Courage, political resistance, and self-deceit

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Much of David Lyons' work has been concerned with systematic and occasional injustices perpetrated by governmental authorities on ordinary (and extraordinary) people. Taken together the essays he has written over the past twenty years are a coherent investigation of the ways in which authorities abuse citizens and non-citizens and a compelling argument that resistance and non-compliance are not just permissible but in many circumstances do not need to be justified against the presumption of tacit obedience to extent laws.

Lyons has made extensive use of history, particularly U.S. history, in his arguments. His careful attention to historical specifics often takes him to problems that are not apparent to less historically inclined theorists. To give just one salient example which will be relevant to my discussion, his paper "The Legal Entrenchment of Illegality" describes an underexamined "subset of unlawful conduct... official practices that are clearly unlawful, largely open (not hidden), and deeply entrenched (tolerated for a long period of time)." That such practices exist, are even pervasive, is a phenomenon which Lyons calls "the legal entrenchment of illegality."

It is very surprising how little theoretical discussion there is of what is a pervasive fact about many apparently just or selectively just political orders, that they tolerate, mandate and even require actions and oversights which are flagrantly illegal by their own stated public standards of legality. Lyons argues that once recognized the officially condoned or even officially sponsored, open and flagrantly unlawful practices in the Jim Crow system in the American South and the body of law connected with them are at odds with the way that H. L. A. Hart frames rules of recognition in the first edition of The Concept of Law. Theoretical claims are put to the test of specific historical examples and theories of justice and legality are the better for confronting actual examples of injustice and illegality.

As I just noted, Lyons has also written about the ordinary and extraordinary people who resist these systematic and occasional injustices in a way that focuses the theoretical discussion by using concrete historical examples. His classic paper "Moral Judgment, Historical Reality and Civil Disobedience" does just that, by exploring how major practitioners of civil disobedience did not think that their practice needed moral justification as against a default presumption of

2 Ibid., p.29
political obligation. The very word "disobedience" in "civil disobedience" suggests that obedience is the normal state even under injustice. Again in Lyons' work the specifics of history -- the reported motivations of actors and the particularities of the injustices that they confronted such as legally entrenched illegality -- challenges armchair moralizing in a way which falsifies less informed arguments.

In this paper I would like to consider one aspect of Lyons' interest in resistance by discussing an unpublished paper entitled "Courage and Political Resistance" which draws on his published papers on political resistance and entrenched injustice and develops them in a novel direction. I know it is odd to discuss an unpublished paper at a conference in honor of a widely published philosopher like David Lyons, but I think the paper is an important supplement to Lyons' published discussions and it is a shame that it remains unknown -- so I would like to bring it to your attention. I've thought about the paper regularly since David presented it, and I think there is a lot more to be said on the issues which David raises. In this essay I would like to consider the flip-side to David's paper -- what stops people from exhibiting the exemplary sort of courage which he describes in the paper. And I would like to ask whether there is something going on beyond the broad sense of courage which Lyon invokes?

In discussing admirable character traits like courage I am aware that there is a great tide of secondary literature arguing that there are no stable character traits, stable virtues, etc. and that we are far less in control of our actions than our folk narratives might seem to imply. I am very sympathetic to the experimental literature. That said I think it tends to overstatement. I will focus on one article from the "anti-character" camp on atrocities and war crimes by John Doris and Dominic Murphy in making my case.4

Most of my discussion will focus on one of Lyons' examples: Hugh Thompson, the helicopter pilot who interceded in the My Lai massacre which is also discussed in the Doris and Murphy paper. I will also consider some of Lyons other examples and, briefly, a few of my own. In focusing on these examples I will argue that although courage may be, and indeed is, important under many circumstances involving political resistance, resistance to self-deceit is decisive even if the sources of the resistance are often varied and mysterious.

I.

