

**MORAL INJURY AND HEALING OF THE
SOUL: AN EXISTENTIAL SPIRITUAL
CRISIS AT THE JUNCTURE OF OUR
MORAL LIMTS**

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**CH (COL) Thomas C. Waynick, USA, Retired
CEO/Director Pastoral Institute
Columbus, Georgia**

The Field of Moral Injury in 2016

- **More is being written about shame (self-rebuke) and guilt (demand for self-flagellation)**
- **More is being debated about corporate and communal moral injury (i.e. drone strikes)**
- **Just War Theory is being questioned (is there every a Great War or Good War?)**
- **Questions being raised about Resiliency merely being a Stoic view that denies loss, injury and evil.**
- **More knowledge of self-empathy, moral engagement, moral repair, forgiveness and redemption.**

From Ancient Times . . .

In Sophocles' play *Philoctetes* the young naïve son of the dead hero Achilles, Neoptolemus is prepared for war by Odysseus who says:

**I know, young man, it is not your natural bent
To say such things nor to contrive such mischief.
But the prize of victory is pleasant to win.
Bear up: another time we shall prove honest. For
one brief shameless portion of a day
Give me yourself, and then for all the rest
You may be called the most scrupulous of men.**

He soon yields his moral ground and desires to retrace or repent of his actions.

2 Chronicles 28:8-15

8 The men of Israel took captive from their fellow Israelites who were from Judah two hundred thousand wives, sons and daughters. They also took a great deal of plunder, which they carried back to Samaria. **9** But a prophet of the Lord named Oded was there, and he went out to meet the army when it returned to Samaria. He said to them, “Because the Lord, the God of your ancestors, was angry with Judah, he gave them into your hand. But you have slaughtered them in a rage that reaches to heaven. **10** And now you intend to make the men and women of Judah and Jerusalem your slaves. But aren’t you also guilty of sins against the Lord your God? **11** Now listen to me! Send back your fellow Israelites you have taken as prisoners, for the Lord’s fierce anger rests on you.” **12** Then some of the leaders in Ephraim—Azariah son of Jehohanan, Berekiah son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah son of Shallum, and Amasa son of Hadlai—confronted those who were arriving from the war. **13** “You must not bring those prisoners here,” they said, “or we will be guilty before the Lord. Do you intend to add to our sin and guilt? For our guilt is already great, and his fierce anger rests on Israel.” **14** So the soldiers gave up the prisoners and plunder in the presence of the officials and all the assembly. **15** The men designated by name took the prisoners, and from the plunder they clothed all who were naked. They provided them with clothes and sandals, food and drink, and healing balm. All those who were weak they put on donkeys. So they took them back to their fellow Israelites at Jericho, the City of Palms, and returned to Samaria.

A Soldiers Eyes

**When you look into a soldier's eyes
you see the images locked deep inside
the torture and hate he has seen
the deaths of friends that have been
the hard decisions he has made
the killing blast of one grenade
the countless men he has killed
the dangerous missions he has fulfilled
the horrific gore
the madness of war
the deaths of the innocent, their piercing scream
now you too won't be able to dream
that steely eyed soldier was just a boy
until war took all his joy
so when you meet a soldier with distant eyes
think of what he has seen and why he wears that disguise**

- Kristoffer Rehder

Lone Survivor

The trailer for Peter Berg's movie gives us all a glimpse of the tension in the souls of Soldiers:

In one scene, the small Navy SEAL team assigned to kill an al-Qaeda leader is surrounding young Afghan goat-herders in the middle of the Hindu-Kush Mountains. Taylor Kitsch's character says, "The way I see it, we got two options: one, let 'em go, roll the dice. The second that they run down there, we've got 200 on our backs. Two, we terminate the compromise." Mark Wahlberg's character cuts in: ". . . Not killing kids, not feeling it. This is not a vote, we're gonna cut them loose and we're going home."

