

Nancy Shteynberg

AFTERWAR

HEALING THE MORAL
WOUNDS OF OUR SOLDIERS



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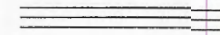
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NANCY SHERMAN

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To Marshall, Kala, and Jonathan
The Loves of My Life



What do we mean when we say "Thank you for your service"?

CHAPTER 2



DON'T JUST TELL ME "THANK YOU"

MIL/CIV STRAINS

At a civilian-veteran gathering in D.C. in early summer of 2012, a young vet came forward, turned to a civilian he hadn't met before, and said: "Don't just tell me 'Thank you for your service.' First say, 'Please.'" The remark was polemical and just what was meant was vague. But the resentment expressed was unmistakable. You couldn't be a civilian in that room and not feel the sting. The remark broke the ice and the dialogue began.

I brought a Marine vet with me that evening who had just finished his freshman year at Georgetown. He wasn't the vet who spoke those words, but he shared some of the anger.

At twenty-two years of age, T. M. ("TM") Gibbons-Neff served as a rifleman in charge of an eight-man team in a second deployment to Afghanistan. His unit was among the first to arrive in Afghanistan in December 2009 as part of President Obama's surge that would send 30,000 additional U.S. troops to try to turn around the course of the eight-year-old stagnating war. Like many of those troops, TM was posted to the southwest of the country, to the violent southern Helmand Province.

On the evening of day one of the first mission, on the edge of a Taliban-held village, TM and two other teammates were crouched down on the highest rooftop they could find, surveying the nooks and crannies where the insurgents could hide and arm. They had their scopes on several who looked suspicious, but they drew no fire and so just kept to their lookouts. Then, it got “sporty,” says TM, in his measured way, with lightning rounds and pops coming in from three different directions. Two rounds hit the arms of his buddy, Matt Tooker, just as he stood up to launch a grenade; another ricocheted off the body armor of his light gunner, Matt Bostrom, leaving severe chest wounds. Less than 24 hours into the mission, and TM was already down two out of his eight men. The game plan had totally shifted: he had been the observer and now he was the primary shooter, and needed to find another observer. By the end of the day he was squarely in the role of “strategic corporal,” the apt term coined by retired Marine Commandant General Charles Krulak for a low guy on the noncommissioned totem pole, typically in a remote and dangerous outpost, away from direct supervision, having to implement quick tactical and moral decisions with far-reaching strategic implications. For TM, resuscitating the mission all-consuming him. Even the thought that he had two friends who had just got badly wounded barely surfaced. He was operating in “code red.” Not even the most subliminal, sweet thoughts of home and his girlfriend darted through his mind.

In due course the losses sunk in. And more losses piled on. A year and a half later, Matt Tooker, shot that night, was killed in a motorcycle crash back home. TM is pretty sure it was the culmination of risky, suicidal behavior: with a maimed arm, he could no longer hold the sniper role that had come to define him. Two other close friends were killed in action in Afghanistan in May 2010. TM’s Marine career had begun with his father’s death (a Vietnam War Navy veteran), just days after TM had arrived at boot camp. “I’m no stranger to people I know getting ripped out of my life pretty quickly,” he says, at twenty-four, with a war weariness that doesn’t easily match his boyish looks and small frame. The names of his three fallen best buddies are engraved on a black bracelet he wears on his right wrist. It is his own memorial, a place to remember his buddies by touch, the way visitors run their fingers over the names on the Vietnam Wall.

TM has done his share of grieving and visiting team members at Walter Reed Hospital who weren’t as lucky as he. Still, the grief and the visits fuel a deep sadness about what he thinks of as the futility of some of his missions in Afghanistan. When he first got to Georgetown University, the loose political banter on the social media sites about the need to intervene in various conflict areas around the world—Libya, Iran, Syria—riled him. It was hard to watch his peers beating the war drums while fully insulated from the consequences of deployments. The media- and philanthropy-backed campaign against the Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony and his abduction of children as soldiers in his Lord’s Resistance Army (launched through the popular YouTube video “Kony 2012”) made him especially resentful of his classmates’ sense of comfortable entitlement. His own losses were still fresh. He didn’t want to see more: “You know, a thing like Kony . . . , and all these people saying, ‘We should do more. What are we going to do about it?’ *You’re* not going to go over there! . . . That will be our job, and then more of my friends will get buried, and then you guys can talk about it on Facebook. That’s what upsets me. . . . The politics. The policy. The rant. . . . Oh, you want to go over there and stop Kony. Hey, you YouTube watcher: Is this going to be *you*? . . .”

I am not saying don’t support that political agenda. Or don’t think about those little kids who are dying out there. But what about *our* kids who are dying out there!

TM did not hit the Send button on any of the Facebook replies he composed. Instead, he went on to write about his war experience—for the *New York Times* war blog, the *Washington Post*, *Time*, the *Atlantic*, the *Nation*, and other war blogs. He has served as executive editor of Georgetown’s student newspaper, *The Hoya*. A year or so after we met, he took a seminar I taught on war ethics, and helped create in that class a remarkable civilian–veteran dialogue. And he has done that on campus, too, serving as the head of the campus student veteran association. He is processing his war publicly and reflectively in writing and community outreach. But his early feelings of resentment, like those of the veteran who turned to the civilian that night, are important to hear and important to try to understand. Those feelings are,

in part, resentment at too easy a beating of the war drums by civilians safe from battle, infused with militarism at a distance.

Resentment toward civilians is, I suspect, an emotion felt by many who have recently served, even if the feeling is often kept under wraps. It is a way of holding another to account, of demanding respect, of calling out another for due attention and recognition as part of a shared moral community. It is a way of saying another is responsible *to you*. Sometimes it morphs into feelings of alienation and disengagement. For some veterans, the tipping point is being publicly glorified as a war hero while privately disdained (or not at all understood) for having heeded the call of military service.

Jonathan Wong, a former Marine from University of California, San Diego, who later came to Georgetown for a master's degree in security studies, spoke to just this point. He told me that when he came home from Iraq in the early days of the war, he would go out to dinner with his friends and there would be "excess adulation." With a few too many drinks, his buddies would boast to his date that he "saved Jessica Lynch. That's all they knew." They knew little about his war or what Marines like him were doing in Iraq. As civilians they were uninterested in his real military life. All they wanted to do was turn him into a war hero. "That really brought it home to me. Nobody really understands. And after that, I started really withdrawing." He took up surfing. He would go out alone often: "The ocean really doesn't care that you went to Iraq," he told me. "It's just going to dunk you to the bottom anyway." The sea couldn't praise, blame, glorify, or judge. Turning to the sea was Jonathan Wong's way of disengaging from civilian disengagement. It wasn't just the interpersonal reality that felt alien. It was the visual environment too, and especially the assault of "vibrant colors" on the San Diego campus. "Even after three months of coming home, the amount of colors in the clothes, in the buildings, even the sky was colorful," compared to Iraq, "a beige kind of place, covered in dust." That Kodachrome world, Wong said, could "either disconcert and unsettle you, or it could make you excited about the possibilities for the future."

Others come home alienated in ways that don't so clearly involve resentment or disappointment or visual dislocation. What they feel is profound moral dislocation and a consequent slipping sense of connectedness with family

they love. Some turn to work as their drug of choice. This was the experience of Air Force Colonel Erik Goepner upon returning home as Commander of Provincial Reconstruction Team Zabul in southern Afghanistan (2010). During Goepner's time Taliban fighters poured into Zabul Province, trying to gain a stronghold over its patchwork of 2,500 remote villages. His forces partnered with local government officials to stabilize institutions rife with corruption and incompetency: "The stories you hear about corruption, at least for Zabul, probably understated it, to be honest with you. I mean the corruption was that bad," he said. "Governance is bad, corruption's high, and there's not a lot of government guys that are capable."

Goepner has gone on to write scholarly articles about the "mission-ineffective" environment of counterinsurgency operations with failed and weak states. He argues that the prevalence of PTSD in a war-torn population like that in the Zabul Province both exacerbates vulnerability to insurgency and makes effective counterinsurgency intractable. His was a mission you couldn't accomplish in the time frame allotted, with U.S. "touch-and-go" security and the fragility of the host institutions. The corrosive environment and futility of the operations hit him personally: "Anyone who comes close to that environment is going to come away maybe not ruined but tarnished, dirtied, sullied," he said as we talked. But he wasn't prepared for what those sullied feelings led to at home: "I'm fairly introverted anyway—but I became *hugely* introverted. I had a very strong desire to disengage from most everything. Work went fine. I was still doing a grade-A job there. And I think in a sense that became its own little cathartic area, if you will. But in terms of my wife, in particular, I was *very disengaging*. And I became highly insecure as I related to her, for no reason whatsoever. And not any reason you might think, like, "You're separated, and so maybe someone was unfaithful." It wasn't that type of insecurity. Just very bizarre. . . . And it was fairly persistent. And so my response was instead of ever getting angry or yelling at anybody, I just disengaged. I didn't want to spend time with them, I'd read a book, I'd do some writing or something like that. . . . I'd say I now have a higher need for privacy and alone-time than I used to."

The disengagement may have seemed unfamiliar and "bizarre," but Goepner had been exposed to this kind of afterwar during much of his

childhood. He told me about his beloved and much admired grandfather, a German soldier who served for six years during World War II and then emigrated to the United States. War left its mark on his "Opa's" soul and bearing: There was always a "steady tension" in his face, he said, and "no ability to cry anymore." But what Goepner remembered most was how his grandfather had retreated: "There would be a week that would go by and he would literally not say two words to my grandmother. She endured quite a bit of pain as a result of his pain." If times had been different, she confided to Goepner one day, she would have definitely left his Opa. "It was just too hard" to live with someone so emotionally disengaged. Goepner doesn't want to relive that part of a soldier's life.

Steady tension and disengagement may keep in check the display of anger and resentment, but the feelings can still brew. In the example in the beginning of this chapter—of the vet who turns to the civilian and says, "Don't just tell me 'Thank you for your service'; first say, 'please'"—the display of resentment comes to the surface, and the moral invocation to another, in second-personal address, is overt. Still, the "you" who is addressed is not really the civilian whom the veteran happens to be talking to but, rather, a generic civilian, a "personation" for a group, a stand-in for civilians who haven't served or who are not part of military families that have recently served or who haven't felt the pinch of war through war rationing or lifestyle changes. ("They've been shopping at the mall while we've been at war," as some have said to me.) It is a heterogeneous group of U.S. citizens who may include one-time war supporters or dissenters, politically active or inactive citizens, and those with varying degrees of engagement in veteran outreach efforts.

Assigning responsibility in light of group membership is messy here, and messy in general. Philosophically, the topic touches on a host of extremely thorny issues some to do with complicity and group identification. Focus on these issues would distract and take us down too many winding roads. Still, I mention the point to underscore that reactive attitudes can have a wide address, with the appropriate target not just persons, but persons whose relevant status is as members of specific groups and, in the case at hand, non-serving fellow citizens. This is important for understanding the

military-civilian exchange. It's second-personal address, but also at times impersonal. And the fact that it can be impersonal, addressed to *you* as the civilian from *you* as the service member, puts each of us in a box that can alienate and further complicate and strain any reconciliation. The work of emotional communication becomes all the more critical, as we shall soon see.

We are beginning with tensions, rifts, feelings of being misunderstood and not given one's due, as a soldier or as a veteran, as one who has served honorably or, in some cases, less than honorably. In those latter cases brought to attention of late, bad conduct caused by the strain of war can result in carrying "bad paper" (a dishonorable discharge), which cuts one out of the benefits, jobs, education, housing, or medical and mental health care due a veteran. The punishment can be severe, deeply inequitable, and cause the bitterest sort of resentment.

But before we probe veteran resentment and the conciliatory work of a civilian "Thank you for your service," a few general remarks about the current military-civilian gap are in order.

The gap is, no doubt, exacerbated by the fact that we are not in an era of conscription. Less than 1 percent of the population served in the armed forces during the recent wars. And we don't have general requirements for universal national service; examples of selfless service to causes larger than oneself don't abound. I am not advocating for universal national service, nor do I have good ideas about how it could be instituted in a way that doesn't replicate the Vietnam era inequities of conscription, or that doesn't undermine national labor markets and employment growth. Thankfully, that is not my task. But the absence of a generalized obligation to serve one's nation does isolate, and at times over-idealize, the military as a special group that serves and sacrifices. And it contributes to a sense of us vs. them moral tribalism. That isolation is no doubt exacerbated by the fact that not only do the military typically deploy to remote places, but once they are back state-side, they often live in isolated bases, away from major metropolitan hubs and civilian networks. Remote bases are, in a way, "inside the wire," in places like Fort Hood, Fort Bragg, Camp LeJeune, Fort Lewis-McChord, and so on. These are not destinations for civilians who don't already have military

connections. And so the encamped mentality persists, with little mingling and with an entrenched sense of distance.

Congress is also disengaged in its own way, with a historic underrepresentation of veterans within its ranks. As I write, only 20 percent of Congress's members are veterans, compared to more than 75 percent in the post Vietnam era. This may help explain the absence of a sense of camaraderie within the halls of Congress, but it also mirrors, at an institutional level, a public distance and disengagement from the veteran experience. These are impressionistic remarks, but they indicate the gap many of us see and feel, as well as the desire to narrow it and the belief that we ought to do that.

There is a further element in the moral background that is never far from us, and that is the legacy of Vietnam. "Thank you for your service" is a national reaction to a past negative reaction. Speak to many Vietnam vets to this day and they will tell you how demeaned they felt when they got off planes and how reluctant they were to wear uniforms in public places, especially near academic campuses. Take Paul Baffico, whom we met earlier. He was an ROTC graduate, class of 1968, the University of San Francisco, who couldn't bring himself to burn his draft card, and so he headed to Vietnam without believing in the war or its conduct. Over the course of six months, as a communications platoon leader, changing out equipment and personnel every three or four days, he faced 206 combat assaults and lost five of his men. Some of his assignments were "suicide" missions, he said, dropping off one kid, and then another, and another by helicopter in firebases (essentially artillery bases) that were entrenched enemy encampments. In one case, Baffico dropped Ken Luttle, Dennis Borhman, and Bob Woodall, "at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and four o'clock in the morning Ken and Dennis were dead, and Bob was seriously wounded. The place was overrun with the enemy."

"Why did I pick them for the mission? Why didn't I have the courage to stay with them? That haunts me. Forever." Paul carried that guilt off the plane when he came back from Vietnam on a commercial flight to Travis Airport, just south of Sacramento. When they landed, a crewmember gave him specific disembarkation orders: "When you get off the plane, there will be a yellow stripe on the ground down the stairs and on the tarmac. Stay on the yellow stripe. *Do not deviate. Do not engage anybody.* That stripe is going

to lead you through a cyclone fence tunnel, and it will put you into the terminal. Your family will be waiting for you on the other side of the terminal."

"Sure enough, through the tunnel all the protesters [were] there, and they were jeering and booing, paint thrown on you, spitting water." Paul Baffico was in his tropical weight khakis. That was his welcome home. "My defense mechanism was, 'It don't mean nothing. I'm going to stay encased, and I'm going to keep all that. And I'm going to move on. My drug of choice? It was work.'"

From my conversations with many Vietnam veterans and dissidents of my generation, this homecoming was not atypical. Public dishonor was thrown onto many who already felt profound private moral ambivalence. Resistance to a war turned into antipathy toward its warriors. The homecoming left abiding scars on both sides. The residue within us is "Thank you for your service."

RESENTMENT AND GRATITUDE

We've been probing the feelings of resentment and grievance that underlie the sort of remark that opened the chapter: "Don't just tell me 'Thank you for my service.' First say, 'Please.'" Philosophers, since at least the time of Bishop Butler's famous sermons in the Rolls Chapel in London in the 1720s, have reflected on the ubiquity of resentment and how, in particular, *moral* resentment (of the sort felt when one suffers a moral injury) can have warrant, even if the feeling puts one at odds, as Butler worried, with a Christian command to love our enemies. The warrant has to do with the importance of voicing moral outrage and of bringing a community together in that outrage, where moral protest and the demand for justice are distinct from vengeance and acts of payback and revenge. Given the strength and prevalence of feelings of resentment in many veterans who are transitioning home, it's worth pausing for a moment to explore the structure and content of that resentment and examine how attempts to allay it in explicit expressions of gratitude, such as "Thank you for your service," might be appropriate responses.

Resentment is a reactive anger grounded in a belief, thought, or perception of being wrongly injured by another. The emotion is *about* objects and

states of affairs in the world. In this way, it is different from a mental state like anxiety or edginess, where we do not know what we are anxious or edgy about, and we may not be anxious or edgy *about* anything at all. Put otherwise, anger *represents* something: that someone unjustly wronged us. In the cases we are interested in, there is the implicit complaint that civilian fellow citizens, or some subset of them, fail to assume an adequate degree of moral responsibility for the wars that they (indirectly and directly) help wage, and for the afterwar—the arduous veteran recovery that follows in the wake of going to war. How one assumes and accepts moral responsibility is often a vague and varied matter. But at very least, it seems to have to do with *backward-looking responsibility*, or accepting some accountability for action taken, and *forward-looking responsibility*, or accepting some accountability to another for future restoration or repair.

What is the specific grievance being aired in the veteran vignette with which this chapter began? I am pretty sure that the veteran who says “Don’t just tell me ‘Thank you.’ First say ‘Please.’” is not reproaching the civilian for bad manners, like picking her nose in public or using a dessert fork for the entrée instead of a dinner fork. The demand for “Please” here is not about etiquette, any more than is the expectation for what is conveyed in a “Thank you for your service.”

Expressed gratitude in the form of a “Thank you” is due another because she has benefitted or served you in some way or, more paradigmatically, because she has gone above and beyond the minimal requirements due you. I suspect that this latter idea comes closer to the work of gratitude. In saying “Thank you” to a service member, we are recognizing another for service to the community that involves considerable risk-taking and sacrifice at its vocational core. Of course, soldiers have a contractual obligation to accept a certain amount of risk. “It’s a job,” as an officer friend is fond of reminding me—“for which there is compensation,” he adds. But I suspect that accepting risk is often motivated by professional honor and not just consent to a role; and it is, in part, that *motivation* that we in principle are crediting in our expressions of gratitude. We are recognizing character—courage tied to public service—even if somewhat abstractly. We see the combat fatigues in an airport, and we honor an individual as a group member, with some notion in mind about where she has been or will return to. Civilians and service

members both wear their group identities in the interaction. They represent their groups and they engage in a ritual that each tacitly recognizes, whether or not they fully endorse it.

The eighteenth-century German Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant can help here. Gratitude, he insists, is more a matter of morals than of manners. Specifically, it is an expression of respect toward another person and the reciprocation of the goodwill that the person has shown, either directly or indirectly, through some deed. In showing gratitude, we are letting another know that we are not taking for granted her assistance, even when it is due; or, as in the present case, when it involves great risk or hardship that was accepted willingly. The reciprocity may not be especially robust in the sense of trading places, in fact or fancy. A civilian may say “Thank you” sincerely, yet with an unspoken sense of relief—*I am glad it’s not my child returning from war*—or without much empathic energy going into imagining what it would be like to wear full-body armor in 110 degree weather, carrying an eighty-pound pack through booby-trapped terrain.

Still, Kant emphasizes the “appreciativeness” that pre-exists the giving of gratitude or that comes to be cultivated through it. The gratitude is itself a moment in gift giving; one is “to accept the occasion for gratitude” as itself an occasion for giving “a moral kindness”; it is “an opportunity . . . to combine *sensitivity* to others’ benevolence with the *cordiality* of a benevolent attitude of will, and so to cultivate one’s love of man.” Put otherwise, gratitude is part of a mutual transaction of service and benefaction that builds community and fosters mutual respect and a sense of humanity. All this is critical for soldiers and civilians as they work to convoke a community and morally re-engage with one another at home. Kant wisely warns that genuine gratitude does not manipulate indebtedness for future service: gratitude “is not a mere *prudential* maxim of encouraging another to show me *further* beneficence by attesting my indebtedness to him for a past kindness . . .; for in such a maxim I use him merely as a means to my further purposes.”

Again, there is a crucial lesson here for us. Soldiers can rightly feel “used,” sacrificial, exploited by their nation-states or leaders, when gratitude is merely instrumental, for the sake of getting them to renew their service, or takes for granted their participation. Here I hear the words of Fitzroy

Newsum, a Tuskegee Airman who served in World War II and received the Congressional Medal of Honor. He recalled an exchange at a speaking tour: "A young white man came up to me and thanked me for serving our country. 'Are you including me when you say, "our country?"' I asked."

Worries about morally dubious or thin gratitude are background to the polemical "Please" in our opening vignette: Don't take for granted my service. Don't be cavalier in a call to arms. Take greater responsibility for the wars that our country wages. You, as a citizen, through public debate and an electoral process, through taxes and lobbying, through your military contracts and civilian defense work, are partially responsible for sending me to war, keeping me at war, and integrating me into the workforce when I come home. You are morally obligated to assume some ownership for that participation, even if not for my particular conduct within a war.

The imagined dialogue I've just given vividly captures the notion I will appeal to often in this book; it expresses the reactive attitudes, such as resentment, that call another to account with the implicit expectation or demand of a reply to that call: "Hey, there, you owe me an RSVP." The presumption is of a shared moral community with expectations of mutual recognition and goodwill. To show resentment is to call out to another in response to some perceived wronging and hold him to account. In the case of returning veterans, the wronging that is the object of resentment may be more a passive than an active wronging: a perceived denial or failure to accept responsibility for one's facilitating and participatory role in the country's war activities. What hurts is that civilians appear to be free-riding, enjoying and having enjoyed for more than a decade the benefits of peace at home—economic, emotional, and material well-being—without taking on the costs of a nation at war.

SHARED MORAL RESPONSIBILITY AND LIABILITY

I have framed the question of civilian moral responsibility for war in terms of civilian participation and contribution to a war effort. That way of framing the issue embraces larger ongoing policy and includes just war theory debates

being carried out within the halls of academe and outside. A key question is: Who can be held responsible and liable for intentional harm in war? Relatedly, are there just and unjust combatants (and noncombatants) in war, where the distinction hangs on whether or not the cause of their war is just? The conceptual terrain here is fine-grained, but the discourse has engaged many young soldier-philosophers with whom I work, who have been to war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and have led troops in thickly populated civilian environments in morally trying partnerships with civilians, tribal and national soldiers, and warlords. They worry often about who the players are in war, who is liable for its harms, and to what degree. For them, these are not abstract questions any more than is the question of civilian responsibility at home for a war effort. Many of those same mid-level officers—Army and Marine and Air Force majors and Navy lieutenant commanders—are now teaching young cadets and midshipmen at West Point, the Naval Academy, and the Air Force Academy. Those students, too, especially the better ones, reflect hard on their moral responsibilities as they contemplate following orders someday to go to war and prosecute it, and to leave behind a better peace for locals. For those who teach, the lessons are still being worked out, especially in light of the massive reversals in regions where there has been so much bloodshed. In short, the issues are very much on the minds of some of the best mid-grade officers, as well as those who will follow them. In light of this, it is appropriate for us to dip a bit into the philosophical issues ourselves here.

The most prominent strand in the recent philosophical discussion is a critique of traditional just war theory, a theory championed by Michael Walzer in his famous *Just and Unjust Wars* (written in the wake of the Vietnam War). Just war theory has roots in early theological doctrine, dating back to Augustine (fourth century) and Thomas Aquinas (thirteenth century), and concerns the central questions of what counts as a just cause for going to war and what counts as just conduct in its prosecution. In the past two decades, the philosopher Jeff McMahan has spearheaded a wide critique of Walzer, attacking the central assumption that, in just war doctrine, there is moral equality on the battlefield, irrespective of a combatant's cause. As Walzer puts the claim, all combatants have "an equal right to kill." McMahan's view,

however, is that moral justification for self-defense on the battlefield is far more restrictive and is inseparable from cause. In this regard, the permissions and justifications for killing people in war become like those in other contexts of individual self-defense. The proposal is radical, and a full examination of the issues would take us far afield. But one small aspect of the debate sheds important light on the issue of returning soldiers' resentment at civilians for not taking more seriously their own accountability for war. And it is worth turning to that briefly.

