

# Warrior Ethic

The following is an attempt to answer some basic questions on the "Warrior Psychology" published in the first issue of Versus State. The article begins with an extended quote from a Letter submitted to us by John Long. I consider his statement as representative of the metaphysic of muscle, or action divorced from conscious identity. My answer to Mr. Long follows his statment.

## LONG'S STATEMENT

"...Slomon's statement referring to the Anarcho-capitalist warrior (sic), "The fear of death is lost in the pride of accomplishment", is functionally inaccurate. The experienced, competitively-oriented, professional military mercenary is not remotely interested in dying. Death is defeat, death is the loss of everything of real value. Faced with an absolute critical choice even surrender is preferable. Therein remains a chance to fight again and at least occupy some of the enemies time, manpower, and supplies.

"The most common causes of death and injury amongst conscripts, "citizen volunteers", and a raw militia are lack of proper training, lack of proper motivation, and lack of proper confidence. "Bad luck" trails far behind.

"The amateur soldier often believes it is "honorable" to die for his country or cause. This belief has the insidious effect of making him more susceptible to being killed or injured. This in turn makes the amateur a detriment to his military organization. In dying, or becoming injured, he increases his comrade's jeopardy. The available firepower is decreased, tactical efficacy is reduced, and an unnecessary burden is placed on logistical services.

"The professional mercenary trains and fights to win as an individual. It is as such that he is compensated. To win he must live. He must want to live more than anything else conceivable. He fears for his life. He feels the same gut-boiling, gorge-filling, diaphoretic, bladder-emptying, bowel-evacuating fear any rational human experiences in the face of violent agonizing death. He uses his fear to advantage. It motivates him to develop and hone his skills and condition to maximum potential: no holds barred.

"He learns to sublimate and control the physiological effects of fear and channel the resultant energy into clear-headed accurate situation analysis and effective violent physical action.

"What about preserving the integrity of current military intelligence. One may ask, "Is not going down fighting or suicide wisest in some situations?"

"Yes, however: any military organization that reveals tactically critical information on other than an absolute need-to-know basis, to its junior officers and ems deserves to be defeated..."

## SLOMON'S ANSWER

Before commencing my rebuttal, I want to point out that my original article "The Warrior Psychology of the Anarcho-capitalist Revolutionary" does not deal with the specifics of the military occupation per se but with the warrior psychology of the revolutionary personality. In fact, in my first footnote I state that "Revolutionary

is meant in the broadest sense of new ideas and approaches", thus, it could apply to an architect, doctor, engineer, political organizer as well as to a military professional. Hence, when I asserted the disappearance of one's fear of death as a consequence of an ultimate ethical integration, I was not referring to the often necessary physiological anxiety, apprehension and fear which may grip individuals undergoing great risk of bodily harm to themselves, nor was I advocating reckless and purposeless exposure of oneself to harm or fatality. I was, rather, discussing the primacy of identity and the fulfillment of one's conscious ethical identity without the paralyzing psycho-epistemological self-doubt which afflicts advanced human beings

The fear to which I am referring is the lack of courage which comes of a failure of intellect to grasp the metaphysical givens of life and death, i.e., that the laws of reality (what Rand would call the "primacy of existence") governing non man-made universe are unalterable and that the only thing humans can change is themselves and their constructs. A warrior is, thus, one who faces the prospect of death serenely but who has the courage to live under great odds to achieve the most extremely difficult tasks at great risks to himself. Contrary to Long's belief, courageous men and women do not try to expose themselves to unnecessary risk or act recklessly as might an aberrant personality seeking a false sense of esteem. My whole statement in the "Warrior Psychology" deals with the mechanisms of maturity and not with the juvenile forms of fanaticism most generally associated with religionism. My assertion is that one's fear of dying (and of living as well!) is lost in the pride of accomplishment -- not in the dis-accomplishment of one's existence for a momentary flush of ecstasy.

