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Oppositional Courage: The Martial Courage of Refusing to Fight

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Abstract

In a nearly paradoxical manner, the virtue of martial courage is best understood through violent acts that are typically vicious, such as killing, maiming, and bombing. To ameliorate this worry, I make a new distinction that is dependent on whether the agent acts in accord with social norms (social courage) or against them (oppositional courage). We usually understand martial courage through social courage, where soldiers are courageous through performing violent acts that society determines are necessary. While this understanding is accurate for a just war, violence cannot be virtuous when fighting for an unjust cause. The oppositional form of martial courage involves acting contrary to social norms by refusing to fight on behalf of an unjust cause or in unjust ways. As a virtue, martial courage should include bravely renouncing and resisting unjust wars. In this way, oppositional courage provides a non-violent grounding for martial courage: while martial courage often requires violence, it also requires a vigilant readiness to refuse to be violent when justice requires oppositional courage.

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Introduction

It is somewhat troubling that many of the paradigm examples for the virtue of courage involve violent activities that would more typically derive from vicious character traits (Rorty 1986, 151-6 and 162; Sparks 1997, 76 and 92-3; Scorza 2001, 639-42 and 649; Olsthoorn 2007, 271 and 274-6; Avramenko 2011, 23, 83-5, 114). While numerous acts of courage may be wholly non-violent and not at all troubling, it is concerning to have a virtue that is unquestionably inclusive of acts such as killing, maiming, and bombing. Though we can imagine scenarios where killing, maiming, and bombing could be virtuous, they are *typically* vicious. It is worrisome, then, that we often look to such violent acts to best understand the virtue of courage.

A common response to this problem is to draw distinctions within courage, such as the oft-used distinction between martial and moral courage (Sparks 1997, 92-3; Scorza 2001, 645; Olsthoorn 2007, 271 and 273-6; Avramenko 2011, 85-87; Zavalij and Aristidou 2014, 180-1; Kirkpatrick 2015a, 204-5; Sparrow 2015, 222-224). Martial courage references the notion that, within combat, courage requires the disposition to consistently respond to one's fears and face significant risk through appropriate responses, which often include justified force or violence.

Moral courage is meant to serve as a contrast with martial courage. Yet, the terminology of "moral courage" can, unfortunately, lead to some confusion. On the one hand, if we are discussing courage as a virtue, then "moral courage" becomes fairly redundant. If, on the other hand, we mean to use a broader sense of "courage" as applicable to acts in general, where you can be courageous while performing immoral acts, then "moral courage" is potentially a more useful category. While there are interesting discussions of moral courage in the literature (Osswald et al. 2010; Avramenko 2011, 139-190; Pianalto 2012), I will be discussing courage as a virtue, and so will not make use of the possibly redundant phrase, "moral courage." In its place, I will use "civilian courage" to reference the disposition to consistently respond to one's fears and face risk outside of combat, for morally permissible reasons. I will use martial and civilian courage as exclusive terms, though the same person can have both and exhibit them in different contexts (in or out of combat).

The problem with the martial vs. civilian courage distinction is that it simply moves the previous worry down a level: instead of thinking that courage in general is overly violent, we can now pinpoint martial courage as such. After all, martial courage is now *characterized* by examples such as killing, maiming, and bombing in combat. For this reason, critics of martial courage see it as potentially dangerous (Rorty 1986, 151-6 and

170; Scorza 2001, 639-42, 646 and 649; Avramenko 2011, 85). Further, feminists worry that it overly embraces masculine values (Sparks 1997, 76 and 96; Scorza 2001, 638), while other critics emphasize the worry that it is overly violent (Rorty 1986, 151, 154-6, and 170; Scorza 2001, 639-42 and 649; Avramenko 2011, 83-85). Thus, martial courage in particular is even harder to see as a virtue due to its seeming violent nature and inherent association with typically vicious acts.

I will seek to address the violence problem with a second distinction between social and oppositional courage. Social courage is a disposition to perform acts of courage for morally permissible reasons, where the determination of what counts as courageous is consistent with social notions of courage. Given the alignment of social courage with social mores and opinions, social courage is easily recognized as such. I will use “oppositional courage” to reference a consistent disposition to act courageously for morally permissible reasons in ways that conflict with the social determination of courage. People with oppositional courage perform acts of courage that society deems to be either cowardly or rash. Since this distinction depends on social viewpoints, the same act can exhibit social courage in some societies and oppositional courage in others. Importantly, the person with oppositional courage relies on their own determination of what courage requires and likely receives no recognition for their courageous behavior. The two distinctions can overlap such that there can be, at least in theory, social/martial courage, oppositional/martial courage, social/civilian courage, and oppositional/civilian courage.