One way to enter the debate, as one philosopher has, is to think about different degrees of moral responsibility. Someone is morally responsible in the *weak* sense if he or she causes a wrongful harm, but is not, strictly speaking, culpable for it (perhaps he or she caused this harm without meaning to). Someone is morally responsible in the *strong* sense, by contrast, if he or she causes a wrongful harm and is culpable for it, such that he or she deserves praise or blame. To be culpable, one must typically, though not necessarily, understand that the action is right or wrong and perform it freely.

Suppose that a military operation goes awry and that several noncombatants are caught in the crossfire. Who is responsible for their deaths? In the strong sense of moral responsibility, it may be that no one is responsible. Even the soldiers who pulled the trigger did not knowingly and intentionally kill these noncombatants, and thus they arguably lack culpability. In the weak sense of moral responsibility, on the other hand, it may be that many, many people are responsible—even the taxpayers who financed the military operation are linked in the causal chain leading up to this harm.

Thus, weak moral responsibility—being enablers and causers and facilitators of wrongful harm without being strictly culpable—characterizes many combatants and noncombatants alike. It is not a salient moral marker that distinguishes combatant from noncombatant. So, some combatants may not fire their arms out of reluctance to kill, yet their very presence on the battlefield, armed as they are and standing as a part of the forces, may contribute to the war effort by detracting an enemy from taking out a more lethal threat. Similarly, noncombatants may make causal contributions to the course of a war in a multitude of individually unnecessary ways. If weak moral responsibility is all it takes to become liable for war's killing, then too many

noncombatants would become permissible targets in an all-out total war. They'd be sucked into the "liability net": "Many noncombatants... make small, individually unnecessary contributions to their side's ability to wage the war, both directly and indirectly. Direct contributions include paying taxes that fund the war, supplying military necessities, voting, supporting the war, giving it legitimacy, so attracting further support from others, and bringing up and motivating the sons and daughters who do the fighting. Indirect contributions include the ways they have built the state's capacity over previous years, giving it the strength and support to concentrate on war, and contributions they have made to the fighting capacities of specific combatants: the math teacher, for example, who imparts skills to a student, later necessary to his role as a gunner; the mother who brings up a strong, lethal son.... In the modern state, almost everyone contributes to the capacity of our government to act—all the more so in democracies. Though our contributions are individually small and unnecessary, that does nothing to distinguish us from... [some] combatants.... If their causal contributions cross the liability threshold, then so do ours."

The point is highly relevant to the sort of resentment soldiers express in the cases we've been considering. When soldiers suggest that their fellow civilians aren't shouldering their share of the moral burdens of war, I doubt most mean that, in general, civilians' moral responsibility is such that civilians should fall within the liability net of war's intentional or collateral harms—that they should have skin in the game in that way. Moreover, as a background point, I strongly doubt most would even view liability to attack in war as itself based on moral responsibility for cause, whether minimal or maximal. Most soldiers implicitly hold the traditional view (which Walzer articulates) of the moral equality of combatants on the battlefield—that combatants are liable for military attack, irrespective of their cause. What they are morally responsible for is their individual conduct, and specifically for fighting in ways that are discriminate and that minimize collateral damage to noncombatants.

Some version of this traditional view seems reasonable, and I shall assume that here for reasons others have argued for well: the hurdles for determining justice in the cause for war are extremely high, given the contentiousness of

academic theories of just war, the interpretive complexities of international war conventions, and the obscurity and unavailability of many nonmoral facts relevant to the battlefield. Moreover, the justification for wars may simply not be available when soldiers are deployed and required to serve. For it is only after the fact that knowledge affecting the justification of a war, such as the proportionality of violence to good accomplished, can be assessed. Predictions are limited and often wrong. And even if we could predict fairly accurately the future outcomes, proportionality typically involves weighing incommensurable goods. It is unreasonable to expect ordinary soldiers to have knowledge that simply may not be determinate or available. The same, it might be argued, holds for the ordinary citizenry.

Still this line of reasoning won't assuage many soldiers who feel that civilians can and should take greater responsibility than they often do for both indirect and direct support of wars that are botched, imprudent, or only dubiously just. And they may reasonably and implicitly feel that, however difficult it is to determine the justness of a cause, civilians are often better situated to investigate the cause, and are morally and politically able to protest appropriately. Furthermore, civilians are not subject to the constraints that service members face—the punitive consequences of selective conscientious refusal, the shame of abandoning fellow service members who have come to be family, the guilt of vacating national defense when an investment has been made in their training at great taxpayer's expense. Civilians are proxies for service members in important ways, and their position gives them certain advantages and responsibilities, as well as incurs costs. Those expanded responsibilities may not be an argument for pulling civilians into the battlefield and incurring its liabilities, but it does suggest the need to look for other ways of accepting responsibility that are both backward looking and, more important, forward looking—and that may better represent the nature of our *shared* moral responsibility. To put the point differently, civilians may not be *liable* for the harms combatants face, but they are nonetheless *responsible* to combatants for the harms they suffer in defending the nation.

There is an additional worry in thinking about causal contributions to war that would pull civilians into the liabilities of the battlefield. And that is that it is just too individualistic a measure for understanding the real nature

of owning and accepting shared moral responsibility in a country's collective projects, such as its military interventions. The point about *shared* moral responsibility doesn't have to rely on abstract notions of collective agents or psychologized notions of group identity that suggest strongly felt nationalistic and tribalistic feelings. One philosopher and legal scholar has argued in important recent work that the very nature of certain kinds of group membership, including that of nation-state citizen, may itself ground certain normative expectations of shared responsibility and obligation. And that sense of shared responsibility may hold even when citizens do not directly participate in an activity—in our case, go to war, or support it, or materially contribute to its prosecution.

I leave it to others to develop that philosophical argument. For now I want to embrace the conclusion: civilian gratitude expressed toward service members is a token acceptance of that shared responsibility and accountability for sending fellow citizens to war, independent of specific causal contributions to war activity or to its support. Saying "Thank you" is a way we civilians acknowledge and accept some responsibility for sending our sons and daughters to war and a way of acknowledging our responsibility for taking care of them when they come home.

But there is a question that nags us: How can gratitude be substantive when its expression is so trivialized in a pat, easy-to-say "Thank you"? How can that reentry ritual contribute to any kind of genuine reintegration?

Before answering, it is worth remembering the primary aim of this book: understanding the one-on-one obligations and expectations that are part of bringing soldiers home. The work is woven in the microfibers of moral communication and address—the subtle texture of individual engagements, in words and emotional tone and in body language and conduct, that convey our moral regard for each other and our responsibilities as members of a shared community. These engagements, right down to the feel and quality of the exchange, are a critical part of moral healing and moral repair. And so we need to understand the kinds of engagements that go into recognizing service through gratitude, placing hope in others and in ourselves; counting on ourselves and others through overtures of trust and returned assurances; and letting go of paralyzing shame and guilt by addressing the accused self with

empathy, compassion, and imagination for a brighter future. All this takes place in interpersonal and intrapersonal moral (or, more broadly, normative) space. It is part of our sacred obligation to those who serve.

Of course, healing after war is a nation's work, driven by enlightened institutions and policies, tax dollars and allocations, governmental and nongovernmental agencies. A veteran's embrace of life after war—in some cases, choosing life—is impossible without state-of-the-art medical and mental healthcare and research, expanded veterans education and training opportunities, nonpredatory housing loans, and meaningful work. And, too, there has to be adequate care, education, and job opportunities for military spouses, who have vicariously gone to war for over a decade by struggling to keep up the home front. And there are the special needs of many military children who have been strained by years of separation from one or both military parents, and the stress of living with fear and uncertainty. All this is part of reintegration and repair at the macro (and, we might say, mezzo or mid-) level. It would be hard to imagine effective one-on-one engagement without robust institutional programs at all levels, as well as careful monitoring of their efficacy.

I don't take any of this for granted. But I also don't underestimate the power of one-on-one interactions in invoking and convoking a sense of community that supports and is supported by enlightened policy.

THE MANAGED "THANK YOU"

We hear "Thank you for your service" in airports and planes, on Veterans Day and Memorial Day. The practice can seem hollow, mechanical, and rote. Whether service member or civilian, it's easy to be cynical. But the distinctions here are too coarse, and the idea that emotional expression should show exactly what is felt is too simple.

We manage our emotional expressions in all sorts of ways—we suppress tears, coax a smile, prevent a face of disgust from taking over our demeanor. In short, we are used to exerting "emotional labor." But the military case is fraught precisely because of the resentment (and reciprocally, the guilt) that

can be an undercurrent in the exchange. Even if we are used to illusion in our emotion performances, when there is a perception of inequity or entitlement, the illusion grates and we beg for some emotional honesty. In cases of consequence—namely, a nation's regard for its soldiers—there is little honor in the illusion if neither side moves beyond a ritualistic volley of pat phrases. This volley resets the rift and likely widens the misunderstandings.

Consider the case of Phil Carter, the National Veterans Director in the first Obama presidential campaign and now counsel at the Washington think tank Center for New American Security (CNAS), focusing on the reintegration of veterans. Carter served nine years as an Army military police and civil affairs officer, including a year in Iraq, where he advised the provincial police, judiciary, and prisons in Diyala Province. In an opinion piece that appeared on Veterans Day in the *Washington Post*, Carter spoke candidly about the resentment he felt toward civilians upon coming home from Iraq in the spring of 2006. The "Thank you's" and "hero" labels rang hollow in light of what he had left behind: "Thousands of Iraqis ... dying each month in a hellish civil war. If we were really heroes, why was the war in Iraq going so badly?" He was alienated and withdrew from civilians: "I ... resented the strangers who thanked me. I suspected that they were just trying to ease their guilt for not serving. Instead of thanking me, I wanted them ... to make some sacrifice greater than the amount of lung effort necessary to utter a few words." Words were cheap and action was dear, especially the sort of action he valued as a military person.

He pushed away his family, tightening his web of trust to a near exclusive circle of veterans. There he found mutual trustworthiness rooted, likely, in the mechanisms that often inspire trusting attitudes: a sense of shared loyalty, a presumption of virtue or goodness in those one trusts, and a belief that trust is to everyone's mutual advantage. With veterans, he didn't need to take much of a gamble: trust was easy. Many veterans feel similarly. And the assumption that those trust mechanisms will always be in place is at the heart of many support groups, formal and informal, as well as the drinks that veterans have shared with each other over the years. (I know veterans who will go out for a beer almost exclusively with fellow veterans because they

know that, if one drink too many should lead to a flashback, another veteran will be there who understands.)

I explore trust in a later chapter, in addition to the challenges of expanding trust circles. But for now, we note the messy and unspoken emotional subterrain that can underlie a perfunctory "Thank you." There is the nagging sense, often private but felt by both sides, that more needs to be said—just not here and just not now. There is the worry on the part of the "Thank You-er" that she might seem meddlesome if she asks more, or cold if she keeps the exchange formal, or superficial if she utters a pat expression that doesn't convey her true feelings; that she may feel upset about the hardships of the tours, doubtful about whether the sacrifices have been worth it, skeptical about whether twelve years of war have reduced the threat of either radical Islamism or terrorism, or given real hope to failed states or the means for reversing new insurgencies. The worry is not whether civilians will go back to receiving veterans the way they did after the Vietnam War. It is whether the gratitude ritual can ever be more than just a "thin crust of display." Can it function as overture to a more satisfying form of moral address and recognition? Can it do substantive work to bring the sides closer?

The provocative remark that opened this chapter expresses these demands or, more loosely, the normative expectations. I presume in this case the veteran was not only expressing resentment but also feeling it. His remarks *announced* his angry feelings. They were evidence of it; in a loose sense, his resentment became perceptible through his words. Emotional expressions often reveal underlying, corresponding emotional states; they don't always, but when they do, they do far more than that. They are pieces of conduct, emotional interactions that can be untethered from their matching inner states. When the drill sergeant screams at his recruits, he may not really be angry; he may be using anger behavior to motivate and achieve specific ends. The point is one Cicero and Seneca routinely make in discussing motivational techniques in oratory. The orator may need to show "the guise of doing harm," says Seneca, in order to inspire fear in his audience. Real anger is never to be encouraged, on Seneca's Stoic view, for it disarms control; but it can be *performed* strategically: "Anger can never be permitted though it may sometimes be simulated if the sluggish minds of the audience are to be aroused."

Emotional posturing, demeanor, and mien are critical aspects of oratory, and more generally, of "interaction rituals" in daily life, as the great sociologist Erving Goffman famously taught in a similar vein. We are emotional performers, on stage and off. We have audiences, real and implicit, including ourselves. Verbal intonation, dynamics, facial and body gestures, open and closed body positions toward those we address, and body distance all are constitutive elements of emotional communication: of signaling anger, delight, annoyance, and interest, as well as resentment, blame, guilt, trust, gratitude, hope, disappointment, shame, and empathy—the emotions of moral engagement, injury, and repair.

But communication involves signaling *and* receiving. And while there is some evidence that the expressive behavior for basic emotions, like anger, fear, disgust, or sadness, are the same across cultures, more nuanced emotional expressions will vary considerably across gender, cultural, ethnic, national, and linguistic groups, with some also idiosyncratic to individuals or families. And different emotional styles can pose obvious interpretive challenges. "Emotional communities" can challenge broad, inter-group communication. Yet even if we have to work sometimes to successfully convey and recognize others' messages, we do so all the time. There are attunements and misattunements, communications and miscommunications, signalings and resignalings, receivings and re-receivings. "Thank you for your service" and "You're welcome" represents just one emotional performance among thousands that we engage in and decode.

So, in what sense is this ritual more than a "thin crust of display"? What kind of richer content might it have? What are some of the possibilities implicit in our performance?

When a civilian says "Thank you for your service," he may be addressing his remark *to* a service member, but it's made before a larger real or imagined audience of which he is a part and before whom he is modeling his behavior. He's signaling a norm and conveying a shared (or what he thinks should be a shared) response. The basic idea borrows from early developmental literature on *social referencing* and on observations of how young children assess target objects: Should they be scared or comforted by the new person who walks into the room? Children look, or "refer," to their parents (or caregivers) to

read their faces and see how they comport themselves before the stranger. They then regulate their emotions by reference to the parents' reactions. We adults continue with this practice, checking others' faces and emotional behaviors to gauge how we should react, looking for cues from others about the norms of engagement. As addresser, we can intentionally send messages to third parties, both by what we say and how we say it or behave; other times, that is not our direct intent, though we are aware that we are signaling and do little to make the display private.

I think some of this is going on in civilian "Thank you's" to military members. We civilians are addressing our gratitude *to* the military, but we are also modeling *before* the fellow civilians whom we stand for or with. We are saying "Thank you" on their behalf. The display is a public enactment and recommendation of a norm. Again, the parenting model has some purchase. For instance, I may indirectly signal to my husband through my emotional reaction how I think *he* should be reacting to our children's behavior at the table. I'm modeling what I think "we" should do, and I'm hoping he shows solidarity. This is a way of thinking about a *shared* reactive attitude: it is addressed *to* another but *for* others (and *on behalf of* others) whom we regard as teammates and partners committed to underlying group values. We are doing some of this when we thank soldiers for their service. Our show of gratitude shows *others* how to respond. That's one substantive role of the ritual.

But a second role is that in *showing* gratitude, we ourselves come to *feel* gratitude. The idea is again familiar: we nurse our hearts from outside in. Kant urges us not to be put off by these enactments: "Men are, one and all, actors—the more so the more civilized they are. They put on a show of affection, respect for others, modesty and disinterest without deceiving anyone, since it is generally understood that they are not sincere about it. And it a very good thing that this happens in the world. For if men keep on playing these roles, the real virtues whose semblance they have merely been affecting for a long time are gradually aroused and pass into their attitude of will."

The remarks shed light on Kant's Pietism and his concern with what's inner—in this case, inner feeling promoted through outer "aesthetic." Charges of inauthenticity, of faking it, get dispelled once one appreciates that display can be constitutive of character formation. We take on the

benevolent feel of a smile by practicing smiling, Kant reminds us (we now know that there is some physiological evidence for this in the notion of efferent bio-feedback loops): "Affability, sociability, courtesy, hospitality, and gentleness" may be "small change," he concedes. "Yet they promote the feeling for virtue itself by [arousing] a striving to bring this illusion as near as possible to the truth."

It may well be that at times surface acting leads only to more convincing acting. But it seems plausible that it can also lead to deeper acting that involves deeper engagement, vulnerability, and authenticity. The managed "thank you" becomes an occasion for stabilizing genuine and reliable gratitude. And if Kant is right, we don't necessarily undermine the aimed-for uptake of our remarks when those who are targeted recognize we are engaged in a performance ritual: we all know we role-play at times and that a way of *becoming* is by *doing*. There is tacit acceptance of the point. Goffman gives a contemporary gloss to Kant's point: "Regard is something" an individual "knows enough about what to feign on occasion"; in turn, the recipient of that regard knows not "to steal information" that goes too deeply behind the façade.

So far we've indicated two ways even a routinized "Thank you for your service" can do substantive moral work: First, through a ritual display of gratitude, we *model behavior* and *instate a norm* in a public way. Second, the performance is a way to *manage* our hearts and at the same time *teach it* how to feel differently.

A third function of the ritual is more straightforward and basic to both of the above cases. In thanking you, I am engaging you in *second-personal address*, as philosophers put it. I am calling out to you that you have met expectations or exceeded them. I show approval or recognition through my gratitude. And that address can itself take two forms. The performance may be disclosive: I am *showing* what I now feel. I *avow* my heart and its truth. But my expression may also be a sign for something else—that I am expressing interest and opening a door for future interaction.

All this has relevance to the "Thank you" rituals we civilians find ourselves engaged in with veterans. The address may be emotional performance, but the performance does moral work—that we lock eyes, show

interest, listen, and, in the best case, take the outreach and connect to the next step.

In all this, the basic worry really is: How do we impose costs on civilian "Thank you's"? That was Phil Carter's worry. It seems too cheap. I'm suggesting that we go beyond a cheap aesthetic when we willingly engage in an ongoing dialogue with a veteran and that we recommend and model that commitment for others. Moreover, it's likely that if we incur that cost, we do so because we truly feel gratitude, whatever else we may believe about a war and its cause. But we also are likely to deepen our gratitude and make more concrete our appreciation through the engagement. Emotional attitudes are rarely pristine, well-formed states that we simply turn inside out; even when we do *show* our heart, it's through nuanced conduct that shapes our mental state in the very outing.

PEACE GIFTS OF WEAPONS

Resentment, as has been said in this chapter, is about past injury, holding someone to account for a past harm, whether apparent or intentional. You step on my toe; I hold you to account. There is no point in my demanding that you undo that step; it's done. It is a fantasy of sorts to replay the tape differently, even if that is often how we satisfy our wishes for respect and redress. Resentment gets answered, constructively, in part, through assurances about the future, about one's own future treatment but also treatment of others like oneself. Indeed, for many soldiers, the assurance wanted most is that future generations of soldiers will not be subject to the same sense of betrayal when fighting imprudent, unjust, or unnecessary wars. But, of course, that is an abstract aspiration, addressed at an indeterminate group of political and civilian leaders who may or may not be able to shape political will, now or in the future. Moreover, the kinds of assurance wanted—that wars will be justified on moral or even prudential grounds—may simply not be available when troops are deployed. As a result, deep resentments may fester, and veterans may become re-traumatized as they live through new wars that they believe are unjustified

or unnecessary, and they watch a new generation of veterans—some their own sons and daughters—come home, or not come home. The sense of anger, helplessness, and futility gets refueled: new afterwars rekindle old ones. Not surprisingly, the kind of trust and assurance that can often salve deep disillusionment may come not top-down—from the promises of civilian and military leaders—but, rather, from the bottom up, in one-on-one engagements that build interpersonal connections and develop a sense of being understood.

In this vein, consider a case that a psychiatrist friend, Sam Goodman, shared with me, involving a Vietnam veteran he saw some forty years ago. Sam served during the Vietnam War as an Army psychiatrist, although he treated this patient after he was out of service. He was reminded of him as we talked about a new generation of soldiers transitioning home.

The soldier, call him "Bill," entered Vietnam early at the encouragement of his father, who regarded it a patriotic act. Bill rose fast to become a sergeant and an exemplary leader who cared deeply for the lives of his troops. "This guy won my heart," said Sam. "He was a wonderful man."

Bill later became a Green Beret, slipping through enemy lines as part of President Nixon's secret war in Cambodia. In the stealth of the night, Bill would leave his lethal mark on many an enemy sentinel, slitting the guard's throat while others were asleep, as a calling card of what might come. In one intimate, deadly encounter, Bill was pinned down, but managed to pull out a concealed knife and stab the enemy fatally in the chest. The corpse fell on him, with Bill remaining perfectly still so as not to awake others, himself corpse-like under its dead weight for over an hour. In that hour, Sam said, Bill savored "the sense of peace" in knowing how close he was to the enemy and almost dead, yet alive, the victor in this battle.

But that sense of peace or victory wasn't to last. Bill came home profoundly disillusioned, regretting his war, feeling suckered by the Army, and angry that he was fooled into thinking that his service was patriotic. After a violent car accident, frequent panic attacks, self-medication with alcohol, and a search for redemptive meaning through religion and pacifism, Bill came to Sam, whom he saw for four years, twice a week, in face-to-face psychotherapy, in conjunction with anti-depressant drug

therapy: "I'd say he responded very deeply to the therapy, but his depression remained."

What marked the therapy is that for four years, "Bill was so very, very engaged in telling his story and having his story understood" by Sam, as a proxy for others. In the final session of their time together, in deep gratitude, Bill bequeathed Sam a peace gift of weapons—a bazooka and a gun that had been disarmed and were no longer utilizable: "Give them to your children," he said, "and tell them never to use them." The sadness, said Sam, is that in Bill's own eyes, "he was a murderer," whose deeds in war were ultimately unjustified. The depression was, in part, his unrelieved guilt and grief at being caught in that untenable position.

Bill's self-loathing mixed with raging resentment toward those whom he believed aided and abetted his becoming a murderer. Sam, himself, often feared for his life: "I was always very cautious about making him too angry, and at times my blood ran cold when I realized that he could kill me without a weapon at any time—a completely foreign idea under any other of my life circumstances. The work involved this fear that he had at all times that he could, if made angry, kill again or he could kill those responsible for his being in the war."

This is an extreme story of resentment, indeed vengeance, but not an unfamiliar legacy of the war in Vietnam. The story of the most recent two wars is still being written, though views of them are taking shape. The war in Iraq is now considered by many to have been fought for an unjust cause and based on false information and faulty reasoning. Even if not viewed as unjust, many see it as an unnecessary and optional war. And it is a war that has not left a better peace; rather, it has reignited war in a failed state. And the war in Afghanistan, while widely viewed at its inception as "the good war" and a just defense in response to domestic attack, has, over twelve years later, left many soldiers wondering whether their efforts were ultimately worth it; whether their mission of wooing tribal populations away from the Taliban and establishing a stable, U.S.-supported government, with its own economic and political infrastructure, was any way achievable or laudable, versus the kind of end that demands a traditional ground war where we "defeat" an enemy. This is the political backdrop for individual soldiers' resentment, even when

those soldiers are volunteers who often feel great pride in their service, loyalty to their comrades, and have identities and personal ideals tightly wrapped up with their service in the military.

RESENTMENT'S BID FOR RESPECT

In light of Sam's vignette about Bill, it is all too tempting to think of resentment as essentially defensive anger, a "brandishing of emotional arms." Sam feels fear, he's "cautious," often on guard. Bill's resentment is murderous; it feels that he could still kill, with or without weapons. The resentment is displaced, in this case, on a near-to-hand object. Sam is the replacement target for some ill-defined generic, a fellow citizen-injurer.