The type of personality I am talking about would be far more dependable in a fire-fight or under a prolonged war than Mr. Long's mercenaries. First of all, he would be fighting because he consciously understood his cause to be true. His military professionalism would be based on his dedication to his own highly developed ethical identity -- not merely on his desires for monetary remuneration. I hasten to add that there is nothing wrong with being a mercenary -- in any field of endeavor -- only that it is inferior in terms of what the individual experiences as his identity. And, more significantly, in regards to Mr. Long's point-of-view, it is militarily inferior. Mercenaries can do an excellent job but their motivation and dependability is always questionable. People who fight for a cause, and who are willing to risk their lives when necessary (i.e. when their voluntarily accepted command structure orders), are more dependable. A general facing an enemy force composed of dedicated troops ably trained and led, must not only be able to field an ably-trained and well-led body of troops but one which is at least as dedicated. There is no substitute in warfare for dedication. And this is where Mr. Long's mercenary-survive-at-any-cost thesis flounders. It may work for mercenaries who depart when the going gets ultra-tough but it does not work for the military professional whose life is dedicated to the defense of philosophical ideals in the concrete form of a political cause. I assert that mercenaries cannot win against an equal number of equally trained, experienced and armed warriors who are dedicated to their cause and willing to die for it.

More significantly, I detect in Mr. Long's statement a mistrust of abstract ideals -- a kind of action-oriented pragmatism we have seen enthroned in the form of the Clint Eastwood-style anti-hero. Although I don't doubt the limited efficacy of this stoic breed of American cynicism, it is still an aberration rather than a model for emulation. People who have no ideals, just the tenacity to live through it all, no matter what, are distorted adaptations in a world without values. I assert their lives are meaningless to themselves in any fundamental sense. More than that, they are generally undependable in relationships which transcend personal face-to-face loyalties. This I know from experience as well as from reasoned logic. In spite of all the movies to the contrary, the motorcycle gang member, although prone to violence and reckless acts, is not a dependable anything. It is this type which one often

finds as the mercenary -- a fact well documented by their conduct in Angola and Rhodesia.

As I previously said, the Warrior Psychology is not limited to military professionals but applies universally to all individuals capable of advanced consciousness. Mr. Long's position provides no scope for a developed personal identity -- merely survived of biological existence. I assert to the contrary, that to live fully as a human being requires a defined standard of values which ultimately exceed in importance even one's continued existence. This is not an entreaty for suicide. Far from it, I call for the maintenance of personal identity come what may. If one follows the logic of Mr. Long's position to its final outcome, one would have to forsake all abstract ideals -- a loss of identity entailing a form of living death.

Having answered Mr. Long who attacks my position from one end, I will take this occasion to clarify my differences with the epistemo-ethical dualism thesis of Mr. Larry Frost.<sup>1</sup> This position is interesting in that it exploits the same basic ambiguity as does Mr. Long but arrives at a vastly different position though approximately equally erroneous. Mr. Frost's thesis is that to serve effectively in a military situation one must be willing to obey commands which could lead to loss of one's life, thus, one must be altruistic to serve adequately as a military professional. The philosophical consequence of this viewpoint is to dissolve the unity of any objective epistemological or ethical viewpoint. In social terms it necessitates the rise of a caste system and it is interesting that similar views are found in the Hindu caste system.

Although one can argue that rational military service does not or should not entail the equivalent of a libertarian bushido, it is obvious that circumstances may require its de facto equivalence in practice. Thus, the question enters whether, in essence, risking or giving one's life for the performance of one's mission is necessarily a sacrifice, i.e., the surrender of a higher value for a lower value. I assert it does not necessarily constitute a sacrifice if, in fact, the individual considers it of supreme importance to his identity. Although existence is necessary to consciousness and identity in an ontological sense, once evolved, one's identity must of logic become paramount in one's life. Thus, conscious identity must take precedence in a mature personality over even existence itself.

