

# A Phenomenologic Approach to the Warrior Experience and Ethos: Consideration of an Arc of Enchantment in the Formation of Individual Military Identity

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## Abstract

Military identity emerges through the lived, imaginative, and moral experience of service. This paper introduces *enchantment*—the cognitive, narrative, and symbolic structuring of meaning—as a foundational dimension of military life that sustains commitment, moral coherence, and disciplined action under conditions of risk, ambiguity, and existential strain. We propose the “arc of enchantment”, a phenomenologically grounded trajectory encompassing initial enchantment, disruption, disenchantment, reflective integration, and re-enchantment. Disenchantment is not failure, but a predictable encounter with operational and moral reality that can destabilize identity or, when supported by reflection and institutional guidance, deepen ethical and professional resilience. Enchantment functions as cognitive and moral armor, enabling agency, judgment, and ethical integrity where analytic rationality alone is insufficient. Military institutions have an ethical responsibility to cultivate and sustain these dimensions, ensuring warriors can inhabit ideals with disciplined judgment, ethical clarity, and resilient moral agency.

## Keywords

Military Ethos, Profession of Arms, Warrior Identity, Command Authority

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## 1. Introduction: A Phenomenology of Military Experience

Phenomenology brackets abstract theorizing in order to examine experience as it

is lived from the first-person perspective. For military philosophy, this can serve to understand how identity ideas and commitments are embodied in the persons who are warriors, operating in the realities of military life, and under conditions of rigor, routine, risk and danger. We contend that this approach has particular utility for examining identity formation over time, because it treats subjective aspects of identity as being constituted through experience, rather than merely adopted through affiliation or instruction.

A critical, yet we believe insufficiently examined aspect of military experience and identity is the role of imagination in sustaining moral agency, psychological coherence, and disciplined action under the conditions that define military life. This phenomenological dimension has been described as *enchantment* and can be defined as the action or process of enchantment, which per definition is to be charmed and filled with attraction and delight by something (not to be conflated with the more colloquial use of the term to refer to magic or bewitchery (Oxford English Dictionary, 2025)). Despite what would seem to be an obvious factor in enfranchising an individual to military service, this phenomenological dimension is seldom acknowledged or addressed within the formal codex of military doctrine, which rightly prioritizes operational efficiency, command authority, and procedural clarity. We opine that enchantment is equivalently important, as we believe it to be essential to the warrior's capacity for commitment, comportment, and ethical perseverance in the military environments that are characterized not only by structure, discipline, and tradition, but also by situations and circumstances of uncertainty, risk, threat and moral gravity.

Phenomenologically, it represents a component of cognitive structuring; a phase that is marked by a coherence between expectation and meaning. In this stage, ethical principles are often experienced as self-evident. Honor feels natural, meaningful sacrifice, and obedience morally justified by trust in the military institution and its mission. Importantly, enchantment is not naivete; it is a necessary condition for commitment. Without an initial sense that service matters—that it participates in a moral order larger than oneself—there can be no durable warrior identity. The danger lies not in enchantment itself, but in failing to prepare the warrior for what follows.

Indeed, the actuality of military life, and of the lifeworld of the neophyte warrior can, and often do, create disparity between an expectational ideal and the experienced reality. The notion of “double consciousness” was first articulated by Du Bois (1903) to describe the sociological condition of inhabiting a divided standpoint, in which lived self-understanding is continually mediated by an external evaluative frame. Rita Felski's subsequent conceptualization of *double consciousness* emphasizes the simultaneous apprehension of material reality and imaginative significance (Felski, 2008). We posit that taken together, these constructs can provide a valuable phenomenological framework for examining how military personnel could develop and maintain functional stability without retreating into illusion or abandoning ideals and professional discipline. Toward such an exami-

nation, we find utility in the phenomenological method of eidetic reduction<sup>1</sup>, as applied to the experience.