In his *Fifteen Sermons*, Bishop Butler articulates this notion of resentment as defensive anger in his classic sermon on resentment, mentioned earlier: resentment is "a weapon against injury, injustice, and cruelty." It is retaliation against "one who has been in a moral sense injurious" to ourselves. Nietzsche, in a similar spirit, roots the morality system for compensation and blame in what he famously names the revenge impulse to *ressentiment*—a "reactive *pathos*," "a yearning ... to anaesthetize pain" through vengeful emotion. Nietzschean *ressentiment* is perhaps better thought of as a perversion of resentment, a "squint" and grudge, malice and spite that last too long. It is the morality of the enslaved and inferior, he tells us, and it needs to be overcome. The point echoes Seneca's views in *On Anger*, in which he paints a graphic picture of the depravity of revenge feelings.

But resentment in general, and the practice its expression mediates of holding another to account, is often too narrowly conceived as essentially retaliatory—a return of disrespect with disrespect, a retributive tit for tat. That is one manifestation, but the underlying notion is broader and not, at its core, belligerence or bullying. Resentment, at its most basic, is a bid for respect, a demand of the person who caused the injury, or who contributed significantly, to acknowledge one's standing. One prominent contemporary philosopher reconstructs a version of the sentiment in just this way: "These circumstances can give rise, in the victim or in someone else on behalf of the

victim, to a very special fantasy of retrospective prevention. As victim, I have a fantasy of inserting into the agent an acknowledgement of me, to take the place of exactly the act that harmed me. I want to think that he might have acknowledged me, that he might have been prevented from harming me."

Blame (or more precisely, as this writer puts it, "focused blame" for culpability, and not simply causal agency) "asks for acknowledgement." In general, it takes seriously the other's person's deliberative process in something of the way that offering advice does, but in retrospect, not prospect: It "involves treating the person who is blamed like someone who had a reason to do the right thing but did not do it." So although resentment cannot *demand* that the other undo the past, the retrospective fantasy is more than just a wishful imagining of an alternative past. Its focus is on an *alternative deliberation*—that someone had a reason to do the right thing and didn't. And that is future-oriented; it's about how one normatively expects to be acknowledged in another's deliberations, in general and in future dealings, where there is forward-looking responsibility. We are calling attention to another's regard for us (or lack of regard) and asking for receipt and recognition of that regard in a way that may have some influence on future behavior. As such, blaming, on this view, is neither moralistic disdain nor manipulation by coercion or force. The point is not to shame or threaten another with your will—you are not brandishing your will, to bully or dominate; rather, your aim is to engage with another whom you take to have the authority and competence to *understand* your complaint, to acknowledge it, and to be guided by it in future interactions with you or others like you.

The point is one the Scottish Enlightenment philosopher Adam Smith long ago recognized: "The object ... which resentment is chiefly intent upon, is not so much to make our enemy feel pain in his turn, as to ... make him sensible that the person whom he injured did not deserve to be treated in that manner." What really enrages us, he continues, "is the little account which he seems to make of us ... that absurd self-love, by which he seems to imagine that other people may be sacrificed at any time, to his conveniency or his humor."

This is important background to further understand the resentment some veterans feel. The resentment is typically not a demand for pity or sympathy.

("Don't pity us," one four-star Army general invoked repeatedly in a keynote speech to civilians and veterans at a Georgetown Veterans Day celebration.) Nor is it necessarily a demand for empathic sharing of feeling, at least if that means access to the horrors and gore of war through vicarious arousal; many who go to war want to protect civilians from just that kind of exposure. Rather, at the core of the resentment is "a bidding to recognize ... a kind of relationship ... in which parties are responsible to each other."

That accountability of civilian to soldier is ongoing. The soldier wants assurance from civilian and military leaders and, collectively, from a nation, that they are *never just forces*, never just an asset to be used (or preserved) instrumentally as a part of military necessity in achieving missions (and continuing the fight). They are fellow citizens, with rights to life and liberty, not alienated even in fighting. And they are fellow citizens with rights to protection, not just in battling the enemy outside but also in battling the enemy within—all too vividly illustrated in the case of sexual assault within the military, which we take up in a later chapter.

And as military veterans, they have rights to live *good* lives—to the degree that is possible, given severe impairments and disability. The needs here are profound. If past wars are an indicator, the numbers with mental health issues will likely rise, with deferred onsets and delayed seeking of treatment peaking some ten to twenty years after a war ends. Recent spikes in suicide rates speak to the desperation already. And there are the staggering physical wounds, the legacy of advanced battlefield medicine that keeps soldiers alive at rates unheard of in history, but who are profoundly altered in face and limb (and altered by surgery too, as in facial cases, where forty to fifty operations may be required to keep reversing the fresh scarring that closes up orifices and makes impossible basic functioning.) The "transitioning" of soldiers after more than a decade of war is an antiseptic term that barely touches the ravages of war on those bodies and souls.

All this is to point to the hard work of building concrete moral respect for veterans in the complex and interconnected arrays of institutions public and private, at federal, state, and local levels, and combinations thereof, regarding healthcare, housing, employment, education, transportation, recreation, extended family assistance, and more. The nation's obligations to provide

veterans with the best care and the greatest means for social reintegration are strict. Foundation work and private influence, however critical, can never replace public institutions and the democratic obligations to fund them.

But building concrete moral respect also takes place at the micro level, in the fine texture of moral interactions and engagements through which we acknowledge and accept moral responsibility for each other, both within and outside larger institutional networks. Those practices of recognition constitute a critical level of social and informal institutional reality.

UNSHAKEABLE RESENTMENT

Some examples of moral injuries and reactions I have been discussing (and will go on to discuss in the pages that follow) may strike readers as not grave, however much they represent genuine tears in service members' psyches and communities. Reconciliation after mass atrocity may be a different matter. And here, letting go of grudges may be a pernicious form of "cheap grace." In such cases, resentment, and particularly Nietzsche's version of it, *ressentiment*, with its enduring "squint" of grudge, may strike us less as a perversion and more as an essential way of holding onto humanity, as the moral protest required for retaining membership in a moral community. It is what is left for moral survival when repair is not possible.

This is the view of Jean Améry, an Austrian (whose father was an assimilated Jew and mother was a Roman Catholic) who, after the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 marking his Jewish ancestry, fled to Belgium. After Belgium's occupation by the Germans, Améry was expelled as an enemy alien, interned in France, and then escaped and joined the Belgian Resistance Movement. Soon after, Améry was captured by the Nazis and tortured during his two years of internment in the camps. His memoirs, which he began writing in the mid-sixties, are a remarkable rehabilitation of *ressentiment*. They pose an argument worth considering: that reconciliation, in the case of some moral injuries, risks undoing the humanity of the victim.

I cannot take up the case here in any detail, except to consider that, when trust in a world has been so thoroughly shattered by the barbarism of other

humans, letting go of the grudge may seem a nullification of the unspeakable atrocities suffered.

After twenty years of silence, Améry began writing his essays—some of which he read on South German Radio (now a part of Southwest Broadcasting)—just after the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials and during a move within Germany, in the wake of those trials, for reconciliation. The essays, on the state of one who has been "overcome," lost, robbed of dignity and trust, are meant as a correction to policies of forgiveness and neutralization of the past from the perspective of one who cannot give up the grudge. I don't pretend competence in German history of this period, but I call attention to Améry's work simply to claim that there may be moral injuries that can't be healed and reconciliations that defy preservation of humanity.

Améry writes in the essay "Ressentiments," with explicit allusion to Nietzsche: "My personal task is to justify a psychic condition that has been condemned by moralists and psychologists alike. The former regard it as a taint, the latter as a kind of sickness. I must acknowledge it, bear the social taint, and first accept the sickness as an integrating part of my personality and then legitimize it." Améry is well aware of the cost of his resentments and its inconsistencies: "It nails everyone of us onto the cross of his ruined past." And "absurdly, it demands that the irreversible be turned around.... It desires two impossible things: regression into the past and nullification of what happened." It leans backward and forward, with the fantasy, as we might put it, that in going back, the agent of moral injury could be trusted to have acted differently, that he could have inserted into his agency "an acknowledgment of me, to take the place of exactly the act that harmed me." But Améry's humanity cannot trust this fantasy for long, in the face of the more pressing moral reality that torture imprinted on him: "The Flemish SS-man Wajs, who—inspired by his German masters—beat me on the head with a shovel handle whenever I didn't work fast enough, felt the tool to be an extension of his hand and the blows to be emanations of his psycho-physical dynamics. Only I possessed, and still possess the moral truth of the blows that even today roar in my skull, and for that reason I am entitled to judge, not only more than the culprit but also more than society—which thinks only about

its continued existence. The social body ... at the very best ... looks forward, so that such things don't happen again. But my resentments are there in order that the crime become a moral reality for the criminal, in order that he be swept into the truth of his atrocity."

Améry's point is that forward-looking healing and forgiveness may restore the *social* body and politic, but it cannot restore the body *corporel* and soul of the tortured innocent. Day and night the "moral truth of the blows" still "roar in [his] skull." Améry can't forget or forgive or move forward. He must bear witness, lest he undo the moral reality of the crime for the criminal. The passage is stunningly powerful and gives pause to the work of moral reconciliation in places where there have been genocides and systematic atrocity—in South Africa, Rwanda, Bosnia, Syria, and possibly others. I turn to Améry to remind us of limiting cases for relieving moral resentment, where there can be no possibility of moral healing, whether in the work of self-empathy, hope, or trust. The assaults of unmitigated evil erase any reasonable hope for redemption. In many of the cases we take up in this book, there are openings for hope and rapprochement. Still, the healing doesn't come easy.

OUR OWN MOVING FORWARD

We have covered much ground in this chapter, much pivoting on a phrase that symbolizes homecoming—"Thank you for your service." The phrase is unanalyzed for most of us, but said and heard, often with a sense of shrinking and denial. Do we really mean it? What are we *not* saying when we utter the words? What are our underlying obligations in sending troops to war and bringing them home? Why are we, as fellow citizens in a shared project of nation at war, not liable for war's harms? If we aren't liable for battlefield harms, then what responsibilities can be expected of us as we bring troops home? I have argued that personal, supportive engagement is critical at the fine-textured level of one-on-one emotional communication and rapport. That engagement is part of healing and recovery from war. It is part of our shared responsibility toward those who fight our wars.

I began with resentment and gratitude because they are often the starting points for our mutual interactions—or the points of blockage, the unspoken resentment and the ritualistic "Thank you." We need to get beyond that, together. And one way to begin is by exposing the practice and its implications. In what follows, I move to other emotional impasses that need relief if the healing of moral injury from war is to take place. Among them are the pounding guilt of not being able to save a buddy and the self-indictment of falling so short of what one thinks a good soldier, sailor, Marine, or wingman ought to be able to do. Here, the moral call and response are internal, but the healing depends in part on being able to tell others about the inner struggle, and in the telling others, allowing them to empathize and share some of the journey together. In that sense, *we* also are being asked to listen.



Lalo Panyagua in Marja mud hut, preparing for the surge in December 2009

CHAPTER 3



THEY'RE MY BABY BIRDS

I'M THE GUY IN CHARGE

Eduardo "Lalo" Panyagua is one of those Marines who looks just fine on the outside, just a bit rounder in his face and waist than the Marine he was eight years ago, at seventeen and a half when he enlisted. He survived the most dangerous and demanding engagements the Marines have been put through in twelve years of fighting—in Fallujah, Iraq, and in Marja, Afghanistan. And he's received his fair share of medals and honors for his service. He'll tell you that the first two deployments in Iraq were easy. He was a "new kid," spit-polished with no command responsibility. Third time round, "I'm the guy in charge." His lieutenant, a recent ROTC graduate, had not yet cut his teeth on war. He was happy to swap rank for experience. Lalo recalls their first encounter:

"Look, I know I'm in charge," the lieutenant told him. "But this is my first rodeo. You know how to get this shit done." At twenty, Lalo, war-tested and eager, found himself *de facto* in charge of a platoon of thirty-five Marines, plus fifteen Afghani National Army soldiers partnered with the unit. He was a corporal filling a sergeant's billet in a mixed armory/infantry battalion, shaping the battlefield for the surge in the Helmand Province to be unleashed in January 2010.

Lalo joined the Marines as a way out of tough gang life in the L.A. barrios that enmeshed his family and pals, and was beginning to entrap him. A scuffle at Dorsey High School landed him with a revenge threat and an after-school meeting for the deed to be delivered. He skipped out of school before day's end, and by the afternoon was enrolled in a new school. At Hollywood High, in his honors classes, he met Donna Hernandez, a dark-haired, dark-eyed, then Goth girl with street smarts and a bookish sensibility. She was an only child in a protective, traditional Mexican household, with her dad no stranger to gangs. Lalo and Donna fell in love and worked hard to hide the relationship from her parents, and from the extended family who lived across the street. But they all knew.

During his senior year, Lalo enlisted. A year later, in 2008, he headed to Iraq and the following year, Donna went to Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. On September 21, 2009, three weeks into her first semester, Lalo drove up to Washington, D.C. from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, where he was stationed after his two back-to-back tours in Iraq. He took Donna by surprise when he told her about an imminent third deployment. "On an impulse, we eloped."

"To my parents' joy," says Donna, "I did not get married to validate a pregnancy or receive military benefits." But they still weren't pleased, nor were some of her mentors at Georgetown who thought that she might be giving up her education. (I did not know Donna at this point. I met her in the fall of 2012.) A month later, Lalo was on his way to Afghanistan. And Donna was immersed in her studies and busy with a job; in her spare moments, she was tracking any news she could find about a firebase called "Fiddler's Green" in the Helmand Province.

For Lalo, the Marines almost instantly became his core and, along with Donna, his chosen family. After seven and a half years in the Corps, he will leave on medical disability with benefits that match those of someone who served for twenty years. Seven years, in and out of war, speed up the time.

As with many of the walking-wounded veterans of these wars, the injuries Lalo suffers can be hard to see, but they pile onto each other and disable. And there are psychological and moral rewoundings. He has skeletal injuries: upper and lower spine bulgings and herniated disks and nerve damage

that shoot pain down his arms and legs and that alternates with numbness. He suffers from traumatic brain injury: his short-term memory is sketchy and he has trouble remembering people's names. He gets disoriented easily, and his hearing and vision aren't what they used to be. "I'll be driving, and five minutes later I'm like, 'How the hell did I get this far?'" He is still amazed that the barrage of explosives he endured most days could wreak so much havoc on his body and soul when at the time everything seemed so intact: "I had no idea that would come from getting rocked, you know?"

He has been diagnosed with severe and chronic posttraumatic stress. He tells me he struggles with "nightmares, hypervigilance, daydreams ... flashbacks, outbursts of anger, aggressiveness, fatigue all the time. I'm tired all the time ... I daze out throughout the day." Once when Donna was traveling out of the country with a state department internship, he took to the bottle and near destroyed his liver. He's given that up. But now, under extensive care and therapy, he pops a pill per symptom and hates it, but hates going without out his meds even more.

The full onset of all the symptoms, especially the PTS and TBI, was slow. Like Josh Mantz, he felt nothing for months after returning from war. He was home on a routine cycling from Afghanistan to the Marine base at Quantico, Virginia. Life was good: he was enjoying, as he said, a "new honeymoon stage" with Donna, and was ready to leave the Marines and start his marriage for real. But he had done well in the Marines, and an offer of staying stateside at Quantico, only an hour from Georgetown, with a likely option for officer training, was too good to turn down. And so he re-upped.

The adjustment was rocky and the challenges Lalo faced in moving from battlefield to stateside base give some insight into what a homecoming can look like for hundreds of other service members. Two weeks after being in charge of nearly fifty troops in a high-risk, op-tempo, kinetic environment, Lalo found himself hunkered over a computer for eight hours a day, surrounded by both military and civilians, most of whom had not deployed. He felt out of place, unskilled and untrained, with equipment that seemed alien; all of a sudden "my primary weapon became a keyboard, and my handgun ... a mouse." He wasn't ready for the transition. And he wasn't ready for all

the time on his hands, for thoughts and memories to crowd in, and for the chance in idle moments to go back to Afghanistan and follow troop movements vicariously on the web: "Even though it was hell, I still freakin' miss it." "It's like ... home, you know."

At home, the anxiety mounted, the flare-ups started to come, and after a full two years out of Afghanistan and a frightening episode of hurling Donna half way across the bedroom when she tried to calm him down during a night trauma, he agreed to get help.

Lalo takes care of his "baby birds," as he puts it with tenderness. To hurt Donna was the ultimate wake-up call: "I woke up to her crying. And I noticed that I had hurt her. And at that moment, I'm like, 'I'll do anything to make sure I get better, even if it means I've got to go talk to the wizard.'... That's what we Marines call the psychologist. So I told her, 'Look, I'm going to go get assessed. I'll go do an assessment. And we'll see; we'll go from there.' I went, and they're like, 'Sir, you have severe PTSD. You need help.' And that's when the treatment started. And even then, I'm still like, 'Look, I'm fine.'"

It is tempting to think of Lalo's posttraumatic stress, and that of many service members like him, as primarily physiologic or autonomic. He reacts on a dime, as he would in a war zone, hypervigilant and hyperreactive. He revisits his war in nighttime traumas; he disconnects from those who don't understand his war. Exquisitely honed reflexes and observational skills highly adaptive in war become maladaptive at home. As Charles Hoge, a leading Army psychiatrist, has put it, "under prolonged stress, the stress 'thermostat' is reset." Recalibrating the thermostat to what is conducive to healthy living in a peaceful civilian environment can be, for some, no small challenge—even if for many the transition is without trauma.

Still, the metaphor of resetting thermostats is limiting, as Hoge himself, a veteran of war and expert in combat trauma, knows well. In Lalo's case, what anguishes the most are not the conditioned fear responses that can unleash real and lethal aggression. For help with that, he now has Max, a black lab-spaniel therapy dog. "Max covers my back and takes the first hit," he tells me when I first met Max. And Donna has also taken away Lalo's knife that has gotten him too close to danger too many times. But what really torments Lalo is the relentless sense of guilt he feels. And appeasing

that is not a job for Max, or fear deconditioning, or even anger management or weapons disarming.

Lalo can't let go of the guilt of not coming home with all his Marines. It near kills him: "To be honest, the thing I have dealt with the most [in my therapy] is guilt—survivor guilt. I would say the better part of the last year and a half, the better part of my therapy has been focused on survivor guilt.... I was in charge of guys, and my biggest fear out there was losing any one of them. They're all like little brothers who I trained. So, you know, I had guys that died because.... Before that [therapy] I never focused on myself, or the trauma that I went through. I mainly focused on the guys that died in my arms."

It is hard for Lalo to finish the "because." And even thinking of himself as the deserving subject of therapy and the focus of care seems a transgression, a way of letting up on his standing obligation to the others. "Before, in Fallujah, it was: I don't want to die. After that, I accepted that I might die. But I didn't want my Marines to. My biggest fear going into Afghanistan was losing a Marine."

He lost three Marines in Afghanistan. Two deaths haunt him, four years later, leaving him drenched in sweat at night as he rewatches the inner movie and relives the self-rebuke.

It was November 2009, the beginning of his command in Marja, and his platoon was preparing for the surge of 30,000 U.S. troops who would soon fan out in the southwest corner of Afghanistan, along the Helmand River, not far from Dasht-e Margo, literally, "the Desert of Death." Lalo was in charge of a unit emplacing remote ground sensors to gather early warning of enemy movements for target support. The area was riddled with insurgent bombs, and Lalo was wont to warn his Marines as they prepared to leave their armored vehicles to be sure to secure the area and take extra precautions in watching their steps.

On this day, he was one of four Marines in the second vehicle of the convoy. They were in their MRAPs, Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles that could keep you more or less protected, at least if you stayed inside. Corporal Justin Wilson was a mile ahead in the lead vehicle. He had to go—"number 2," as Lalo put it delicately—when he first talked about the incident

in an undergraduate ethics of war seminar I was teaching in which Donna was a student. She was eager to bring him to class, and he was psyched about coming.

"Wilson," Lalo said to the spellbound class, "really had to go." The driver of the MRAP stopped the vehicle. Wilson jumped out, found himself an empty hut for a bit of privacy, and got blown up.

Lalo heard the blast, called his corpsman, and rushed to the hut. The unit was under heavy mortar attack, and though a medevac helicopter was in the area, it couldn't land for close to ten minutes because of the barrage. Lalo made it to Justin and cradled him in his arms. "He was my Marine," Lalo later says to me, a year after this class, reliving the scene. "I was holding his hand, his body—his legs were somewhere else. And then it looked like he just faded away.... When he died, I finally put him on a bird ride." Some Marines were sobbing, he said. But there was no time to mourn. They were still getting shelled. Lalo gave the order: "Alright, he's on a bird. Move on."

He justifies to himself the "move on" tempo. "As someone in a position like that, I couldn't allow myself to be mad. I couldn't let emotions take over. I had to pick up the body parts." And Lalo did. He stayed behind, collected the strewn body fragments, and put them in the only bag he had in the vehicle, a black trash bag. A brief memorial would come later.

It is hard to hear this narrative without thinking that Lalo bears little or no culpable blame for his friend's death. The cause was an insurgent IED and the bad luck of stepping on it.

Lalo sees it differently: "The Marine had to take a shit. I could have said through the radio, 'Don't forget to reinforce the area.'" The wait to call in the medevac could have been shorter, he adds: "The sergeant who was on site didn't have frequency to call in medevac for five minutes. I could have pushed harder, found a way to make the call."

In his mind, luck—at least this manifestation of bad luck—doesn't mitigate the obligations of command responsibility. "I'm the guy in charge," he puts it. It's a father talking, a big brother. "They're my kids," he says, whether older or younger. "They're my baby birds. Ever since I was little, I didn't like people bullying other people. I would see people—like, five kids would get onto this one kid—and I would jump in, even though I don't know this kid.

You want to fight somebody, fight me. I loved fighting, but at the same time I didn't like people bullying other people. It was a rush to me. I loved it. I feel good helping out.... In high school I always protected all of my friends."

Lalo is the protector, in the hood, of his Marines, and now of Donna. In his psychic reality, he sees only his missing causal agency—what he *let* happen on his watch. He doesn't see the inflated sense of control he *inserts* in constructing this picture of volitional and morally responsible agency. He doesn't see that he is making the blame fit by turning an omission, for which he isn't at all culpable, into a transgression that will hold him blameworthy.

But why should Lalo see that? At least, right away and without probing and time? Here we can be speculative for the moment and interpret, at a distance, psychoanalytically. I suspect that some of his aspirations to protect and be in charge are rooted in desires and fantasies of childhood about how "super parents" can rescue and save, and in his *real* childhood world about how *machismo* men *do* really protect and how gang leaders really *are* all powerful. Marine ideals reinforce that familial and childhood world: *semper fidelis*—never leave a comrade behind, protect your own, be in charge, bring your troops home. The socialized ideals of the profession resonate with a protector culture of honor: to take care of those in your orbit. It is not surprising that Lalo found a home for himself in the Marines.

The hyper-idealization of those Marine ideals is that the "guy in charge" doesn't lose troops. Or, that's how the superego takes up the ego ideal and punishes the self who is just a "good enough" commander who did his best with what he had. "His best was not enough," is the superego's devastating critique. "To settle for losing guys is shameful." *Guilt* is the anxiety of being punished; *shame* is the anxiety of having one's *persona* (the compromised and managed ego) exposed and laid bare as mere pretense. The pretense, the "thin crust of display"—to invoke the last chapter's theme—doesn't really convince Lalo. The failure of pretense to satisfy the fantasy of how it is all supposed to work out leaves a hole for crippling disappointment and despair to fill.