Lyons begins the essay "Courage and Political Resistance" by distinguishing between the courage associated with and exemplified by soldiers in war and the courage prerequisite for an agent to engage in "political resistance". The two kinds of courage do not necessarily exclude one another (Lyons gives two examples of soldiers when describing the courage of political resistance). But soldier's courage is often the courage to pursue a goal designated by superiors or to obey difficult orders, especially when that goal involves great personal cost. And pursuing this goal often involves ignoring or at least being willing to incur casualties, including civilian casualties. We will condemn soldiers when the civilian casualties get too large, when the cause is

of little importance or even immoral, and when the atrocities are too overt. But the sort of
courage we associate with soldiers is closely connected with following difficult orders.

The suggestion is that the courage of political resistance that Lyons is distinguishing is the
courage to disobey or even subvert orders, laws, official arrangements, and some unofficial
arrangements under the threat of great personal cost when disobedience is just or morally right.
This is how I will understand it (since the phrase "political resistance" is quite ambiguous).
Resisters often face violent repression, or the threat of violent repression -- violent death, rape,
torture, and many sorts of indirect harm are always possible. One of Lyons' goals in his essay is
to argue that political resistance takes a great deal of courage under many circumstances.

But you might respond, this is obvious! Don't we have an exalted place in popular culture for the
courageous but rebellious figure who bucks authority? Don't many identify by default with the
courage of the individual or group of individuals who resists coercive authority on behalf of the
oppressed and suppressed? Isn't this the stuff of westerns, the Bourne Supremacy, and political
advertisements?

This courage even if lionized after the fact or when spit-polished for the public is often little
appreciated at the time. In times of war much of the public views protesters, soldiers who refuse
deployment, and tax resisters as traitors or sometimes cowards. Lyons has put the standard
picture of "peaceful, nonviolent, conscientious resisters, with moral qualms, breaking laws that
officials responsibly endorse," (C&PR, 21) into question in a number of essays and this is very
much to the point as well. Many only recognize political resisters as courageous after the fact,
when they are non-threatening. And insofar as they are recognized as consistent with the truth of
the law (using law very broadly), or the current law, or how the law ought to be, we attempt as
much as possible to think of them as actually satisfying their obligation to the law even when
disobeying it.

Lyons is particularly interested in cases where the government would not be judged to be
illegitimate by standard accounts. In a section on "Theoretical Implications" Lyons criticizes the
position Rawls argued for in A Theory of Justice that the duty of compliance is primarily
"problematic for permanent minorities that have suffered from injustice for many years". Unfair
burdens on permanent minorities would violate Rawls' assumption that in a nearly just society
"the burden of injustice is more or less evenly distributed over different groups". But the
inference is that even if obligation and compliance are problematic for permanent minorities,
those who are not permanent minorities still have a tacit obligation to comply. In other words,
any loosening of obligation to a permanent minority would not extend to an actor well-served by
a nearly just society.

As Lyons points out, Rawls is far too restrictive a rule by a country mile if we take permanent
minorities to be the sole group for whom the duty of compliance would be problematic. This
would mean that members of a political society who are not permanent minorities have a default
obligation to comply with the laws which place unfair burdens on permanent minorities, not for
the reason that they ought to burden others but for the reason that since the laws are not
burdening them compliance is the default position. It also suggests that in cases where the
government acts against non-citizens in ways which are grossly unjust (whether within the
territory or outside it) there is still a default duty to comply -- the draft for example, or paying
one's taxes which go to support a grossly immoral war (i.e., the example of Thoreau). As a consequence, Lyons broadens Rawls' proviso about permanent minorities to state that "a moral presumption favoring obedience to all laws by all members of a given society is incompatible with significant, deeply entrenched injustice in that society" where I take it "in that society" is to be understood as "by that society" in order to include immoral wars, abusive or even genocidal colonial policies, etc.

I'm in agreement with Lyons about all of this, if I have correctly interpreted him. Where I want to push a bit further is on courage and the point of linking it to political resistance. I of course agree that political resistance takes courage in some or even many circumstances, it would be hard to disagree. But I want to suggest something stronger, that what is at issue is not so much courage, but a resistance to a pervasive kind of self-deceit. The reasons for and causes of this resistance to self-deceit can be various: situational, or due to one's upbringing, or from a source unknown. It is often combined with courage. But I'm not sure under all or even some of the most important circumstances courage is the sine qua non. To start to get at this is I would like to consider the first of Lyons' examples.

