

**Jarmo Toiskallio, Finnish National Defense College, Helsinki****Ethics, Military Pedagogy, and Action Competence**

*“Because the battlefield is untidy, unpredictable and chaotic, military leadership remains essentially a spiritual activity – a matter of both heart and soul.” (Jim Wallace)*

*“A person who has to make moral decisions... is always already in the situation of having to act and hence must already possess and be able to apply moral knowledge... [But] moral knowledge can never be knowable in advance in the manner of knowledge that can be taught.” (Hans-Georg Gadamer)*

**Introduction**

I will reflect on the essential relationship of ethics and military pedagogy in the light of the two quotations above: decision making and knowledge that cannot be taught in advance. But instead of “heart and soul” I will introduce the concepts of “practical wisdom” and “action competence”.

Military pedagogy is the part of military sciences that inquires into the philosophies, conceptions, visions, doctrines, aims, methods, and technologies of military education and training. There are good reasons to argue that the role of military pedagogy will grow in importance, because it is evident that military education and training will become more and more complex and demanding: higher technical, physical, psychological, social, cultural and ethical qualifications and competencies are needed for military operations, including the peace and humanitarian operations.

Ethics means, first of all, critical and responsible decision making: How should I/we act? Already this definition shows that ethics belongs to situations that cannot be mastered by linear rationality, to situations where we cannot exactly know in advance what will happen when we start acting. That is why I am highlighting the virtue of “action competence” as the main aim of all military education and training. It is my basic idea in this article that also the art of military education and training in itself as a highly professional activity should be based on the idea of action competence.

As Brigadier Jim Wallace says, “The greatest strength of the military profession is its recognition that there will always be gaps in knowledge” and “military culture must continue to emphasize the need to make decisions without complete information.”<sup>37</sup> This is a very valuable definition of military culture that should also be the directive idea of military pedagogy. It is a problem that the Information Age does not want to concede the reality of the knowledge gaps. With its “digital decision-making” it believes to reach a total certainty. According to Wallace, “The search for certainty is based on the expectation that digitization will remove the effects of chaos.”

By its nature military pedagogy belongs to the human sciences, which are also called moral sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*). I would like to use the expression “ethical-political science” in order to highlight the centrality of *praxis* – socially responsible action – as the substance of military pedagogy.<sup>38</sup> It is just the concept of *praxis* – and practical wisdom as its core – that connects military pedagogy with the military culture described by Wallace.

Because of the everlasting uncertainty of war, the American Major General C. T. Buckingham demands, “From the beginning of their military education and throughout their careers, officers

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<sup>37</sup> Wallace (2000, 131-132)

<sup>38</sup> The expression “ethical-political” is derived mainly from the philosophies of Aristotle and Hegel for whom it is not possible to understand ethics without thinking about our political commitments and responsibilities. In the classical discourse politics means the communal bonds that form us as citizens (Bernstein 1991, 9).

should study the elements of ethical decision making.”<sup>39</sup> Both Gen Buckingham and the Russian Professor Yuri Noskov underscore a sound ethical leadership in the military. Noskov defines it as follows: ”The professional and moral duty of military officers is to arm their junior officers and younger soldiers with basic moral principles they can rely on to make the right moral choice in complicated situations. This is the meaning of ethical leadership.”<sup>40</sup>

I agree, but in this article I am going a step further: the theme of ethical decision making as a central constituent of action competence – not only of officers, but all the soldiers - should be the main area of interest in military pedagogy. It should also be the leading idea of practical education and training in all of its phases (planning, execution, evaluation and validation).

### Action Competence as the Aim

Action competence is a holistic construct<sup>41</sup> for which I am applying the concepts of “practical wisdom” (*phronesis*) and “action” (*praxis*) from the ethics of Aristotle<sup>42</sup>.

That means that my interest is on individuals in particular situations. For Aristotle practical wisdom was a virtue, a competence for contextualized deliberation, different from scientific knowledge as well as from the technical knowledge of a craftsman.<sup>43</sup> It is my conviction that military pedagogy – because of its complex human area of inquiry - is in need for holistic constructs like action competence in order to deeply understand the problems of educational planning, execution, and evaluation<sup>44</sup>.

I will conclude this article by presenting a model for the peacetime military-pedagogical decision making in the complex field of educational planning. My point of view for the model is that of professionals doing the planning work, and I will insist that educational planning is always an ethical task that needs practical wisdom and “self-knowledge” (i.e. knowledge of oneself)<sup>45</sup>, not only theoretical and technical knowledge. It is the basic idea in my model that the self-knowledge of an educational planner is the ‘driver’ of the system of different kinds of knowledge. All knowledge goes through the filter of self-knowledge. It is the dynamic instance that decides how I/we shall act in the immediacy of a given situation.

The concept of action competence has a double role in the model: I take it to be the main task of all military education and training to enhance and develop the action competence of soldiers, and on the other hand, action competence is the virtue of educational planners. I will return later with a closer look at the idea of action competence.