The solution to the violence problem for martial courage lies in the key role that oppositional/martial courage plays in grounding the morality of martial courage. This point requires that oppositional/martial courage be possible, which may be contentious. I will argue that within combat situations, there can be genuine instances of courage that involve actions that society deems to be cowardly, such as refusing to fight. To make this point, I will use literary examples from William Faulkner’s *A Fable* and Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22*.

I will argue that oppositional/martial courage provides a non-violent version of martial courage that is indispensable to understanding what makes martial courage into a reliable virtue. To make this point, I will argue that, though we usually think of martial courage in the social/martial sense, martial courage in fact requires an openness to engage in oppositional/martial courage. As a virtue, martial courage would not be used to serve unjust causes. Where the war is fought for a just cause using just means, social/martial courage is likely sufficient. In the absence of a just cause, oppositional/martial courage is an absolute necessity: the courageous soldier would go against social expect-

tations when society demands an unjust war. Thus, martial courage requires a vigilant readiness to perform acts of oppositional/martial courage. Oppositional courage then plays a key role in what makes martial courage count as a virtue. We understand martial courage best by examining its non-violent aspects, which lie within oppositional courage.

Courage: The Core Concept

While we are not seeking a comprehensive account of courage in general, it is useful to begin with a rough sense of the courage virtue. Courage, roughly, is a disposition to reliably act in morally permissible ways to face one's fears, overcome obstacles, and/or accept some risk of danger, but only to the degree that it is reasonable to do these things given the morally permissible end one is acting for. As Aristotle noted, there are two vices opposed to courage: cowardice and rashness (2014, 1107a-b). To avoid rashness, one must avoid risking danger without good reason. To avoid cowardice, one must act if the purpose warrants risking the danger. That courage is a virtue does not entail that one is only courageous when acting as moral duty requires, but only that one cannot act courageously while pursuing immoral ends or acting through immoral means. Like all virtues, the core concept of courage must be fine-tuned with reference to social norms and standards (Rorty 1986, 151 and 162; Sparks 1997, 96). Starting with risk, the amount of danger reasonable people would acceptably risk, the amount of fear a reasonable person would be willing to face, and the kind of obstacles that a reasonable person would think should be surmounted are all going to vary depending on social/cultural norms. In societies where ghosts are generally believed to be real, it makes sense to fear them. In other societies, it is generally accepted that ghost fears are groundless. In the first society type, it would be considered rash for a person to spend the night in a haunted house for no good reason. In the society where it is understood that there are no ghosts, individuals would be considered cowardly if they failed to face their groundless fear of ghosts. If a person who fears ghosts in a society where it is known that they do not exist refuses to stay in a haunted house when there is a good reason to do so (say for some odd charity event), then that individual would be deemed to be a coward.

Where risks are accepted as real, an action qualifies as rash, courageous, or cowardly based on whether the payoff is worth the risk. We can determine whether courage requires acting by weighing the probability and severity of the risk against the probability and value of achieving the action's purpose; we can thus imagine a courage formula to judge actions against (Pianalto 2012, 170; Zavaliy and Aristidou 2014, 183). No one literally needs to use this courage formula, of course, for it to be useful for theoretical

discussion (Avramenko 2011, 59). Particular questions of courage are in part based on social norms insofar as risks, values, and the rough ratio between them are partially based on socially determined assessments.

The core concept of courage requires that agents face risks, in spite of their fear, while pursuing worthwhile ends. Particular instances of courage may depend on social norms that help the agent to roughly determine three things: (a) the extent to which the risk involved is serious, (b) the extent to which the expected payoff is valuable, and (c) whether the answer to (b) makes the action worthwhile given the answer to (a). Social courage involves accepting the social determination of (a) – (c), while oppositional courage involves rejecting that social determination by acting on a competing, personal determination of (a) – (c).

Before getting into the two distinctions, one final note is necessary. I will be thinking of courage as a fairly singular virtue that can be theoretically understood in various ways. To be courageous requires consistently and reliably facing fears and taking on risks for worthwhile reasons. The distinctions we will examine simply provide different occasions for being courageous. The first distinction, between martial and civilian courage, depends on the situation, whether in or out of combat. The second distinction depends on social views. The four concepts do not pick out different virtues, just different ways of looking at courage.

Martial Courage and Putatively Courageous Killing

Our first courage distinction is between martial courage and civilian courage, where the former is courage within combat and the latter is outside of combat. Someone has the virtue of martial courage if they have a reliable and consistent disposition to face fears and take on risks within combat, where doing so is reasonable given the justice of their cause. The just cause condition is necessary to ensure that martial courage is a virtue (Avramenko 2011, 254; Simola 2015, 30; Zavaliy and Aristidou 2014, 180-1; Kirkpatrick 2015a, 206). Someone has civilian courage if their courageous disposition involves acting outside of combat. In this paper, I will concentrate on martial, not civilian, courage.