The fantasy, as I say, draws from different sources: from lofty norms and primordial pulls, both internalized in the psyche; from a moralized Marine ethos and from archaic longings about how grown-ups take care of those who are vulnerable. We tend to forget that Marines, like Lalo, go to war as

child warriors, barely eighteen, with a mix of a child's needs and the self- and group-projected identities of how adults are supposed to take responsibility. The combination can be soul-destroying. Donna puts her finger on the point: "He gets so mad at me because I told him that when he got out of boot camp he had PTS [posttraumatic stress]. I told him that you can't be a young seventeen-, eighteen-year-old, go through three months of this people yelling in your face, stripping you of your identity, giving you a new identity, all in three months, and then spits you out into the world, without some sort of side effect."

The socialization is meant to be all-transforming, and for many it is experienced as a new, chosen identity.

There are other factors that likely contribute to Lalo's trauma and that have to do with the specific circumstances of Wilson's death, as well as another that we will turn to soon. First of these other factors is the open-endedness of the loss. There was a delay in the memorial service, which meant that the private and collective grieving had to be deferred, and with it, the honor giving and tribute, through religious or secular ritual, that can help dignify a loss: the rifle barrel in the boots, the helmet atop the rifle, the dog tags draped, each Marine, one after another, paying private respect to the one who is missing. Second is the prolonged immersion in detritus. "I slept with Justin for two nights next to me," Lalo said in passing, after telling me about his death. I wasn't following. Lalo had just told me he had put Justin on "the bird," and then joined his troops on the ground. "In a bag," he explained. "The remaining body parts were in a bag." Those were the remains Lalo had collected for two hours before rejoining his unit. It was two days before the remains were repatriated with the corpse that was in the medevac. All that time, Lalo kept vigil, protecting his Marine by his side. Third was the inglorious "black trash bag." That's all they had in the truck, Lalo tells me, when he was picking up the body parts. "A *trash bag*! I was putting my friend in a *trash bag*. I can't have black trash bags in my house because of that. Right, Donna?"

Lalo's moral injury is complex, with layers compounded on layers. At its core is a young person's self-imposition of oversized liability—liability for the destruction of a friend who has instantly become body shards that

have to be gathered up in a shameful trash bag, with no time to properly mourn. The detritus alone leaves imprints that few of us, half a world away from the battlefield, can fully grasp. Lalo was seeing, smelling, and touching the charred and bloody flesh that had shot across a landscape, scrupulously picking up the tiniest of pieces so they wouldn't turn into enemy trophies. The most avid followers of war coverage these days rarely see what the combatants see; the public is protected, even when photojournalists are onsite. And that sensory overload—stored in the brain in ways that we now know are hard cognitively to mediate and process—can get stuck in repeating video loops, flashbacks that attach to a punishing narrative of moral accountability. The self-condemnation turns toxic through the imagery.

THE RIBBON CHASER

Corporal Justin Wilson's death is one moral wound. There is another loss that racks Lalo with guilt and smoldering resentment. In Arlington Cemetery, ten feet away from Wilson, lies Sergeant Christopher Herbeck. Herbeck commanded Lalo's sister platoon in Marja. In December 2009, Lalo headed up patrols in which he would locate IEDs and then debrief a unit intelligence officer on their coordinates, so the bombs could be defused and the area secured. Lalo reconstructs the events that led to Herbeck's death. The conversations, the tone of voices, the looks, the glances, the anger and disbelief—he's sifted through the scenes over and over to see if he missed something: "There was one [an IED] in southwestern Marja that I reported a month earlier, and it was supposed to be taken out. And this second lieutenant [the unit intelligence officer], because he had heard of all the battles we had gotten into there, wanted to go out and patrol there.... I called him 'a freakin' ribbon-chaser.' He just wanted to go out there and get his combat action ribbon. So he gets a platoon to go there—gathers a bunch of guys that had never patrolled in the area.... And he gets my friend, Sergeant Herbeck, to be the guy in charge of the patrol. I go and I brief them.... 'Look. My guys have been patrolling this for months.

This is here; this is here; this is here. You want to go here; you want to go here; you don't want to go there."

Lalo pressed the lieutenant on his motives for the patrol: "What's your guys' mission?" The lieutenant looks at me, "We're just going to go out there and poke." What do you mean, you're just going to go out there and poke, sir? He's like, "Exactly that, corporal." I'm like, "Sir, if you guys are going to do some sort of mission, I understand that." He's like, "No, we're just going to go out there and poke and see what's going on and what to do about it." At that moment I look at Herbeck, and I ask, "Look, do you need me and part of my guys to be attached to your guys? We've been there; we know the area. We know what it's like." And the lieutenant answers, "We don't need you. You'll be our backup. In case we need you; just be on your radio."

Soon after, Lalo got the distress call: A Marine stepped on an IED. The caller read off the grid square coordinates. "I'm like, 'I know these coordinates.' Sure enough, those were the coordinates I gave the second lieutenant a month prior so they could have the IED blown up. And they didn't do it." Lalo rushed in with his unit to set up a cordon and secure the area. "Where's Herbeck?" he blurted out. A dazed Marine stared back. "Where's your platoon sergeant?" he demanded again. Then he heard what he feared: "Corporal, he's the one that stepped on the IED." There was no need for a medevac. The explosive had instantly pulverized Herbeck—an area, fifty square feet, "filled, spread out with body parts of my friend."

From the narrative so far, this is a tale of dereliction of duty by a superior officer, hungry for action and a medal for it, and cavalier about who will pay. Ask any young Marine or soldier: a superior's ribbon chasing turns them livid. But in Lalo's mind, there is blame enough to go round: "The IED never got cleared. And I never went back to check if it got cleared, either. I'm the guy patrolling the area. Why the hell didn't I go to check it out with my guys to make sure? You never know—especially, if I'm patrolling the area. You know? And here's one of my good friends, whose body parts I picked up for how many hours? Six hours. Because we didn't want to leave a single piece of him there for the enemy." The body remains, again, went into a black trash bag.

Protecting his and the Corps' ideals against a clear, professional betrayal turns the screw of subjective guilt a bit tighter. The counterfactuals, the "what ifs," pour out: "I feel like I *could have* done something else. I *could have* persuaded them to stick me with them and let me patrol. I *could have* gone and made sure that the IED was taken care of. In a big way I feel guilty that my friend died. And sometimes I *wish I could* just go and make sure that the IED wasn't there anymore. It's out of my power. It's out of my control now. But, shit, I was the guy in charge ... of a whole combat area. I *could have* made sure that it got taken care of. But I trusted that second lieutenant to take care of it."

Philosophers and others who hear narratives like this are quick to tell me that guilt feelings of this sort are essentially irrational and inappropriate reactions. A Marine like Lalo must know that he can't control for these kinds of battlefield vagaries. His guilt is recalcitrant: the indictment that is at the basis of the guilt is in conflict with and lags behind a belief he endorses—that he did do what he could, without negligence or culpability. There is cognitive dissonance. Alternatively, if there isn't cognitive conflict, Lalo is just mistaken in his beliefs. Maybe he's naive about what he can control—maybe he's in the grip of wishful fantasies or has a sense of grandiosity.

Many in the military have similar views: "You can't go into war, command units, and think you are not going to lose lives." So insisted a West Point instructor to a group of cadets in a class I attended. Others I have spoken to view soldiering like doctoring: you know you are going to lose some lives. And you need to get calloused if you are going to do your job well. You need to be exposed not only to blood and guts, in both professions, but also to the limits of moral responsibility. Lalo has similar thoughts: "In war, is it expected to lose guys? Yeah. We had been trained to a point where combat is second nature. It's muscle memory. You get hit with a mortar attack. You get up, everything's attached, you keep going. You don't stop. ... I mean I got blown up a couple of times in firefights. It was normal, it was expected."

But what is in muscle memory is how it feels for *him* to get hit and move on. How he feels when *others* he is in charge of get hit, and don't move on, is

something different. A sense of command, a “strict liability” kicks in. “I don’t look at the stuff I went through [as] traumatizing to me as it was to lose my guys,” he says. “I trained these guys for a whole year, they deployed with me, and here they are dying in my arms, and here I am picking up their body parts for six hours at night. That’s what hurts me the most. . . . And I haven’t been able to figure it out.”

Part of the ambiguity here is in what “normal” or “expected” means. In one sense, it is *predictive*—that there is a more than likely chance that, in war zones like Marja, a unit like Lalo’s will take losses. “I’ll lose some and I may get killed.” What’s in muscle memory is not so much that declarative thought but, rather, the procedure for what to do when you do get hit. You move on. You move your troops on. The ancient Roman Stoics talk about “pre-rehearsal of evils,” or getting used to bad things happening. They invoke this kind of habituated, rehearsed response and something more—that you can learn to act habitually without fear or distress, in part, because you have come to believe that there *is* no real threat or loss to cause full-throated fear or distress in the first place. As long as you are holding on to your virtue, and it’s rock solid, you have nothing to fear and have lost nothing. That recalibration of value takes the sting out of loss. The only loss that is real and stress-worthy, on the Stoic view, is your virtue.

But that’s the rub for Lalo, and it’s at the heart of a different meaning of what’s “expected.” Lalo has *normative* expectations of himself, both morally and in his role as a good leader. Whatever he expects to happen as probable outcomes, he has *idealized* expectations for himself, nourished by boyish fantasies and realities and by Marine affirmations of them. He judges himself by how well he meets those aspirations. And he has set the bar high, in abstraction from the very external challenges that figure into the probabilities about outcomes. With the bar set so high and so much psychic energy hanging in the balance, the inner challenges and outer challenges and constraints blur. He lost guys, he failed to meet what he views as a reasonable challenge: he failed to meet the normative expectation he set for himself and others set for him. And *that* failure and disappointment is not at all in his muscle memory. Moreover, in his own case, he reads normative expectation rigidly, as close to

a demand. To fail to meet the demand as the “guy in charge” deserves stern self-punishment and guilt.

All this is an interpretation, as I said earlier. Away from treatment and a clinical setting, it is not therapy. In part, it is an attempt to understand if the conflict Lalo struggles with—and that so many other veterans face—is best understood as a kind of flat-footed irrationality, of believing *p* and *not-p* at the same time. Or, is it better thought of as a different kind of conflict, between what he reasonably expects out there, in specific circumstances, in light of enemy fire and the quirks of accident, and what he expects of himself? Strict self-demands push him into a preventive fantasy, with “could have’s” and “should have’s” of how he *might have* fulfilled his expectations while defying luck. I think it is the latter kind of ambivalence that is at play here. And as I will say in later chapters, erasing the irrationality in a way that obscures the demand on self and an idealized command role does a disservice to service members. It also veils the need to change professional development training so that the internalized normative expectations with which young military men and women go into war are more realistic. Grit, resolve, motivation, and reliability don’t have to depend on models of zero-defect perfectionism.

Lalo holds himself responsible for losses caused by his acts or omissions, irrespective of culpability. At least in the case of his care for his troops, he subscribes to a version of strict liability. In tort law, *strict liability* is imposed without a finding of fault for the damages or proof of negligence. In his court, Lalo is, of course, plaintiff and defendant. And he is a fairly merciless plaintiff. He sees now what he couldn’t fully see then, and holds himself to the retrospective assessment. Scottish Enlightenment philosopher Adam Smith offers a description of the dual stance we take in self-assessment: “When I endeavor to examine my own conduct, when I endeavor to pass sentence upon it, and either to approve or condemn it, it is evident that, in all such cases, I divide myself, as it were, into two persons; and that I, the examiner and judge, represent a different character from that other I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged of. The first is the spectator, whose sentiments with regard to my own conduct I endeavor to enter into, by placing myself in his situation, and by considering how it would appear to me, when seen from that particular point of view. The second is the agent, the person

whom I properly call myself, and of whose conduct, under the character of a spectator, I was endeavoring to form some opinion. The first is the judge; the second the person judged of."

The "spectator" that Smith famously has in mind is not an actual bystander but, rather, an imagined "impartial spectator"—or, as fellow Scottish philosopher, David Hume calls it, in modeling a related notion, a "judicious spectator." The "agent" judges himself by imagining what the impartial spectator would "approve or condemn" in his conduct. The emphasis on imagination in Smith's notion invokes a spectator who doesn't just mirror social praise and blame (or internalized versions of it), but who, free of actual bias and its limits, can assess *praiseworthiness* and its opposite.

With this in mind, what if Lalo were to try to get to that fairer tribunal by bringing Herbeck into the room—at least, in imagination and fantasy? If he were present, would he be the plaintiff that Lalo now is? Would he accuse? Would he hold Lalo strictly liable for actions and omissions, independent of fault or proof of negligence? The idea of bringing an empty chair into a safe therapeutic setting, where the lost buddy or victim can return and perhaps absolve the patient who feels responsible for his death, is a technique being developed by some VA clinicians to supplement or replace more standard cognitive exposure techniques, commonly used in trauma treatment. Lalo's therapy has, in part, as he has explained it to me, involved more standard exposure techniques used in fear extinction. With a therapist, in a clinical context that feels safe, the traumatic scenes that are so often blocked and repressed are revisited; what happened is felt and experienced and narrated. In some cases, when recorded in journals or on audiotapes, those narratives are reread or replayed on one's own at night. The aim is to desensitize what one couldn't earlier touch. It is a de-conditioning exercise, on the model of deconditioning fear.

However, guilt is in many ways more complex than fear. On a *cognitivist* view of emotions, both emotions have cognitive content and are not just brute feelings. They are *about* something—fear about a real or apparent threat and guilt about a real or apparent transgression. Guilt, in addition, as an attitude of moral engagement, engages or addresses the person it is directed at and

looks for some uptake. Lalo blames himself and demands, through his guilt, both payback of a kind and penitence.

Would the fantasized Herbeck do the same? Who knows? Even if resentment and guilt don't necessarily co-travel—one can feel resentment toward an individual without that individual feeling guilt, and vice versa—we are here talking about how Lalo would reconstruct Herbeck's reactions: Would he imagine Herbeck as a benevolent presence who could help construct a corrective emotional experience? I suspect that is what the "empty chair" therapy is banking on—revised or updated uptake through the mediation of benevolence.

This "transposition of disposition" is complicated, in general and here. But the first step is a willingness to hear oneself addressed by another—in this case, to make room for an imaginary conversation with someone who is not just a beloved buddy who covers your back, as you do his, but also who is now a "black trash bag" of "body parts." That may be in part why a conversation of this sort is so hard. The traumatic imagery is part of the causal narrative and part of the roadblock. The repetitive compulsion to undo what happened in part involves a wish to erase that horrible ending. The step forward requires keeping what's done done and lifting the misplaced and overwrought blame. This is the purported role of a benevolent empathizer. Herbeck may be that person, or at least as introject—that is, an internalized object—that Lalo can vividly imagine. But first he has to detoxify the image of Herbeck that he carries with him and that so torments him.

MORAL REWOUNDING

Lalo is trying to take care of himself these days, to turn his gaze inward and acknowledge that he's hurting. At first, compliance was to please Donna, but with more psychological and physical injuries showing up, it's been hard for him to deny the evidence. Treatment of all sorts has been required: a pile of pills, physical and psychological therapy, memory coaching for diagnostic and MRI workups, arm surgery, and more.

None of this went over easy with his immediate superiors at Quantico. And the moral rewoundings began. He was threatened with a disciplinary separation from the Marine Corps for the weight gain after he started taking some of his meds. Then, a staff sergeant grew tired of all the time he was taking off for medical and mental health appointments, and accused him, in so many words, of being a malingerer. "It's convenient that you have invisible injuries," Lalo reported him saying. "It got to the point," said Lalo, that he told that boss flat out, "Look, yeah, I'm a Marine. . . I'm used to getting my big-boy straw and sucking it up, but I need help." His psychiatrist—a civilian contractor on another base—intervened, reporting the staff sergeant's obstructive behavior up the chain of command and threatening to go higher, if there wasn't a quick remedy. Lalo's sergeant relented, but only after insisting that Lalo make up time by reporting to work at 5:00 A.M. daily. That was hardly viable, given Lalo's chronic insomnia and night traumas, and treatment for it, that make sleep regulation a challenge at the best of times. A confrontation ensued that brought Lalo right to the edge. The commander told Lalo he didn't have a choice in this matter: "Well, it looks like you're going to have to stop taking your sleep medication."

The tirade went on. Tempers boiled over. Lalo insisted that they go outside and talk about matters privately, but the sergeant persisted, in full view of Lalo's junior Marines. When "he got closer nose to nose," and "bucked up like he was going to do something," Lalo's hypervigilance kicked in and he brandished a knife (the knife that Donna has since removed).

It's easy to portray Lalo, and those like him, as a veteran with a short fuse, ready to snap and turn violent. Hyper-arousal and flashbacks to the battlefield are certainly part of his symptom set. But this exchange with his superior was also a full plate of moral reactions to moral abuse: he was made to feel weak, a fake, an impostor, a Marine who couldn't make it, a Marine who should be able to suck it up without medical or psychological help. Wounded was weak—at least, *this kind of wounded*. And he was told so to his face, and in front of his subordinates.

That shame and humiliation was piled on top of what Lalo already felt. Still, in the case of these shamings from outside, Lalo is able to create some distance, with Donna's help. Lalo knows the sergeant was out of line

in denying him official Marine-approved appointments. And the appointments are ones he, in fact, needs; they are not an indulgence, and he is not a malingerer. And the sleep meds are also not optional, at least at this point, without an alternative sleep-treatment program. Lalo gets that psychological and moral injury is real. The sergeant doesn't, or at least it is convenient for him to deny it. But the shame for not being the Marine he thought he was, or thought he could be for his subordinates—that judgment is one he still takes to heart. He believes it. He can't wiggle out of it easily. And the moral despair it leads to can be paralyzing.

Three years after arriving home from Afghanistan, Lalo was selected for the Wounded Warrior Battalion at Walter Reed Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland—a residential program for Marines with psychological and physical injuries, aimed at providing care coordination and recovery support. The commander at the Quantico base supported his application: Lalo's full-time job as a wounded Marine was to get better. That was his only job, the commander told the obstructive sergeant.

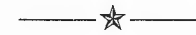
But there was a bureaucratic wrinkle that would injure again. Lalo showed up on campus with Max, the certified and trained therapy dog that was helping keep him calm and getting him out of the house regularly. But according to local base regulations, Max was not an official service dog, even though he was ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) certified. From the point of local base rules, he was just a pet and wasn't allowed in the barracks. But Lalo wasn't going without his dog. There had been too many sudden changes in his life; he had just driven Donna up to New Haven, where she was starting a master's program. They were back to an every other weekend visiting schedule. He had just given up his therapist of one and a half years as part of the transfer of bases from Virginia to Maryland. He wasn't about to also give up the only constant at this point in his therapy. After some wrangling, an accommodation was found: he would live off campus, in a military retirement home in Virginia, with Max. And he would commute daily to the Bethesda hospital. A critical piece of the program—wounded warriors living together 24/7—was compromised from the start.

It's a glitch in huge, lumbering bureaucracy. As an Army colonel at West Point put it to me: "In my experience, you can't make it in the military unless

you have a sense of the absurd." Lalo actually handles the "absurd" fairly well, with a little help from Donna's sass. Upon coming home, he was asked to pay the replacement cost for his Kevlar flak jacket because he returned it "damaged"—it was stained with blood! "Excuse me," Donna erupted, finishing the story for Lalo, "the vest did its job. They owe you for having gone through the injury." His commander wrote him a letter to get him out of the equipment fine: "The fact that the letter had to be written in the first place. . . . This is how I started becoming an advocate for these guys," says Donna.

Donna is Lalo's advocate. It would be hard to imagine his recovery without her, and without her sustained hope in him. I explore this in chapter 6. But for now, this story serves to give insight into the crushing guilt and humiliation many service members feel and the hard road they encounter in seeking help. Lalo's guilt may be overwrought, built on narratives constructed around fictitious missteps and impossible omniscience. But it is a guilt that needs to be understood and acknowledged by us at home because it is one way that service members can honorably bear the burden of taking young men and women into war. There are other less destructive ways to honorably carry that burden. And finding them is critical to resilience and recovery. But for those who do feel the guilt, a first step forward is having it recognized for what it is, with its moral pulls and aspirations, and its blurred vision.

CHAPTER 4



RECOVERING LOST GOODNESS

THE WOUNDS OF SHAME

Army Major Jeffrey Hall deployed to Iraq twice, commanding infantry and artillery units (at the time, at the rank of captain) near Baghdad and Fallujah. He signed up for the Army at seventeen, and at forty, despite having implemented versions of COIN (counterinsurgency operations) in those last deployments—serving as mayor of a local advisory council of elders, painting schools and laying sewers, outfitting scores of children with shoes (who never having worn them before had no clue that shoes, or their feet, had a right and a left), and risking life to bring food and medical care to families in need—he still thinks what he should do in armed conflict, and what he is good at and trained to do as a soldier, is to engage and destroy an enemy.

And yet that was not what his war in Iraq was about. Once Baghdad fell in 2003, he found himself deep into softer and more cultural methods of warfare, often inadequately supported, and unclear of the cause or mission. He often felt betrayed by his command, and as a result, he in turn was forced to betray those who counted on him. Stateside, he was diagnosed with severe, near suicidal posttraumatic stress (PTS), and with the support of his wife and his commander at home, sought treatment at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.



The heavy weight of loss

As he puts it, "You have to understand. My PTS had everything to do with moral injury. It was not from killing, or seeing bodies severed, or blown up. It was from betrayal, from moral betrayal."

One incident stands out. In his first deployment in 2003, a civilian family driving home from church in Bagdad's Mansour district crossed a cordon and got caught in the crossfire of a U.S. attack on a high-value target. Hall's unit didn't carry out the attack, but he was near the scene at the time. The mother and son were evacuated from the car, though died shortly thereafter. The father was instantly killed, his body parts strewn over the road. Hall and a buddy gathered up the fragments and rolled them up in a rug that they then loaded onto an ambulance. "It was collateral damage that happens and that is probably justified in war," Hall says philosophically. "The car just turned a corner at the wrong place at the wrong time." But in his mind what followed was not at all justified or unavoidable, and that is the aftermath that unravels him.

Shortly after the accident, Hall got orders from his battalion headquarters to find the surviving family members and begin to make amends. He found the home and a young daughter and elderly uncle, who had stepped in as guardian. Over Chai the family made it clear that what they wanted most was the return of the bodies for a prompt burial. Hall set to work, but his efforts were stymied at every turn. His battalion was partnered with the Coalition Provisional Agency (CPA)—Paul Bremer's American occupation administration set up to govern Iraq after the fall of Baghdad—and incompetence, by many accounts, ran deep. Hoping to cut through the bureaucracy, Hall drove to the morgue himself and located the bodies. But the CPA wouldn't release them without official paper work authorized and signed by the Iraqi Ministry of Health. So began the wait for over a month for the bodies.

In the meantime, Hall's commander called to inform him that the CPA had issued solace money for the family. With cautious excitement, Hall drove to battalion headquarters to pick up the money; finally, he'd have something positive to show the uncle and daughter. He was speechless when he opened the envelope and counted the bills. It was a piddling \$750. He let his commander know how he felt: "Sir, they lost a father, a mother, and a son. And a car that is probably as important to them as the other losses." He handed the money back to the commander in disgust: "You go pay them with this!" The commander,

cocooned for much of the war inside Saddam's former palace in the Green Zone, was unmoved. Hall had an unequivocal order to deliver the money. ■

And so he did. In silence, he handed the uncle the envelope and watched as he counted the bills, and then flung them to the ground. "I deserve whatever this man does," Hall recalls thinking. "If he slaps me in my face, I will take it. I will just take it." But the uncle just stood up, turned his back to Hall, and walked out of the room, the money still strewn on the floor. With the young girl's eyes glued on him, Hall put on his helmet, snapped his chinstrap, and left the house, covered in shame.