### The Theme of Ethical Decision-making

<sup>39</sup> Buckingham (2002). MajGen Buckingham spoke in the seminar of military ethics at Riga, Latvia.

<sup>40</sup> Noskov (2002) in the same seminar with Buckingham. Dr Noskov is Navy Captain and professor of military sciences.

<sup>41</sup> The term ‘holistic’ refers to an understanding of action in terms of an integrated whole of psychical, physical, social, and ethical spheres (a system that cannot be reduced to its different parts). We cannot understand someone’s action if we only look at his/her different modes of behavior.

<sup>42</sup> Some of the famous philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have interpreted and utilized these Aristotelian concepts; for instance Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hannah Arendt, and Paul Ricoeur. Major Scott F. Murray, U.S. Air Force, uses the concept of *phronesis* in a fruitful way when discussing battle command and decision making (Murray 2002).

<sup>43</sup> Stephen Toulmin writes that Aristotle ”knew the difference between intellectual grasp of a theory (or *episteme*), mastery of arts and techniques (*techne*), and the wisdom needed to put techniques to work in concrete cases dealing with actual problems (i.e., *phronesis*).” (Toulmin 1992, 190)

<sup>44</sup> Already Carl von Clausewitz wrote that “theory becomes infinitely more difficult as soon as it touches the realms of moral values” (Clausewitz 1984, 136). ‘Moral values’ is a translation from the original “geistige Größe”. ‘Moral values’ refers to the fact that war is always human action.

<sup>45</sup> Gadamer (1988, 282). Gadamer derives the concept of self-knowledge from Aristotle.

A problem of discussing ethics is that there is no single concept of ethics: from Aristotle to Kant and Hegel to Nietzsche and Foucault to Levinas and Derrida, and to Habermas, the concept of ethics has been re-conceptualized and reformulated.

Maj.Gen. Buckingham describes the normative basis of military ethics like this: "Whatever protects and enhances human life is good, and whatever destroys or degrades human life is evil"<sup>46</sup>. This means that in its fundamental essence, the purpose of military force is to protect life, not to destroy it. Accordingly, it is obvious that for military pedagogy everything that protects and enhances human life is good. For instance, and in its simplest, if we handle the recruits as 'objects' or as 'plain instruments', we are not enhancing human life. Immanuel Kant formulated one of the most well known ethical principles: "Man (and every rational being) is an end-in-himself, i.e., he is never to be used merely as a means for someone."

There is a demand for ethical decisions every time we have to act in social contexts (war, for instance, is always a social context, as well as the threat of terrorism) in which we cannot exactly "know" how to act and what kind of consequences our action will have. Ethical decision-making always goes beyond knowledge that can be taught in advance, as Hans-Georg Gadamer says in the quotation above. In the postmodern techno-culture of the Information Age we are continuously confronted by new and changing situations in which such decisions are needed.

Societies and organizations have moral norms and rules. But ethics does not consist only of norms and rules. It is more active; it is visions, critical thinking, discourse, and decisions about good life and action. Ethics is an integral constituent of our action, and in action there is always decision-making: How should I/we act. Ethics belongs to our self-understanding as acting human beings: "...ethics is first of all a vision which shapes us as human beings, as persons able to take our responsibilities for our life with others and with the whole living world"<sup>47</sup>. In general, ethics is – as the Danish philosopher Peter Kemp says - a vision of the good life and responsibility for life.

One of the great borderlines goes between Kantian *Moralität* and Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*. It is the standard practice in moral philosophy to distinguish questions of "justice" from questions of "the good life". The Kantians are dealing with "the right", and the Hegelians (or neo-Aristotelians) with "the good". It is a problem also for military pedagogy that in the Kantian approach the norms of justice are thought to be universally valid and binding, whereas "the good" is seen to depend on culturally and historically specific practices and horizons of value.

In ethics it is not so much a question about abstract values and norms, but discerning, decision-making, reflection and responsibility here and now, in concrete tasks, environments, and situations. That is why we should perhaps be more Aristotelians and Hegelians than Kantians in military pedagogy. In his concept *Sittlichkeit* Hegel based ethics on *Sitten* – customs or habits in concrete cultural environments. *Sittlichkeit* has been translated into English as 'ethical life'. Scott Lash welcomes this translation, because it very well expresses the coupling of ethics with "forms of life"<sup>48</sup>. Ethical life means much the same as collective identity. The French hermeneutical philosopher Paul Ricoeur has reinterpreted the Aristotelian practical wisdom as a means of reorienting the Hegelian idea of *Sittlichkeit*. According to Ricoeur, Hegel sought to relate ethical criteria to a concrete historical context in order to overcome the abstraction of Kantian moral philosophy<sup>49</sup>.

