

1 February 2011/ [The U.S. Army White Paper on the Profession of Arms](#) is published in the current edition of this journal. We're exploring it in this blog in order to support and complement a year-long discussion that has been initiated by senior Army leaders. Send us your perspectives. We also welcome comments from those in other branches of service and in the armed forces of other nations, including views of the professional cultures and ethical standards of other services.

Send us your thoughts on this question: What are the spiritual beliefs and attitudes that undergird, shape and support the U.S. Army's Core Values, its ethic, its culture and its professional relationships and responsibilities? (To read the rest of this blog entry, select "Read More" below at right.)

The Spring 2010 issue of *Modern Age* journal includes a review by Andrew Taylor of a book by Hugh Heclo entitled *On Thinking Institutionally*. Taylor summarizes Heclo's claim that in order to sustain necessary institutions in society, we must learn to do two things: to think institutionally and to act institutionally. Taylor explains these as follows:

Thinking institutionally "...is very different from thinking about institutions as scholars do. It is not an objective and intellectual exercise. It is a more participatory and intuitive one. What is more, it is not quixotic. To think institutionally you do not have to live slavishly by an institution's rules, become an institution's chief supporter, or heroically buffer an institution from the vicissitudes of the outside world. Instead, thinking this way means something less, perhaps something easier. You should 'distrust but value.' To think institutionally you need a 'particular sensitivity' to or an 'appreciative viewpoint' of [the institution]. To be more specific, the exercise moves our focus away from the self and towards a recognition of our debts and obligations to others."

The second way institutions are supported is by *acting institutionally*. One can only act institutionally if one first thinks institutionally. Heclo argues that acting institutionally has three components. The first, '*profession*', involves learning and respecting a body of knowledge and aspiring to a particular level of

conduct. The second, '

office

, ' is a sense of duty that compels an individual to accomplish considerably more for the institution than a minimal check-list of tasks enumerated within a kind of job description. Finally, there is '

stewardship

. ' Here Hecllo is getting at the notion of fiduciary responsibility. The individual essentially takes the decisions of past members on trust, acts in the interests of present and future members, and stands accountable for his actions."

We plan to publish Taylor's complete review soon. For those who intend to seriously participate in this dialogue, it's worth reading. Send in your comments so that we can move this dialogue forward! --*the editor*