The Story of Noah Pierce

Part of the 2003 Iraq Invasion. Four years later put a gun to his head. Left the following suicide note on the back of an NRA pistol-safety certificate:

Mom, I am so sorry. My life has been hell since March 2003 when I was part of the Iraq invasion . . . I am freeing myself from the desert once and for all . . . I am not a good person. I have done bad things. I have taken lives. Now it is time to take mine.

From Iraq he had written to his mom:

“So tell me how we are heroes?”

Wartorn 1861-2010; HBO Documentary; Directors: Jon Alpert, Ellen Goosenberg Kent

Army Major Jeff Hall

In 2003 an Iraqi family was leaving church and got caught in a crossfire. He helped gather the bodies and understood it was “collateral damage.” He was charged with making amends to the surviving family. The incompetent CPA took a month for paperwork. The Iraqi Ministry of Health issues the death certificates with enemy stamped on them. By that time the un-embalmed body parts were rotted and the amount was \$750 total. Betrayed by command, feeling helpless, and shame and with suicidal thoughts he got help.

(Aftermath by Nancy Sherman, pp. 77-81)

Jeff the Marine

“On a cold night in March 2010, Jeff brought up the kid he’d shot a month earlier, when the battle for the Afghan city of Marjah was hot and there was no shortage of 15-year olds picking up Kalashnikovs . . . Jeff had killed one of them with four shots from a heavy-caliber semi-auto that made a soft thud when the bolt released. The kid had a rifle, and even kids with rifles can kill marines, Jeff had figured. A few weeks later . . . He described the way the kid had fell and how he wasn’t sure he had done the right thing . . . [over five years the thoughts] grew and matured just as Jeff had, until one day Jeff sat on his bed with a loaded rifle across his lap, staring at a part of his life he could no longer understand . . . A moral injury.”

Haunted by Their Decisions in War, Washington Post; Thomas Gibbons-Neff

CPT Timothy Kudo

I held two seemingly contradictory beliefs: Killing is always wrong, but in war, it is necessary. How could something be both immoral and necessary? I didn't have time to resolve this question before deploying. And in the first few months, I fell right into killing without thinking twice. We were simply too busy to worry about the morality of what we were doing. But one day in Afghanistan in 2010, my patrol got into a firefight and ended up killing two people on a motorcycle who we thought were about to attack us. They ignored or didn't understand our warnings to stop, and according to the military's "escalation of force" guidelines, we were authorized to shoot them in self-defense. Although we thought they were armed, they turned out to be civilians. One looked no older than 16. It's been more than two years since we killed those people on the motorcycle, and I think about them every day. Sometimes it's when I'm reading the news or watching a movie, but most often it's when I'm taking a shower or walking down my street in Brooklyn.

("I Killed People in Afghanistan. Was I right or wrong?" Washington Post by Timothy Kudo January 25, 2013)

Kudo (continued)

To properly wage war, you have to recalibrate your moral compass. Once you return from the battlefield, it is difficult or impossible to repair it. VA has started calling this problem “moral injury.” . . . War makes us killers. We must confront this horror directly if we’re to be honest about the true costs of war. I didn’t return from Afghanistan as the same person. My personality is the same, or at least close enough, but I’m no longer the “good” person I once thought I was. There’s nothing that can change that; it’s impossible to forget what happened, and the only people who can forgive me are dead. I will never know whether my actions in Afghanistan were right or wrong. On good days, I believe they were necessary. But instead, I want to believe that killing, even in war, is wrong.

(Ibid.)

No Single Moral Injury Fits All

Moral injury “refers to experiences of serious inner conflict arising from what one takes to be grievous moral transgressions that can overwhelm one’s sense of goodness and humanity. The sense of transgression can arise from (real or apparent) transgressive commissions and omissions perpetrated by oneself or others, or from bearing witness to the intense human suffering and detritus that is a part of the grotesquerie of war and its aftermath. In some cases, the moral injury has less to do with specific (real or apparent) transgressive acts than with a generalized sense of falling short of moral and normative standards befitting good persons and good soldiers.”