Of course there might be severe problems when ethics is tied with local and national value traditions. The "Neo-Aristotelians" are often called "communitarians", and communitarianism has

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<sup>46</sup> Buckingham (2002)

<sup>47</sup> Kemp (1999, 283)

<sup>48</sup> Lash (2002, 35)

<sup>49</sup> Barash (1999, 36)

been seen even dangerous - perhaps as nationalist, tribalist and racist - for the global development of peace and cooperation. But this is a narrow-minded view. It would be more fruitful to see the Hegelian "ethical life" as an inter-subjective, dialogical interpretation of community: "Hegel showed the path away from an atomistic conception of the self... to a model that defined the self as constitutively directed toward the others"<sup>50</sup>. The problem is how we today - in the globalizing world - understand "the others", the community, and the collective identity. European Union with its developing armed forces is a good example: is it possible to develop a collective identity like "Euro-military identity"<sup>51</sup>? And how to further global ethics by means of dialogue between cultures?<sup>52</sup>

### **Military Pedagogy and the Problem of Technological Logic**

Today there seems to be three major reasons for profound new thinking in military pedagogy especially when it is inquiring into the practical planning of military education and training. The first one is composed of the changing tasks and action contexts of the armed forces. Secondly, there are the dramatic changes in societies and the life styles of people. The third reason is the technological logic or techno-culture of the Information Age: There is basically the problem in techno-culture how to understand the relation between man and machine, and what kind of an image we should have of the human being. After that comes the problem how to understand human action, and the action competence of soldiers that we want to have.

It is not only theoretically interesting, but also practically important to contrast ethical decision-making with "digital decision making", a typical techno-cultural mode of thinking and a pivotal constituent of the "revolution in military affairs" (RMA) and the "network-centric warfare" (NCW)<sup>53</sup>. In the ethical decision-making practical wisdom is needed, whereas artificial intelligence of computers takes its place in digital decision-making. It is the profound problem of techno-culture that it cannot see the basic difference between practical wisdom and artificial intelligence – or in classical terms, the difference between *phronesis* and *techne*.<sup>54</sup>

It is not to say that digital decision-making as *techne* is a bad thing. On the contrary, the new technologies are really beneficial. The problem is that it is difficult for the techno-culture to understand the nature and role of ethical decision-making. It is a new task of our days to be able to see that "NCW's ... effects are rooted in examining combat leaders' practical wisdom and character because battle command depends on their moral choices. Sound character, reinforced by practical wisdom, is a prerequisite in being able to exercise battle command because seeing, deciding, and acting begin there."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Hanssen (2000, 134)

<sup>51</sup> Royl (2002)

<sup>52</sup> Heinonen (2002)

<sup>53</sup> Even though RMA is very much technologically loaded, it refers not only to technology. The US Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld described the new situation in the beginning of 2002 as follows: "We need to change not only the capabilities at our disposal, but also how we think about war. All the high-tech weapons in the world will not transform U.S. armed forces unless we also transform the way we think, the way we train, the way we exercise and the way we fight."

NCW takes place in a wireless, digital environment. The increased information transfer and processing rates have created environments for exchanging unlimited amounts of information in real time between any two or more points on the globe. This is the environment for "digital decision-making".

<sup>54</sup> Scott Lash (2002, 15) talks about "technological forms of life" in which we make sense of the world through technological systems, like "I can't live without my laptop computer". See also Harig's article on "digital generals" (Harig 1996).

<sup>55</sup> Murray (2002)

For military pedagogy, it is crucial to underscore “the human face of warfare”<sup>56</sup>. Although there will be more and more information-age systems and remotely piloted weapons, war remains a fundamentally human act. It will be a human act, although the “modern man has dehumanized warfare”<sup>57</sup>: there are acting people, not only machines and artificial intelligence.

The term ‘dehumanization’ is impressive; it means forgetting - or even trying to hide - the everlasting cruelty, fear and chaos of warfare and battles. Dehumanization is a part of technological logic: the enemy has become faceless, and easier than ever to kill. In other words, as Peters says, “Our wars are, or attempt to be, wars of alienation”. This is the other side of the attempts to make wars clean, less bloody. It is one of the tasks of military ethics to remind us about the human nature of military activities. The contemporary technological logic is instrumentalizing soldiers: most of the western militaries are conducting research and development programs like “soldier as system” with the aim to make the soldiers “instruments of war”, grasping the humans only as complete platforms of weapons and information technology.

It is the idea of RMA that there will be profound changes in doctrine, training, leadership, organization, materiel management, and warrior skills. But in her analysis of old and new wars, Mary Kaldor sees that RMA still continues the images of old wars: the new technologies are developing as linear continuities of the past<sup>58</sup>. According to Kaldor a revolution really has happened in warfare, but it is not technological - it is a revolution in the social spheres of warfare: the new wars have to be seen as a part of the globalization process.

### The Idea of Practical Wisdom for Military Pedagogy

It was Aristotle who in his ethics said that every science aims at some good: according to him “the good” for the military science was victory in war. Today the new wars and the “postmodern” societies within the globalized world are very much different from the ancient days of the city-state Athens, and the phrase “victory in war” must be understood in broader terms. The contemporary military sciences must be able to think in the framework of complex political, informational, technological, and logistical contexts with global, communal, and individual values and responsibilities.