In this way, we focus upon the ideas that establish a prospective warrior's attraction to and appeal for the military (*viz.*, the development of initial enchantment); the subsequent subjective event(s) of the objective aspects of the military lifeworld (i.e., as theatre for possible disenchantment), and the first-person process of coming to terms with their sense of self, construct of identity, and the roles, responsibilities and respective dynamics of reframing their individual professional grounding and its attendant moral posture. We call this process the arc of enchantment. Within both their lives in garrison, and their engagement on deployment (and particularly when immersed in the battlespace), warfighters inhabit two overlapping experiential domains. In this sense, the warfighter's experiential condition parallels Du Bois's original insight into simultaneity, yet, pro Felski, operates within a phenomenological rather than sociological register, wherein meaning and materiality are held in productive tension rather than experienced as mutually negating. One is defined by narrative coherence, symbolic meaning, ethical orientation, and identity continuity, the other by weapons systems, mission dictates and metrics, rules of engagement, and casualty counts.

We put forth that enchantment (*qua* circumstantial/existential imagination), far from being escapist or decorative, constitutes a core ethical resource. It enables disciplined agency when analytic rationality alone would collapse under cognitive load or moral uncertainty. Enchantment organizes perception, motivates engagement and/or restraint, and supports identity coherence in ways that are indispensable to the profession of arms. The trajectory of enchantment, disenchantment, and re-enchantment across the arc of a warrior's professional life situates these processes as predictable, ethically significant responses to a range of morally challenging environments. In this light, we argue for an expanded conception of military responsibility that recognizes the cultivation and preservation of enchantment and its attendant moral imagination as an institutional ethical imperative of military service and life.

## 2. Initial Enchantment and the Formation of Moral Identity

Long before an oath is administered or a uniform is donned, individuals who seek to serve as warriors tend to bear a pre-dispositional moral orientation. While this orientation may not yet have been articulated in the formal language of oath of service or office, doctrine, law, or professional ethics, it is nonetheless operative. It consists of internalized narratives concerning duty, sacrifice, courage, restraint, and responsibility that have been acquired through family traditions, cultural

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<sup>1</sup>According to Edmund Husserl, a process for identifying the basic, foundational components of phenomena, with the intention to extract those aspects that are definitive of, and necessary to the reality of the entity in focus (Drummond, 2009). This is a tripartite process of: 1) Focusing upon some entity, object or experience; 2) Varying it imaginatively to investigate the possibilities for difference or similarity; 3) From this, determining those aspects and qualities that cannot be eliminated. Here, we apply this reductive method to the phenomenological experience of the military lifeworld of seeking to become, and then being, a warrior.

norms, collective values and expectations and observed examples – and community regard, of service. Taken together, these form a tacit moral architecture that can shape how prospective warriors interpret authority, risk, loyalty, honor, and the legitimacy and responsibilities of force (de Graaff et al., 2020).

Much of this moral architecture operates beneath conscious deliberation. It is not typically transmitted through explicit instruction yet it can exert significant influence on identity formation and ethical orientation. Individuals who present themselves for military service do not arrive as morally neutral agents. Rather, they are already conditioned to accept hardship, discipline, and the possibility of violence when such actions are framed as necessary for the protection of others or the fulfillment of collective obligations (Challans, 2015). This acceptance should not be dismissed as naïveté; instead, we posit that it reflects an early (but somewhat unexamined) element of moral prefiguration.

As Felski (2008) has noted, enchantment can and frequently does precede and condition rational deliberation. Emotional and symbolic meaning are often established prior to analytic assessment or actual experience. In this sense, the future warfighter does not merely evaluate military service as a rational choice among alternatives; service is frequently regarded as a moral necessity of identity by experience. Narratives and symbols associated with protection, sacrifice, cohesion, and the lawful application of force can coalesce into a sense of obligation that is felt before it is fully reasoned. We propose that this initial form of enchantment is foundational to military identity.

Importantly, this early enchantment does not originate solely from institutional messaging or recruitment discourse. It develops longitudinally through exposure to exemplars of responsibility, social reinforcement of honor and resilience, and broader national narratives that frame military service as a vocation and covenant rather than merely a contractual occupation. For many individuals, entering military service is understood as far more than employment; and is perceived as an assumption of a morally weighted role that entails enduring responsibility, fidelity, and risk. Such narratives are sometimes characterized as romanticized or idealized representations of military life. While they are undoubtedly stylized, dismissing them on that basis alone overlooks their ethical function and importance. They are not endorsements of violence per se; rather, they articulate the moral conditions under which violence may be considered legitimate within the profession of arms, and encode substantive moral guidance, including the disciplined use of force, obedience bounded by lawful authority, accountability to superiors, comrades and noncombatants, and the prioritization of collective security over individual safety.