A useful entry point into the discussion of martial courage is provided by a debate between Jesse Kirkpatrick (2015a and 2015b) and Robert Sparrow (2015) over whether drone operators can have martial courage. Kirkpatrick's (2015a and 2015b) argues that drone operators can achieve martial courage in spite of the fact that their risk of physical harm is minimal. The drone operators' significant risk to psychological harm, in the

form of post-traumatic stress, grounds their courage (Kirkpatrick 2015a, 208-210). Because they are willing to operate drones to accomplish key military objectives in pursuit of just aims, and because doing so exposes them to significant risk of developing post-traumatic stress, the operators exhibit martial courage.

Although Sparrow (2015) agrees with Kirkpatrick that drone operators exhibit courage, he denies that their courage can be martial. In particular, Sparrow argues that drone operators do not kill as part of combat, but at a distance from combat (2015, 223-4). Thus, for Sparrow, their courage cannot count, conceptually speaking, as martial: it simply fails to meet the definition since it is not part of combat. To further his argument, Sparrow analogizes drone operators with “medics, chaplains, and military psychologists,” who risk psychological harms, but lack martial courage insofar as they act within specific, non-combatant roles (2015, 224). Similarly, Sparrow acknowledges that a conscientious objector or deserter may exhibit great courage, but “it stretches the imagination to call this martial courage” (2015, 225). We will return to Sparrow’s thoughts on conscientious objectors later on.

In response to Sparrow, Kirkpatrick agrees that combat is a necessary condition for martial courage, but argues that drone operators kill as part of combat (2015b, 230). In particular, he argues that drone operators “save lives, they kill people—sometimes they accidentally kill innocent people—and they do so while operating in complex combat environments within a military chain-of-command. This seems like combat and being at war to me” (2015b, 230). Thus, Kirkpatrick argues, quite persuasively, that drone operators act within combat, and so are eligible for martial courage, because they kill in ways that fit within a military mode of killing (to save lives, potentially killing innocent people, and while operating according to the chain-in-command). Combat is necessary for courage to count as martial, and killing (in a certain way) is key to what it means to engage in combat. Thus, drone operators have martial courage for Kirkpatrick.

Killing’s central role in martial courage, which both Kirkpatrick and Sparrow embrace, returns us to the violence problem. For Kirkpatrick, killing plays a fairly essential role in what makes drone operators courageous: “Even when the cause is just, the intention right, and the act is necessary, a last resort, and proportionate, taking another human’s life is an act that requires significant courage” (2015a, 211). For Kirkpatrick, drone operators exhibit martial courage in large part because their video surveillance allows them to experience killing in close and intimate ways that surely play a role in their later post-traumatic stress (2015a, 211-213). In spite of not seeing their killings as part of combat, Sparrow agrees that, “at least some drone operators do kill reluctantly and

exercise moral courage in doing so” (2015, 223). For both theorists, the act of killing is a positive indicator that courage is applicable.

The problem is how intimately connected the virtue of martial courage is to an activity—killing—that is typically indicative of vice. The person who kills almost always exhibits vice insofar as killing almost never exhibits good, moral character. The person who kills typically has character flaws that led her to react rashly, give in to controlling passions, easily be misled, and/or fail to rationally examine preferable alternatives. The taking of another person’s life is incredibly difficult to justify, and the person who takes a life has almost always shown some vice in doing so. It is, at the very least, strange to have a putative virtue, such as martial courage, so strongly identified with an activity that almost always signals a vicious character.

This violence problem does not necessarily undermine accounts of martial courage. It is not so much a knock-down objection as much as it offers a sense that there is something unintuitive about understanding a virtue through an activity that typically points towards viciousness. Even in the best cases, killing is a regrettable, necessary evil where one is required to search extremely hard for alternatives. In the worst cases, killing is a downright vicious act. Though this is not a knock-down objection, a different understanding of martial courage would be preferable. I will argue that oppositional/martial courage provides that preferable understanding.

Oppositional Courage in Literature

The second distinction, between social and oppositional courage, comes down to whether the agent’s courage matches social conventions or runs contrary to them. Social courage is the disposition to consistently respond to one’s fears and face significant risk for valuable reasons, where society agrees with the individual’s determination of the fears, risks, and the ratio between them that marks the act as courageous. Oppositional courage is the disposition to consistently respond to one’s fears and face significant risk for valuable reasons, where society disagrees with the individual’s determination.

