employee skipped the item in order to counsel another person in your organization with suicidal intentions.

In the scenario, the first statement is intended to prompt students to think about the importance of rules/regulations as a form of duty or obligation; the second statement is intended to point towards the consequence or impact of the event; and the third statement is intended to place attention on the character of the employee. These elements are then connected to possible decisions made in response to the failure of completing a mandatory safety protocol; in this case, if one values duty/obligation more, then some form of reprimand appears necessary. In contrast, if one values individual character and integrity, then perhaps a distinction or award is appropriate.

Initial Assessment of the Ethical Decision-Making Workshop

Assessment of the ethical decision-making workshop is ongoing. However, the initial piloting of the content indicates considerable effectiveness as measured by students' self-assessment of their understanding of ethical decision-making. Prior to each workshop, students are administered a pre-test survey with seven questions relating to their ethical decision-making skills. These seven questions relate to the competencies identified as part of AU's QEP program across schools and programs (see Table 1). Shortly after the workshop, students are then asked to take the same survey to determine whether they perceive their ethical decision-making abilities to have progressed.

Table 1. Pre-Test / Post-Test Questionnaire for Ethical Decision-Making Competencies

Question #	Prompt
1	I can identify ethical dilemmas and affected parties within the Air Force context.
2	I can describe various approaches to ethical decision making.
3	I can define moral arguments.
4	I can construct moral arguments.
5	I can apply approaches to ethical decision making to real-world ethical dilemmas.
6	I can demonstrate ethical decision-making skills in the Air Force context when grappling with new challenges and complex situations.
7	I can discuss the process of making moral decisions in the Air Force context.

Note: All questions are placed on a five-point Likert Scale

Table 2 summarizes the results of the pre-test/post-test survey based on five workshops carried out during AY21. There were 73 students who answered the pre-test survey and 61 students who followed up with the post-test survey. Across all seven questions, we see a significant increase in students' perception of their ethical decision-making competencies.

Table 2. Pre-Test / Post-Test Results from Ethical Decision-Making Workshops

Question	Pre-Test			Post-Test			t-score	p (one-tail)
	N	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	-	-
1	73	3.52	0.56	61	4.07	0.33	-4.66	0.00**
2	73	3.21	0.53	61	3.95	0.51	-5.95	0.00**
3	73	3.25	0.66	61	3.95	0.45	-5.41	0.00**
4	73	3.18	0.49	61	3.80	0.56	-4.96	0.00**
5	73	3.36	0.57	61	4.02	0.45	-5.31	0.00**
6	73	3.34	0.45	61	3.97	0.43	-5.42	0.00**
7	73	3.36	0.59	61	3.97	0.47	-4.81	0.00**
Average	73	3.31	0.35	61	3.96	0.34	-6.35	-

**Notes significance at p<.001

In addition to the pre-test/post-test scores, students are asked to provide some qualitative comments about their experience during the lesson. These questions are open-ended and reveal additional evidence affirming the approach and value of having students discuss the scenarios presented in addition to the importance of the delivery of the content.

Theme 1: Content Relevance

- "As I think back on how we started with military strategy, the strategic leader, and the nature of strategy it was a good time to work in ethics. Clearly the ethical dilemmas of military strategic leaders is critical in decision making processes."
- "This lesson and the instructor were spot on for this course. The articles and discussion were very relevant and developed critical thinking. I would keep this format of case studies/articles and then discussion was natural."
- "Really appreciated the content and discussion. Ethics is important. Great way to frame it at the SEL level versus do-good!"
- "The material was surprisingly concise, well presented, Thorough and well applied to real life scenarios"

Theme 2: Critical Thinking/Different Perspectives

- "Helping break down the three frameworks gave me affirmation on what to consider as a leader in my organization."
- "Ethics brief on target with great dialogue and offered different perspective of scenarios/application."
- "The application process…,it was a great exercise and it was surprising to see others perspectives."
- "Lots of very educated people in the room with very amazing thoughts on the topic."
- [the content I found most useful was] "Connecting my personal values to military values."
- [the content I found most useful was] "Open conversation among all participants."

Conclusion

This essay argued for the importance of developing a virtue-based ethical decision-making curriculum to help mitigate ethical lapses in the US armed forces. By focusing on *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, Airmen are encouraged to view ethics as an aspirational endeavor requiring the practice of good judgment in resolving ethical dilemmas that they inevitably face throughout their careers. Thus, the workshop's intent is to help shift Airmen away from unimaginative, bureaucratic tendencies inherent in military professions and encourage personal thought development. Finally, the initial assessment of the curriculum demonstrates significant improvement in students' perception of their ethical decision-making skills.

This project is part of an ongoing, five-year program to enhance Air University's strategic ethical leadership curriculum across the continuum of learning. Future assessment efforts include analyzing student self-perception data across courses and programs in addition to direct assessment of student deliverables in the form of ethical advice papers, leadership philosophies, weekly discussion boards, and other assignments unique to each course. Greater statistical analysis into differences between officer, enlisted, civilian, and supervisor versus more junior-level Airmen is in progress.

Appendix A. Comparison of Ethical Frameworks Handout

Comparison of Ethical Frameworks

	 **Agent** "How to live your life"	 **Action** "Is it right?"	 **Outcome** "Are the results good?"
Key question to ask:	What kind of person do I want to be?	What obligations do I owe and to whom?	What impact does my behavior have on the world?
Goals:	Develop personal integrity, avoid vices	Act according to the proper rules in a situation	Greatest good for greatest number of people
Assumption:	Good people do good things	Rules define good behavior	Consequences determine what is good
Example:	*I want to be a person of integrity by having the courage to treat all people with respect.* *Regardless of policy or procedure, I always call people out for when they discriminate or make disparaging remarks. Rules may change, but my integrity stays constant.*	*It is my duty to follow orders and procedure, regardless of the outcome or my intentions.* *I never sign off on work I haven't personally done. As long as I am following orders, I am doing my duty.*	*I believe that ensuring the mission is accomplished is most important, no matter how it is done.*