Early enchantment functions as a pre-rational ethical grounding. It provides motivational force, orienting values, and a sense of purpose that later enable individuals to endure the physical, psychological, and moral demands of military training and operations. When recruits articulate a desire to “serve something larger than themselves”, they are not merely regurgitating institutional language, but are expressing an emergent moral identity that is broadly aligned with the

ethical commitments of military professionalism (Rebera, 2025). Crucially, a form of double consciousness is likely already operative at this stage. Even prior to exposure to combat, many individuals recognize that prevailing military narratives are necessarily simplified, incomplete, or selectively framed. Nevertheless, they remain fashioned by their normative force. The capacity to hold aspirational ideals in concert with an awareness of their limitations constitutes a cognitive and moral foundation of professional military identity that enables commitment without illusion and disciplined action without moral abdication.

The moral identity of prospective warriors is shaped long before formal training or battlefield exposure (Challans, 2015). As individuals encounter operational, moral, and personal stressors, the frameworks of early enchantment are inevitably challenged, giving rise to predictable phases as shown in **Table 1**. Recognition of this dynamic of enchantment, disruption, disenchantment, reflection, and re-enchantment is essential to understand how moral agency, professional identity, and ethical integrity are formed, compromised, reconstructed, and preserved.

**Table 1.** Phases of the arc of enchantment and ethical adaptation in military service.

| Phase                 | Cognitive State   | Primary Sources/<br>Exposure  | Ethical Risk/<br>Vulnerability   | Functional/Adaptive<br>Role   | Implications for<br>Military Service   |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Enchantment</b>    | Engagement, coherence, perceived agency                 | Initial service commitment, mission alignment, collective identity formation, clear command authority | Naïveté, over-identification, idealization of mission                          | Provides moral and cognitive scaffolding; enhances motivation, moral clarity, and operational performance | Establishes baseline ethos and professional identity; sets moral expectations for service                  |
| <b>Disruption</b>     | Dissonance, cognitive tension                           | Encounter with operational ambiguity, institutional inconsistency, early exposure to moral complexity | Suppression of doubts, denial, potential misalignment with mission             | Signals gaps in understanding; promotes situational awareness and adaptive cognition                      | Critical moment for reflection; early intervention can prevent entrenched cynicism or disengagement        |
| <b>Disenchantment</b> | Cognitive distancing, skepticism, fragmented perception | Exposure to combat chaos, moral injury, ambiguity without closure, ethical dilemmas                   | Cynicism, withdrawal, erosion of trust in systems or self, ethical dislocation | Forces recognition of operational and moral realities; initiates moral recalibration                      | Risk of identity destabilization if unsupported; veteran may struggle with reintegration or meaning-making |
| <b>Reflection</b>     | Integration, meaning-making, ethical deliberation       | Guided processing of experiences, institutional support, mentorship, peer dialogue                    | Stagnation if unsupported, risk of moral rumination                            | Enables narrative reconstruction, ethical reconciliation, and cognitive adaptation                        | Critical fulcrum for re-enchantment; supports moral repair and professional identity continuity            |
| <b>Re-Enchantment</b> | Renewed agency, self-aware moral reasoning              | Reflective practice, moral acknowledgment, narrative integration                                      | Regression if romanticized or coerced  | Consolidates adaptive cognition, ethical resilience; fosters morally sober engagement                     | Establishes ethically resilient identity; supports veteran reintegration and lifelong moral agency         |

### 3. Disenchantment as Reality-Exposure, Not Failure

Enchantment, the internal buttress through which perception, purpose, and moral identity are organized is a dynamic, cognitively and ethically rich state. It constitutes an engaged orientation toward meaning coherence, and development of moral agency within the military context (Lumpkin et al., 2024). Enchantment manifests as alignment with professional ethos, trust in institutional structures, confidence in personal and collective competence, and an affective resonance with the responsibilities of service. Yet, enchantment is inevitably challenged. Disenchantment does not signify failure, deficiency, or moral weakness, but rather, is a predictable consequence of exposure to operational, ethical, and existential stressors that challenge one's sense of purpose, identity, belonging and moral accountability, and if exacerbated and/or unresolved can contribute to moral injury (Phelps et al., 2022).