Before examining this distinction, it is important to note that some theorists take moral courage to require acting against social norms, and so their usage is similar to how I use oppositional courage (Osswald et al. 2010, 150-3; Pianalto 2012, 165, 172-3). Osswald et al. define moral courage as “a prosocial behavior with high social costs and no (or rare) direct rewards for the actor” (2010, 150). Pianalto defines moral courage by noting that, unlike physical courage where one must face fearful objects or situations,

“moral courage involves facing other persons while upholding some morally motivated cause” (2012, 165). This facing of other persons who stand in the way of the morally motivated cause implies that there is “significant risk of social rejection or social death” (Pianalto 2012, 172). Thus, for both Osswald et al. and Pianalto, being morally courageous requires going against social opinions while risking one’s own social status. While this way of spelling out moral courage may be useful for other purposes, it will not sufficiently serve the current purpose for a few reasons. Firstly, Pianalto is setting up a sharp contrast between physical courage, which involves standing up to objects or situations, and moral courage, which involves standing up to persons. Such a sharp distinction would not help us with our current goal of understanding martial courage better, since we will be interested in situations that involve both physical danger and social pressure. Secondly, drawing such a strong conceptual distinction risks overlooking the importance of social courage. There are situations where it makes sense to say someone is morally courageous even while society recognizes their courage. Consider people who commit civil disobedience against an unpopular government. While the government may disagree with their stance, society generally supports the agents. These agents ought to count as having moral courage, but theirs is distinctly social, not oppositional, courage. Finally, this terminology can be misleading since a contrast between moral courage and courage that is socially accepted would seem to imply that one is only moral while acting against social norms and not while facing physical fears. Thus, we gain a great deal from using the oppositional vs. social courage distinction.

A quick example will be useful. In a society that considers fighting fires to protect persons and homes to be courageous, fire fighters have social courage. Suppose there were a society where fire-fighting technology was insufficiently safe and so it was generally accepted that it was rash to fight fires. Suppose further that one person decided it was worth the risk, and she in fact could effectively fight fires, even though no one in her society recognized her relevant skills. Since that society would consider her to be rash, she would exhibit oppositional courage: she faces her fears, risks her life, and does so for moral values (saving lives and properties), in spite of the fact that she is never credited with being courageous. Oppositional courage typically involves being courageous without any recognition. In fact, those who have oppositional courage will often be thought of as either rash or cowardly.

Oppositional courage differs from social courage due to the agent’s disagreement with society over whether the action counts as courageous. “Oppositional courage” then is partially defined negatively: it applies when society gets courage wrong. That means the individual must make her own, independent determination of what courage requires, and she has to get it objectively correct in spite of her society getting it objec-

tively wrong. The individual already has to determine if her planned action is worth the risk if she is prudentially rational: it would be irrational to act where you do not know whether you are taking risks that are not warranted by the expected payoff. Since the rational agent already makes this determination, we can ask whether her evaluation matches with her society's. Where the agent and her society make the same determination, we can ask whether she has social courage. Where they make different determinations, we can ask which one got it right. If the agent got it right, then her actions may exhibit oppositional courage. If she gets it wrong, and her society gets it right, or if both get it wrong, then the agent does not have courage in either sense.

This analysis then depends on there being right answers, at least roughly speaking, for what the virtue courage requires. Where one must, with no weapons at hand, rescue a neighbor's dog from an animal attack, courage would require standing up to a mouse, would not require standing up to a bear, and would allow for some gray area for animals that are both much scarier than a mouse and much less scary than a bear. In the war context, there are just and unjust causes for war. A courageous act during war requires acting from the right intentions for a just cause in a permissible manner. In that case, the answer to what courage requires is based on what it means for intentions to be right, for war causes to be just, and for means to be permissible. My claim that courage has right answers relies on the claim that morality and justice have right answers. I cannot here tackle those larger value theory questions. Instead, I will take for granted that insofar as justice and morality provide right answers, then so would courage. In that case, sometimes society gets courage right, sometimes the individual does, and sometimes neither does. Where society and the individual both get it right, social courage applies. Where the individual gets it right and the society gets it wrong, oppositional courage applies. This point does not imply that it is easy to tell who is right or wrong, or that one side is right more often than the other. It simply will not be oppositional courage unless it is the precise situation where the individual is right and society is wrong.

With oppositional courage, the agent not only faces fears and takes on risks, but she also likely does so without any expectation for social recognition. Since her determination of what courage requires differs from her society's, the individual should realize that her society is unlikely to reward her actions with praise. The person with oppositional courage is not likely motivated by personal recognition: she will not be seen as a courageous hero and is more likely to be seen as either rash or even cowardly.

The paradigm cases of oppositional courage in combat would be people who society least thinks of as courageous. I will argue that conscientious objectors and even deserters can exhibit oppositional courage. Later I will argue, contrary to Sparrow, that their

oppositional courage is also martial courage. To make these points, I will use two literary examples: the corporal from William Faulkner's *A Fable* and Yossarian from Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*.