There is then no need for positing an altruistic position for the military profession which is the prime rationale for Mr. Long's exclusive mercenarism and Mr. Frost's dualist position. An individual experiences satisfaction through the use of abstract concepts. Even emotions are the result of the prior learning and acceptance of conceptual value standards. Although in defective personalities the entire process of value standards appears more or less intuitive and unexplicit, a rational and healthy personality requires definition of values at all levels. This process of precise definition of one's standard of value becomes the essence of one's life and action. As such the consistent integration of personal ethical standard and action rises with one's maturity to the pinnacle of one's priorities. There is no other process which is harmonious with a conscious entity.

In the minds of some we may still have a problem. The libertarian ethic asserts that one's life is one's highest value. That an individual is an end in himself. That achieving one's own happiness should and must be one's goal, that is if one is to be rational. Altruism and self-sacrifice are absolutely abhorant to the libertarian, as they must be to any rational being. But is there not a contradiction here between the requirements of warfare which are real and cannot be denied and the requirements of self-interest which are just as real? Does not warfare ultimately entail the notion of self-sacrifice? And if so, is it not diametrically opposed to the libertarian ideal of rational selfishness? Ethically a libertarian will never surrender a higher value for a lower value, nor can he ask it of others and remain true to his

The nature of rational consciousness is essential for the understanding of Anarcho-capitalist ethics and rights theory. Conventional statist ideologies obscure the overriding importance of consciousness and identity. This partly motivated by the altruist-collectivist demand for the egalitarian reduction of the role of the basic egoism of individuals. Our whole philosophy and political ideology rests on volitional consciousness and ethical identity as objective necessities of a developed human nature.

- Richard R. Slomon

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own credo. And this is fine in capitalist society where rational self-interest leads individuals to create and produce values for voluntary exchange in the marketplace. Each trades goods of lower value to himself than those he receives in exchange. This is the basis for Creator Class life, outside of thwarting certain criminal aberrations, the conflict level of war as I have defined it does not fit. Is there an unbridgeable epistemological and ethical dichotomy between Creator and Warrior in libertarian society?

No there is not. The Warrior does not surrender a higher value for a lower value which is the essence of a sacrificial act. The essential idea of a libertarian Creator is that as a being he maintains integrity by living according to his nature. This means his life's profession, is to meet the challenge of real conditions and triumph over them. The consciousness that he is doing this is the basis for his self-esteem and fulfillment, i.e., his happiness. The sum of the values he consciously holds and the attitudes which he has carefully adopted the requirements of his life are the components of his identity. His physical existence is not denied but ultimately it is the values which he identifies as himself which are supreme in his life. The requirements of being a Warrior or meeting the challenge of reality fully and unequivocally are exactly the heroic requirements in principle which rule the life of the Creator. By triumphing in meeting the requirements of his profession, the Warrior is being selfish in the most ultimate sense. He will permit nothing from interfering from his maximizing of his own self-identity. Not even the continuation of his own physical existence.

In fact, this primacy of self-identity is the basis for the heroism of the fictional characters depicted in Ayn Rand's novels Atlas Shrugged and The Fountainhead. It is discernable in a number of professions. These include architect, steelmaker, miner, and scientist. The principle interest of each characterization is in the integrity of their work as the central validation of one's life to oneself. The primary interest is not in physical survival per se but in maintaining an integrity of values with the requirements of life as a whole. Ironically, it is the Warrior's epistemological requirement in the necessity of his work, of his mission, which highlights the true heroism of libertarian selfishness. A selfishness which springs from a maximal identification with truth. A selfishness which is the willingness to wrench a consciously explicit self-identity from the jaws of fear and ambivalence.

- Richard R. Slomon

#### FOOTNOTES

1. L.A. Frost, "Military Affairs - Warrior Ethic and Free Society", Quest, Vol. 1, No. 1, February, 1975, and in "Military Affairs - De Novo", Quest, Vol. 1, No. 2, March, 1975.