Dissonance can occur early or may be more latent, arising during initial exposure to the rigors of basic training, the fatigue of garrison life and/or the disorganized and often chaotic realities of combat. For some disenchantment develops gradually, as the cumulative weight of moral complexity, operational ambiguity, and experiential strain undermines previously held assumptions and interpretive frameworks (Heward et al., 2024). Regardless of trajectory, disenchantment is destabilizing because it evolves from individuals' iterative confrontation with incongruences between their moral narratives and the lived realities of military service.

#### Operational Disenchantment

Operational disenchantment represents, and is one of the most commonly experienced forms of this phenomenon. Military service emphasizes structure, repetition, and procedural predictability as means to inculcate competence, cohesion, and survivability. Doctrine, rules of engagement, and training simulations cultivate expectations of certainty, controllable expectations in uncertain environments, and skills to manage threats (Sekel et al., 2023). Combat, however, entails elements of chaos and uncertainty that can rapidly expose the limits of such frameworks of structure and order. Operational disenchantment is not indicative of inadequate training; it reflects the inevitable collision between human cognitive processing, and the complexity and extremes of combat. Failure to acknowledge the likelihood of operational dissonance is to risk mischaracterize adaptive human responses as professional deficiencies and imposing unrealistic expectations on personnel (Annett & Giordano, 2025a).

#### Moral Disenchantment

Moral disenchantment arises when unpredictability intersects with ethical complexity. Warriors enter combat with pre-formed moral frameworks that are communicated and reinforced through narratives of duty, honor, protection, restraint, and loyalty. These frameworks are deeply internalized, derived from institutional teaching, modeling, and social constructs regarding the vocation and morality of service. But the reality of combat can exceed the interpretive and prescriptive capacity of these narratives. Every tactical decision bears implications

beyond immediate operational objectives. Witnessing profound harm, participating in operations the goals of which may be somewhat ambiguous, and/or encountering actions that conflict with internalized moral expectations all can contribute to the erosion of previously stable moral reference points (Annett et al., 2025). Moral disenchantment destabilizes inherited narratives of what is held to be right, wrong, and permissible conduct. It exposes the disjunction between idealized ethical frameworks and the practical exigencies of armed conflict. Moral disenchantment is not simply a subjective experience of distress, but instead constitutes a critical moment in the evolution of professional ethical capacity.

### **Personal Disenchantment**

When operational and moral disruptions accumulate without regrounding to cognitive, social, or institutional anchors, personal disenchantment can emerge. With this occurrence, the warrior confronts the fragility of previously reliable sources of identity and agency, and questions may arise beyond the scope or rationality of the mission or organizational effectiveness, that encompass the coherence of the self as an operational and moral agent (Annett et al., 2025; Grossman & Christensen, 2022).

Personal disenchantment is characterized by fragmentation of identity, affective distancing, and a diminished sense of integrity. It represents an existential dislocation wherein the warrior's internal narratives fail to provide guidance or meaning. Without structured opportunities for reflection and moral repair, personal disenchantment can ossify, producing chronic cynicism, withdrawal, and/or ethical disengagement. From a phenomenological standpoint, these domains of disenchantment represent a multiplex crisis of meaning. The warrior must confront the gap between ideals and lived reality. If this gap cannot be interpreted or integrated, it may result in moral injury, alienation from the institution, or fragmentation of identity. Yet, phenomenology also reveals that disenchantment is not inherently corrosive. It is, rather, a transitional moment that can either degrade or deepen moral understanding.