Faulkner's *A Fable* provides a thinly disguised answer to the question: What would happen if Jesus Christ were a 20th century soldier? Prior to the novel's events, the corporal (who like most of *A Fable*'s characters lacks a name) refuses to fire his weapon in the midst of a World War I battle. Twelve other soldiers (one of whom will betray him) quickly follow suit and refuse to fight, followed by their entire regiment on the allied side. Surprisingly, the Germans also lay down their weapons. For at least a day, war is brought to a halt not by the greater display of violence, but by a refusal to deploy violence. The corporal presents a good case of oppositional courage insofar as he has the courage to refuse to fight, which, socially, is almost always considered an act of cowardice.

While the corporal's actions lead to the cessation of battle, the aftermath is almost entirely negative. Gragnon, who is commanding the mutinying division for France, wants all of his soldiers shot (Faulkner 1978, 23-5). The soldiers who refused to fight quickly abandon the corporal—scorning and swearing at him in his jail cell (Faulkner 1978, 190-1). Faulkner's larger point is not just that the corporal's actions are not socially accepted as courageous, but that they cannot be seen as socially courageous within this kind of war setting. One of *A Fable*'s main morals is that if society at large—combatants and civilians alike—took the corporal's actions to be courageous, it would mean an end to war. The group commander, Lallemond, explains this point to Gragnon: "Let the whole vast moil and seethe of man confederate in stopping wars if they wish, so long as we can prevent them learning that they have done so" (Faulkner 1978, 45). Lallemond accepts that acts like the corporal's can end wars, but such acts become truly dangerous when people believe they have succeeded. The social determination of courage can be manipulated by the powers that lead society—especially as those powers seek to infuse a patriotic fervor throughout society to curry the support necessary to initiate and maintain unjustified wars. When the social sense of courage has been manipulated to serve an unjust cause, oppositional courage is called for.

Thus, Faulkner's corporal exhibits oppositional courage insofar as he refuses to fight in the midst of combat. Society will not grant him recognition, but the corporal feels that showing the way to end war is worth the risk. The corporal's act will earn him no praise as a savior, but only abandonment, betrayal, and scorn. He receives no medals, but only an execution. By putting down his arms and leading a mutiny that attempts

to stop war, the corporal exhibits oppositional courage: his courage mocks society's very conception of courage, which ensures the purity of his courage.

The corporal's oppositional courage, as Faulkner surely would agree, is a necessary response to the unyielding horror of war. Through Lallemond's opposition, Faulkner signals that we should start with a presumption against alleged social/martial courage. Most societies contain manipulative powers that wish to convince us to go to war. These manipulative powers seek to reward martial courage in part because doing so is a major way in which they can populate armies for unjust wars. Insofar as there are a plethora of unjust wars throughout history, there are also countless powerful leaders who have propagated false notions of social/martial courage to convince people to kill and die for unjust causes.

The corporal, in representing an allegory for Christ's courage, exhibits oppositional courage in a pure form. Captain Yossarian, from Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* represents a more realistic approach as he is self-involved and is only courageous to save his own life. Some readers have a visceral anti-Yossarian reaction to *Catch-22* since he attempts to get out of his contractual obligation to fight in what many believe is one of the clearest examples of a justified war: World War II (Podhoretz 2008, 228-32). Some commentators go so far as to say that the novel removes courage and noble sacrifice from the battlefield (Pinsker 2000, 207; Podhoretz 2008, 224-5). This point certainly applies to the extent that Yossarian does not qualify for social courage. Nonetheless, I will argue that Yossarian exhibits oppositional courage in spite of being self-interested because it is his life that is at stake. Yossarian has the right to decide that the war is not worth a greater risk of his life, and he bravely makes this determination knowing that society will consider him to be a coward. Thus, Yossarian shows us a more tampered down case of oppositional courage.

Yossarian openly flaunts social courage by admitting that he is not facing his fear of death, but, instead, is running from it. Given his fear-based action, Yossarian hardly seems to be courageous at all. Consider Yossarian's explanation to Major Major for why he does not wish to fly any more combat missions:

"I'm afraid."

"That's nothing to be ashamed of," Major Major counseled him kindly. "We're all afraid."

"I'm not ashamed," Yossarian said. "I'm just afraid" (Heller 1999, 103).

Yet Yossarian is courageous: while he acts from his fear of death, he is facing his fear of being labeled as “cowardly.” This prevalent fear can be purposely instilled in soldiers to such an extent that it becomes greater than the fear of death (Olsthoorn 2007, 275; Avramenko 2011, 33-49). Soldiers could act from their fear of being labeled “cowardly,” while still accurately counting as socially courageous by facing their fear of death. Yet, society is less likely to recognize a soldier as courageous at all if they give into the fear of death even while facing the often stronger fear of being labeled a “coward.” Someone like Yossarian cannot achieve social courage because he is weighing the threats (of death and the “cowardly” label) differently than society expects them to be weighed.