To illustrate the courage of political resisters, Lyons gives us three examples of political resistance in war, three well known political activists who were theorists of resistance (Gandhi, Thoreau, and King), and two political activists in the Voting Rights Campaign (Samuel Block and Annie Devine). The first two examples are from the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the third from the Vietnam War. The first example Lyons gives of political resistance in war, under the heading "Killing One's Own", is of an action by Mordechai Growas, a group leader in the uprising. Growas put a heroic fighter named Yewal who had been (presumably) mortally wounded out of his misery. Lyons writes:

that act by Growas was merciful and, I think, courageous. He did not cope with fear or danger but had to overcome deep commitments and powerful, humane inhibitions. (p. 5)

I would like to disagree with Lyons in the letter (if perhaps not wholly in the spirit) of this remark. Overcoming "deep and powerful, humane inhibitions" can give rise to some of the worst human actions. So the fact that one overcomes these inhibitions when difficult may be courageous, we may have to face up to our fears and overcome it, but this is not in and of itself admirable.

I contrast the following conversation reported between Hugh Thompson and Lieutenant Calley after Hugh Thompson and his helicopter crew had landed in the midst of the My Lai massacre. Calley outranked Thompson:

"What's going on here, lieutenant?" Thompson asked Calley.
"This is my business," Calley answered sharply.
"What is this? Who are these people?" the angry pilot demanded, as his face grew more and more red.
"Just following orders."
"Orders? Whose orders?"
"Just following..."
"But, these are human beings, unarmed civilians, sir"
"Look, Thompson, this is my show. I'm in charge here. It ain't your concern."
"Yeah, great job," Thompson said sarcastically.
"You better get back in that chopper and mind your own business."
"You ain't heard the last of this!"5

Calley was also inviting Thompson to ignore deep humane inhibitions in order to follow orders - in this case an order not to interfere with the massacre. In discussing Growas, I presume Lyons wished to say that Growas overcame these humane inhibitions in order to do something fundamentally humane, i.e., to put a mortally wounded soldier out of his misery. This is of course the stuff of standard war movies as well, so I further presume that Lyons' point is that the sort of courage we identify with soldiers following a chain of command is also to be found in resisters who are not submitting to a chain of command -- i.e., such courage can be present in a political resister as well as a soldier following orders and consequently if one finds it exemplary in soldiers one ought also to find it exemplary in resisters. So it seems that Growas' act if courageous was courageous not because he overcame deep humane inhibitions, nor was it courageous to overcome deep humane inhibitions in and of itself, but rather because he undertook an action which he knew for good reasons to be humane but since it took killing a comrade also involved overcoming the resistance to "killing one's own". This is imputing a lot of motivation to Growas on the basis of a brief passage, but it seems plausible enough.

Still, I don't think it makes much sense to call Growas' act "courageous" in a way specially connected with political resistance other than a political resister undertook the act, as the comparison with war movies makes clear. More strongly, I'm not even sure the act was courageous in any colloquial sense. Soldiers get used to killing, and get used to killing even their comrades. Some of the deaths in My Lai were due to soldiers of Charlie Company who had not played a direct part in the massacre putting civilians in pain "out of their misery". In the horror

5 Trent Angers, The Forgotten Hero of My Lai: The Hugh Thompson Story (Lafayette, LA: Acadian House, 1999), pp 119-120. I am aware that this is reported dialogue and the descriptive interpolations are not to be trusted. But since it comes from an interview with Hugh Thompson (Ibid., p. 237 for the source) there is little reason to question it. See also Michael Bilton and Kevin Sim, Four Hours in My Lai (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1993), p. 138

The Scottish anarcho-punk group the Dog Faced Hermanns captured the exclusionary force of this statement in their "Calley" (Those Deep Buds, 1994). In the song, Calley yells when asked about My Lai after the war in his Georgia grocery store -- "Get out, get out, get out, this is my place of business". That cutting out the tongues of women being raped and bayoneted so their screams could not be heard could be presented as "business" in the dialogue above, says a great deal.
of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising it is equally plausible, even likely, that a commander might kill with little afterthought or courage (in the usual sense we use this). At best I think we can say an act of the sort that Growas undertook is no more or less courageous than an act undertaken by a soldier not involved in resistance.