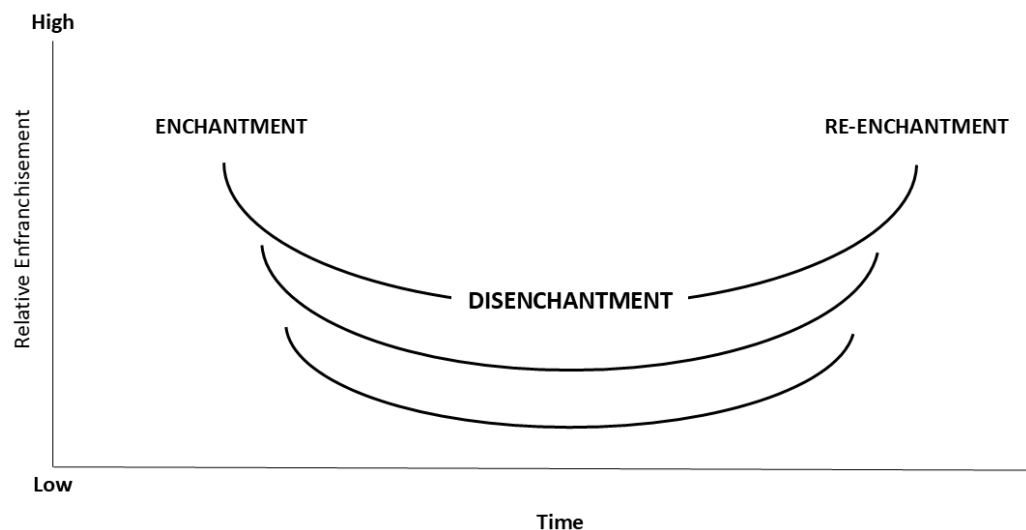
### **Enchantment as Cognitive and Moral Armor**

Warriors cannot subsist on analytic or procedural proficiency alone. Survival and ethical action under conditions of uncertainty and threat require psychological, cognitive, and moral fortitude capable of absorbing trauma while sustaining coherence, agency and judgment. Enchantment, understood as the structured engagement of imagination, symbolic meaning, and narrative coherence, functions to bolster such fortitude. It serves as cognitive and moral armor, providing orientation and grounding in chaotic environments, mitigating dissonance, and enabling effective action when both material and ethical conditions may be ambiguous (Annett & Giordano, 2025b). This armor constitutes an adaptive, functional, and morally necessary resource. By integrating symbolic structures, professional norms, and imaginative frameworks, warriors preserve agency, maintain ethical integrity, and enable reflective engagement even under extreme duress (Annett et al., 2025). In effect, enchantment prepares the warrior to act within a domain de-

fined by lawful violence, moral ambiguity, and existential risk.

#### 4. The Arc of Enchantment

The warrior's cognitive and ethical trajectory is best understood as an arc, which may entail oscillatory rather than linear movement. We propose a model, "the pendulum of ethos", as depicted in **Figure 1**, in which movement along this arc can be, and often is, an alternation between states of enchantment and enfranchisement, fracture and disenchantment, potential disenfranchisement, and eventual re-enchantment and re-enfranchisement.



**Figure 1.** Diagrammatic representation of the arc of enchantment, as described in text. Initial enhancement is associated with high enfranchisement, which with experience(s) over time may become diminished toward disenchantment and a corresponding decrease in enfranchisement. Further experience(s) and engagement(s) can promote re-enchantment and re-enfranchisement. As depicted by the lower arcs in the figure, lesser initial enchantment (and enfranchisement) can decrease to disenchantment and disenfranchisement (and subsequent re-enchantment) with relative proportionality. As detailed in text, it is important to note that movement along this arc may be somewhat linear or may oscillate with experience(s) and time.

Each phase is cognitively distinct, governed by interactions among cognitive frameworks, narrative integration, social, institutional, and circumstantial realities, ethical acknowledgment of burden, risk, and threat, as well as responsibility, resilience, recognition, and restoration. Enchantment provides motivational coherence and ethical alignment, but its stability is contingent on alignment between internalized moral frameworks and operational realities. Disruption emerges when expectations of order, clarity, or ethical consistency are violated, producing cognitive tension and moral dissonance. Disenchantment can occur predictably when exposure to ambiguity, moral injury, or operational complexity exceeds the warrior's immediate integrative capacity. This phase is not necessarily aberrant it is a structural consequence of sustained exposure to ethically and cognitively demanding environments.

Without timely reflection, disenchantment becomes static, creating conditions of chronic alienation, identity fragmentation, and moral disengagement. Reflection functions as a cognitive, and ethical fulcrum to enable integration of operational experience with internalized values, narrative reconstruction, and acknowledgment of capability, responsibility and limitation (Grossman & Christensen, 2022). This reflective phase permits transition toward re-enchantment, where moral clarity, agency, and operational effectiveness are restored, but in a more tempered, ethically sober form.