It is precisely because Yossarian weighs these threats differently than his society that he is eligible for oppositional courage. In fact, Yossarian is willing to do whatever it takes—stand up to authority, refuse orders, accept a court martial, be labeled as “cowardly”—to avoid being killed in combat. The one line he draws is selling out his fellow soldiers, but he comes close to doing that. When Colonels Korn and Cathcart offer to send Yossarian home in exchange for simply liking them (which would entail endorsing their view that all the other men should continue flying missions) (Heller 1999, 392), Yossarian at first agrees, even though he recognizes it would be “a pretty scummy trick... on the men in the squadron” (393). Yet, he doesn’t carry through on his agreement, as he realizes it is “odious” (399 and 405).

Yossarian backs out of his agreement and still insists he will not fly more missions. Socially speaking, it is considered a low point of masculinity for a man—especially a soldier—to go against his word. Perhaps that is why some readers so dislike Yossarian, who is trying to get out of his voluntarily enlisted military service. But, as Yossarian explains, he made the later agreement with the Colonels “in a moment of weakness” because he, “was trying to save [his] life” (405). So he twice turns against his word—both against his particular agreement to like the Colonels and against his agreement to serve dutifully as a bomber—which is socially unacceptable.

Yossarian has oppositional courage because he is facing his fear of being thought of as cowardly due to his determination that this course of action is worthwhile, even if his society disapproves. He is not pure like Faulkner’s corporal since Yossarian acts courageously in the face of one fear (being thought of as cowardly) for the sake of a second fear (of death). Even where the war is just, someone can be courageous in refusing to fight because it is their life they are being asked to give up. Society may make a different determination, but Yossarian seems to be within his rights to decide he is no longer willing to die for the cause.

It is worth noting that Yossarian makes this determination after he has flown dozens of combat missions, during which he exhibited social/martial courage (Heller 1999, 409). However, the Colonels regularly raise the number of missions required, for their own self-aggrandizement, so that it appears that Yossarian will never be allowed to go home. Thus, Yossarian has engaged in social/martial courage prior to deciding that it is not worth it to fly more combat missions. Additionally, Yossarian refuses to act on his fear of death if it requires doing something immoral, such as selling out his fellow soldiers. Thus, Yossarian's oppositional courage is based on a fear (of death) that he feels is more important to avoid (though society disagrees), but he sets a moral limiting condition on his activity, which exhibits that his actions are virtuous.

We then see two very different instances of oppositional courage. The corporal exhibits the kind that is more useful for the theoretical aims of this paper. The corporal's courage involves risking his life to stop an unjust war, in spite of society's demands that he keep fighting. The corporal's oppositional courage lies in his refusal to fight in an unjust war, regardless of the social and physical risks to himself. Yossarian's oppositional courage is not about a bigger picture of whether the war is just, but about Yossarian's own determination of what matters for his life. He feels he has sufficiently killed and risked his life for his country and now does not believe they have the right to ask him to do more. Since the Colonels are treating him unfairly, and Yossarian would not betray his fellow soldiers, his actions can still be virtuous and courageous even if he is primarily acting for himself. Thus, Yossarian's oppositional courage involves a more routine determination of his own values, which differ from that of his society, and his insistence that he will act virtuously in pursuit of those values. Though I will use oppositional courage that is more like the corporal's to argue for my points, it is important to keep in mind that Yossarian's actions likewise exhibit oppositional courage.

A conscientious objector, the corporal, and a potential deserter, Yossarian, can exhibit oppositional courage. Courage for conscientious objectors and war deserters is very unlikely to be social courage since society almost always discourages such activity. Each of these literary characters refuses to fight due to values that they determine are more worthwhile. The corporal seeks to show the lofty moral notion that soldiers who have the courage not to fight can undermine war. Yossarian simply does not wish to die for the war. Since their reasons appear to be valid, we can see each character as exhibiting oppositional courage. The next question is whether their courage counts as martial courage.

The Oppositional Grounding of Martial Courage

It is perhaps unsurprising that conscientious objectors and even deserters can exhibit oppositional courage. They are almost always going against social designations of what courage requires, and serious moral reservations often motivate them. Sparrow appears to agree with a similar point when he says, “To become a conscientious objector or a deserter on moral or political grounds does, I strongly suspect, require great moral courage but it stretches the imagination to call this martial courage” (2015, 225).

Unfortunately, since he is addressing a different question, Sparrow says no more on why he thinks conscientious objectors and deserters cannot have martial courage. He uses these cases as supposedly obvious analogies to support his disagreement with Kirkpatrick. Sparrow is arguing that if Kirkpatrick were to grant martial courage to drone operators, he would have to likewise grant it to medics, chaplains, military psychologists, and even to conscientious objectors and deserters. Sparrow hopes to provide a clear *modus tollens*: clearly no one would want to grant martial courage to deserters, and so we should deny it to drone operators. And while it may seem that the best response is to question Sparrow’s conditional premise, I am, for my own purposes, more interested in the premise that excludes conscientious objectors and deserters from martial courage.