But the ordeal, and the shame, wouldn't end. The bodies were finally returned to the family, unembalmed and rotted beyond recognition by the scorching desert heat. The family had one last request of Hall. They needed death certificates to finalize the burial. And so Hall returned to the Ministry of Health and was given the certificates. On each was stamped in bold red letters: ENEMY. "Can't you give me something that doesn't have 'enemy' stamped on it?" Hall beseeched. "No," the official curtly replied. "They are enemies. They are considered enemies."

The incompetence of Hall's superiors verges on the comedic, but the profound moral injury that Hall suffered verges on the tragic. Disarmed of much of his usual arsenal as a warrior, more than ever he needed to be able to trust his own basic goodness and have some assurance that he could compassionately help these noncombatants caught in war. However much a part of the just conduct of a soldier it is to minimize collateral damage in war and ameliorate its effects, for Hall the duty was more basic: it was an intimate duty to a family he had come to know and care for. He felt thoroughly impotent in the role. He felt profoundly betrayed by his command and coalition, and humiliated that their massive incompetence forced him to betray innocents who had suffered so grievously. When he says the injury was worse and more lasting than what he suffered from seeing the detritus of war for three years, what he means in part is that the betrayal by command put him in a position of feeling trapped and helpless, much more powerless and captive than he had ever felt in facing enemy fire. He was stripped and left defenseless, with nowhere to go. That shame haunted him until one day back home, on base at Fort Riley, Kansas, he simply couldn't put his combat boots on. Suicidal

feelings and ideas took over. It was at that point that a new, far more benign commander than his previous one got him help. Empathy and self-empathy were a critical part of the healing.

The idea of self-empathy may strike some as odd. As an epistemic notion, empathy is typically directed at another and is a vehicle for understanding how to see the world from someone else's particular corner. As an affective mode, it is a way of being able to share someone's emotion and so have congruent feeling. But what work does empathy do when directed at the self? Even if we are never *fully* in sync with our own minds and emotions, for most of us there isn't the same gap within us as there is between people. The idea of empathizing with oneself, some might say, is redundant. I argue in this chapter that this is not so. Even if we are already in sync with many aspects of ourselves, there are still corners we don't peek into because their contents are too alien, so possibilities for change there are closed off. Self-empathy (or what I am interested in, therapeutic self-empathy) can play a role in peering into those corners and opening the doors. It can be an important part of recovering a sense of lost goodness. It can be a way of calling out to oneself that one is hurt and in need of attention and response.

Put this way, self-empathy can be construed as a kind of positive reactive attitude, alongside trust and certain forms of hope—in ourselves and in others. These emotions, each in their own way, and whether directed at the self or others, expose vulnerability and call out to others about one's needs, dependence, aspirations, normative expectations, and so on—and they seek a response. With trust, we call upon another to tend to our interests when we cannot. With hope, we call upon another to aspire to heights that we may not expect that person to reach without our setting the challenge. And with self-empathy, too, we call upon ourselves to re-evaluate our past actions, and to show mercy and understanding where we could not before. Sometimes we “grow” responsiveness in those we engage through our emotional calls. This is often true in the case of trust, where if we are a bit wise with regard to whom we trust for what and when, our very act of trusting may elicit and reinforce another's trustworthiness. Something similar may happen in the case of therapeutic self-empathy. We uncover our hurt to ourselves, and in that acknowledgment can sometimes elicit resources for responding to and

ameliorating the suffering. In the case of punishing guilt, in empathetically reviewing the very evaluations that are at the core of our self-reproach, we may find room to hold ourselves to account in a more compassionate and equitable way. Rather than focusing on the fact that we have fallen short of some standard to which we hold ourselves, as we do when we take up the perspective of the accuser, we learn to empathize with our imperfect selves: we take up the perspective of the accused, of one who genuinely attempted to meet the endorsed standard, but who failed through no fault of her own.

We shall come to the various dimensions of self-empathy and their healing powers. But first I retell another story of shame, this one an ancient tale. And then I turn to a contemporary story of guilt with underlayers in shame.

In all this I come to moral repair slowly, as do the veterans I talk with, through the concrete challenges and anguish of real moral damage. For them, thriving or flourishing after war is rarely just about positive thinking. Healing requires a complex understanding of one's war—how to make sense of its detritus and profound losses. Those losses can seem, on the one hand, all too futile in the face of war's often dubious and grand political goals, and on the other, thoroughly avoidable if only one's own conduct were just a bit more perfect. Repairing selves involves a kind of inner moral dialogue, a kind of call and response. Soldiers often feel need and hurt, and seek help that acknowledges that hurt and helps to redress it. Healing starts, then, from recognition and empathy; self-healing starts with self-empathy. All this takes time, loving support, and intellectual honesty. For many in the military, it is still all too easy to soft-peddle the realities of mental and moral injury, and to believe that with just a little bit more positive thinking and stoic sucking it up, they can get the mission done. But healing after moral trauma is not that kind of mission. Thriving after war requires a different kind of resilience.

AJAX'S SHAME AND PRIOR'S GUILT

I first met Major Hall at a reading of Sophocles's *Ajax*, performed by the Theater of War before a mostly military audience at the 13th annual Force Health Protection Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, in August of

2010. The play is another story of shame, with disastrous outcome. Ajax is stripped of his *timē*, his honor and status, when the Greek chiefs vote to award Achilles's armor—a prize given to the best fighter—to Odysseus rather than to him, despite his legendary status. As Homer chronicles in the *Iliad*, Ajax was “the bulwark of the Achaeans” in their fight against Troy, “giant” in size, “powerful and well-built,” “the giant god of battle,” unrivaled as a fighter. In a famed duel with Hector, he is easily the victor. His own warrior mettle is storied, god-like, but so too is his father's. He is the son of Telamon, who battled the Trojans alongside Heracles and who, for his mettle, was awarded the Trojan king's daughter, Hesione, as a war bride.

In the play, Ajax's shock and shame of losing a prize comparable to his father's becomes part of a more generalized, psychological break. He has lost all face before those who matter: “I will return from Troy having earned nothing. How could he [my father, Telamon] stand to even look at me?” In a pique of blazing rage, he sets out to take revenge on Odysseus and his troops, and to prove once and for all his unmatched skill as a swordsman. But the goddess Athena blinds him and he flails his sword in the dark, mistaking barnyard animals for his rival: He “hacked at this chief and that chief,” recounts Athena. And after tiring of the slaughter, he took the rest of the beasts captive and tortured them. Ajax “comes co” in a bloodbath of butchered carcasses and mutilated livestock. He mocks the sight of himself: “Look at the valiant man! The brave heart! The one who unflinchingly faced the enemy! You see the great deeds I have done to harmless beasts? Oh, the ridicule runs riot against me!”

There is ironic distance, but it fails to insulate. Ajax's self-evaluation couldn't be more unforgiving. He seems to look at himself as someone in the past. But his past is not *past*. It consumes him in the present. In an unparalleled moment in Greek tragedy, this great Greek general falls on his sword on stage. In this particular staging of the play, before a community that has come to know suicide all too intimately, the scene brought a hush like few moments I have known in theater. Ajax was in the room, in Major Hall and in many others, who felt they had lost their identity as warriors, and then their good name

Here, the work of psychoanalyst Melvin Lansky is pertinent and well worth mentioning. Lansky, who has worked extensively with Vietnam War veterans, writes insightfully of stages that lead up to a violent, impulsive act, such as suicide, and the role of shame as a precipitant. Though Lansky's discussion is not focused on Sophocles's *Ajax*, the stages he describes have interesting correlates in the play and underscore the power of the play for understanding suicidal impulses and the role of shame as a causal factor:

(1) In the first stage, turbulence and shame erupt from a “narcissistic wound” that exposes one's own “limitations.” In our play, Ajax is passed over for the all-critical prize, to which he believes he is entitled. This injury to his ego throws him into a narcissistic rage.

(2) Next, there is a “dissociative” break that may follow the upsurge of shame. As Lansky puts it, “In more protracted cases, the patient often reports a disorganized, fragile, paranoid state of mind.” Similarly, for Ajax there is madness induced by a god: “Never in your right mind / Would you, Telamon's son, / Go so far as to slaughter livestock. / The gods must have driven him mad!” sing the Chorus. “I can darken the sharpest eyes,” Athena boasts to Odysseus.

(3) The dissociative break is followed by an impulsive act, with the impulsive actor “oblivious” to its consequences. Ajax finds himself in a delusional state: “He thought he was bathing his hands in your blood,” Athena tells Odysseus. Mad with rage, Ajax is unaware of his environment and the objects he acts on.

(4) The agent's consequent “reaction to the act,” often “conscious remorse or guilt,” can mask the shame of dissociating and of the impulsive act. Surveying the massacre he has executed, Ajax bemoans: “You see the great deeds I have done to harmless animals.” So Ajax's wife, Tecmessa, reports: “He has been laid low by this evil. He won't eat or drink or say anything. He just sits in the midst of his butchery.”

(5) Finally, there is a tenuous and manipulated reaching out to loved ones in response to the intimidation of self-harming. So Ajax demands that Tecmessa bring to him their son for a final encounter: “Lift him up to me here. The sight of fresh blood will not frighten him—Not if he is truly his father's son. Now he must begin to be broken in and hardened to the ways

of his father." In Ajax's case, shame piles on shame—the barnyard massacre piles on top of the loss of the coveted and anticipated prize—leading to the final, irrevocable act.

The experience of shame—as Ajax's and Hall's stories, ancient and contemporary, show—is about being seen and about having nowhere to hide. Greek etymology is a reminder. *Aidōs* is related to *aidōia*, genitals. To be ashamed is to be caught without your fig leaf. The audience can be real or imagined. When Aristotle says, "eyes are upon you," he should not be read literally. That is how shame *feels*.

In some cases, shame can be too toxic to be consciously experienced, screened as a more socially respectable and manageable feeling of guilt with its presumption of a discrete act of wrongdoing and its promise of redemption through moral repair. Indeed, perhaps one way to think of certain instances of epistemically ill-fitting (or irrational) guilt is as a substitute for shame, a sublimation of sort. So an Army commander who loses a private owing to an accidental blast of a turret gun on an army vehicle may not be culpably negligent, though he feels horrific and unabated guilt.

This is a case of what I call "accident guilt" in *The Untold War*. In the specific case I detail there, the commander, Captain John Prior, approved, with the advice of his team of engineers, the use of a Marine replacement battery for the Army's Bradley Fighting Vehicle in the early months of the Iraq War. What no one foresaw was that turning on the ignition would now cause the current to jump to the turret and automatically fire the gun. The blast scooped out the face of young private Joseph Mayek, who did not survive the ordeal. Prior tells me, several years later: "The aftermath of that was the guilt of the situation because I'm the one who placed the vehicles; I'm the one who set the security. Like most accidents, I'm not in jail right now. Clearly I wasn't egregiously responsible. Still, I dealt with and still deal with the guilt of having cost him his life essentially."

After a lengthy investigation, the mechanical cause of the misfire was pinpointed to the amperage of the replacement battery. Though the Marine battery had the same voltage as the original Army battery, the amperage was different and that turned out to be all-critical. In this case, the guilt Prior feels may be morally fitting and admirable, though not strictly speaking

objectively fitting, given the actual facts of moral responsibility. That is, in feeling guilt (perhaps mixed with shame), he may be expressing the sense of falling short in his inability to save one of his men. He failed Mayek, in a way, and there is something admirable in that sense of taking seriously his obligation to his troops. But at the same time it is irrational to think that he really was at fault for failing to understand how the replacement battery would work, especially in light of having authorized its use only after expert consultation on the matter. Prior is well aware of this and so, in a way, his guilt is "recalcitrant." That is, the belief or appraisal that grounds the feeling is in conflict with another belief or appraisal he holds that he was not at fault in causing the accident.

What Prior feels is that he *should have* been able to take care of his soldiers better, or as philosophers might put it, that he less than perfectly fulfilled his imperfect duty of care. (As an imperfect duty, there is typically "room for play," as Immanuel Kant calls it, for how and how much one fulfills the duty, but Prior viewed the duty as having to be fulfilled perfectly.) So cast, the emotion may have more the color of shame than of guilt, the shame of falling short of an ideal that Prior set for himself and that captures his responsibilities of office and role. But given the context and the fact that a unit member was killed in a noncombat action, in "friendly fire" on his watch, for Prior and (for many like him, I suspect), the more ready-to-hand way to express that self-reproach is in holding oneself culpable for a negligent omission.

Guilt brings with it concrete opportunities for moral repair—to the mother of the dead soldier, to soldiers who lost their good buddy, to unit members who need reassurance that a similar accident will not be repeated. Shame may bring opportunities for moral repair, as well, in terms of reinstating oneself and reviewing one's commitments to ideals. In some cases that repair may be more self-regarding than other-regarding. In other cases, not. Hall feels diminished by his stymied efforts to aid the Iraqi family, and the discomfort of that shame may motivate him to redouble his efforts at aid. In his case, at least, it seems the urgency for action comes from a desire to right a grievous wrong to others that will derivatively help restore his own sense of goodness. One can imagine other cases in which the fall in self-standing and self-image itself pushes toward correction and a closing of the gap between

reality and aspiration. In such cases, the push comes from the damage to the self more than the damage to others.

In pointing to the complex and camouflaged nature of this emotion, I am not suggesting that the feeling of guilt, here or in similar cases, is in any way manipulated—a contrivance that allows for a contrition that might not otherwise be possible. Rather, I am suggesting that feelings of guilt can easily eclipse feelings of shame; and when the shame isn't obvious or manifest, we may be too quick, both as self-judges and as judges of others, to think that what we feel is misplaced or epistemically irrational guilt. As shame, in contrast, the feeling is all too epistemically fitting, whether manifest or not—Prior *did* fall short of an implicit image of himself as a commander who takes care of his troops. Moreover, the idea of seeing oneself as a leader who should be able to avoid this kind of malfunction on his watch is not that far-fetched or grandiose; at least, it does not seem over-idealized to me, in the way that, say, thinking one can avoid enemy-inflicted combat death is. Epistemically fitting shame, in this regard, seems more permissive than epistemically fitting guilt and perhaps less “irrational.” Still, shame of this sort can linger far too long. That is precisely why it is important to try to unmask the shame, differentiate it, and find ways to own and tolerate it. Self-empathy plays a role.

RECALCITRANT EMOTIONS AND UNCERTAINTY

We are nearly ready to turn to self-empathy and its role in helping to assuage the hounding (sometimes suicidal) recalcitrant shame and guilt feelings soldiers can experience after traumatic incidents in war. But to understand the reparative work of self-empathy, we need to understand better in what sense these emotional experiences are, in fact, recalcitrant. Consider one philosopher's view of recalcitrant fear: In a recalcitrant bout of fear, a person “is primed to act on and assent to her construal of her situation as dangerous, but does not act on or assent to this construal, believing instead that her situation is *not* dangerous.” There is a waste of cognitive resources here. “Recalcitrant

emotions therefore involve the mobilization of cognitive resources in the service of a question that has, by the subject's own lights, *already been answered*.” The waste of resources means that attention is taken away from factors that *are* relevant to one's situation, and invested instead in an inclination to seek more confirmation of an evaluation one doesn't believe.

But sometimes—I suspect often, in difficult cases—feeling guilt involves an *open* question of one's moral responsibility. One simply may not have settled the matter as to whether one is fully off the hook. There is lingering doubt and enough harsh self-judgment to keep the question alive. It is not so much that one has an “incoherent evaluative profile,” as this philosopher puts it, a conflict of evaluations about what one did and its potential wrongness. It is that one is genuinely uncertain, not sure what to believe about one's moral responsibility given one's causal involvement, whether one could have or should have known the consequences of one's actions (as in Prior's case, in replacing the battery) or could have or should have found a more graceful way out of complicity (as in Hall's case, in betraying the civilian family through the bureaucratic operations of his command chain). There are shadows of doubt, not a flat-out conflict of evaluations in the way there is, say, in the case of a knowing phobic who walks onto a plane and immediately becomes frightened, evaluating the upcoming flight as dangerous, though she in fact believes the situation poses no threats. Recalcitrance often comes in shades—it is a spectral notion, with unstable or ambivalent emotions occupying points on a continuum.

In the case of subjective guilt, to call it “irrational” or recalcitrant can be dismissive, encouraging us to overlook the genuine figuring out that is often part of the psychological process of healthy ownership of moral responsibility. That process may include an investigative sorting out of the facts of the matter: a psychological “working-through” (what Freud called *Durcharbeitung*) of the conflicts, investments, and losses; an acceptance of the limits of control that often are part of this kind of reflection; and an openness to feeling new emotions, such as grief, sorrow, and self-empathy, based on new evaluations once self-reproach lifts its grip. As such, subjective guilt may have deep connectivity to a range of epistemically appropriate feelings that we come to only indirectly, after first experiencing guilt and then surmounting it.

Consider the following case involving a student of mine. Again, the details are important for capturing the contours of the moral phenomenology—how it feels to experience this kind of guilt. Tom Fiebrandt served in Iraq between July 2001 and December 2005. At twenty-one he was a young sergeant and a team leader of a group of intelligence analysts attached to an Army cavalry squadron of 410 men in Tal Afar, a desert town not far from Mosul, about forty miles from the Syrian border. As cavalry, his unit served as the “eyes and ears” of the battalion, collecting and sorting intelligence critical for a dynamic picture of the current battlefield. The unit was a bridge between those inside and those outside the wire, with Fiebrandt himself spending much of his time outside, talking to troops and locals, and drawing and redrawing a visual, first-hand picture of the vicinity and its dangers. He knew how tall buildings were on different streets, where snipers could lurk, where you did and didn’t want to be. He became the point guy who noncommissioned officers and officers alike sought to get their information. As he put it, with modesty but candor, his superiors “had confidence in his competence.”

About three months before his deployment was up, he was ordered to take a few days of “R and R” (rest and relaxation) in Qatar before returning to the States for a longer two-week leave. Fiebrandt was reluctant to abandon the unit so close to the end of their deployment, but an order was an order and leave time was mandatory anyway. He was stressed of late, “bouncing inside and outside the wire,” as he put it, and at some level, he knew that a break was probably a good idea.

En route to Qatar, he learned that his unit was about to run a cordon and search operation in the southeast corner of Tal Afar that had become a major smuggling hub, with weapons pouring in from unsecured border spots with Syria. It was now time to flush out the weapon caches and insurgents with a strong show of troop forces and a door-to-door raid. What Fiebrandt didn’t know was that as part of the preparation, one of the platoons, headed by Lieutenant William Edens, a close friend, had been ordered to scout out a potential egress route at the backside of the city, where a wall of troops could be mounted to block insurgents fleeing the raid into the desert. It was during this preparatory drive-through that an IED struck Edens’s vehicle, killing him and two others. Fiebrandt learned about the incident a few days after he

arrived in Qatar. It hit him hard: “What bothered me was that it was in an area that I knew very well. It was in a part of the city that you really had to see in order to visualize. And I had this lurking suspicion that my soldiers, who had never actually, personally been there, didn’t really have a grasp of all the information that I felt I did. In some way, I almost felt responsible for not being there to provide them with the information that may have potentially resulted in a different outcome. So it is rough. It is a difficult thing for me to process. . . . So here I was sitting by a pool, and I hear this. It was—I don’t even know how to describe it. It was—devastating.”

Had Fiebrandt been there, he is sure he would have recommended against Edens’s taking that road. He knew that back area of the city was especially dangerous and that no unit vehicles had traveled down that road for good reason. He would have urged more reconnaissance on the routes and potential alternatives. “Whether or not I would have been successful in getting that to become the battle plan, I don’t know.” But given that he was relied on for this kind of information, he had a good chance of making the case. In his mind, he let down his command as well as a friend. What happened, as he puts it, “reflected poorly” on him. He “faults” himself for not being there, and though he is “frustrated” that his unit members “didn’t have the same clout” as he did, and couldn’t “pick up the slack” in his absence, he doesn’t fault them for failing to make the call.

Significantly, it is just this sense of feeling that he is the only guy who can do the job and that it is a job that requires constant vigilance, without gaps and breaks, that both hounds him and ultimately opens the way for self-exculpation. The fact that he didn’t *choose* to take the leave—that he was acting on an order—only gets him so far. The real exculpation comes some three to four months after the incident, when his deployment is over and he reflects on the incident in connection with whether he should re-enlist and return to Iraq after what would amount to a longer period away. He now sees, somehow, that the demand he put on himself to be quasi-omniscient, to keep constant vigil of the changing battlefield, as he puts it several times, without “gaps in his knowledge,” is unsustainable. He reconstructs the thinking: “Well, god, I thought to myself, if I am not here in a two-week period of time and things go to hell in a hand basket . . . what is the situation going

to be like when I get back, having been away longer? I am going to be less equipped to handle any further situations, because now I have a real gap in my knowledge. So all of this was coalescing at the same time, and it took me a while to sort of realize that I couldn't be the person that was there all the time. I could only be in one spot at a time. I could reenlist and I could stay in the job. But ultimately I am never going to cover the whole country. I was never going to be the one-stop intel analyst for the whole Army. Maybe my role was actually very small."

Looking on from the outside, we might say, "Well, of course." However well Fiebrandt served in his role and however critical he was to the safety of his unit, he wasn't there that day, he wasn't at fault for not being there that day, and he wasn't at fault for not briefing in advance his unit about a mission that he didn't even know was going to take place. Yet for Fiebrandt, it was an epiphany to see that holding himself responsible was grandiose. It required too idealized a sense of his role responsibilities and duties, and too idealized a set of expectations and injunctions about how he was supposed to function. And yet the unreasonableness of the demands to which he held himself only dawned on him with time, when he realized their absurd implications—that he was expecting of himself something close to full omniscience and omnipresence, a constant vigil on the battlefield that could produce an accurate, automatically refreshed picture without gaps, breaks, and breaches. He chuckles as he thinks about the absurdity of it all and of the *reductio* that it took to get him to realize it. But, it is a tentative laugh. He still knows the pull of those expectations and what it is like to be in their grip. He may no longer endorse the evaluations so intimately related to the feelings, but when he says, "I kind of fault myself," or "I almost felt responsible for not being there," he still can put himself in the mindset of what it was like to endorse those evaluations and feel their tugs. He is now at a point where he has moved on. But he got there only through an honest moral struggle with what it means to be vigilant as an intel guy. There were limits to his knowledge and frailties that he had to accept, however they compromised his agency. Like many soldiers I have spoken to, Fiebrandt doesn't easily volunteer the word *guilt*. His words are *fault* and *responsibility*. But, it is clear that he is talking about self-blame.

I tell this story to illustrate the function of guilt, as a way of working out the boundaries of moral responsibility. There is genuine *intellectual* figuring out. The emotion of guilt is not just recalcitrant in this case, with Fiebrandt seeking confirmation of a construal "despite believing that there *are* no genuine reasons in favor of that construal." Fiebrandt is not sure what he believes, and he is not going to let himself off the hook until he is sure. The rub, of course, is that having "to be sure" quickly spirals into intellectualization and rationalization, an inventing of reasons. In short, it becomes primitive thinking that mixes rational processing with the illogicality of wishful/magical thinking and presumptions of omniscience. There are elements of this in Fiebrandt's thinking. Without any inkling of the planned raid, Fiebrandt had no reason to inform his commanders of potential dangers before he left for R and R. Yet, he repeatedly put himself back in the reporting chain as if he knew, or should have known, what would become relevant only later. Similarly, there was little reason for him to have pointed out that particular street to Edens; though projecting forward, he helps himself to what is now the salience of that piece of knowledge and faults himself for failing to share it earlier. He faults himself for an epistemic stance he couldn't easily have had then.

But my point is what Fiebrandt was going through wasn't *just* that. He was also thinking, as he put it: Was he like the homeowner who never quite got around to putting a fence around the backyard pool and then one day discovers a child has waded into the pool and drowned? Or was he more like the cop who might have had helpful information but was legitimately off-duty at the moment and nowhere near the scene of danger? In the end, he seemed to think he was more like the cop than the homeowner, but accepting that required a lengthy psychological process of surmounting his self-reproach. It required accepting his limits and the bad luck of being up against them then. It required self-empathy.

