

2022

Care for the Sorrowing Soul: Healing Moral Injuries from Military Service and Implications for the Rest of Us

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Recommended Citation

Gibbons, Tom; Larson, Duane; and Zust, Jeff (2022) "Care for the Sorrowing Soul: Healing Moral Injuries from Military Service and Implications for the Rest of Us," *Naval War College Review*. Vol. 75: No. 4, Article 12.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol75/iss4/12>

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Elleman set out to answer the question in the title: Did Taiwan's offshore possessions function as barriers or pathways, and how, for whom, and why? The answer, somewhat limited as it is by the dichotomous framing of the question, is yes—and no. While Taiwan's offshore possessions remained a psychological liability to the Chinese Nationalists, and in some instances had to be sacrificed on the altar of political and military expediency—as the Dachens were in 1955—they consistently functioned as a barrier to the Chinese Communists and a figurative pathway for American interests in the area. Elleman's study demonstrates the importance of examining history as part of the process of developing contemporary strategy. In their policy and strategy toward Taiwan, American policy makers had to chart a careful course between the Scylla of general war and the Charybdis of perceived indifference; current public servants would do well to follow their example.

RYAN DRADZYNSKI



Care for the Sorrowing Soul: Healing Moral Injuries from Military Service and Implications for the Rest of Us, by Duane Larson and Jeff Zust. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017. 273 pages. \$26.95.

The concept of moral injury (MI) has gained much traction in recent years with respect to America's military. *Care for the Sorrowing Soul* is a remarkably well-written book that explores MI and its devastating effects on combat veterans. As with other psychological injuries, MI often is misdiagnosed because it is invisible, with no telltale signs or symptoms. However, it is painful and often deadly for veterans

and can have long-term consequences for both family members and caregivers. It is a growing concern in the military and for military leaders.

Initially, the authors lay the foundation and introduce the concept of MI. They define *moral injury* as “the complex soul wound that results from a person's inability to resolve the differences between one's idealized values and one's personal experiences” (p. 5). It is important to note that the term *moral injury* still is misunderstood and misused by active-duty servicemembers, veterans, and caregivers alike. Additionally, those experiencing MI may try to hide the effects because they are ashamed or uncomfortable, thus making a diagnosis all the more difficult. Moreover, as the authors highlight, the effects of MI are felt by more than combat veterans alone; the “moral injuries experienced by soldiers are also experienced by society” (p. 17). This is why it is important to understand what MI is and what it is not.

Larson and Zust introduce a simple construct known as the “two-mirror model” to explain how MI occurs. Moral dissonance results when the first mirror, or the “ideal self,” and the second mirror, or the “perceived self,” show different things. In other words, when someone's actions are not in consonance with the beliefs or values developed throughout that person's life, it creates moral dissonance. Moral dissonance leads to confusion, and eventually to MI. The bottom line can be explained as follows: “Conflicts between soldiers' ideal and perceived self-images generate ‘value-based’ moral dissonance that results in moral injury” (p. 82). The resulting MI undermines the warrior's sense of worth.

The authors present several personal stories from recent combat veterans to illustrate the harmful effects of MI. The personal stories enable readers to relate to the veterans as human beings and make the image of MI much more palatable and understandable. Additionally, the authors contrast MI with another often misunderstood combat injury, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). “MI is a value-based injury, distinguished from a trauma-based injury such as PTSD” (p. 56). The dichotomy between the two different conditions adds to the confusion and mystery surrounding MI.

One of the more-valuable features of the book is the review of current literature and practices used to treat and deal with MI in combat veterans. This discussion is useful for leaders in any of the military services, as it traces the work done by many in this new and evolving field. Moreover, it helps clear up some of the confusion surrounding MI.

The chapters addressing military character are important, because they underscore the central role that character development plays within the military profession. Recent conflicts and the impact of multiple combat tours have taken a toll on U.S. servicemembers and their allies. The continued character development of members of the military profession is critical to the future force. The authors explain that military character feeds into both one’s perceived and actual self-images, thus having a critical effect on MI.

Two case studies included in the appendix provide readers an opportunity to see the two-mirror model being employed. The first case study focuses on the atrocities at My Lai during the Vietnam War, when U.S. soldiers killed

innocent civilians in retribution for mines and booby traps in their local area of operations. The second case study deals with drone warfare and the potential for MI among crewmembers who engage and kill targets thousands of miles away using remotely piloted drones. Both case studies, although from several decades apart, give readers some insight into the moral dissonance that soldiers and airmen experience under the intense pressure and stress of a combat situation. They enable the reader to reflect on how the outcomes might have been different if participants had applied the concepts of fidelity, responsibility, accountability, maturity, and efficacy (referred to as FRAME), as highlighted in the two-mirror model.

My only criticism is that the authors could have added suggested questions to the case studies to help guide subsequent discussions. Talking about MI with superiors, peers, and subordinates is difficult, but doing so sheds a light on the topic and helps to illuminate the issues surrounding MI throughout society. Discussion questions would have enabled readers to focus on hard-to-grasp and often-overlooked points.

Larson and Zust’s experience with ethics, pastoral care, and counseling, informed by Zust’s thirty years of experience as an Army chaplain, enables them to provide a unique perspective on this devastating and destructive injury. Their work provides an insight rarely seen and gives hope to the many combat veterans afflicted with MI. I wholeheartedly recommend this book to military leaders, veterans, family members, and caregivers searching for answers and a better understanding of MI.

TOM GIBBONS