But, on the other hand, it is just because of these complexities that we should develop our practical wisdom, *phronesis*. According to Aristotle, practical wisdom means to be able to deliberate about what is good and advantageous for us and for people in general<sup>59</sup>. The deepest relation of military pedagogy with ethics can be seen just in the concept of practical wisdom. Both military pedagogy and ethics deal with the good for life and for people. In other words: military pedagogy should be more practical than technical<sup>60</sup>. Practicality means decisions on how to act in living, changing and open-ended situations, whereas technicality refers to knowledge of how to reach particular ends (know-how). Practicality needs moral knowledge, but the problem is that

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<sup>56</sup> Evans & Ryan (2000)

<sup>57</sup> Peters (1996)

<sup>58</sup> Kaldor (2001)

<sup>59</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Book six, 1140a24-b12. Stephen Toulmin (1992, 190) concludes the Aristotelian concept of practical wisdom as follows: “... our chance of acting wisely in a practical field depends upon our readiness, not just to calculate the timeless demands of intellectual formulae, but also to take decisions *pros ton kairon* – that is, ‘as the occasion requires’.”

<sup>60</sup> Aristotle made a distinction between *praxis* (action) and *poiesis* (making). The mental state of action is *phronesis*, and the mental state of making (or producing) is *techne* (know-how). For an action it is not enough only to have know-how: practical wisdom is higher in rank than *techne*. The concept of practical wisdom has always been opposed to purely technical cognition, and held to refer to the effective, harmonious and farsighted conduct of practical affairs (Haslam & Baron 1994, 50).

moral knowledge cannot be taught like technical knowledge<sup>61</sup>. Soldiers can be trained to use weapons, tools, and procedures exactly, but for acting in complex and unexpected situations only general principles can be given. It is just for these situations that practical wisdom is needed.

If one feels that the idea of *phronesis* is ‘too philosophical’ it is good to transfer the idea into the operational platform of tactics. We can clearly see the idea of practical wisdom in the German concept of *Auftragstaktik*. Major General Werner Widder describes it as follows:

“... Auftragstaktik is based on an image of man who values his individual dignity and freedom and who harnesses them to achieve superior strength. This concept is still valid for the 21st century. Based on the premise that leadership encompasses two aspects—being a role model and accepting responsibility—leadership requires competence, strength of character, trust, initiative, judgment, assertiveness, and decision-making ability at all command levels. Only Auftragstaktik enables the meaningful exploitation of the most sophisticated technology, and only Auftragstaktik allows mastery of the increasingly complex challenges of the 21st century.”<sup>62</sup>

The relative ideas can be found when Stephen Toulmin criticizes modern science and philosophy: “...philosophers ignored the concrete, timely, particular issues of practical philosophy, and pursued abstract, timeless, and universal (i.e., theoretical) issues”<sup>63</sup>. Toulmin’s agenda for “humanizing modernity” consists of four “returns”: the return to the oral in the meaning of communication and discourse, the return to the particular (for instance, ethics in specific types of situations), the return to the local (to the concrete cultural and historical contexts), and the return to the timely (from eternal problems to things whose rational significance depends on the timelines of our solutions).

Applying Toulmin’s agenda we might say that the philosophical core elements of decision-making in *Auftragstaktik* are communication, particularity, locality, and time. These are also the core elements of practical wisdom. Echoes of practical wisdom can also be heard when the Russian Colonel Varnavskikh says that it is the task of military pedagogy to enhance the abilities for individual action in complicated and rapidly changing environments: “It must be stressed that the conscious freedom in choosing a goal and means of activity, in behavior and creativity is the most important essential quality of man.”<sup>64</sup>

Perhaps one of the best examples of the idea of practical wisdom is the concept of *Innere Führung* in connection with the principle of *Auftragstaktik*. As an image of man *Innere Führung* means that the soldier is a free person:

“Only the responsible citizen will act out of his own free will and the responsibility he feels toward the community. ... *Innere Führung* is the commitment of ...soldiers to moral-ethical standards. ... [Auftragstaktik] means that execution itself becomes the executor's responsibility. His skills, creativity, and commitment will be the key elements of execution. Thus, Auftragstaktik is not merely a technique of issuing orders but a type of leadership that is inextricably linked to a certain image of men as soldiers.”<sup>65</sup>

Practical wisdom has always been opposed to purely abstract or technical cognition, and to refer to the effective, harmonious and farsighted conduct of practical affairs. Practical wisdom is centrally concerned with judgments in the face of uncertainty and implies a particular attitude to risk. It is a profound area of research for military pedagogy how to develop and enhance practical wisdom.