SELF-EMPATHY

Much has been written on empathy in the past three decades, and so I will be brief in this prelude to self-empathy. "Empathy" is a term of fairly recent

academic coinage. It came into use at the turn of the twentieth century with the translation by Titchner of the German word *Einfühlung*—"to enter into a feeling"—a term itself first used by Robert Vischer in 1873 in the context of the psychology of aesthetics and developed by Theodor Lipps in the context of how we know other minds. Two prominent models of empathy have emerged in recent years as something of competitors in the psychological and philosophical literature. The first is empathy as vicarious arousal or contagion. The key historical figure is David Hume and his notion of sympathy, though what he means is what we would now call "empathy," a mechanism that allows us to "catch" another person's affect. We know others' emotions by coming to feel qualitatively similar or congruent emotions. Hume's metaphor is intuitive: We are attached, as if by a cord, with movement at one end reverberating at the other, causing a fainter impression of the original feeling. The second camp, led by Adam Smith, conceives of empathy in more robust, cognitive terms. Empathy (again, "sympathy" is his term) is a process that engages imagination, requiring simulation and the taking up of roles or perspectives. We come to know another's emotions by trading places "in fancy," as Smith puts it, and coming to "beat time" with their hearts. But Smith insists that the swap is not only situational but also dispositional. We not only stand in another's shoes, we try to become them in their shoes: to "enter, as it were, into his body and become in some measure the same person with him."

How do these models fare with respect to *self-empathy*, and in particular, with its role in surmounting overly harsh self-reproach? One obvious worry for the contagion model is that it suggests a picture of empathy as a repetition of the same stuck, often intrusive feeling, and it risks re-traumatization as a secondary effect of the repetition (even when the repetition is in the service of mastery and self-understanding). The idea of emotional fixity or stubbornness is part of a more general worry about the inbuilt biases of emotional construals (or ways of "seeing as") that predispose us to judgments (in the way perceptions do), but also, sometimes, predispose us to what we don't believe. As one philosopher puts it, emotional subjects tend to confirm rather than disconfirm their evaluative construals: "The feeling directed toward the object of the emotion, and the related perception of the object as having the

[evaluative] property, tend to be idées fixes to which reason has to cohere. The phenomenon is a familiar one: when we are afraid, we tend unknowingly to seek out features of the object of our fear that will justify the fear." So we have an epistemic tendency to build an "epistemic landscape" that coheres with an evaluation and feeling. We lock ourselves into a specific emotional take. Self-empathy, as a contagious re-experience of emotion, may exacerbate a tendency that we already have and that itself requires intervention.

Similar worries emerge for the simulation view of empathy, for it would require that we take up, again, the very perspective from which we are trying to free ourselves. In the cases I detailed above, the emotional subject's focus is framed by guilt and shame that "capture and consume attention." Self-empathy requires dwelling again in that perspective, and so re-experiencing the same emotions. In the case of traumatic emotions, it may involve re-traumatization.

These objections may be limited, but they make clear that if a notion of self-empathy is to be part of a model of emotional and moral growth, something more than simulating and re-experiencing traumatic events and emotions (whether through narration or other representational forms—e.g., artwork or dance) is required. Here, not surprisingly, the notion of empathy in psychotherapy is helpful. Psychotherapy of various stripes, and especially psychodynamic models, depends on a patient revisiting and reliving painful emotions, characteristically in the context of an empathic listener who can both bear compassionate witness to the pain and through various interventions and gentle corrections of bias, interpretations, or reframings help break the repetition and defenses. The therapist's empathy involves "tracking" a patient's emotion—sometimes through her own congruent reenactments or counter-transferences, other times more cognitively. But it also typically involves a conveyed sympathy—compassion, trust, rapport, and a nonjudgmental stance that help build a "working alliance." Empathy, in this rich context, involves access but also benevolence and trust. The stance is both protective and transformative, helping the patient safely to remember, revisit, and feel painful reactions to traumatic events, as well as to reconstrue what happened in ways that may involve fairer self-judgment and less rigid notions of success and failure that ultimately help loosen self-destructive feelings.

All this is relatively familiar stuff. Less familiar is the notion of self-empathy and what role it can play in moral healing, not as a competitor or replacement for second-personal empathy and its role in formal or informal therapy, but as something in addition that has an important place in its own right.

One way to think about self-empathy is as a conceptually or causally derivative notion. We look at ourselves as if from outside, from a spectatorial point of view. Adam Smith develops the stance: "Whatever judgment we can form concerning [our own conduct], accordingly, must always bear some secret reference, either to what are, or to what, upon a certain condition, would be, or to what, we imagine, ought to be the judgment of others." So, individuals may come to self-empathy by internalizing a second-personal instance of it, say, when they learn a measure of self-empathy through the empathy of a therapist toward them. In this case, they may internalize another's stance. But they may also internalize the stance that they take toward others.

So, too, a rape victim in a support group may come to feel self-empathy only after first feeling empathy toward others in the group who were similarly victimized. "Oh, my God, that's what happened to me," the victim might come to say to herself. The recognition of experiences similar to her own and the ensuing empathy toward others may enable her now to look at herself through new eyes. Second-personal empathy, both the receiving and giving of it, may thus prepare one for first-personal empathy. One gains an outside perspective on oneself that is qualitatively different from the punishing and shaming stance that has held one hostage until now. Veteran support groups may similarly enable self-empathy through the validating experience of empathizing and being empathized with.

In thinking about self-empathy, it is useful to turn to Aristotle's remarks about self-love (or self-friendship). He is aware that the idea of self-love may be a bit strained, both because it requires that we stand as subject *and* object toward ourselves, and more importantly because it connotes a problematic sort of selfishness. However, there is room for a good kind of self-love, he insists, that is the capacity of a self to listen to practical reason with equanimity. He associates this kind of self-love with nobility and the sacrifice characteristic of virtue and practical wisdom, and contrasts it with the baser kind of self-love that involves taking material advantage for oneself.

However, in the soldiers' stories that are my focus, there is no shortage of nobility and sacrifice. If anything, that aspiration for virtue is too hard-driving, giving way to too much self-punishment when luck runs out. Even so, Aristotle's idea of finding the right way to befriend oneself is useful here. The best kind of friendship—that of character friendship, he tells us—is an arena for character critique and moral growth, which like all friendship requires positive feelings (*philēsis*) toward one's object and feelings of goodwill (*eunoia*).

Self-empathy, as I am imagining it, involves a similar kind of self-friendship and requires a minimal measure of goodwill or compassion. I am also imagining it in the service of moral growth and in the cases I have limned of moral repair, of being called forth when one has held oneself accountable in a way that begins to seem unfair, or at least requires further reconsideration and reassessment of the nature of that accountability. And so the self-empathy I have in mind emerges as part of a moral process and is *earned* as a counterweight to overbearing self-judgment. This helps deflect various popular images of self-empathy as essentially self-kindness or self-compassion, a "going gentle on oneself," or, relatedly, the kind of self-esteem that is a contrived boost to undo self-deprecation, or a narcissistic self-absorption where gaze turns too much to the self and not enough to others.

But equally, I am not thinking of self-empathy as a minimization of self, a putting of self in its place, as Cicero redacts the Epicurean teaching: these are "the restrictions under which all humans live," "you are not the only one to have this happen," "to endure these things is human." The Epicureans are saying, in effect: Get over it; what you suffer is just a part of the shared human condition. But this is not the kind of self-empathy I have in mind. I am envisioning self-empathy as an emotional attitude that predisposes one to a fairer self-assessment, especially, in the cases I have focused on, where luck and accident and power ceded to others squeeze out one's moral efficacy or cast doubt on one's goodness.

As a kind of felt reactive attitude, self-empathy operates by drawing us in, in the way that *emotions*—and not less charged mental states do—rein in our attention on what is morally salient and significant to our moral agency and well-being. One way of thinking about Tom Fiebrandt's experience

is that he entreated himself to look back at the specific evaluations in his self-condemnation and the need for reopening the case. He went back to the very scenes that caused so much pain and assessed them from a new perspective that time and distance allow. In the dialogue of expressed reactive attitudes, overwrought guilt calls on the self to consider the reasonableness of showing oneself some compassion and empathy, in the same way that resentment asks those who have transgressed us to now give us reasons for reassurance or trust. The call in each case has the standing to expect a reply.

As suggested, the notion of self-esteem doesn't get at this reparative idea, but neither does that of self-respect. The underlying notion behind self-respect is that one is not servile or subordinate to others but, rather, an equal among equals. Yet someone may have no doubt about that, stand in no need of its reaffirmation, and yet still need a fairer hearing about whether "could have done's" entail "should have done's" in the case of guilt feelings, or about how fixed or severe the damage done to the self is in the case of shame feelings.

This reparative or therapeutic view of self-empathy presupposes the possibility of narrative distance and what one author has called a "narratable" conception of self: "We are able to deploy in thought and feeling a narratable conception of oneself: with a narratable past, which one now remembers, interprets, and evaluates in various ways; with a present; and with a narratable future, about which one can make plans, have hopes and aspirations, and so on. This conception of oneself is the narrative sense of self."

One is "in effect seeing oneself as another." And this creates an evaluative and epistemic gap essential to reappraisal and reevaluation: "One now knows what one did not know then; ... one can now take an evaluative stance which differs from the stance that one then took."

My notion of self-empathy adds to this narratable conception of self an ability to see from beyond or outside without radical dissociation or alienation from the old self and its ways of seeing *and* feeling. That is part of the force of the notions of affective and cognitive reengagement. In this sense, self-empathy allows for self-reintegration (a kind of connectedness), rather than serial reinvention or radical conversion. Though one may have psychologically and emotionally moved on, one can still remember how one saw and felt things. One can still be affected, even if slightly, in some such way.

As I am imagining it, in a case like Prior's, he can still feel a bit of the bite of the old guilt. It doesn't rattle him any longer, but in narrating the story, he is nonetheless affected by the remembering, in some way as he once was. That is not all he feels with respect to the events, though. He now sees circumstances far more completely and his emotions reflect those changed appraisals. But it is not just that he is now *tolerating* what he used to feel or think, or *accepting* and *owning* it for what it was, as therapists might put it. Rather, he also knows how it feels, as if in *muscle memory*. That is part of his self-empathy. Similarly, in Jeff Hall's case, we can imagine him experiencing a flush of shame as he retells the story and brings to mind the faces of the father and daughter or hears the commander's intonation as he gives him the order to deliver the envelope. The shame is no longer intrusive and paralyzing, as it is in posttraumatic stress. But it is still accessible. Self-empathy, as I am using the term—in addition to a compassionate, less judging regard—involves this kind of affective, empathic access.

Obviously the degree of access will depend on how changed a person's psychological make-up has become. Access exists along a continuum. When the narrative distance is great, an individual may be able to remember only coldly and cognitively, with little emotional valence. He isn't much alive to how circumstances felt then. At this extreme, a limit to self-empathy has been reached, at least for a while.

A STOIC LESSON: THE SAGE AND THE PROGRESSOR

To illustrate the idea of self-empathy as empathic access, the Stoic writers discussed two conceptions of emotional change. One characterizes the path to emotional enlightenment of the sage; the other, describes the emotional reforms of the "progressor"—that is, the student who makes moral progress but never reaches sagehood (namely, you and I, and all those I interview!). Self-empathy, both as empathic access and as compassionate, fair regard, can play a role in the progressor's life, though not easily at the point of sagehood. And it's the reasons that help underscore the notion of self-empathy I am after.

But first, some very brief background is helpful. The Stoics hold that emotions are ways of accepting certain impressions or construals about the world. And so, they are cognitivists. The impressions constitutive of ordinary emotions (and there are four basic ones) have to do with goods or bads in the present or future: *appetite* is directed at a future good and *fear* at avoiding a future bad, while *pleasure* is directed at a present good and *distress* at a present bad.

The Stoic prescriptive claim overlaid on top of this is that, in experiencing these ordinary emotions, we are assenting to *false* impressions about what is good and bad and what will make us happy. So, in experiencing ordinary desires and appetites, we mistakenly think the objects of those desires and appetites—food, drink, comfortable homes, and beloved children and spouses—are real goods and fail to grasp that the only real good in life is virtue, and that it alone constitutes well-being or happiness (*eudaimonia*). Everything else is an *indifferent*—it makes no substantive difference to our happiness. To be a sage is to be free of all those ordinary emotions and their clingy attachments, and prize virtue as the only real good. The sage who arrives at this enlightened state will not be emotion-free—truly *a-pathetic* (without emotion): he will have cultivated or “good” emotions (*eupatheiai*), hygienic versions of three of the four basic emotions (there is no good kind of distress for a sage) that will function as handmaidens of virtue and gatekeepers against vice.

The taxonomy is clunky. But the point of introducing it is that to be a sage who sees externals as truly indifferent requires *radical* transformation, a conversion of sorts, with a discrete break from a past self. You are either a sage or a fool, in one of the many hyperbolic Stoic formulations, and to become a sage is to leave behind what you used to experience as a fool. Stably recalibrating externals so that they are now seen as indifferents removes the sage from the emotional vulnerability to them that the fool still experiences. But crucially, for our purposes, this also means that the sage remembers his past in a way that is *affectively disengaged* from how he used to experience it. The remembered events simply don’t touch him in the way that they were felt. They have lost their charge and emotional valence. They are not relived affectively, not even faintly. There is no “Proustian madeleine.” Thus with equanimity comes a change in phenomenological access. And so the sage loses empathic access

to who he was, but also, presumably, empathic access to those who are still emotionally like he used to be. In short, on this interpretation, the price of being a sage is that you lose connection to what it feels like to be a fool. This may be a blessing that makes achieving the most stable kind of happiness possible. But it definitely puts the sage at odds with most of humanity, including who he once was. This is a radical picture of conversion that requires dissociation from the past as part of an embrace of an enlightened future.

Admittedly, the picture is complicated by the Stoic concession that the sage still can shutter and shake. A sage’s hair may stand on end at the sight of awful physical danger, “the knees of even the fiercest soldier [may] tremble a little as the signal is given for battle.” Still these are not full-blown emotions, insist the Stoics. They are protoemotions (*propathēiai*), *physiological* disturbances that don’t impugn the sage’s pure virtue. They are caused by seductive impressions that only when assented to become proper emotions. “If anyone thinks that pallor, falling tears, sexual excitement or deep sighing or a sudden glint in the eyes or something similar are an indication of emotion . . . , he is wrong,” insists Seneca. “He fails to see that these are just bodily agitations.” Emotion “never occurs without the mind’s assent.” The sage knows not to give assent to these seductive presentations.

This idea of a “protoemotion” drives home the point that the sage still can *feel* what he used to feel and so preserves empathic access with his past. (And I have made this point myself in some reconstructions of the sage.) But the congruence of feelings, here, is thin and merely physiological. The battle cry is sounded, the sage’s knees tremble, presumably as they used to, in the old pre-enlightenment days. But it is a physical sensation in his knees, like a startle reflex. Even if he can remember, cognitively, the thoughts that were part of an earlier set of reactions—that the enemy is fearsome and death unnerving—those are old appraisals no longer infused with affect. He doesn’t relive the fear. Nor does he assent to impressions of present threats that would bring on similar feelings now. His body is just “acting out” involuntarily. He knows that to have the old emotions is both unfitting morally and unfitting epistemically, misrepresenting what is good and bad out there. And his character is in line with those new judgments. The upshot is that empathy with his past self is precluded as a condition of equanimity, but so too, it seems, is empathy

with others who still feel and see through pre-enlightened sensibilities. This may be a new kind of numbness.

Contrast this picture of a sage with the less idealized model of emotional change that the Stoics also offer. The progressor aims for the sage's goal, to recalibrate values and emotions and thus achieve the self-sufficiency that comes with grasping inner virtue as the only true good. But the goal is always only asymptotic, and there is progress but also the possibility of regress. Even when the aspirant is most zealous, there is still empathic openness to what it feels like to be emotionally vulnerable and hurt. This is the best most of us mortals can expect.

Seneca, at times, takes up this stance when he writes to his moral tutees, his progressors, from the vantage point of a fellow progressor who is just a bit further along. He is the doctor as well as the patient: "Listen to me, therefore, as you would as if I were talking to myself, ... lying ill in the same hospital." In a letter to Lucilius upon the death of his good friend Flaccus, Seneca urges Lucilius to move beyond his grief and "not ... sorrow more than is fitting," though take comfort in the fact that the "the ideal soul"—the sage—can himself be "stung by an event like this." Still, if the sting (*morsus*) is a reference only to the physiological protoemotions to which the sage remains vulnerable, then Seneca is not offering much of a bone.

The real concession comes when Seneca confides that "he who writes these words to you is no other than I, who wept so excessively for my dear friend Annaeus Serenus that, in spite of my wishes, I must be included among the examples of men who have been overcome by grief." He suffers real grief, and not just protogrief—*lachrimae* that are an involuntary, physiological drip. Granted, the mature Seneca now "condemns" (*damno*) this behavior and believes he might have avoided it had he practiced then the Stoic consolations he now embraces. But what catches the reader's attention, and no doubt Lucilius's, is the empathic stance both toward himself and toward his student. Despite the psychological progress, Seneca remains alive to what he once felt. We can imagine him remembering the narrative details of the loss of Serenus and the actual feelings that he felt then—the helplessness and grief as he shed excessive tears, the shock and surprise, as he says, that someone so much younger than himself should predecease him. The feelings are

repudiated but not disowned. Seneca, *qua* progressor, doesn't pity his former self for having been so vulnerable or fear for his current self that he will be derailed by the glance backward. In contrast, the sage both condemns his former behavior and feelings and has made them alien. The progressor maintains a kind of self-empathy with his past as he moves forward.

SELF-EMPATHY IS NOT SELF-FORGIVENESS

Some readers may have the nagging thought that what I have been after all along is not self-empathy but self-forgiveness. Isn't it forgiveness that can really heal the guilt-wracked soul? Isn't it self-forgiveness that helps Tom Fiebrand move forward, or Jeff Hall leave behind the awful weight of guilt and shame?

Even if a notion of *self*-forgiveness is coherent in cases where one has transgressed against another, still it seems an ill-fitting notion when there is no real intentional wrongdoing for which to demand forgiveness, as in the case of these soldiers. True, as a more general idea of foreswearing anger and blame, it may have its place in the surmounting of self-reproach, irrespective of whether that reproach is deserved or not. But even so, self-forgiveness doesn't expose the more complex evaluative and affective mechanism I have been keen to explore—of surmounting certain emotions with compassion while preserving empathic access to them.

And why is that access important and worth preserving? I suspect it is because I don't believe that difficult conflicts and the emotions that express them are ever so completely resolved that all residue of such conflicts disappears. Self-empathy is a way of remaining attuned to those tugs and pulls as they morph into new shapes on new landscapes. It is a compassionate form of keeping self-vigil. That said, we may also need self-empathy in the cases where we have, in fact, transgressed or acted morally wrongly and forgiveness, toward ourselves or from others, doesn't seem quite right—perhaps because the wrongdoing was so heinous (and unforgivable).

We've traveled a long and winding path in this sketch of the role of therapeutic self-empathy in a homecoming, uncovering along the way historical and philosophical resonances in the notion of self-empathy. As I have

developed it, self-empathy is a composite notion that resists easy unification. A quick recap of some of its features will help. Self-empathy involves:

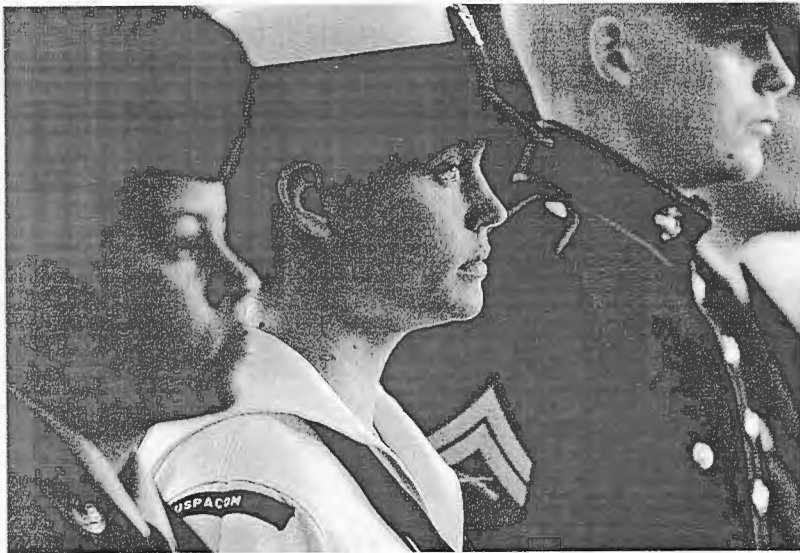
- ♦ **Affective access** to past emotionally imbued experiences, such that one is able to “feel” and recapture something of the tone and valence of those experiences. This is the force of “being alive” to those experiences, not numb or dissociated. (This picks up on Hume’s notion of empathy as a way of “catching” affect.)
- ♦ **Cognitive and imaginative engagement** such that one can reinterpret, reframe, and so reconstrue emotionally powerful and, in some cases, traumatic experiences. This will often involve reassessment of the evaluative dimensions of that experience—one’s sense of betraying or being betrayed, or letting oneself or others down, and so on. (This idea resonates with Smith’s cognitive gloss on empathy as involving imagination or “fancy.”)
- ♦ **Compassionate and benevolent regard** toward oneself, especially in cases where it is needed to counter harsh self-rebuke. In the cases I am most interested in, this attitude can often amount to a fairer and more equitable assessment of responsibility that’s crucial for moral repair. (Relevant here is Aristotle’s notion that all friendships, including those toward self, involve feelings of affection and goodwill, and that the best friendships involve moral growth.)
- ♦ **Reactive attitude structure**, in the sense that self-empathy is an emotionally charged way of calling out to oneself with the normative expectation of a reply. We can think of the narratives I have retold as involving moral calls to self about how to hold oneself accountable. Soldiers such as Tom Fiebrand and Jeff Hall are exposing their shame and guilt and demanding of themselves a shift from blame to *credit* for doing what was at the time reasonable or appropriate or simply the best that they could do.
- ♦ **A narratable conception of the self**, in the sense that in understanding one’s past actions, one narrates as if from outside, with a perspective not shared by the self that is inside the narrative: one

knows now what one didn’t know then. This notion of self invokes a historical perspective; one now has an epistemic and evaluative advantage that only time affords.

- ♦ **Self-forgiveness** may figure as a companion notion in this account of self-empathy. However, forgiveness typically connotes an objective wrongdoing that one forswears and seeks atonement for as a condition of reentry into a moral community. Insofar as the kinds of moral injuries I have been focusing on do not typically involve objective wrongdoing, self-forgiveness seems inapt. Granted, I have spoken of self-exoneration in places, but I am bending that term to capture the psychological sense of release from reproach and the move toward credit giving and self-trust, without commitment to the *fact* of a wrongdoing.

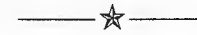
Perhaps the best way to capture that move from negative to positive self-reactive attitudes is by thinking about the shame or guilt that can come with nonperfect fulfillment of imperfect duties, and the ultimate acceptance of one’s bounded but nonetheless honorable and creditworthy engagement. So, I couldn’t save my buddy, but I was still a good soldier or Marine and I did nothing that intentionally or through negligence or incompetence or self-serving ends exposed them to undue risk or harm. To arrive at that point is no small achievement for many service members. And it may take the kind of self-empathy that is hard to come by for many a tough soldier.

To sum up, in thinking about self-empathy I have focused on moral injuries that may *seem* only apparent because the wrongs *are* only apparent. But the injuries are no less real. And the soldiers’ suffering is no less real. Soldiers routinely impose moral responsibility on themselves in the face of factors that make light of their own agency, whether flukish accident, the tyranny of bureaucracy and public indifference, gappy intelligence, or all too lethal high-tech and low-tech weaponry. All this begs for healing, in part, through the consolations of self-empathy that allow one to touch the past in a way that doesn’t devastate and to see a future filled with some sense of trust and hope in oneself and others.