Though Sparrow simply assumes the exclusion of conscientious objectors and deserters from martial courage, we can tease out two main reasons for this exclusion. First, he argues that agents in these various excluded roles do not face physical harm from the enemy in the right sort of way (2015, 224). It is not clear, however, how far this first argument is meant to go since some of these roles do face physical harm from the enemy. Medics, for example, are often on the battlefield and may have a difficult time protecting themselves. Faulkner’s corporal steps out into the middle of the battlefield, risking that the enemy could easily shoot him. Yossarian attempts to refuse to fight, but resides on a military base that can be attacked. This point would not prove too much since Sparrow’s own cases provide counter-examples to it.

A second possible argument can be based on Sparrow’s thought that these roles do not involve killing the enemy in the right sort of way (2015, 224-5). In fact, Sparrow is somewhat open to drone operators having martial courage precisely due to the ways in which they do and do not kill. When drone operators kill, Sparrow initially is worried that their martial courage can be contested because their killing occurs “thousands of kilometers away” (223). He recognizes, though, that at least some drone operators struggle with killing, and Sparrow believes that their courage is “arguably distinctly ‘martial’” (223-4). Further, when they refuse orders to kill, he again considers the pos-

sibility that their courage is “more martial,” but then rejects this possibility because it would imply that conscientious objectors and deserters could count as having martial courage, which, to quote him again, he claims “stretches the imagination” (224-5). Thus, we are left unsure precisely why Sparrow denies that conscientious objectors and deserters can have martial courage, which makes sense given the direction of his argument.

I would argue that conscientious objectors and deserters can indeed have martial courage precisely because acting within combat is constitutive of their type of courage. Once we see that these soldiers who refuse to fight have oppositional courage, we must also recognize that their courage is strictly connected to combat. The corporal literally steps onto the battlefield, risking his life, to visually lay down his arms. Although Yossarian’s courageous activity does not occur in the middle of combat, his courage primarily concerns his goal to stop flying combat missions. It would be confusing to describe Yossarian’s courage as civilian courage. Yossarian is courageous about not flying combat missions, the general arena where his courage takes place is the war zone, and he is facing the risk of being court martialed in military court, not civilian court. Yossarian acts within combat just as the pitcher who intentionally walks a batter acts within the baseball game. In neither case is the action entirely proper to the setting, but in both cases the improper action only makes sense within that setting. The pitcher cannot intentionally walk a batter outside of a baseball game. Similarly, Yossarian cannot refuse to engage in combat outside of a combat setting.

It is fair to label the corporal’s and Yossarian’s courage as being both oppositional and martial. Oppositional/martial courage is the distinct kind of courage exhibited by someone who acts within combat and chooses to go with their individual determination of what courage requires even when their society disagrees with them. Insofar as a combatant lays down arms, refuses to fight, or even deserts, that combatant has oppositional/martial courage provided that she acts according to her independent determination of what courage requires and she is right even though her society disagrees with her. In particular, if she is fighting on the unjust side of the war, then courage requires her to engage in oppositional courage. The possibility of oppositional/martial courage in the face of potentially contributing to an unjust war helps ground the morality of martial courage as a virtue.

The violence problem that made martial courage appear somewhat unintuitive as a virtue is based in the fact that martial courage primarily involves acting violently in ways that hardly seems to befit a virtue. Oppositional/martial courage points to an entirely different kind of activity. While some instances of oppositional/martial courage may

be violent (just as some acts of social/martial courage may be non-violent), the paradigm cases of oppositional/martial courage will involve refusing to be violent, usually because the person has realized either that their side of the war is unjust or that their current combat activity is unjust or at least not warranted. Thus, oppositional/martial courage often results from a determination that justice requires combat activity that is not actually violent, but is instead a refusal to be violent. In this way of thinking about oppositional/martial courage, we find a moral grounding for martial courage that is not based in violence or typically vicious acts. The idea is simple: an agent with true martial courage must be ready and able to exhibit oppositional/martial courage when it is called for.

For the most part, we expect soldiers to exhibit social/martial courage: they are to be brave in combat in precisely the (violent) ways that society expects. Soldiers are to kill when called upon, to bomb when ordered to do so, and to be willing to die for the war's just cause. Their social/martial courage is picked out by the standard things that soldiers are meant to do. Yet, the performance of these socially courageous acts is not sufficient to determine if the soldiers have the virtue of martial courage: they have simply shown signs of social courage when it was called for. Where society consistently demands fighting for the war regardless of whether it is just, the virtue of martial courage requires acting in accord with social/martial courage when fighting is in fact justified, and oppositional/martial courage when it is not.