II.

If there is nothing in this action that is particularly distinctive of someone engaged in political resistance nor necessarily courageous, are there actions that are distinctive and really have nothing to do with following orders? This is not Lyons' question, but his discussion suggests it.

Let's start by asking whether what was distinctive about Thompson's actions was that they were courageous. In presenting the actions of Thompson for teaching purposes the United States Naval Academy describes him as a man of "extraordinary moral and physical courage."6 His actions at My Lai were extraordinary insofar as it is clear that not every soldier would have stopped a massacre by confronting a superior officer (eventually at gunpoint) and arranged an airlift for the survivors, although there is no question that it was not a lone action. Thompson's helicopter crew supported one another in their actions and Glenn Andreotti (who died in combat a few weeks later) initiated the sequence of events resulting in the intervention.7 Thompson certainly did face a possible death if that is a measure of courage -- he could have been killed by Calley with little consequence since he initially stood down Calley and the troops unarmed. Furthermore, the killing could have been claimed to be an accident and no doubt it would then have been covered up by the military.8 Thompson's actions also had great personal cost. After initially being decorated for heroism in an attempt to play down the incident, he was shunned and mistreated for years, including death threats and mutilated animals on his doorstep.9 Many of his fellow officers likely thought he had tarred decent soldiers with the brush of My Lai and having presented a war for which many Americans had sacrificed their lives as a moral outrage cheapening the sacrifices they had made.

All this said, I don't think what is most distinctive about Thompson's (and Andreotti's and Colburne's actions) is overcoming a fear of death for a noble cause or moral and physical courage in an ordinary sense (i.e., in the sense of acting regardless of the cost). Thompson's own description of why he was led to act the way he did was that he was not "taught to murder and kill" and that he didn't do something when he thought it was wrong.10 From his and Colburne's descriptions it seems that Thompson acted mostly without much fear on his mind. If anything it seems that he and Andreotti acted impulsively from anger and shock when they saw, as they circled, that the killing of frightened, unarmed civilians had not stopped.

6  http://www.usna.edu/Ethics/Publications/ThompsonPg1-28_Final.pdf, p.3.
7  Bilton and Sim, Four Hours in My Lai, p. 138.
8  I assume this given that they went to such great lengths to cover up My Lai.
9  http://www.usna.edu/Ethics/Publications/ThompsonPg1-28_Final.pdf, p. 12
10 Ibid., p. 7, 16.
Let's return to the dialogue between Calley and Thompson above. When the discussion took place, Charlie Company had already killed most of the inhabitants of the village. The men had left for the fields, so most of those murdered were women, children, and the elderly. After the brief discussion I quoted above, Thompson, Andreotti, and Colburne circled, frustrated, until they saw Charlie Company firing into a ditch full of bodies in an attempt to kill any survivors who might remain alive, and chasing a group of unarmed civilians. It was at this point that Thompson and his crew landed their helicopter between the remaining survivors and their pursuers, and faced down a superior officer.

Note in the above dialogue that Thompson continued to ask Calley specific questions which attempted to get at what was happening at My Lai: "What's going on here, Lieutenant?"; "What is this? Who are these people?"; "Orders? Whose orders?". At each point Calley responded with the same sort of answer -- this is none of your business. Because Calley outranked Thompson this was not just any non-answer, it was a tacit order so it had some coercive force as well. And what Calley said wasn't false however horrifying -- it was Calley's business not Thompson's, Calley was following orders from Captain Medina, and Calley was the superior officer and so in charge. At each point Thompson had an easy out -- he could have accepted Calley's responses. But he refused the outs, and "this is my business" was being offered by a Calley as an out with the additional motivation of tacit coercion.

