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My Task is to write a thought paper on Ethics. Although the assignment required no additional research, I found it necessary to do a little homework on the subject in order to clarify some of the terminology. Like most Americans, if asked, I could not define the difference between morals and ethics, the two were always one of the same.

Taken from the internet, author unknown, I found an article on ethics that defined these terms clearly for me;

Morals: the rules and prima facia duties that govern our behavior as persons to persons (gentleness, compassion, fidelity, fairness)

Values: States of affairs that are desired by and for people and that we want to increase (health, wealth, freedom, happiness, human rights)

Virtues: Conditions of people that are desirable both for the people themselves and for the good functioning of the society (wisdom, courage, justice, self-control)

Ethics: The whole field of morals, duties, values, and virtues -- our attempts to order human conduct toward the right and the good.

Although definitions may vary, for the thoughts that follow, my use of these words will be as defined above. Now my thoughts, in no particular order:

As I look back throughout our nation's history, our ethical principles have changed tremendously. Not long ago, what our society considered acceptable treatment for blacks, would not only be illegal but also considered ethically unexceptionable today. Like wise, the violence and nudity on our televisions or a woman bearing a child out of wedlock are common occurrences today, but unspeakable only a short while back. My point being, society's ethical standards are in constant change. Who knows what will be said one hundred years from now about our standards of behavior today or how acceptable behavior will be defined then.

Another point of contention is these liberal thinkers that hide behind their constitutional rights. I realize how that might sound, but freedom of speech and expression must have limits. We must not confuse "our right" with "what is right." Yes, you *have the right* to burn the American flag, but is that the *right thing to do*? The reporter that releases the story or pictures before verification of information or worse, notification of family? Then of course there's the right to life activist that indiscriminately car bombs clinics? Yes, your right to expression, information and life is guaranteed, but these people are ethically mistaken in each case.

The Armed Forces, specifically the Army, has established a professional standard of ethics that I am proud to be a part of. As leaders, we will not only be role models, we will also assist in establishing the ethical standards for future generations. As I pointed out earlier, these standards must continually evolve in order to remain relevant. People have a tendency to equate a change in standards with an erosion of standards. Not so long ago, beer machines stood where our coke machines are now? Not so long ago, lunch at the NCO club meant something entirely

different, knock down a couple cold ones while you watch the dancers. Imagine doing those things today? No way!

Although morals and virtues will remain fairly constant, society's values will consistently change. I do not advocate a lower standard, only one that is relevant. One example that comes to mind is the Department of Defense's Fraternalization Policy. This policy, which forbids any relationship between an officer and an enlisted Soldier is a perfect example of the caste system, where a person could not associate with another outside their own caste or social group. Not only is this a stupid policy, but one that will be too difficult to enforce. Ethical standards written by the "reliables of the 1950s" have changed and so must we. Some of these standards will be written regulations or policies, however many will not, and should not be written. Many are so basic, that writing them would be an insult, "*Treat others as you would like to be treated*", "*be loyal*", or "*be honest*". Soldiers should not have to be told these things or carry around a little card to remind them.

As I stated earlier, I am proud to be a part of the Army's Ethical team. I will continue to teach my soldiers *the right thing*. As long as we remain relevant in establishing our standards and once established, we must not compromise our standards. As we strive for a higher standard, we must accept the fact that amongst us are some bad apples. We should be careful not to over react, as in the fraternization case. Instead, we must find these misfits, weed them out and then drive on. Our professional standards should be derived from those traditional standards that have proudly made us who we are today and balanced with the social norms in which our soldiers come from.