Analytically, the arc is predictable and systemically informative. Mapping the trajectory from enchantment through dis-enchantment to re-enchantment allows identification of those points where institutional support, mentorship, and/or structured narrative reconstruction can mitigate the ethical and psychological risks of prolonged disenchantment. Failure to recognize these dynamics endangers individual moral agency, and can propagate organizational and systemic ethical vulnerability, as predictably disenchanted personnel may adopt defensive cynicism, disengagement, or externally directed blame (Shook & Giordano, 2025). Hence, the pendular model can function both as a diagnostic tool and a prescriptive framework, highlighting the necessity of proactive intervention at critical junctures to maintain ethical cogency, and operational efficacy.

## 5. The Arc of Enchantment and Continuity of Experience

Enchantment, understood as the capacity to structure perception, emotion, and identity through imaginative frameworks, represents a critical phenomenon, serving as a structural component of human identity, providing orientation, resilience, and moral coherence. Disenchantment, the absence of narrative or moral coherence, can emerge from engagement with extreme reality. Re-enchantment, the reconstruction of imaginative and moral frameworks, becomes essential for psychological integration, functional perseverance and ethical continuity. Through an arc of enchantment, disenchantment, and re-enchantment, warriors may continuously reconstruct identity, negotiate ethical complexity, and maintain operational and moral coherence.

Phenomenologically, re-enchantment involves narrative integration. The warrior reinterprets past experiences in a way that restores coherence to identity. Honor is no longer romanticized but understood as fidelity under constraint. Courage is not fearlessness but perseverance amid moral uncertainty. Obedience becomes morally situated, bounded by responsibility rather than blind compliance. This stage is essential for ethical sustainability. Without re-enchantment, warriors may remain trapped in cynicism or disengagement. Ultimately, the warrior derives cognitive sustenance from structured meaning, which arises from the capacity to imagine, contextualize, and interpret experience in ways that preserve reality, ethical integrity, and personal identity (Wilcox, 2019). In this way, we posit that the arc of enchantment is inseparable from the continuity of human experience. It undergirds the capacity to engage, endure, and recover, and thus consti-

tutes a critical ethical and operational concern, and we argue that it is an important focus for institutions that train, sustain, and support warriors.

## 6. Ethical Implications: Recognizing the Warrior's Inner World

Military institutions traditionally emphasize discipline, operational efficiency, and rational decision-making. These priorities, while essential for cohesion and effectiveness, often obscure the imaginative and emotional dimensions of the warrior's experience. Warriors are not simply instruments of tactical execution or strategic engagement. They are meaning-seeking persons whose identities, ethical frameworks, and psychological endurance depend on coherent narratives that structure perception, emotion and action. Neglecting this dimension produces avoidable burden, ethical harm, and diminished operational effectiveness, and thus acknowledging this inner world is of practical and ethical importance (Shook & Giordano, 2025). Recognizing the warrior's imaginative life requires focal attention across multiple domains. Warriors certainly require technical training, but they also need meaning to be embedded within their roles. Psychological, narrative support is necessary to help navigate the cognitive and moral stresses inherent to military life, whether in garrison, on deployment, or upon the battlefield.

War is waged in a physical domain, but the resilience, resistance and restoration of warriors occur in the domain of meaning. Ethical responsibility of the military to its warriors entails cultivation of environments where warriors can sustain agency, integrate moral experience, and maintain coherence between external action and internal identity. Institutions that fail to recognize and engage in these dimensions risk inculcating individuals whose operational capacities may persist while their ethical, and emotional resources erode.

## 7. Toward a Future Warrior Ethic

While enchantment shapes the early framework of military identity, the warrior ethos provides an operative moral grammar with which warriors can, and arguably should interpret and express their obligations, limits, and place within the profession of arms. The warrior ethos, rooted in traditions of courage, discipline, service, and willingness to confront danger for the sake of others, grounds the individual to a framework of meaning that precedes and exceeds technical doctrine. It is neither ornamental nor romantic. It is an adaptive ethical architecture that organizes conduct within environments of varying duress. In this way, the warrior ethos can be seen as a neurocognitive, and moral scaffold upon which the arc of enchantment (and its constituent disenchantment, and enfranchisement) can be structured.