In his Sermons, Joseph Butler characterized self-deceit as a tendency to undermine our belief in and consequently our actions in relation to what we know or feel to be right by seeking outs.¹¹ "Outs" is my term not Butler's, and I mean excuses offered by others or responses by others which engender excuses or which can initiate a chain of excuses. In "Upon the Character of Balaam",¹² Butler commented on the story of Balaam, a prophet who was asked by the ambassadors of Moab (an enemy of Israel) to curse the Israelites for a substantial reward. Balaam turned the ambassadors away when they initially entreated him since he knew the action that they wished him to perform was wrong. The Moabites responded by sending a second group of ambassadors with the promise of a much greater reward. Instead of sending these ambassadors away, Balaam let them stay the night and this undermined his resolve to reject their entreaty.

For Butler this explains the general pattern of self-deceit. We sometimes would prefer not to do what we know is right because it conflicts with our "self partiality". In order to avoid doing what we know is right we often seek "outs". We try to put ourselves in circumstances, for non-blameworthy reasons, where we know our resolve to do what is right will be naturally diminished. So we seek out friends or others who we know will be sympathetic to us, knowing they will help undermine our resolve, just as instead of throwing the ambassadors out immediately, Balaam let them stay the night. Letting ambassadors spend the night is hospitable, seeking friends is natural, neither is blameworthy in itself. According to Butler, this form of self-deceit hinges on our natural credulity. We tend to believe what others tell us all things being equal, and in particular when we wish or desire to believe what we know they will tell us. So even if we know that our friends are just yessing us, our natural tendency to believe them offsets

¹¹ My discussion draws heavily on my paper "Bishop Butler on Bullshit".
¹² Joseph Butler, Fifteen sermons preached at the Rolls Chapel (London, 1729), 2nd ed., VII.
what we know to be wrong and provides us with an out. For Butler, self-deceit involves putting ourselves in situations that allow this natural credulousness to kick in and to defeat our reasonable beliefs in what is the right course of action thus satisfying other desires.

Thompson took Calley's responses not as outs but as poor answers to his questions, insofar as they failed to explain what was wrong. This initiated Thompson's political resistance -- standing down the chain of command to organize an airlift for the few survivors of the massacre, and then telling everyone he could about the incident. I add it was political resistance to legally entrenched illegality, a massacre of civilians (and there were and have been many others so it is reasonable to view the practice as entrenched) ordered and approved by superior officials as a means of open and clearly illegal (by the military's own rules) coercion. It was also perpetrated by a society that many would have considered "nearly just".

This refusal to engage in self-deceit when aware of injustice and of oppressive practices seems to be what is distinctive in political resistance, in particular in political resistance under difficult circumstances. Sometimes the difficult circumstances are in one's face -- as in the cases of Thompson or King or Gandhi or Samuel Block or Annie Devine -- and sometimes not -- as in the case of Thoreau. But all these actors share a refusal to avail themselves of outs.

Sometimes this refusal is -- not surprisingly since we are discussing resistance to self-deceit -- connected with an attitude towards honesty and accuracy. In Truth and Truthfulness, Bernard Williams describes Primo Levi's renewed commitment to the "dignity and majesty" of science under Mussolini as it provided "an antidote to 'the filth of fascism which polluted the sky,' because 'they were clear and distinct and verifiable at every step, and not a tissue of lies and emptiness, like the radio and the newspapers.'"

Levi's attitude seems connected to his extraordinary resistance to self-deceit in his writings and in his interactions:

> When a Bayer director observed that it was ‘most unusual’ for an Italian to speak German, Levi countered: ‘My name is Levi. I am a Jew, and I learned your language at Auschwitz.’ A stuttering apology was following by silence. As an Auschwitz survivor, Levi could hardly pretend he was in a normal business relation with the Germans.

This response could be construed in a number of ways, but it certainly shows a resistance to papering over the unpleasant but true with niceties. Thompson engaged in this sort of refusal as well with Calley, some aspects of his life would have gone much easier for him had he responded "Yes Sir!" as opposed to continue to ask questions.