(Aftermath by Nancy Sherman, pp. 8)

PTSD: National Center for PTSD Definition

Like psychological trauma, moral injury is a construct that describes extreme and unprecedented life experience including the harmful aftermath of exposure to such events. Events are considered morally injurious if they "transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations" (1). Thus, the key precondition for moral injury is an act of transgression, which shatters moral and ethical expectations that are rooted in religious or spiritual beliefs, or culture-based, organizational, and group-based rules about fairness, the value of life, and so forth. In the context of war, moral injuries may stem from direct participation in acts of combat, such as killing or harming others, or indirect acts, such as witnessing death or dying, failing to prevent immoral acts of others, or giving or receiving orders that are perceived as gross moral violations (2). The act may have been carried out by an individual or a group, through a decision made individually or as a response to orders given by leaders.

(PTSD: National Center for PTSD; Moral Injury in the Context of War; Shira Maguen, PhD and Brett Litz, PhD; http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/co-occurring/moral_injury_at_war.asp)

Examples:

- **Unintentional errors: Military personnel are well trained in the rules of engagement and do a remarkable job making life or death decisions in war; however, sometimes unintentional error leads to the loss of life of non-combatants, setting the stage for moral injury.**
- **Transgressive acts of others: Service members can be morally injured by the transgression of peers and leaders who betray expectations in egregious ways.**

(http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/co-occurring/moral_injury_at_war.asp)

Moral Injury = Mortal Fight of the Soul

Moral injury is that serious transgression that leads to a mortal conflict of the soul when one's experience is at odds with one's core ethical or moral beliefs

Mortal because the transgression stands in opposition to the values of the soul and thus splits the self into a battle of competing parts and destroys a sense of wholeness and being. As Soldiers have often reported "my soul has fled."

The Combatants

CH Jeffrey Voyles, in his presentation on moral injury, speaks of that splitting in a number of dichotomies:

- **Professional versus personal**
- **Feminine versus masculine**
- **Warrior versus civilian**
- **Warrior versus monster**
- **Redeemable versus damned**
- **Saint versus sinner**

Moral Injury Origins

- **We value life/ natural law**
- **For the West – the Just War Theory versus the early pacifism of the church**
- **Training can create a response not in sync with conscience**
- **Prepared for combat, but not for dealing with spiritual shrapnel**
- **Train through repetition to overcome natural aversion to killing**
- **The harsh realities of modern warfare**

VUCA Environment

The Nature of Modern Combat

V = Volatility - The nature and dynamics of change, and the nature and speed of change forces and change catalysts.

U = Uncertainty - The lack of predictability, the prospects for surprise, and the sense of awareness and understanding of issues and events.

C = Complexity - The multiplex of forces, the confounding of issues and the chaos and confusion that surround an organization.

A = Ambiguity - The haziness of reality, the potential for misreads, and the mixed meanings of conditions; cause-and-effect confusion.

An Example

A young man who was the gunner on an Abrams tank in the Gulf War . . . He could sleep at night only if he knew the people he killed were combatants . . . He would never know, so the combat continues within him.

Dr. Ed Tick in War and the Soul tells us:

"Sitting Bull and his warriors, or other bands from innumerable traditional cultures, were never plagued with self doubt about the value of their mission, as many of our soldiers are today. In order to do battle with a whole heart, the danger and threat to one's home must be real, and the people must experience it as immediate and about to threaten their existence as a whole. They and their warriors must be in unity." (179)

That Was a Far Different World than Today

The irony is that the post modern world is less likely to give credence to the soul. The philosophy of our time is that reality is constructed without recognition of any absolute moral authority. We hold to the myth of technology - that man can be changed and programmed with the right science; and what can't be cognitively reconstructed can be medicated. It has led at least one AP reporter* to ask the question, “has the military failed by focusing on PTSD and neglecting moral injury?”

*** http://vitals.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/02/22/17056891-veterans-suffer-moral-injury-from-warfare?lite**

From the Leaders in the Field

Dr. Johnathan Shay first coined the term “moral injury” and characterized it as the “undoing of the soul.” He has also stated it is a “betrayal of ‘what’s right’ in a high stakes situation by someone who holds power.”