Central to this ethos is the recognition that the warrior is a moral agent entrusted with lethal authority. This trust constitutes a multi-layered covenant between the warrior and the institution of the military, the warrior and society, the warrior and teammates, and, most critically, between the warrior and their sense

of self. Enchantment vests this covenant within narratives of honor, purpose, and moral clarity. Disenchantment incurs fractures when lived experience exposes the ambiguity, fragility, and ethical dissonance that characterize military experience in both modern battlespaces and certain aspects of society. When trust in mission, leadership, belonging, and/or personal judgment becomes destabilized, the warrior often confronts threats to their professional identity and its constituent moral agency (Wilcox, 2019).

At this juncture disenchantment intersects the military ethic. The profession of arms is predicated on principled restraint, proportionality, discrimination, integrity, and disciplined application of force. Asymmetric conflict, grey-zone operations, and hybrid threats introduce conditions of uncertainty that can tax or exceed doctrinal anticipation. The result is not simply stress, but instead the possible destabilization of moral architecture that enables coherent action. The consequence is risk of moral injury, and the emergence of ethical alienation—a cognitive and existential distancing from the profession that once anchored identity.

Yet there is potential for ethical (re-)enfranchisement within this destabilization. This is a forward-leaning re-engagement with the military ethic that revises the worldview to accept ambiguities, complexity, and responsibility. Re-enfranchisement is not a nostalgic return to earlier ideative simplicity, but is a consolidation of psychological and ethical maturity forged through lived experience (of conflict). It marks a warrior's transition from accepting an inherited ethos to embodying ethical agency, shaped by experience, humility, and moral reflection. Re-enchantment and enfranchisement are distinct processes. Re-enchantment restores cognitive coherence through integration of narrative, symbolic meaning, and the imaginative reconstruction of identity consequential to experience. Enfranchisement restores ethical coherence through deliberate moral reasoning, the incorporation of lived dilemmas, and the acceptance of both the limits and responsibilities inherent to the profession of arms. Re-enchantment reorients the self; enfranchisement reorients agency.

Thus, the warrior ethos can be a locus of investiture, point of fracture, and source of renewal. Institutional structures of the military, including leadership practices, training paradigms, professional education, and mental health support, act as buttresses to facilitate (or, if inapt inhibit) movement from disenchantment toward enfranchisement. Institutions that cultivate reflective practice, candid ethical discourse, mentorship, and acknowledgment of ambiguity enable warriors to forge moral resilience from lived experience. In this way, the arc of enchantment (and its componential disenchantment, re-enchantment and enfranchisement) reflects both phenomenological experience and a characterological evolution that aligns with the human demands of contemporary and near future military realities. The warrior's path along this arc does not leave them unscathed. But through such experience the warrior can emerge more enabled in ethical capacity, in finding clarity within chaos, in being more disciplined in action under conditions of ambiguity, and in sustaining integrity amid moral turbulence.

## 8. Conclusion

For military philosophers, phenomenology provides a view of military identity as a process of becoming, forged through experience, reflection, and meaning-making across time. The arc of enchantment, disenchantment, and re-enchantment is a normal trajectory of identity and moral formation in military life. We opine that insight into these processes has practical implications for professional military education. Instruction and training do not serve merely to preserve enchantment or suppress disenchantment but rather should prepare warriors for the events of the arc, and the path to re-enchantment. Ethical training should extend beyond didactics to include practices that help individuals interpret moral complexity as a constituent of their military identity and understand that leadership emerges through confrontation with moral difficulty, not avoidance of it. Concrete pedagogical strategies toward such ends might include narrative workshops, and development of specific reflective protocols that could operationalize the theoretical arc for military educators. By attending to the lived arc of enchantment, disenchantment, and re-enchantment, a deepened view may be gained of how identity is forged, challenged, reshaped, and ultimately strengthened by military experience. The enduring strength of the profession of arms does not lie in unexamined ideals, but in warriors capable of inhabiting those ideals with humility, clarity, and resolve.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions presented in this essay are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. government, Department of Defense, National Defense University and/or those organizations and institutions that support the authors' work.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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