How deep is trust within the ranks?

CHAPTER 5



REBUILDING TRUST

"A DEER IN HUNTING SEASON"

In late 2005, "Sally," then twenty-two, deployed to Iraq from an Air Force base in the Midwest. The walk into the chow hall each day was a routine reminder of her perilous state as an attractive woman in a predominantly male and fairly sexist military. "I would walk in and everybody would stare at me," she said. "I felt like a deer in hunting season." She felt guilty relief when another woman would come on base, and eyes were redirected. What particularly upset her was that officers led in the staring: "The first ones that I noticed ogling me were the commanders, the higher officers, and after two seconds, they would look down or look away. So they are feeling kind of ashamed, and they know that they all have simultaneously reached that point in ogling and feel like, 'I shouldn't be doing this.'"

Sally wasn't the only woman I interviewed who told me of the chow hall ordeal. "When I would go into the dining room, I mean *everybody* is looking at you. There will be tables of guys elbowing each other: 'Hey, check it out,'" a mid-level Air Force officer told me on a recent visit I made to give a talk at the Air Force Academy. The leering wore on her, though she was no stranger to that kind of gender-drenched environment. In 2003, she was a freshman

cadet at the Academy when it was roiled by sexual harassment and assault scandals. She now teaches there and sees an all too familiar pattern of sexism persisting in many of her classes and pervading life on the base, in subtle and not so subtle ways.

In Sally's case, downrange, her officers' predatory leers inspired little confidence in their leadership: "When all else fails, they're who I should be able to go with problems ... but they're having a hard time, just struggling with my presence." Still, she felt conflicted throughout her deployment, and afterwards, about whether she was empathetic enough toward many of the males and took seriously enough their sense of sexual deprivation. She worried that she was putting her own fears before their needs. "We're sexual creatures, I understand this," she told me. "So, I'm sure in an all-male shop the sexual urge was a little bit more rampant and the frustration dealing with that built up. ... I think I always fought with whether I was compassionate enough for them. ... I always struggled with how much I could put up with, and how much I couldn't."

Two harassment incidents forced her to turn to her superiors for intervention. In the first, a unit member began to stalk her, spreading rumors that they were sleeping together. Given the daily chow-hall ogling, she was "already hypervigilant; then, on top of that, I had to look out of the corners of my eye all the time to see if someone was following me. It was really stressful." In a second incident, she noticed that her underwear went missing while she was doing her laundry one day. She had stepped outside the laundry area to take a break for a few minutes; when she returned to fold the dry clothes, her panties and bras had vanished. She felt embarrassed and exposed, and ashamed even to have to write to her mother to ask, without explanation, for a care package, not of goodies but of a new supply of underwear.

After the theft, she decided it was time to report what was going on to her immediate supervisor, a male NCO (noncommissioned officer). Though she was reluctant to burden him with her problems in the midst of a war, and especially embarrassed to have to expose "the weird" underwear theft, she felt threatened and needed help. It got to a point, she said, where "I just couldn't take it anymore." We might say that she took a stab at trust.

Trust and trustworthiness are irreducible elements in the fabric of military life. They are the glue of any good military and are key to the willingness of battle buddies to fight and die for each other. Ordinary trust is the confidence that people won't betray you or waylay you in an alley or fail to bring you your soup, if they're your waiters. The bar is obviously higher for battle buddies than for waiters and diners. And yet trust is constantly tested in war among those who are supposed to be one's archdefenders. Betrayal by command or peer or institution is all too common a theme in military life and a significant cause of moral injury. The residue of those betrayals is part of the long afterwar in need of repair, in part through the renewals of trust at home.

The issue can be especially acute for women in the services, at home and abroad. Overall, women make up about 14 percent of the active-duty force, and on some bases abroad during the recent conflicts, they have been only 2 percent of the personnel, or 1 in 50. Betrayals in war zones can leave women with a profound sense of isolation, unprotected on American bases in a foreign enemy's land. On ships, where battle can quickly turn internecine in the absence of an outer enemy, women often feel especially alone and at risk. Trust's call, so critical to a band of warriors—that one can count on a buddy to cover one's back—falls on deaf, and sometimes hostile, ears. The reasonable expectation that battle buddies will be trustworthy, motivated by goodwill, or respect, or conscientious performance of duty—or more minimally, interest in reputation bound up with being regarded as trustworthy—is too often violated. Systemic biases underlying gender betrayal in the military, including sexual assault, harassment, unwanted contact, and inequities in prosecution, have been slow to be exposed, and only now, as I write, are making their way to the Senate floor, with proposals and responses of service chiefs. High-profile cases are exposing a broken judicial system and ill-thought-out responses to political pressures that can make worse the inequities.

It is not just *women* who are abused sexually inside the wire. In a recent report on sexual assault, the Pentagon estimated that 26,000 service members experienced unwanted sexual contact in 2012, up from 19,000 in 2010. Of those cases, 53 percent involved attacks on men, mostly by other men. This should not be surprising, given that men make up the bulk of the force and predatory sexual behavior has long been a form of bullying and

entertainment in an all-male force. When I taught at the Naval Academy in the mid-1990s, the masculine entrenched environment made life for some of my women students desperately uncomfortable. A more recent high-profile sexual assault case at Annapolis, and campus-wide shunning of the female accuser, suggest that patterns of sexism have not changed much in twenty years and may even be more entrenched now than then. Given the difficulties for victims of sexual abuse, male and female, to come forward, the statistics likely underreport the incidences. Victims are left to suffer with shame and humiliation and trauma that are often overlooked in favor of more traditional combat exposure trauma.

But what the public debate presumes is that we all understand well enough what trust is and how to rebuild it. I don't share that presumption. Given how critical trust is within the military and to reentry at home, it warrants our careful scrutiny. In this chapter, we listen to several female service members and the serious challenges to trust that they face. And we listen to an ancient Greek male warrior whose willingness to trust the Greeks after a massive betrayal gives general insight into the conditions necessary for trusting again.

WHY TRUST OTHERS?

I conceive of trust as I have the other reactive attitudes, as implicitly involving a call to a person that you are holding him to account, with a normative expectation of an appropriate reply. Specifically, it is a summoning of another to recognize that you are in need or dependent in a specific way and require attention or assistance in that domain. In a most general sense, it is an exposure of vulnerability to another of one's finitude as a practical agent, with the expectation that the other will be responsive. Trust is as basic to the military as forming a cadre.

But why think you can trust another, especially when you lack strong beliefs that the other won't let you down? Why should a trustor trust a trustee to do something?

Consider Sally again. In coming forward, Sally might think, this man may be no more concerned about my well-being than my harassers. But in his role

as supervisor, he is *constrained* to help me, and if he cares at all about compliance and conscientious fulfillment of his duties, then he should behave reasonably. In the philosophical literature, some have objected that this line of thought amounts more to *reliance* on another person than real trust (where reliance is a predictive notion that could be answered by the workings of a machine, stable patterns of nature, or a person's dependable psychological habits). Trust, in contrast, is a normative notion, an expectation based on a belief about how people *ought* to behave toward you, given your normative standing or status. Specifically, it is an expectation of another's genuine interest in your well-being or dignity. As one philosopher has argued in important early work on trust, trust is the expectation of another showing you goodwill. But while conscientiousness may be a thinner kind of moral (or normative) motive, it still seems to ground a kind of trustworthiness. Indeed, in Sally's case, knowing that her supervisor is motivated by conscientiousness in taking care of his troops might be enough for her to feel she can count on him. In this regard, conscientiousness as motivating trustworthiness works like goodwill. As a conscientious teacher, it is just part of my role to be responsive in various ways to my students—and so, too, a doctor toward her patients and, similarly, a first-line supervisor toward his soldiers. His job just is to take care of those under his command.

The rub, of course, is that in practice, in the context at hand, an entrenched male military, what constitutes the ideal of a conscientious commander is often laced with deep-seated bias and built-in institutional prejudice that can harm and disadvantage women and other minority and marginalized groups. (The issues can range from sexual harassment and assault [of women and men alike] to gender "naivete" with regard to hygiene requirements that can mean downrange port-a-potties that can't handle tampon disposal and stench.) The more general point is that social norms can compromise positive responsiveness to need, whether the responsiveness is in the form of goodwill (respect and benevolence) or a blander conscientious performance of duty. Each alike can be blind. On their own, they are abstract ideals that don't necessarily meet the needs and capabilities of real people in concrete cases.

Others have argued that the ground of trustworthiness has little to do with moral motives, thick or thin, and reduces simply to self-interest.

To be regarded as trustworthy by others satisfies a person's basic need for self-esteem: We desire and take pleasure in each other's good opinions. And being trusted is one such important opinion. The "cunning" of trust, as one philosopher puts it, is that it takes a motive that might be thought of as problematic and tames it for its social capital. In a parallel vein, another author argues that it is in a trustee's own self-interest to maintain a trust relationship and so in her interest to "encapsulate" the trustor's interests within her own. Trust banks on that confidence: "You can more confidently trust me if you know that my own interest will induce me to live up to your expectations. Your trust is your expectation that my interest encapsulates yours." But while it may be useful at times to ground trust in another's self-interest, relationships built on mutual self-interest (such as utility, as Aristotle argued long ago in cataloguing different kinds of friendships) tend not to be all that stable: "The useful is not permanent but is always changing," he reminds us. Self-interest is a wobbly ground for friendship, in part because what's in one's interest doesn't always coincide, or coincide for long, with the interests and needs of another. Similarly, self-interest is too transient a ground to motivate stable trust. Self-advantage can pull apart from what others are counting on one to do. And when it does, and prevails, trust and trustworthiness give way.

This is the backdrop for thinking about Sally's narrative. Imagine for the moment what she was probably hoping: that her interaction with her supervisor would be trusting in the sense that he would show her some goodwill. In coming forward, she is hoping he responds to her with genuine interest in her well-being and with an acknowledgment that she has been mistreated and threatened. Her trust overture may well be tentative. It's as if she is asking her supervisor, implicitly, if she can trust him before she trusts him. We do this kind of thing all the time when we make general inquiries: "Can I ask you a question?" is sometimes the preface to asking a question. What we are trying to do is establish our listener's standing, or maybe "instate" it through some prep work. We roll out the substantive exchange slowly so that we can build confidence in a partnership. In *deciding* to come forward, Sally is doing some of this. She's setting up a meeting, asking her supervisor to make time, asking him, in a way, to warm to the idea of being interested in her well-being and her personal safety on base.

Once they meet, his goodwill toward her would be communicated in just that kind of responsiveness, adapted, of course, in the way that attitude always is, to our personalities or temperament and professional codes of conduct. But the point is that goodwill is normatively expected. But so, too, is conscientious fulfillment of his office as a good supervisor, role modeling by example, and setting the right kind of nonsexist tone for the command climate within his unit. When she exposes her vulnerability, she in essence is saying, "I'm counting on you. I can't handle this one on my own." The interaction, ideally, puts in motion a reflective loop: he knows that she is counting on him, and she knows that he knows, and so on. As Aristotle might put it, building on a metaphor from the ancient Greek Stoic Chrysippus (280–207 BCE), and preserved by Seneca in his account of the mutual interaction in benefit and gratitude: Each "does not fail to notice" that the other "has properly thrown and caught [the ball] from one pair of hands to the other." That mutual acknowledgment ought to reinforce the supervisor's sense of being held accountable and of Sally's holding him accountable. But she might also think about his potential trustworthiness in more strategic terms, as we've said: that it's in his basic self-interest to care about her opinion of him, and that of other women on base who, if he responds well, may come to view him as a trustworthy advocate and good leader.

However, from my conversations with Sally, it's clear that she didn't ever develop that kind of trust toward her supervisor, or other senior officers, male or female, for that matter. (There were no female officers in her unit, and the one female officer outside her unit was well above her rank and outside what Sally viewed an appropriate reporting chain.) In short, Sally never got the sense that her supervisor was particularly responsive to her. In the case of the stalker incident, he did step in and mediate. But in the case of the underwear theft, he wasn't particularly empathetic or much interested in following up. He didn't seem to think it threatened her in any serious way or made her feel less safe in a war zone. In the end, she relied on her supervisor in only a perfunctory way; she never felt like she was being cared for in the way that noncommissioned officers are supposed to "take care" of their troops. The suspension of trust exposed an irony not lost on Sally: "I remember I did seek service with a chaplain ... and he happened to be a captain. One of my

complaints was that I didn't feel like I could trust any of the officers. It was an awkward moment, because I'm telling an officer I don't think I can trust officers!"

In the end, in the absence of trust, she became self-protective. She "androgenized" herself, she said—never wore make-up and cut down on her use of shampoo after receiving flirtatious comments on how nice her hair smelled. "You just don't want to look pretty. You want to be clean. But that's it." And she began carrying an unconcealed knife to meals, clipped to her wallet and slung around her body on a string.

TRUST AS REPARATIVE

Sally's bid at trust was not successful. Her resentment and fear on base went unabated. She never got the reassurance that what happened wouldn't be repeated. Her wariness toward many of the males around her triggered a backlash of defensive hostility and more reactive vigilance on her part. Her supervisor did little to improve the climate. A year or more after her deployment, she was still cautiously working out "trust issues" back home: The knife was "only an Iraq thing," she told me. "I now carry mace in my car. For the most part, civilians take care of their sexual needs. And I have good enough judgment to know how to keep myself away from the wrong people." By and large, she was amazed at how much more easily she could breathe on a large coed university campus that had near gender parity in its student population. Her sense of being routinely toyed with as a woman was beginning to lift.

Put all this into the language of expressed reactive attitudes, the manifest attitudes by which we hold each other accountable as members of a shared moral community: expressed resentment is moral address mediated through anger. We react with hurt and pain to something that has been done to us that violates due regard or a norm, and we sanction the transgressor through blame. Resentment demands recuperation of respect and goodwill in a negative way, through direct or second-personal reproach. Indignation is a third party's reproach toward those who have injured you. In one sense, it is moral

protest *on your behalf* for an injury against *you*; in another sense, it is moral protest more globally for an affront against *one's shared humanity*. Either way, it involves the kind of intervention and empathy Sally hoped she would inspire in her supervisor, in even the faintest way, when she came forward.

But of course we hold each other to account in positive ways, too, as I have been arguing throughout, and we build partnerships and engagements through more reparative forms of moral (and normative) address. Resentment sometimes paves the way for it. In a formulation used earlier, the "preventive fantasy" in retributivist attitudes is the thought that the other *might have* acknowledged me. There was room and reason in another's deliberations for a different, more positive response and regard.

Trust makes good that fantasy. As another philosopher has put it well, "the sought-for 'answer' to being 'addressed' in the mode of resentment is 'be assured, trust again.'" This is to say that trust can be reparative. To loosely repurpose Nietzsche's idiom for *ressentiment* (which we considered in chapter 2), trust is a *positive* "reactive pathos." It is a positive attitude of holding another accountable that may work to undo resentment.

While resentment looks primarily backwards, *reacting* to what another has done, trust along with hope looks primarily forward, imagining and *projecting*. Trust is anticipatory, and broadly speaking, takes the form of a confidence (albeit often mild or weak), or an expectation about a person that falls short of sure belief and that involves some exposure to vulnerability and risk-taking. When expressed and explicit, as we have said before, it signals to the other that one is counting on her to recognize and respond to one's dependency or entrustment in a certain domain. We are counting on her to be responsive to our trust and to mirror that trust through trustworthiness. Granted, as we've noted, there are often backward-looking (reactive) reasons that support one's forward-looking projection of trustworthiness in another, such as past evidence of goodwill or solidarity or conscientiousness. Still, in trusting, one takes a gamble. That is especially so for Sally. She comes forward hesitantly in a way that so many victims of sexual harassment and abuse do. She fears she won't be taken seriously or believed, and that talk of bras and panties will seem like girly patter. She's not playing along in the "bro" game. Still, Sally takes a chance in summoning help. It is clear that she is

not asking for a moral bludgeoning against the stalker or underwear thief; reparative trust can be built on empathy. Empathy goes a long way—in this case, by the supervisor showing that he “gets it,” understands why she might feel unsafe, inside the wire and not just outside. If she trusts, in part, it is in order to bootstrap trust with a trustee who hasn’t yet fully earned it. Even if she fails, she reasons that she needs to take the risk—treat the supervisor *as if* he’s trustworthy and responsive to her call. She doesn’t begin by wearing the knife. That comes after.

“HE GAVE ME HIS HAND, BUT TOOK MY BOW”

Let us now enter the realm of Greek mythology and take up another complex tale of testing trust. The trust trial comes in the aftermath of a massive betrayal by command, a festering resentment, and an entreaty to trust again by an emissary of the group who betrayed. The strange trust relationship I refer to is that between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus in Sophocles’s tragedy *Philoctetes*. The case has little on its face to do with women in the military. But it is has everything to do with betrayal and abandonment, and the bootstrapping of trust afterwards. And in this regard, it speaks to women *and* men in the services who may suffer betrayals by command, or by political leaders, or by public and private institutions of all sorts, or by civilians too ready to say to a service member, “I just can’t imagine what you’ve been through” and so perpetuate the myth that the military are made of different stuff from the rest of humankind, and that their experiences and traumas are somehow unfathomable and unspeakable. That remark is part of an implicit call and response, antiphonal to a service member’s own defensive retreat, “You wouldn’t understand, you weren’t there.” From both sides, the remarks conspire to create a romantic view of the warrior class that too easily lets civilians off the hook and invites isolation and betrayal by distance.

Our tragic tale has to do with profound isolation and betrayal. But before recounting the story, it is important to remember that Sophocles (496–405 BCE) was himself a Greek general whose plays, like *Ajax* and

Philoctetes, were public reentry rituals of sorts performed before returning veterans. They served as a public homecoming, or *nostos*. The audience would likely include top brass in the front rows, and hoplites, or foot soldiers, in the upper reaches, in an amphitheater that could hold some 15,000. The audience knew war all too well. Sophocles was writing in a century in which there were seven decades of war. The reenactment, or *mimēsis*, of betrayals by command, awful separations from family and home, abandonments due to war-incurred disfigurements, and psychological maladaptions were among the themes. But so, too, especially in *Philoctetes*, was the theme of repair through trust and hope. The audience learning from the suffering (and growth) on stage, through the cathartic and identificatory emotions of pity and fear, could, as Aristotle teaches in the *Poetics*, engage in their own healing from war.

The story will be familiar to some readers. Philoctetes is a Greek warrior marooned for ten years on the island of Lemnos, abandoned by his Greek commanders as they headed on to Troy. He was left behind because of a fetid foot wound he suffered as the result of a bite from a poisonous snake guarding the tomb of the goddess Chryse. Shunned by his command and by a fleet that couldn’t tolerate the putrid smell of his mutilated foot or the constant shrieks of his anguished wailing, he was left to die with his “weeping disease.” But ten years into his solitary confinement, Philoctetes, or more properly his bow, becomes critically necessary for the victory of the Greeks against the Trojans. And so Odysseus, trickster and cunning speechifier, enlists a boy warrior, Neoptolemus, with the right credentials and ancestral lineage (he is son of the deceased and glorious Achilles), to do Odysseus’s and the Greek army’s bidding. The two arrive at the island, Odysseus keeping out of sight as he coaches Neoptolemus to capture the bow through a snare of trust: “You know I could never speak to him as you can / He will trust you, and you will stay safe.”

Like a good military interrogator, Neoptolemus is to build trust in order to exploit it. Of course it is not intelligence that he will gather, but the “unsailable weapon” itself. He is to say that he too has a grudge against the Greek commanders for not holding him worthy of inheriting Achilles’s arms. And from that sense of shared *ressentiment*, Philoctetes will begin to make himself vulnerable to Neoptolemus’s overtures. He will begin to trust.

The trusting at first seems odd. Why should Philoctetes trust this young stranger who has pulled in from Troy and arrived so mysteriously on his island? Moreover, is it trust or just desperation that disarms him of caution? For he is miserable and lonely, and above all else craves safe passage home. He longs for human contact, and after a decade of solitary confinement thirsts for any news a messenger can bring of the battlefield and the fate of his fellow soldiers. In light of all this, is he just too ready to gain a friend, as a possible meaning of his name suggests ("he who gains a friend")? Trust is an attitude born of dependency. But when the need is abject and the power others have over one is near total, trust is manipulated, not given. Indeed, as I said, Neoptolemus's narrative of betrayal by the Greek commanders might be seen as an ancient version of a rapport-building technique that a good interrogator uses. The good interrogator develops an intimate and empathic relationship with his subject, and may even sow the seeds for an erotic or idealizing "transference" onto himself that can then be exploited for further domination and advantage: Neoptolemus rehearses plausible grounds for rapport: "Abused and insulted, I am sailing for home / Deprived of what is rightfully mine / By that bastard son of bastards, Odysseus. / I hold the commanders accountable. / Philoctetes is moved, as planned. / We share a 'cargo of common grievances,' he says. / 'You and I sing the same song.'"

The trust is coerced by faked trustworthiness, or at least trustworthiness fashioned with bits and pieces of truth, designed to ensnare. That is the hoax, a kind of Trojan horse rolled onto this island, once again engineered by the wily Odysseus, with the "young warrior" Neoptolemus (which is just what his name means) being initiated by his side in the sorts of treachery often morally permissible in warfare, though typically not directed against one's own. But is there any genuine trust and trustworthiness displayed in this play? Is there trust and trustworthiness that is not part of an intelligence scheme? There is. But it has to be developed. And its manifestation is critical for Philoctetes's moral repair from the double moral betrayal he suffers by his command (the first in the original abandonment by his commanders, the second in this trumped-up trust hoax). The power of trust in this parable, and the fact that it comes into being in the very moment of a potential massive betrayal, is an object lesson, albeit an idealized one, of trust's generative capacities.

The pivotal moment comes when Philoctetes, persuaded to leave the island with Neoptolemus and set sail for what he believes is home, gathers his few belongings, including his famous bow. Eager to get his hands on the bow, Neoptolemus asks to see it. Without the slightest reluctance, Philoctetes begins to entrust Neoptolemus with the very bow that has kept him alive on this island, protected from predators and provided with food. "I will grant your wish. There's nothing I wouldn't do for you," obliges Philoctetes. Neoptolemus gently demurs: "Is it allowed (*themis*)? If not, I will relent." Philoctetes assures him that it is permissible, and more importantly, that he trusts him because he has shown him goodwill and kindness. In that, he says, he mirrors Philoctetes himself, who received the bow from Heracles as a gift for his own demonstration of kindness.

There are two wrinkles in this passage, and they mislead about what is most fundamental in the trust exchange. The first is the apparent worry about background norms, implied by the question of whether it is right or permitted to hold the bow. Can he, Neoptolemus, really hold this sacred bow? Will it offend the gods? Is it okay to touch it? Is Neoptolemus really concerned about acting in conformity with a divine norm, or is he just exhibiting fake decency in order to mask his intention to steal? I suspect it is the latter. But whatever the answer, the basic trust isn't grounded in Philoctetes's expectation of Neoptolemus's compliance with some external norm. Rather, I want to argue that it is essentially grounded in the interaction itself—in Philoctetes's calling out to Neoptolemus saying, "Look. I'm counting on you as competent here." "I'm counting on the idea that you'll take seriously my dependency and be responsive to it in your own reasons for action." Moreover, that trust is projective: The trust is expressed here as a way of trying to elicit trustworthiness from Neoptolemus. It scaffolds trust, nurses it along, and helps it to grow through the expectation that he ought to be trustworthy. That is part of trust's cunning and perhaps why, at times, it can create not just trustees but also dependents, manipulated into collaboration.