Dr. Tick writes, "We do not help survivors rebuild dignity and rediscover inner peace. Certainly, in contrast to traditional cultures, our modern processes do not include sacred and communal dimensions of healing. Also, the recovery of each individual is no longer a priority to the larger social system because the system functions even with the loss of significant numbers of its adult population. Nor do we reserve special roles for our returnees; we want them to function the same as they did before. We do not recognize that they have been through a profound death-rebirth process and are significantly and permanently transformed." (104)

The Realities of Being a Soldier

You are trained to overcome the natural resistance to killing. That is a core value and part of your morality.

We have learned from past wars that Soldiers are naturally reluctant to kill. We are now much better at teaching Soldiers to overcome that reluctance. (In Civil War, WWII and Korea many did not fire, changed training methods and now above 90 %). (Grossman – On Killing)

If you are an American Soldier in today's Army, you have been trained to close in on and destroy the enemy. One of our commanding generals has a fondness for saying: "We don't want a fair fight." And we don't. If we are to engage and kill the enemy we want it to be with "shock and awe."

I Did Right, But I Did Wrong

Even when killing is justified, Soldiers can still feel guilt and experience moral injury.

"In *The Naked and the Dead*, Norman Mailer described the discomfort of Catholic Soldiers during WWII who were afraid they might die in battle before they could make confession and be purged of the killings they had done." (Tick 141)

Our Lethality Equals an Enormous Cost to Body, Mind and Soul

The story of Brandon Bryant, a man who joined the military on a whim. He eventually ended up as a sensor operator (co-pilot) for drones. His job at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico was to sit in front of 14 computer monitors and fly a predator drone in Afghanistan 6,250 miles away. One day, upon receiving the order to fire, he pushed a button that launched a Hellfire missile into a mud hut that had been lased. At the launch it took sixteen seconds to put steel on target. Three seconds from impact, a child walked around the corner of the hut. There was a flash and then the realization, "Did we just kill a kid?" After that he began to shut down. He got moody. He had trouble sleeping. One day he collapsed at work spitting up blood. He was diagnosed with PTSD. But there was something there beyond the physical and mental symptoms. Suffering from a moral injury, he decided to quit after walking into work one day and saying to his coworkers: "Hey, what motherfucker is going to die today?" (Spiegel Online)

You Don't Even Have To Be There

Bill Nash, a VA leader in the field of moral injury, defined it this way in a recent Time magazine article: "Moral injury is stress resulting from perpetrating, or merely witnessing, acts - or failures to act - that transgress deeply held, communally shared moral beliefs and expectations."

<http://nation.time.com/2013/04/17/moral-injury-a-profound-sense-of-alienation-and-abstract-shame/>

You Don't Have To Be The One Pulling The Trigger

- **Bitter Vietnam era chaplain - one thing you will learn “He who lives by the sword dies by the sword.”**
- **Retiring General Officer who asks the question, “Can God forgive me?”**
- **Many senior officers carry around cards on every Soldier they have lost.**
- **Chaplain who, because of his friendship, caused an interpreter to be gutted and hung.**
- **A gifted sniper who can't sleep or eat. He is haunted by the deaths that are being caused because he is not there to kill.**
- **Soldier stood by as friend put a bullet in badly injured child.**
- **Alvin York (the most decorated American Soldier in WWI) plagued by questions over what he had done.**

13th Annual Force Protection Conference: Dr. William Nash's Moral Injury Scenarios

As you are greeted by a village elder outside his home, machine gun fire erupts from a second floor window, killing one of your marines and injuring another. As you hit the deck, the elder pleads with you, "Don't shoot! Don't shoot! My family is in there!"

A Marine handler of bomb-sniffing dogs is asked to train other Marines in your squad in his special skill set. One of his first pupils, while handling a dog on his own, fails to spot an IED that kills his best friend in the squad.