Oppositional/martial courage requires that soldiers refrain from acting in combat in ways that are not justified even if social expectations require continued violence to achieve military objectives. The two versions of martial courage act in concert—requiring adaptation to match the morality of the situation. Where the war and military activity are thoroughly justified, then the soldier with the virtue of martial courage exhibits social/martial courage. When either the war or the activity is not justified, and yet society demands pushing ahead, then the soldier with martial courage exhibits oppositional/martial courage. The soldier who exhibits social/martial courage when it is called for but cannot exhibit oppositional/martial courage when it is called for does not truly have the virtue of martial courage—in spite of socially appearing to have it. Such a soldier is willing to kill and receive social honor for doing so, but is not willing to refuse to kill and risk social disapprobation. A failure to follow the trail of justice with an activity as serious and irreversible as killing is hardly worth associating with a virtuous character. Hence, martial courage requires consistency according to the standard of justice, which may require adaptation between social and oppositional courage. We can now respond to the violence problem for martial courage. If we thought someone had martial courage because we saw them acting in a consistently violent way, we

might be right, but we lack the essential information of whether the person would refuse to act where their violence turned out to be wrong (even though society insisted it was still right). Thus, if it is merely fortunate that the soldier happens to be killing in a just war (they, unbeknownst to an outside observer and perhaps also to the soldier themselves, would also kill in an unjust war), then they do not truly have the virtue of martial courage. What tells us whether they merely have the appearance of martial courage is whether the soldier would kill in an unjust war. That is, what establishes true martial courage is the exhibiting of oppositional/martial courage when it is called for.

Oppositional courage plays a key role in establishing why martial courage counts as a virtue. The soldier with martial courage exhibits oppositional/martial courage when called upon. Martial courage is not entirely based on acts that are routinely vicious, such as killing, maiming, and bombing. Instead, martial courage, deep down, is just as much based on the refusal to kill, maim, or bomb. Even where the refusal is not actually required, it is the counter-factual refusal that establishes that the soldier is only killing because justice absolutely requires it. Further, given the irreversible nature of killing, oppositional/martial courage should actually be the default. The virtuous agent will first seek out any acceptable alternative to killing, even at the risk of being considered cowardly. The virtuous agent would turn to social/martial courage and kill only if it were absolutely necessary. The soldier with martial courage acts based on the demands of justice and not for social recognition. Thus, oppositional courage provides key moral grounding that ensures martial courage counts as a virtue.

Conclusion

By making two courage distinctions, we develop a better understanding of martial courage in general. The first distinction depends on the setting: martial courage occurs within combat, while civilian courage does not. The second distinction depends on society's views about courage: social courage implies an agreement between the individual and society, while oppositional courage occurs when the individual has a better determination than society does.

We saw that martial courage appears to be beset with a problem that might make us concerned about its status as a virtue. Namely, we understand martial courage through violence in general and worrisome acts in particular, such as killing, maiming, and bombing. This violence problem at least makes it harder to imagine martial courage as a virtue. Fortunately, oppositional courage provides insight into martial courage in a way that responds to this worry.

Before we could adopt that potential solution, it was necessary to show that oppositional/martial courage was a possible way to think about courage. As we saw in the literary examples, Faulkner's corporal and Heller's Yossarian exhibit oppositional courage insofar as they each react to war in unique ways that would make them appear to be cowards based solely on social determinations. Yet, their acts against war were based in their own personal senses of courage. Further, since their actions were based in and revolved around combat, I argued that it only made sense to think of them as also engaging in martial courage. Thus, the two literary examples established the possibility of oppositional/martial courage.

Oppositional/martial courage turns out to resolve the violence problem for martial courage. In particular, oppositional/martial courage is called for when either the war or some part of the war activity is unjust. Yet, if the war or some war activity were unjust, then a virtuous soldier would have to engage in oppositional/martial courage and refuse to act unjustly when the moral stakes are as high as they are in war. True martial courage requires that agents engage in oppositional/martial courage when required just as much as it requires they engage in social/martial courage when that is required.

Martial courage then necessitates both social and oppositional courage. We primarily think of martial courage in terms of its social component, which makes sense since that would be the location where we are following the common, social conception of war. It is the oppositional component, however, that ensures that the killing and similar activities are complemented with the courage not to kill even when society demands killing. Oppositional courage provides the moral grounding because it ensures that the soldier is only killing because justice absolutely calls for it, and not simply because society honors it. The soldier who has true martial courage, as a virtue, would be open to killing or refusing to kill, depending on what justice requires. Thus, by looking at this wider picture of martial courage, in a way that is inclusive of oppositional/martial courage, we see that martial courage may often be violent, but it also has a moral grounding that sometimes requires the refusal to engage in violence.

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