<sup>61</sup> Gadamer (1988, 278-289)

<sup>62</sup> Widder (2002)

<sup>63</sup> Toulmin (1992, 186-190)

<sup>64</sup> Varnavskikh (2002, 65)

<sup>65</sup> Widder (2002)

One of the crucial points is that practical wisdom is always based on tradition and community: nobody can become practically wise as an isolated individual. That is why military pedagogical inquiries must be conducted within the frameworks of culture, forms of life, and *Sittlichkeit* or ethical life. Perhaps military pedagogy should be much more interested in “warrior cultures”. Warrior cultures throughout history have all constructed codes of behavior, which establish that culture’s image of the ideal warrior. These codes are often closely linked to a culture’s religious beliefs, and in many cases they seem to hold the warrior to a higher ethical standard than that required of an ordinary citizen.<sup>66</sup>

### Action Competence and Embodied Agents

In short, action competence refers to the potentiality of being an embodied agent in complex and unforeseen situations. ‘Embodied’ means that we already are mentally and physically, as whole persons, in the situation of having to act. The concept of embodied agent is critical of the traditional way of thinking in which mind and body are treated as separate elements. It is reasonable to use the concept of action competence at the individual level (like Scott Murray speaks about seeing, deciding, and acting as the basic constituents of battle command).

In tactical terms there are good reasons to be more interested in individuals: “...the continuing tendency will...be for platoon to do a company’s job, and a squad to do a platoon’s, and hence for each junior commander to operate more independently... [Furthermore] artillery has become sufficiently responsive to be called down by almost every individual soldier... We are not far away from the situation in which ‘a corporal can fire a cruise missile’.”<sup>67</sup> In other words, individual soldiers with their practical wisdom will have a role of growing importance. Alongside with this tendency it is impossible to understand how there might be efficient troops and units without action competent persons.

Persons having responsibilities is the key of practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is the prerequisite for *praxis*, deliberate and socially responsible action. Understood like this, action is more than behavior or performance. Animals, and even machines, can behave, but action is possible only for human beings. With the advancing technologies, it is a crucial question whether we are going to drop the term ‘action’ and replace it with the term ‘behavior’ like psychologists some decades ago when they made efforts to take on the mantle of a ‘science’: their attempt was to physicalize the human mind.<sup>68</sup>

Action is always intentional, purposeful, deliberated: one acts for a reason, in order to do something, or as an expression of some values and attitudes. Agency means to be an agent, an acting subject. An agent is one who acts, and an agent may be contrasted to being one who is acted upon. Like Charles Taylor says, it is important to see “the subject as essentially an embodied agent, engaged with the world.”<sup>69</sup> The traditional Western way of thinking intentionally has separated mind and body: somehow perception and cognition precede action. It is just this conception that Derrida sees as the main problem when we try to understand decision<sup>70</sup>. His idea is that as embodied agents we step outside knowledge; it is impossible to know the future in advance.

Hans Jonas describes the embodied agent like this: “It is the body’s capabilities, habits and ways of relating to the environment which form the background to all conscious goal-setting, in other words, to our intentionality.”<sup>71</sup> It seems very clear that in military pedagogy human beings should

<sup>66</sup> French (2002)

<sup>67</sup> Griffith (2000, 114-115). Paddy Griffith inquires into leadership and morale on the ‘empty battlefield’.

<sup>68</sup> Harré & Gillet (1994, 112).

<sup>69</sup> Taylor (1995, 22)

<sup>70</sup> Derrida (1999)

<sup>71</sup> Joas (1996, 158)

be understood as embodied agents, and it is a challenge for practical education and training how to develop individuals as embodied agents capable of creative and responsible action in the complex environments. Military pedagogy should be able to see a soldier as a person - as a holistic 'system' with psychical, physical, social, and ethical competencies – who already is in a situation and cannot but decide to act somehow. We cannot understand a soldier as a person and his/her action competence if we are inquiring only into a single part of that complex system. It is already the basic definition of a holistic, or complex, system that everything affects everything.

When talking about the decision-making of an embodied agent, the distinction between technical and practical decision-making should be understood. On the other hand, there is a technical-rational, linear procedure (that has been the ideal of modern rationality), and on the other hand the essential contingency of human action with the unforeseeable character of its consequences. Derrida says that in a real decision one has to experience some “undecidability”, because without it the decision is simply the application of a program, the consequences of a premises: “If we knew what to do, ... then the decision would not be a decision... if the decision is simply the final moment of a knowing process, it is not a decision... At some point, for a decision to be made, you have to go beyond knowledge, to do something that you don't know.”

Just because in a real decision we have to go beyond knowledge, Derrida says, “A decision is something terrible”. It is “both a terrible and tragic situation” in which I am alone. Derrida's view onto decision-making is valuable for military pedagogy, because it describes the human situation at the chaos-like “empty” battlefield extremely well. Altogether, it can be said that it is the main interest of military pedagogy to inquire into the holistic system of competencies for action. It is not the fundamental task of military education and training that the trainees only learn some knowledge and some performances.

The fundamental task is to enhance the human action competence as a potential. Performance and behavior refer to *poiesis* that is a form of non-reflexive 'know-how' guided by *techne*, and action competence refers to reflexive *praxis* guided by *phronesis*. In the complex, moving, and changing situations we cannot manage decision-making with linear (non-reflective) technical procedures. Instead, we must be practically wise embodied agents with our physical, psychical, social, and ethical competencies tied together by our identity, as shown in the following picture. As Manuel Castells says, identity is a source of meaning for the actor him-/herself<sup>72</sup>.