Your squad is approached at a checkpoint by an Afghan woman holding a young boy with a badly infected leg wound. The boy is dying. Your request for a CASEVAC is denied. You must send the woman and her son away to seek care at a local Afghan hospital.

The Pastoral Perspective

Kent Drescher who has an M.Div and a Ph.D. in psychology from Fuller and has worked at the VA in Palo Alto has been an advocate for the validity of moral injury as distinct from PTSD. Part of the reason for this is that PTSD does not "sufficiently capture moral injury, or the shame, guilt, and self-handicapping behaviors that often accompany moral injury." (PTSD Qtr Research Vol 23:1, 2012)

Drescher's Insights on Moral Injury

- **Contributing events: Betrayals by leaders, trusted peers or oneself; Disproportionate violence or revenge; Harming civilians or civilian property**
- **Signs and symptoms: Misconduct, violence, and other disciplinary problems; Social alienation, alienation from self; Loss of faith, loss of meaning**
- **Intervention approaches: Diverse psychological, social and spiritual recommendations**

(Taken from the 13th Annual Force Protection Conference:
<http://www.slideshare.net/marina761/2010-force-health-protection-conference-deployment-healthcare>)

Theological Aftermath of Moral Injury

- **Did I do the right thing? It's not about ROE, it's a matter of the heart.**
- **Can God forgive me?**
- **Oh, sir, you're talking about guilt. You mean they have given it a name?**
- **Professed vs. real theology (TBI)**

Emotional Aftermath of Moral Injury

In terms of the aftermath of moral injuries, transgressive acts may result in highly aversive and haunting states of inner conflict and turmoil.

- Shame, which stems from global self-attributions (for example "I am an evil terrible person; I am unforgivable")**
- Guilt**
- Anxiety about possible consequences**
- Anger about betrayal-based moral injuries**

(http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/co-occurring/moral_injury_at_war.asp)

Behavioral Aftermath of Moral Injury

- **Anomie (for example alienation, purposelessness, and/or social instability caused by a breakdown in standards and values)**
- **Withdrawal and self-condemnation**
- **Self-harming (for example suicidal ideation or attempts)**
- **Self-handicapping behaviors (for example alcohol or drug use, self-sabotaging relationships, etc.)**

(http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/co-occurring/moral_injury_at_war.asp)

PTSD Vs. Moral Injury

Though there may be some overlap in symptoms, moral injuries aren't what most people think of as PTSD. The nightmares and flashbacks of terrifying, life-threatening combat events.

A moral injury tortures the conscience. Symptoms include deep shame, guilt and rage. It's not a medical problem, and it's unclear how to treat it. "The concept ... is more an existentialist one," says retired Col. Elspeth Ritchie, former psychiatry consultant to the Army Surgeon General.

(http://vitals.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/02/22/17056891-veterans-suffer-moral-injury-from-warfare?lite)

Are moral injury and PTSD the same?

More research is needed to answer this question. At present, although the constructs of PTSD and moral injury overlap, each has unique components that make them separable consequences of war and other traumatic contexts.

- **PTSD is a mental disorder that requires a diagnosis. Moral injury is a dimensional problem - there is no threshold for the presence of moral injury, rather, at a given point in time, a Veteran may have none, or mild to extreme manifestations.**

- **Transgression is not necessary for PTSD to develop nor does the PTSD diagnosis sufficiently capture moral injury (shame, self-handicapping, guilt, etc.).**

Consequently, it is important to assess mental health symptoms and moral injury as separate manifestations of war trauma to form a comprehensive clinical picture, and provide the most relevant treatment. One example of a moral injury specific measure is the Moral Injury Events Scale.

(http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/co-occurring/moral_injury_at_war.asp)

PTSD – Criteria DSM-V

- 1. Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence**
- 2. Intrusion symptoms**
- 3. Avoidance of stimuli**
- 4. Negative alterations in cognitions and mood associated with the event (moral injury?)**
- 5. Marked alterations in arousal and reactivity**
- 6. Duration is more than one month**
- 7. Disturbance in social, occupational or other areas**
- 8. Not related to effects of substance or another medical condition**

Moral Injury Criteria Categories Illustrated in “Fury”

Idealization vs. reality

“Ideals are peaceful; war is violent.”