That said, I don't want to suggest that a robust attitude towards honesty and accuracy of the kind Levi describes is necessary to counter the sort of self-deceit I am describing in cases of political resistance, or even the common source. Consider one of the best-known examples of political resistance to injustice in American history, the raid on Harpers Ferry. There is no doubt that the actions of all the raiders were courageous in every normal sense. There is also little question that

all refused to accept the systematic and pervasive injustice of slavery and wish to overthrow the injustice by whatever means. The motivations of the raiders were quite varied. John Brown was motivated, as far as one can tell from his letters and from contemporary descriptions, by an unshakable belief in basic human equality and strong, almost messianic, religious motivations. He also may have been motivated by something like the commitment to honesty and accuracy described by Levi above (although he may not have been). Dangerfield Newby, in contrast, was motivated by much more pressing and proximate experiences. He was a freed slave "who dreamed of freeing his enslaved wife, who was waiting for him with their children thirty miles south of Harpers Ferry."¹⁵ He was the first killed at Harpers Ferry and died with letters from his wife in his pockets. This make him no less extraordinary an actor, or less courageous. But some of the reasons that he was less prone to apologize for the slave system and to deceive himself about its illegitimacy or to excuse inaction, and presumably many of the particular beliefs he had about its injustice, were quite different than those of John Brown. In Dangerfield Newby's case the truth of the horrors of the slave system were quite evident. Many extraordinary and driven political resisters share many of these motivations. They are deeply committed to honesty and accuracy and they have strong first-hand experience of the nature of these horrors and the price of silence.

It is clear that both were quite different from the many US citizens who did excuse the slave system, or did little or nothing to try to stop it and thus took the various outs offered them by their friends and leaders. Returning to Lyons' discussion of the legal entrenchment of illegality, illegal and entrenched practices persist because of a lack of resistance to self-deceit at many levels. We (I'm not including you David!) refuse to ask questions, or find excuses for the practices, or find support for our self-interested beliefs that the costs are far too high for us to resist by drawing on the support of those around us with similar attitudes who also have not thought them through.

III.

So my suggestion is that political resistance certainly may and does take courage in many circumstances, but courage is not distinctive of political resistance (i.e., the sort of courage Lyons ascribed to Growas is not really the courage of political resistance, it is courage and political resistance, the courage of a soldier who also was involved in political resistance) whereas a resistance to self-deceit about injustices which most of us would recognize as clear and demanding response if we did not quickly scramble for outs, is. I've also suggested that a resistance to self-deceit can be present for many reasons. It can arise from questionable beliefs (some of John Brown's beliefs), first-hand experience of injustice to oneself and one's loved ones (Dangerfield Newby), shocking first-hand experience of injustice combined with deeply held conviction (Hugh Thompson), or a general attitude towards accuracy and honesty (Primo Levi and perhaps many others, but perhaps not). I've defined it negatively in order not to suggest that this resistance need rest on a particular character type or a distinctive virtue, although the virtues

of honesty and accuracy seem particularly closely connected in many circumstances.

In their article "From My Lai to Abu Ghraib: The Moral Psychology of Atrocity", John Doris and Dominic Murphy argue that in many cases branded as war crimes we should have a general presumption that we cannot attribute responsibility to the perpetrators due to "the combination of war-fighting culture, racialization, and poor command supervision". The conditions of soldiers in many wars are "sufficiently cognitively degrading to constitute excusing conditions: given what is known about the My Lai massacre, the soldiers there could have been reasonably expected to make the requisite determinations of manifest illegality." Doris and Murphy go on to admit that this is not meant to imply that many or even most of the soldiers could not have been responsible, and they indeed suggest that Calley likely was. But "the evidence regarding My Lai... makes this general presumption compelling."

I have little doubt that the three factors Doris and Murphy describe were all in operation. But the evidence regarding My Lai is poor in making the case that these might be excuses for the actions of Charlie Company. Three important facts are ignored by Doris and Murphy. First Doris and Murphy present the massacre "cleanly" -- as the military inquest did, as lining people up, or chasing them, and killing them. But Charlie Company engaged in systematic rape of the women of the village, twenty cases of rape and mutilation are documented. It is hard to imagine an excusing condition for this. Second, most of the members of Charlie Company did not take part in the massacre. Some ran away, some refused to shoot, although none stopped the killing some tried to stop the rape and torture. Third, Charlie Company had very limited experience in fire fights. The individual members of Charlie Company may have, but it seems implausible to take them as an example of a group bonded together in wartime as they come under fire from an unknown and shifting enemy.