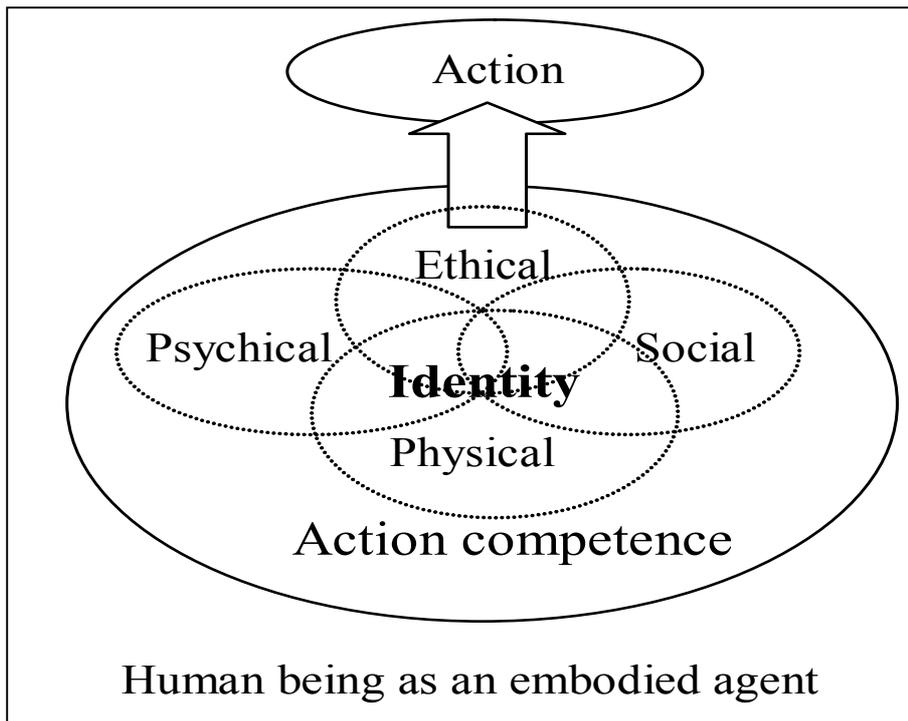
Identity is a term that combines the individual and the social spheres. In the context of practical wisdom identity refers to collective identity in the sense of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*, ethical life: identity is formed, and continuously developed, as we live in a social community. That is why the concepts of identity and ethics cannot be discussed separately<sup>73</sup>. Although the concept of action competence was above connected to the individual level, it is not an individualistic concept because the idea of practical wisdom strongly binds it with the social reality.

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<sup>72</sup> Castells (1997, 6-7)

<sup>73</sup> The term of ethics has its root in *ethos* – a mode of life in common. Identities of people are formed by the same modes of life in common.

Picture 1. The idea of action competence.



### Conception of Aims: The New Contexts

Developing action competence is always tied with aims, but to have a clear conception of the aims of military education and training is not an easy task. The challenges of security and defense are changing dramatically, and the armed forces are forced to critically reflect on their cultures and identities. For instance, the new wars have been described as follows:

“... Terrorism is just one of many, non-traditional security challenges. Examples include ethnic and religious conflict, drug trafficking, mass migration, environmental instability, corruption, money laundering, militant activism and information theft. Such threats - where conflict and crime often merge - respect no boundaries. All too often, there are no leaders or legions against which to focus attention or target a response.”<sup>74</sup>

In the new wars, as the American Colonel Peters writes, “...our enemies, our potential adversaries, and even our provisional partners either do not know or reject our Western ethics... We face opponents, from warlords to drug lords, who operate in environments of tremendous moral freedom, unconstrained by laws...”<sup>75</sup>

One of the most fundamental ethical questions in military pedagogy is what we mean to do with military and soldiers. In the new wars a range of new militaries can be found: state armies, paramilitary groups, self-defense units, mercenaries, etc. There might be children as well as criminals freed from prisons for fighting in the paramilitary groups. Are they soldiers?

The problem should be seen the way Wolfgang Royl sees it: Military pedagogy is linked to global military responsibilities for the security of the free world<sup>76</sup>. Here “the free world” should be understood in its profound meaning referring to democracy. The main interest of military pedagogy should be “soldiership in democracy”. This can be formulated as a task to develop “the theory of the

<sup>74</sup> Hall & Fox (2002)

<sup>75</sup> Peters (1996)

<sup>76</sup> Royl (2002, 13)

military in the democracy”<sup>77</sup>. With this formulation it is clear that military pedagogy is interested only in the education and training of the organized, democratically controlled armed forces, both national and international. “Military” means just these forces, whatever their tasks and duties, be they conscript or all-volunteer forces. But still there is the possibility that the potential adversaries are not military people in this meaning.

According to Mary Kaldor<sup>78</sup>, the rupture with classical modernity that is associated with the process of globalization is illustrated by the changes in the pattern of organized violence. In the new wars violence is mainly directed against civilians, not another army. The aim is to capture territory through political control rather than military success. Population displacement, massacres, widespread atrocities are not just side effects of war; they are a deliberate strategy for political control.