“We saw it, but we couldn’t understand it.”

Violated core values and morals

(juxtaposition of Bible quotes, talk of salvation, killing and war crimes)

Perceived failure

(War daddy’s loss of a team member)

Performed duty – produced tragic results

(carried out mission and the sorrow/guilt of not keeping every one alive)

National Center for PTSD IOK Treatment

The first intervention is a six-session module called Impact of Killing in War (IOK), developed to augment existing EBTs for PTSD (for example, IOK is used in conjunction with existing EBT for PTSD interventions, in those who have conflict related to killing in war). Pilot testing is currently underway. Preliminary data from pilot testing demonstrated significant improvements for participants on overall psychiatric symptoms, anxiety, and depression, compared to a control group, as well as greater community involvement and increased ability to share personal thoughts/feelings with others.

(http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/co-occurring/moral_injury_at_war.asp)

IOK is within a cognitive-behavioral framework:

- **Education about the complex interplay of the biopsychosocial aspects of killing in war that may cause inner conflict and moral injury.**
- **Identification of meaning elements and cognitive attributions related to killing in war.**
- **Self-forgiveness (which entails cognitive therapy and for some the promotion of spirituality or faith-based religious practices).**
- **Making amends tailored to the individual (this may include writing forgiveness letters and an action plan to start the process of making amends).**

(http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/co-occurring/moral_injury_at_war.asp)

Adaptive Disclosure Therapy

Psychologist Brett Litz and his team have addressed “these morally injurious experiences . . . associated with shame and guilt and feeling that you're not entitled to get better and have a good life . . . by creating Adaptive Disclosure Therapy, or ADT. It is relatively short . . . six weeks. Soldiers close their eyes and imagine they are speaking to an unconditionally loving and non-judging person.”

(<http://www.pri.org/stories/2013-12-27/military-going-beyond-ptsd-help-soldiers-who-have-suffered-moral-injury>)

Adaptive Disclosure

In a further adaption:

"The treatment, Adaptive Disclosure, consists of eight 90-minute sessions, each of which includes imaginal exposure to a core haunting combat experience and uncovering beliefs and meanings in this emotionally evocative context. In cases where traumatic loss or moral injury are present, patients also engage in experiential exercises that entail either a charged imaginal conversation with the deceased or a compassionate and forgiving moral authority in the context of moral injury. In an open trial, Adaptive Disclosure resulted in reductions in PTSD symptoms, depression symptoms, and negative post-traumatic appraisals, and increased post-traumatic growth."

(PTSD Qtr Research Vol 23:1, 2012)

Dr. Nash's Thoughts of the Role of Community

- **Moral Repair requires reconstruction of damaged moral covenants and trust; making amends; asking and accepting forgiveness**
- **Community leaders (in family, church, military organizations, nation) are responsible for social justice as an adjunct to moral repair**
- **Moral authorities may have unique abilities to forgive or encourage forgiveness**
- **(<http://www.slideshare.net/marina761/2010-force-health-protection-conference-deployment-healthcare>)**

Importance of Theological Integration

- **Gary Asklog JPC 2001**
 - **58% Religion very important, 26% psychologist**
 - **90% belief in personal God, 24% psychologist**
- **“They don’t leave their spirituality in the waiting room.” (Pargament, 2007)**

Importance of Religious Ritual

For those who fought with William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings, the Norman bishops decreed:

Anyone who knows that he killed a man in the great battle must do penance for one year for each man that he killed.

Anyone who wounded a man, and does not know whether he killed him or not, must do penance for forty days for each man he thus struck (if he can remember the number), either continuously or at intervals.

Anyone who does not know the number of those he wounded or killed must, at the discretion of his bishop, do penance for one day in each week for the remainder of his life; or, if he can, let him redeem his sin by perpetual alms, either by building or endowing a church.