The second wrinkle is that Philoctetes's own remarks bury this point. He suggests that his trust is based on his anticipation of Neoptolemus's continuing to show goodwill and compassion toward him in his suffering. Neoptolemus has become a "priceless friend," and friends act out of goodwill

and benevolence. I can trust my bow with a friend, he thinks. He won't steal it. He won't "stab me in the back," as we would say. But even in this kind of case where trust imputes goodwill to the trustworthy, there is something more basic going on. Philoctetes is telling Neoptolemus that he is counting on him. And that expectation can itself, at times, motivate. So Philoctetes assures Neoptolemus, "Don't worry [*tharsei*, have confidence], the bow will be yours to hold / And then hand it back to the hand that gave it." He plies on additional reasons for his trust, namely friendship, goodwill, and compassion. And they too, no doubt, can incentivize and bring Neoptolemus around. But in a barer, more minimal way, Philoctetes is fostering trust simply by projection of his trust, implicitly saying I'm counting on you to keep safe the bow and then give it back. Being responsive to another's dependency is the bare bones of trustworthiness.

Moreover, in this staged case of trustworthiness, though Philoctetes presumes Neoptolemus's goodness, we as audience have an ironic distance that Philoctetes does not yet possess (and will have only in retrospect). We know that despite the fact that he seems genuinely moved by the islander's suffering, Neoptolemus is still in the employ of Odysseus, and his goodness, even if native and genuine, may just be instrumentally deployed here. So we are suspicious, rightly, from our position of knowledge, that his antecedent goodness or good name is doing any work here other than that of ensnaring his prey.

But, despite this, it would be hard to come away from this scene without seeing a genuine spark of trust and trust responsiveness being kindled. What we see, and probably what Philoctetes also picks up in Neoptolemus's response, is that he is answering an address to be trusted and trustworthy. He is responsive to the address, "I am counting on you." And recognizing that he is being so addressed, and acknowledging it, however thinly, back to Philoctetes, adds a new level of being counted on by him. Put differently, Neoptolemus's "catching the ball" is the first step in the reciprocation. And that acknowledgment, that one is being counted on, is then thrown back and caught by the trustor in a way that reinforces the trust.

There is much more to say about trust and trustworthiness in this play. Neoptolemus insists repeatedly on his trustworthiness with respect to the safekeeping of the bow, and his sincerity seems to grow the more he is exposed

to Philoctetes's excruciating suffering. Philoctetes's utter dependency on him makes it hard for Neoptolemus to carry through with the plot. And he opts to return the bow to Philoctetes rather than continue as Odysseus's lackey, despite the consequences for the mission. It takes a *deus ex machina*, in the form of Heracles, to resolve the plot and assure Philoctetes that his (and the bow's) return to Troy will bring both victory to the Greeks and the cure for his noxious wound.

So goes the plot. The take-home lesson is that in this story Philoctetes, though traumatized by betrayal, still reaches out through trust, and thereby elicits trustworthiness in a potential enemy bent on subjecting him to yet more betrayal. Part of the work is done by the cunning of trust and not just by Philoctetes's generous and resilient spirit or by Neoptolemus's potential compassion, pity, and remorse. These other factors no doubt play an important role in a richer trust relation that can be read into this play, but I don't want to overmoralize the story or lose sight of a ubiquitous, more easily available form of trust that is also part of this story. I am keen to show what a basic display of trust itself can sometimes do, by calling out that one is counting on another to do something (or be competent in a certain domain), and how the fact of dependency may become a compelling reason in that other's deliberations. Whether it is an overriding reason is another matter. And what Neoptolemus must do is to figure out precisely what Philoctetes is counting on him for and whether he can comply in a way that minimizes conflict with his other important standing obligations, including trust relations. But the general point is that expressing trust can bootstrap trustworthiness. It projects onto another a normative expectation that can have causal efficacy.

TRUST FROM THE BOTTOM UP

But trustors, of course, need to be wise and make their addresses to those who are plausibly competent to aid and assist in the domains that are relevant. And those who are competent also need to signal their competencies, and in some cases contribute not just interpersonally but also institutionally, through networks of support. In the case of returning veterans, there can be

a familiar shutting out of civilians, even family members, as potential recipients of trust: those who don't put on the uniform don't know what war is like. As we have seen, the resentment toward a civilian "Thank you for your service" can carry just that thought: And the retreat of veterans to their own circle gives permission to too many civilians to withdraw or believe that it is meddlesome or presumptive to think one has something to offer in helping a soldier process war's effects. But that's a myth that needs to be debunked by both sides.

I myself may have once, in a significant way, been complicit in perpetuating the myth. And the insight speaks to a more general point about elicitation of trust responsiveness. My dad was a World War II veteran (an Army medic) who died several years ago. I was left to clean up his effects in the hospital room. And in putting away his belongings, I found his key chain, with his dog tags (Army identifications) attached. They were well worn, and his name, "Seymour Sherman," was just visible. They had been touched and rubbed and fingered for some sixty-five years. My mother said he had carried them during their whole marriage. But I never noticed them before, and he never showed them to me. Perhaps it was a case of willful ignorance on my part, and willful concealment on his, a "don't ask, don't tell" policy of sorts. But his war experiences were by and large not something to be shared with his children. They were his private burdens, not ours. And we complied. Despite the remnants of World War II in our house—what I remember best was the pile of scratchy brown-green Army blankets that were spare bedding in our hall linen closet—we didn't talk about the war and how it could have affected my dad—or for that matter, all my uncles who also served. It was taboo.

I mention this because many returning veterans do feel, as my dad did, that the inner landscape of war is for soldiers and not for the civilians to whom they return. Why spill out the gore or the doubts or ambivalence to one's innocent family? War is a moral maze about killing and being killed, about liability to lethal and nonlethal harming, about the boundaries of wartime and peacetime, and adapting to the fuzzy boundary crossing. The most resolute Marine may still wonder if he did enough to prevent harm to innocent civilians or avoided undue risk to his troops. Guilt, shame, and a sense of betraying others can easily commingle with adrenalized pride, bravado,

and the overwhelming sense of purpose and meaning that participation in war, even an unjust or imprudent war, can offer. The psychological and philosophical mess is hard to untangle and easy to wall up. And there is a certain comfort in thinking one is protecting others, innocent others, from one's toxins. But it comes with a price—of alienation and isolation. In this regard, Philoctetes becomes a bold metaphor for the anomie of a veteran, war-wounded, resentful, still "at sea," alone. Philoctetes's homecoming (*nostos*, in Homeric idiom) is all too uncertain—will he come home and in what condition? How will he be seen? How will he reenter? We are now bringing home the remaining service members from the longest and some might say endless war in American history. It should not surprise us if many return with "nostalgia," meaning literally, in this seventeenth-century, Greco-derived medical term—homecoming pain (*nostos algos*).

And yet Philoctetes heals, or at least begins to. And so he is also a remarkable symbol of the power of transformative trust and how it can bootstrap trustworthiness in the right set of conditions. Trust embeds hope, hope in others, that they may be responsive to one's need. Philoctetes pleads to Neoptolemus: "Have mercy, my son.... Don't let it be said in scorn that you tricked me.... You're not a bad lad, but I think you've been trained by bad men." He invests "parental" hope in the youth; Neoptolemus can overcome the bad influences. And even if his empathy is a bit out of sync at times, misattuned, and subjecting Philoctetes to fresh soul wounds and narcissistic injuries, even if there are many good reasons for him not to risk more vulnerability, the price of that protection is high and at the cost of connectivity with self and others.

Sometimes those who signal competence and interest may be representatives of important institutions responsible for key policy changes and the behavior of scores of others. Neoptolemus symbolizes that, too: he is an emissary of the Greeks. And his tender relationship with the needy Philoctetes will change the view of those in power toward this forsaken bowman.

This brings us to our own stage and to the Senate floor where there has been a recent massive campaign in support of victims of sexual harassment and assault in the armed forces. A few words are appropriate here, as the case illustrates well how, as in the case of Philoctetes and Neoptolemus,

counting on another and being counted on can be a catalyst for change at high levels of power. In the background to the advocacy is the documentary *The Invisible War* (which premiered at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival and was later broadcast on PBS) that features interviews with veterans of the different branches of the armed forces who recount the incidents that led to their assaults. The documentary is harrowing. I have shown it to students—women and men, civilians, veterans, ROTC cadets and active-duty officers, including one high-level Army Ranger battalion commander, married to an Army colonel and West Point sweetheart. What he saw struck a deep nerve. He had just returned from ten years of back-to-back commands in Afghanistan and Iraq. During one of his commands, one of his troops got an emergency call in the midst of a tense engagement: his wife, serving in country in a different unit, had just been assaulted and raped by a fellow soldier. He needed his commander's permission to leave his post immediately and go to her aid. My class froze in hearing the account. The vulnerability that the Ranger commander felt, himself in a dual-career Army marriage, was raw and in the room. All of a sudden my students were looking at a brawny, brainy, invincible-seeming soldier who was not so invincible.

There was another moment that brought the reality of inside-the-wire sexual assault close to home. The film culminates with the exposure of a horrific rape, perpetrated not far from the Georgetown campus, at the prestigious Washington, D.C., Marine Barracks, "the oldest post of the Corps," and home of "The President's Own" Marine Band that plays "Hail to the Chief" at parades and ceremonial missions. Barracks Row in Capitol Hill S.E. has itself become a trendy scene of bars and restaurants, with military pageantry punctuating one corner as Marine sentinels stand guard at the gated courtyard of the historic Barracks. But after watching the film, it would be hard to look at those gates without deep suspicion about what takes place inside.

I leave to the side the harrowing testimonies of the victims and their loved ones. I urge readers to watch the *Invisible War*. The deep misogyny depicted in the film will not come as a surprise to some. The history of U.S. servicemen's treatment of women in regions where they have served, whether in Normandy during the invasion in World War II or in Subic Bay in the

Philippines during Vietnam, has not been pretty. Prostitution and objectification of women have gone hand in hand with U.S. military engagements. It may not be too cynical to say that what was turned against occupied women is now turned against those within. (I have my own stories here: My father, treating troops returning from Normandy on the *Queen Mary*, told me in one of the few conversations we did have about war that, in addition to amputations, what he was treating in his many trips was rampant syphilis and gonorrhea, amid the pleading of his soldiers to not tell the wives at home. And while I was teaching at the Naval Academy, a colleague and retired Marine colonel who commanded troops in Vietnam told ethics classes of how he ordered the bulldozing of prostitution sites his Marines were frequenting that put missions at risk and made light of the humanity of too many women.)

What is crucial to our narrative with regard to beginning to restore trust for today's women who serve is that several of the survivors featured in the film (in particular, Kori Cioca, beaten and raped by her supervisor in the U.S. Coast Guard; Ariana Klay, an Iraq War Marine who returned home to be raped by a senior officer and his friend, and then threatened with death; and Trina McDonald, who was drugged and raped by military policemen on a remote Naval station in Alaska) went on to tell their stories to senators on Capitol Hill, including two female senators, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand of New York and Senator Claire McCaskill of Missouri. Deeply disturbed by what they heard and by DOD statistics that confirm an epidemic of sexual assault in the ranks, each proposed legislation to give victims greater power in the legal process. This is not the place to track legislative reform. Nor is it the place to track whether these milder reforms have enough muscle to do real work in fair adjudication for victims of sexual assault within the ranks. The outcome of two high-profile court cases just in the news as I write suggests a system that is still broken.

What I do want to expose, though, is that these bills (and especially Gillibrand's) represent direct personal *and* institutional responses to the testimony heard and to the systemic fear victims describe of not coming forward because they won't be believed. It is an illustration of the call and response of vulnerability and the bid for trust ratcheted up to an institutional

level through individual engagement—in this case, women listening to other women.

Building trust is a complicated matter for those who have been violated, whether the trust bond is with a producer making a documentary that might change a national conversation, or with a senator who tries to change adjudication procedures, or with a young warrior who shares your grievances, seems of noble cast, and promises you a way out of your desperation. There is risk, exposure, potential betrayal, and sometimes re-traumatization. But significantly, even in the case of restoring trust in an institution or organization, the trust is typically built bottom up, in one-on-one interactions, as in these examples, in conversations with an empathic producer, in private hearings with a public official who seems to “get it,” in an enigmatic relationship with an emissary who reaches out and recognizes anguish. The interaction moves both ways: there is exposure and vulnerability, on the one hand, and recognition of the dependency, on the other—there’s empathy often, and an acknowledgment of the need to respond, in part precisely because one is being counted on. Trust even in institutions as lumbering and bureaucratic as Congress often begins in one-on-one engagements, where there is some sense of uptake, mirroring, and recognition of value. The reach of even that uptake, though, is limited. A senator may not convince enough fellow senators. Military court cases may still embed entrenched sexism by keeping the case within the chain of command. Test cases may founder because of bungled prosecutions and weak or inconsistent testimony from the plaintiffs. Still, getting some senators to take seriously the sexism in the military and begin to fix a broken system is a start.

“I’LL BE ON THE BIG WHITE TV SCREEN”

We have been talking about trust among adults. But coming home from war is often coming home to children, the children a mother or father has left behind. And we would be naive to think that these trust bonds are not among the most fragile. We know from famous developmental research conducted by British psychoanalyst John Bowlby in the wake of World War II,

and evacuations of children during the London Blitz, that attachment and trust go hand in hand, and that separations early in life can affect a child’s sense of “secure base” that’s critical for social and emotional growth.

Concern about the effect of separation on her children must have been in the background of a remarkable set of practices that Air Force Colonel Stephanie Wilson put in place as she prepared to deploy to Ul Adeid Air Base in Qatar for a year-long senior deployment in the Air Force. I came to know Stephanie at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C., where we were both public policy scholars during the academic year 2011–12. Stephanie is an African American engineer with a master’s degree in organizational management from George Washington University, who entered the Air Force through the ROTC program at Georgia Institute of Technology. By May of our year at the Wilson Center, Stephanie was preparing for her next mission, commanding some five to six thousand persons in logistical mission support for Iraq and Afghanistan. It would involve leaving behind her young children—her then five-year-old daughter Mikalya and her two-year-old son Liam. It was her second long deployment in three years; the last overseas deployment was in Ramstein Air Base in Germany.

This time round, Skype would be the family glue, with her husband Scott Wilson, a retired Air Force flyer working on a Ph.D., in charge of the home front and of rounding up the children daily for Skype time on the TV screen with Mom. The kids just had to be in the room, playing and chattering, with Mom in the background as part of their daily routine. True, she wouldn’t be hugging them: “Skype hugs are not real hugs,” as one Air Force colonel’s wife once told me in describing the hug “good night” her son had each night from her husband. The touch, the smell, the feel, so crucial in early attachment, would not be there. But Stephanie would be there in voice and image on the screen, and in that sense, with them physically every day. The time difference was seven hours. The chat would take place in the morning for the kids: “I’ll be on the big white TV screen while the kids are running around in the living room talking to me. So, they don’t have to sit in one place. They can continue life, and Mom can just observe and be part of that life for half an hour every day. That’s my goal; half an hour every day.... During the previous deployment, the attachment bond got built in a different way: My daughter was one

at the time, and I sat down before I left and read about thirty-five books on videotape—by video recorder—and my husband would play one a night for her. And so that's how she got to see who Mom was: I was the girl reading books at night. My daughter was at the age where she didn't need to see the book. She was just fascinated drinking her bottle, listening to her mom."

In this new deployment, roles would be reversed: her daughter would be reading a book to her once a week over Skype as part of the routine.

Not all parents, military or otherwise, are as creative or as conscientious as these two. I suspect the fact that Stephanie is a logistics expert and engineer by education and training explains how she tackles a problem. But also, not all parents have had to face the same trials. At age three, Mikayla was diagnosed with kidney cancer, and within days, Stephanie and Scott were able to change their career plans so that they could be based in Washington, with access to Walter Reed Hospital, where they would have the best fighting chance of beating the cancer. And they did. Mikayla has had a remarkable recovery after aggressive rounds of chemo and radiation—"I'm leaving her healthy, she's completely healthy"—Stephanie tells me with enormous relief, when we spoke over lunch one day just days before her departure from Dulles. Anything is "a cakewalk," she laughed, compared to fighting your child's cancer.

Still, she knew the departure and separation for a year was its own trial. It would begin with two and a half long hours of waiting in the airport lounge. And then, in civilian clothes, she would step onto the plane and leave Scott and the children behind: "That's probably the hardest part—it *was* the last time I went—that first step on the plane. I've jumped off a plane before, out of a perfectly good airplane before. The first step is the hardest. Stepping into nothingness is the hardest. Stepping onto the plane is the hardest."

For Air Force Colonel Stephanie Wilson, stepping onto that plane was parachuting into the abyss. The metaphor absolutely paralyzed me. I imagined myself ejected into a black chute with no chance in hell of a soft landing. But for Stephanie, a wingman trained in parachuting, the metaphor had its comforts. And imaging it afforded her a "pre-rehearsal," as the Stoics would say, to anticipate perceived danger and detoxify some

of the sting that comes with being unprepared. "That's how I think of it mentally. I'm mentally prepared to jump out of this perfectly fine airplane. So, mentally I have that. So how am I now going to take *this* first step? I am going to allow myself to cry. I'll have my box of tissues there. I'll have my pictures there. I've totally war-gamed this thing in my head. It's okay to cry."

Her Stoic pre-rehearsal had its own twist. She would "war-game" it so it was okay to cry. She could cry with advanced permission, and so with a kind of resolute control. The tears would flow—there would be no surprise there. The only issue, she joked, was whether she would have enough tissues.

A year is a highly abstract concept in the mind of a young child who can barely understand the passage of time. And so again, the logistics of counting a week was a problem to solve. There would be jar of goodies in the kitchen, and every Friday, each child would reach in and pick out a treat, "marking each week Mom is gone."

All this is a way of laying down the trust bond in advance, or at least its means. Colonel Stephanie Wilson is anticipating her responsiveness and the conduits that will have to be in place for mutual responsiveness to grow—the nursing story hour, the Skype half-hour, the weekly countdown that brings a young family closer to real time together. Thousands of other military families, some strained by a decade of separation, have been enacting some version of this. It is an enactment to keep the trust exchanges alive.

TRUST, BETRAYAL, EMOTION, AND ACHE

Trust is a future-leaning, reactive attitude, directed toward others and also, by extension, toward oneself, self-reactively. It is a mental attitude that is an emotion, felt and often explicitly expressed. But in what sense is it really an emotion? In what sense is the soldier who, acting through and living with emotion, trusts civilians to understand, or supervisors to not betray her, or senators to acknowledge her defilement, or an emissary

to take her home? Aristotle tells us that emotions are accompanied with pleasure or pain. But trust doesn't have a strong valence, a lot of zing, or wing, or heat. Even if it isn't a belief, in the sense that the reason we turn to trust is precisely because we lack the evidence that would ground firmer belief, still trust doesn't have that excitable feeling we associate with many emotions. Of course, many emotions have their own quietness, and we know well by now that an emotion's "feel," as the critics of William James on emotion long ago pointed out, is not a reliable indicator of either emotion in general (we could just be feeling edgy) or of an emotion in particular (resentment, for example, rather than shame).

But perhaps the better way to get at trust as an emotion is by what it *does* rather than how it *feels*. To trust someone is to organize one's attention in a certain way, to notice what another is signaling or open to, to block out some doubts or suspend suspicion and build up an "epistemic landscape." But trust doesn't just see someone in a certain light. It makes an investment in that person to do something with the thing or confidence that is entrusted. Trust digs us into vulnerability. And we expose that vulnerability—show it to another, in our face, or voice, or expectant or beholden tone. And we disclose that dependency to ourselves, often by externalizing it to others or by trying it out in a performance. But trust in another may not so much see or find value as help build it, elicit worthiness, as we've said, that isn't yet obvious or proven. And all that can motivate us to share burdens, entrust intimacies, seek succor, come out of a shell, and be less alone.

The bottom line is that trust, *qua* emotion, makes us vulnerable to others: to their help and hurt, to their power over us, and to our desire that they be responsive to us. Trust, as emotion, is a basic form of attachment. It is dependence writ large. And as important as trust is to a military corps, the idea of dependence is not something many soldiers, Marines, wingmen, or sailors want to embrace full on. To be self-reliant, stoic, to suck it up, and soldier on are the mantras. Trust may be basic to a cadre, but willful determination and control are how one survives. Or so goes the myth.

But even if there is ideological resistance to the deep dependency and vulnerability that goes with trust, the violations of trust make the fact

of dependence all too emotionally clear. And that is what we have been detailing—the ache and agony of betrayal and the cautious resowing of seeds of trust in its aftermath.

TWIN TALES

Ancient stories, like that of *Philoctetes*, are our own stories through which to understand betrayal and the possibilities for trust's renewal. Other war stories are also ours.

A Civil War *Philoctetes* is perhaps Summerfield Hayes, fictional as well, nineteen years old and a Union soldier from Brooklyn, whose three days of battle take place in the opening campaign of the North against the South in the Battle of the Wilderness. Like *Philoctetes*, Summerfield is abandoned by his command, in his case as punishment for failing to rise from sleep at the bugle's reveille. He lost his hearing from an intense mortar attack the day before and slept through the call. His commander strips him of his rifle and identity papers, and blasts him with the humiliation that would leave him stunned and mute, "I have no time to be playing nursemaid." With that, Summerfield Hayes is deserted, left to make his way between enemy lines in the smoke-shrouded forests of northern Virginia, with no weapon, no buddies, and no name. He finds his way somehow to a Washington hospital, unable to utter his name, or his circumstances, framed by his command as a malingeringer. One missionary nurse, named "Walt," with a gray beard, soft wrinkles under his eyes, a tattered haversack, and a fondness for verse, recognizes that Summerfield's invisible and silent wounds must tell a story as grave as those that can speak through gushing blood and sawed-off limbs. Summerfield keeps looking for his wounds; he must have them if he is so sick. Nothing else could cause him to waste away as he does. He strips down over and over. He knows they must be somewhere.

They are there, wounds of betrayal, distrust, and abandonment. And they ache intensely. It is a fictionalized Walt Whitman, a nursemaid of the soul, who trusts the realness and hardness of this nameless Union soldier's wounds and who helps him to find them, and recover them, in voice and memory.

That overture of trust, an act of faithfulness, is the beginning of a long and arduous healing for Summerfield.

Summerfield has neither the agony nor the luxury of Philoctetes's fetid leg as tangible legitimation of a deeper moral hurt—indeed, he wants that validation desperately and contemplates often returning to the front to secure the badge that can prove his wound. It is only through the work of friendship and trust (of Walt) that he comes to accept that the hurt of being deserted by one's own troops is no less real than the hurt of losing an arm or a leg by enemy fire.

We shouldn't be glib here. Philoctetes's wounds are physical as well as psychological and moral. And presumably that festering, foul-smelling leg is the cause and putative justification of the moral betrayal: he must be cut off from the whole if the whole is to be saved; with a little utilitarian logic chop, the sacrifice of one soldier preserves the army of many. War always puts its human assets, and not just its matériel, at some risk. *Philoctetes* is just another case of balancing force protection against the exigencies of the mission.

But there is something insidious, haunting, cruel, and inhumane about Philoctetes's sacrifice, and it has to do with the trauma of isolation. Philoctetes has been a prisoner in solitary confinement for a full ten years. In his case, he has nature and the beasts as his companions. Not all are so lucky, especially those who have spent the past decade in the U.S. detention center at Guantanamo, set up as a part of the "global war on terror." Still, Philoctetes was put into solitary by his own side, by his own command, and that is perhaps the unkindest betrayal. And that's the reason his trust in Neoptolemus is so fascinating. Why should Philoctetes trust this emissary sent by his betrayers? And why should Neoptolemus be moved to renege on his plot? The moral address in this interaction, the signaling of dependency and the projection that it will be recognized and acknowledged as legitimate, are the components of this new trust bond. (And perhaps that was also so with Summerfield and his Walt.) Trust and trustworthiness are built here from the ground up, on the ashes of soul-shattered living. This is an ancient and abiding lesson for veterans coming home and for civilians to whom they return.