Kaldor says that unlike inter-state wars, which were highly regulated and which indeed provided a model for statist forms of planning, the new wars could almost be described as the model for the contemporary informal economy, in which privatized violence and unregulated social relations feed on each other. It seems that the arguments both of Royl and Kaldor underscore a new style importance of high-level moral standards for the militaries of democracy.

### **Conception of Human Beings: Change of Societies and Lifestyles**

One of the major challengers of military pedagogy is the profound change of societies and the fact that people are different from those of yesterday: where are the future soldiers coming from? We are confronted with the growing complexity and instability of societies, politics, cultures, and human identities. Many sociologists have described our contemporary late modern societies as risk societies where the former concepts of rationality are no more valid. Life values as well as the lifestyles of people have changed, and the processes of globalization and individualization are very much tied together. It seems that the late modern, or postmodern, society produces consumers, not citizens.

There are a lot of alarming features in the technologically developed western world; one of them seems to be a growing social carelessness or egoism. It is coupled with severe identity problems, with difficulties to find any meaning for life. Yuri Noskov sees this clearly when he describes the extremely difficult circumstances in Russian society and in the Russian defense forces: “In the sphere of morality, moral degradation resulted in devaluation of such basic ethical categories as ‘conscience,’ ‘duty,’ ‘honor,’ and ‘dignity’ ... we can say that at the present time, moral security is under a threat in Russia ... moral crisis in modern Russia is accompanied by the growth of crime, prostitution, drug addition etc.”<sup>79</sup>. But we must be careful not to think that these are features of Russian society only.

In every society identities, cultures and ethics belong together. Culture can be seen as an order- and meaning-creating activity of human beings. In a culture it is a question of the meaning perspectives of people. When we are discussing meaning perspectives, we are talking the ability of people to experience the world and their engagement with it as meaningful. As Manuel Castells describes, identities refer to the processes of construction of meaning on the basis of cultural attributes - identities are sources of meaning for the actors themselves<sup>80</sup>. In the postmodern information societies these processes seem to become more and more difficult, perhaps impossible. It is one of the features of a risk society that there is, as Noskov says, “Devaluation of ... conscience, duty, honor, and dignity”.

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<sup>77</sup> Royl (2002, 20)

<sup>78</sup> Kaldor (2001)

<sup>79</sup> Noskov (2002)

<sup>80</sup> Castells (1997, 6-7)

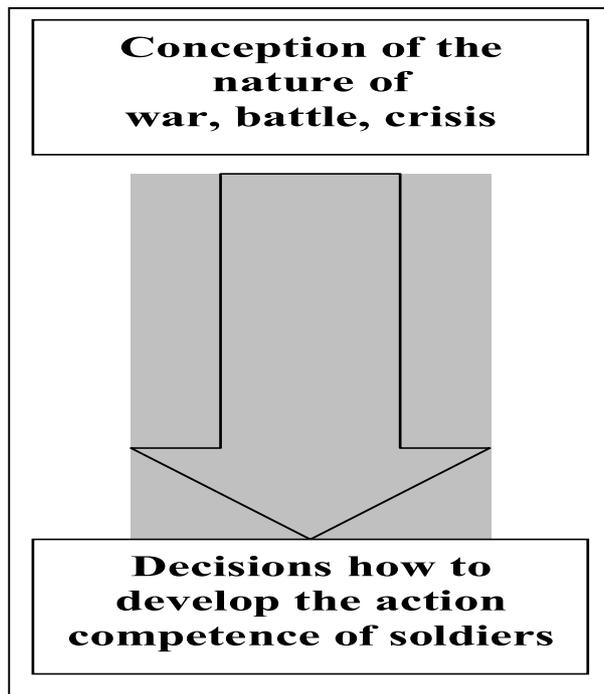
## Military-Pedagogical Planning Model

The idea of the following Military-Pedagogical Planning Model (MPPM) is to describe the philosophy of planning military education and planning at any level. The traditional process of planning uses the linear rationality (from objectives to execution), but from the viewpoint discussed above (action competence, practical wisdom) that kind of model is too restricted. MPPM is hermeneutical with the idea that the complexity of reality shall thoroughly be reflected and understood<sup>81</sup>. Planning military education and training is a task where the planner cannot be an outsider: it is I/we who shall make the decisions although it is never possible to know in advance what will happen. Planning education and training also means an attempt to make the future.

For the individual planners as well as for the organizations, all real planning in the educational field is also a process of “edification” in the meaning of self-formation. Richard Rorty adopted the term of edification because for him “ ‘education’ sounds a bit too flat, and *Bildung* a bit too foreign.”<sup>82</sup> It is typical of Rorty to highlight the everlasting self-constructing, or self-formative, nature of human beings. As responsible planners we have to construct our views of reality and future.