(Page 79 from David J. Morris' *The Evil Hours*)

Guidelines for Pastoral Intervention

- **Providence**
- **Faith**
- **Grace or gratefulness**
- **Repentance**
- **Communion**
- **The sense of vocation**
- **Awareness of the holy**

(Pruyser)

What We Bring As Pastoral Counselors

- **Theology**
- **Experience**
- **Models**
- **Person of the pastor**
 - **Practice faith**
 - **Supervision**
 - **Therapy**
 - **Pastor/spiritual director**
- **Worship**
- **Bible**
- **Community of faith**
- **Prayer**
- **Practices of the faith**
- **Sacraments**

Proven Approaches to Trauma Counseling

- **CBT**
- **Prolonged Exposure**
- **Cognitive Processing Therapy**
- **EMDR**
- **Group**

Common Factors in Psychotherapy

Factor	Percentage of Influence
Client & Extra-Therapeutic Factors	40%
Therapeutic Relationship	30%
Expectancy	15%
Techniques	15%

(Hubble, Duncan, Miller)

Approaches to Pastoral Counseling

- **What matters most is WHO we are as people of God.**
- **“The prayers and supportive love of a simple Christian may be far more healing for a hurting soul than the counsel of a professionally trained pastor empty of divine presence.” (Chirban, 1996)**
- **Are you willing to bear the pain of another?**

Approaches to Pastoral Counseling

War was
wrong.

Pain

You are
a hero.

Approaches to Pastoral Counseling

- **Winnicott – When there is anxiety in the room there is no room for the other.**
- **Bion – Unless there are two equally scared people, therapist and client, therapy is not being conducted**
- **Friedman - The technical superiority of therapist is not required, but rather his or her actual self.**
- **Chirban – “As Christians, we are here to insist on the vital need for unmediated personal encounter: not machine to machine, but face to face, person to person, *prosopon* to *prosopon*, according to the model of God the Trinity.”**

Approaches to Pastoral Counseling

- **Listen deeply**
- **Encounter the other in dialogue**
- **Be changed by the encounter**
- **Journey toward healing by God**

Listening

“Christians, especially ministers, so often think they must always contribute something when they are in the company of others, that this is the one service they have to render. They forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking.”

- Bonhoeffer

What Do You Hear?

PTSD as a diagnosis has a tendency to depoliticize a veteran's disquietude and turn it into a mental disorder . . . the term "moral injury" . . . takes the problem out of the hands of the mental health profession and the military and attempts to place it where it belongs – in society; in the community, and in the family – precisely where moral questions should be posed and wrangled with. It transforms "patients" back into citizens, and "diagnoses" into dialogue. At this stage of American history, it's hard to imagine just what that might look like, but, all the same, it's an attempt that must be made. It's far too easy for people at home, particularly those not directly affected by war (and right now that's about 98 percent of the population) to shed a disingenuous tear for the veterans, donate a few bucks, and whisk them off to the closest shrink . . . out of sight and out of mind. (750)

**Tyler Boudreau, "The Morally Injured" Massachusetts Review
<http://www.massreview.org/sites/default/files/Boudreau.pdf>.**

Conclusion

Moral injuries are not about benefits or blame. They're not about treatment or medications. They're not about disability. They are about our society and our moral values. A Moral injury is not inherently the same thing as a war crime, though clearly the two ideas overlap. But when we talk about war crimes, we seek justice; when we talk about moral injuries, we seek a deeper understanding of our humanity. We seek healing in some spiritual sense. (754)

“Never think that war, no matter how necessary nor how justified is not a crime. Ask the infantry and ask the dead.” – from Ernest Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls*

Final Reflections

“What can I do? Where can I hide from all this and not be found? What wings would take me high enough? How deep a hole would I have to dig? My shame for the evil I have done consumes me . . . I am soaked in blood-guilt, polluted, contagious . . . I am a pollutant, an offense to gods above.”

- Herakles in Euripedes' Herakles (424 BCE)

“Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is greater than I can bear! Today you have driven me away from the soil, and I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and anyone who meets me may kill me.””

- Genesis 4:13-14