

# A Morally-Confused Marine

✘ Last week, the Washington Post published an opinion piece by a Marine captain titled, “I Killed People in Afghanistan. Was I Right or Wrong?”

The column by Timothy Kudo, who is now a graduate student at New York University, is a fine example of the moral confusion leftism has wrought over the last half century. Captain Kudo’s moral confusion may predate his graduate studies, but if so, it has surely been reinforced and strengthened at NYU.

The essence of Mr. Kudo’s piece is that before he served in Afghanistan he was ethically unprepared for killing, that killing is always wrong, and that war is therefore always wrong.

–“I held two seemingly contradictory beliefs: Killing is always wrong, but in war, it is necessary. How could something be both immoral and necessary?”

The statement, “killing is always wrong,” is the core of the captain’s moral confusion.

Where did he learn such nonsense? He had to learn it because it is not intuitive. Every child instinctively understands that it is right to kill in self-defense; every decent human being knows it was right to kill Nazis during World War II; and just about everyone understands that if Hitler, Stalin and Mao had been killed early enough, about one hundred million innocent lives would have been saved.

How is it possible that a Marine captain and graduate student does not know these things? How can he make a statement that is not only morally foolish but actually immoral?

The overwhelmingly likely answer is that Captain Kudo is a product of the dominant religion of our time, leftism. And one

important feature of the left's moral relativism and moral confusion is a strong pacifistic strain.

–“Many veterans are unable to reconcile such actions in war with the biblical commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ When they come home from an environment where killing is not only accepted but is a metric of success, the transition to one where killing is wrong can be incomprehensible.”

I give Captain Kudo the benefit of the doubt that he does not know that the commandment in its original Hebrew reads, “Thou shalt not murder,” not “Thou shalt not kill.” The King James translators did an awe inspiring job in translating the Bible. To this day, no other English translation comes close to conveying the majesty of the biblical prose. But the Hebrew is clear: “Lo tirtzach” means “Do not murder.” Hebrew, like English, has two primary words for homicide – “murder” and “kill.”

Murder is immoral or illegal killing.

Killing, on the other hand, can be, and often is, both moral and legal.

In order to ensure that no more Marines share the captain's moral confusion, the Marine Corps should explain to all those who enlist that the Bible only prohibits murder, not killing. It should further explain that killing murderers – such as the Nazis and Japanese fascists in World War II and the Taliban today – is not only not morally problematic, it is the apotheosis of a moral good. Refusing to kill them means allowing them to murder.

–“This incongruity can have devastating effects. After more than 10 years of war, the military lost more active-duty members last year to suicide than to enemy fire.”

As we have seen, there is no “incongruity” here. And if so many members of the American military believe that it is so

“incongruous” to kill the moral monsters of the Taliban – the people who throw lye in the faces of girls who attend school (and shoot them in the head if they’re outspoken about the right of girls to an education), who murder medical volunteers who give polio shots to Afghan children and who stone women charged with “dishonoring” their families – that they are committing suicide in unprecedented numbers, we have a real moral crisis in our military.

–“To properly wage war, you have to recalibrate your moral compass. Once you return from the battlefield, it is difficult or impossible to repair it.”

You only “have to recalibrate your moral compass” if you enter the military with a broken moral compass – one that neither understands the difference between murder and killing, nor how evil the Taliban is.

–“War makes us killers. We must confront this horror directly if we’re to be honest about the true costs of war.”

Other than the author, are there many Americans who enter the military in time of war without confronting the fact that they are likely to kill? Furthermore, it is not “war” that makes us killers; it is the Taliban. We kill them in order to protect Afghans from Taliban atrocities, and to protect America from another 9/11.

–“I want to believe that killing, even in war, is wrong.”

Why would anyone want to believe that? Were the soldiers who liberated Nazi death camps “wrong?”

“The immorality of war is not a wound we can ignore.”

With all respect, I would rewrite this sentence to read: “The moral confusion of a Marine captain is not a wound we can ignore.”

Every American is deeply grateful to Captain Kudo for his

service on behalf of his country, and on behalf of elementary human rights in Afghanistan. I have to wonder, however, why, given his belief that killing is always wrong, Timothy Kudo ever enlisted in the Marines.

On the other hand, he will fit in perfectly at NYU.