When we make decisions in planning military education and training at any level, we should edify ourselves by thinking critically and creatively about the corner stones of our activity. In MPPM the corner stones are (a) conception of action contexts (wars, battles, crises, etc.), (b) conception of humans (who will be trained and educated), and thirdly (c) conception of learning and growth as well as methods for fostering these processes. The main line of thinking should connect the conception of action contexts with the task of enhancing and fostering action competence.

Picture 2. The main line of thinking in MPPM



It is not enough only to think about the skills that are needed in specific contexts and tasks. Pedagogically, we have to go beyond the level of behavior and analyze what kind of action competence (physical, psychical, social, ethical) is needed in order to use these skills effectively. It is not a task that can be done only by means of linear rationality, because we can never know

<sup>81</sup> I am using hermeneutics like Rorty: Hermeneutics is a description of our study of the unfamiliar – “We must be hermeneutical where we do not understand what is happening but are honest enough to admit it” (Rorty 1989, 321)

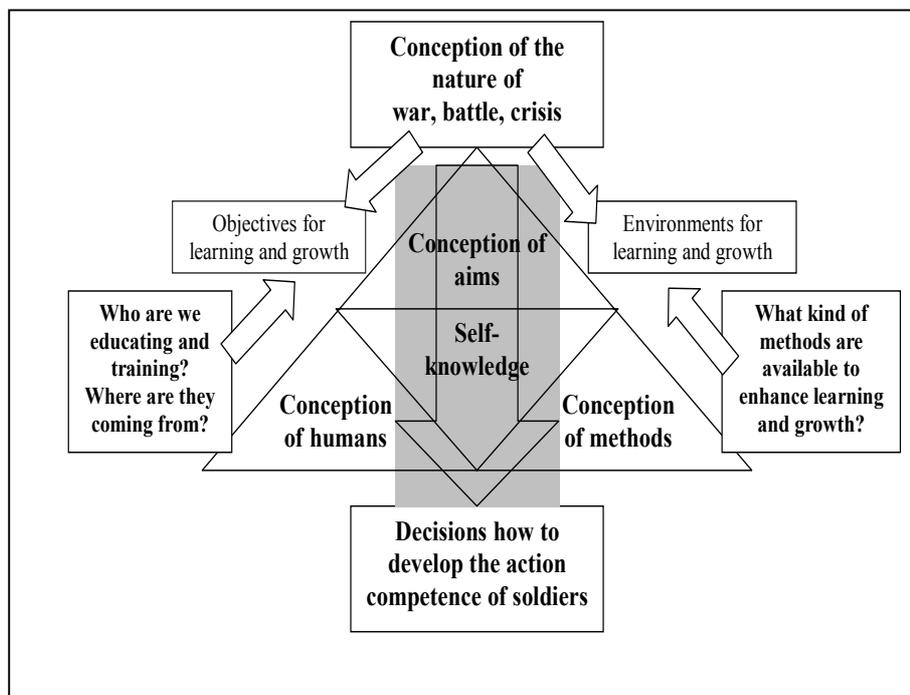
<sup>82</sup> Rorty (1989, 360)

exactly in advance what the real situations will be. It is an old wisdom of military thinking that we shall not prepare ourselves for the past war. We have to imagine the holistic potentiality of individuals for the future. This is one of the most important responsibilities for a planner of military education and training from the pedagogical point of view. That is what Rorty means with edification: to be able to create new descriptions. But edification cannot be taught to the new military planners – we can grow into edification only by first adopting the contemporary military form of life, or culture. After that it is possible to start learning to deconstruct the prevailing descriptions and to make new ones.

But it is not enough in military pedagogy only to inquire into the main line of thinking described above: there are always concrete human beings who should grow to become action competent. The individuals who enter the educational system of the military are persons and citizens of the society. Obviously, there will always be differences between civilian and military cultures, but anyway it is important for the planners of military education and training to thoroughly understand cultures, life values and life styles in the society. That forms of life form the identities of individuals. All the military educators and trainers are confronted by the discrepancies between civilian and military forms of life, and it is their ethical responsibility to find solutions to the problems created by those conflicts.

Only by matching together the human forms of life and the conceptions of wars and battles is it possible to define the concrete objectives for education and training. In the linear planning model it is typical to draw the objectives only from the tasks of an organization. Such objectives can be called abstract, because the human factors are missing. Only with a concrete description of the objectives is it possible to reflect the best possible environments for learning. From the viewpoint of action competence it is crucial to prepare mental, social, and physical learning environments where all the components of action competence can be learned, practiced and enhanced. For this purpose the planner has to combine together the conception of war, the conception of humans, and the conception of learning and teaching.

Picture 3. MPPM: The hermeneutical military-pedagogical planning model



In the center of MPPM there is self-knowledge. It is the responsibility of a planner to have the best possible knowledge about war, people, and methods, but preparing the synthesis of these means going beyond plain knowledge – it is a task of “heart and soul”, in other words, self-knowledge. Planners of military education and training are, of course, professional experts. But

self-knowledge is not the same as the knowledge of an expert. It is to be personally conscious about the fact that it is my/our duty here and now to make decisions on how to act, although we can never know in advance what will happen.

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