Doris and Murphy contrast Charlie Company with Hugh Thompson. They have no doubt that Hugh Thompson was heroic, but they suggest that Hugh Thompson's actions are indeed strong support for their position. Thompson came from outside, from another military culture, into the midst of a massacre. He was not subject to the cognitive deformations that Charlie Company had been subject to.

16 Doris and Murphy, "From My Lai to Abu Ghraib: The Moral Psychology of Atrocity," p. 43.
17 In fact, the word massacre itself lends itself to this false "clean" interpretation of the events.
19 Ibid., p. 23.
20 Bilton and Sim, Four Hours in My Lai, pp. 41-2
I accept that entering into a crime scene from a helicopter is very different from being amidst the perpetrators of a crime although, notably, Thompson and his crew had been in combat so they could have availed themselves of all three of the excusing conditions which Doris and Murphy offer for Charlie Company. I also accept, in fact I think it extremely important, that Thompson, Andreotti, and Colburne all were in a small common space in which they had bonded, and all supported one another in their decisions. One could go further and say that the stories we usually tell about lone heroes are rarely true, there are usually a group who act as supports, prompts, and checks. The Civil Rights movement is an extraordinary instance of this. But, none of this made it easy for Hugh Thompson to avoid seeking outs or made it impossible for Charlie Company. Of course a member of Charlie Company who actively resisted, one of the many who refused to take part or only took part insofar as they shot mortally wounded civilians in an attempt to put them out of their misery, could have intervened (although they might have been killed).

I doubt Doris and Murphy would dispute this given the additional evidence. And indeed they are willing to accept that the particular circumstances of each soldier would need to be taken into account to come to a clear conclusion. As I have said, I want to suggest that the actions of Hugh Thompson were not just courageous, but showed a profound resistance to self-deceit in circumstances where many outs were offered. Members of Charlie Company may have had to exhibit an even more powerful resistance, in particular in cases of entrenched and pervasive illegality in war. Another and at least equally plausible way to look at it, though, is that their cognitive impairments made for quick excuses and outs serving their worst interests -- the rape of villagers for example -- or non-action. But this doesn't make the desire to rape, murder, and mutilate any better or less reprehensible because one is cognitively limited. The presumption should not be that once we are cognitively impaired no choices remain especially when confronted with clear and evident suffering.

This is not different in kind from the self-deceit of those who know, or even sense, a lynching is going on near them but fail to interfere because it is none of their business, or fear the consequences of their actions, or prefer a status quo where they benefit from the suppression of a group and so act is if nothing is happening. When we look at it from the side of self-deceit and the resistance to self-deceit, as opposed to courage, we see that illegal entrenchment often depends on the fact that actors often do not resist self-deceit when outs are offered which serve their local interests or allow them to pass on responsibility.

IV.

In conclusion, my suggestion is that although it often takes a great deal of courage to engage in political resistance, what is distinctive of political resistance is a resistance to the type of self-deceit that Joseph Butler described and analyzed. The resistance to self-deceit can have different sources, but the resistance to self-deceit is what makes the courage of political resistance distinct from the courage associated with soldiers. This is because political resistance often involves not

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22 Thanks to Bryce Huebner for helping me to develop this point and stressing its importance.
23 See Ibid., 79-82.
taking outs, including orders, when these outs conflict with the demands of addressing an evident injustice. In the words of Hugh Thompson -- "If you don't think it's right, it more than likely is not right, and they're just too chicken to do it on their own. They want to drag somebody down with them when they get caught. So just think. All it is is think... it's so simple it's weird." This seems to be the crux of the issue. And lack of thinking, in the sense described by Thompson, in connection with analysis of the reinforcing character of self-deceit as described by Butler goes some way to explaining why there are many courageous people and yet the courage of political resistance is unfortunately rarer than one might hope. But its rarity and the conditions that make it difficult should not function as an excuse, a propos my discussion of Doris and Murphy. It should be an enjoinder to create more conditions that support political resistance (as understood by Lyons) even in nearly just societies.

24 http://www.usna.edu/Ethics/Publications/ThompsonPg1-28_Final.pdf. Hannah Arendt would have approved of this maxim.