

LINE SPACING ILLUSTRATION 2

resources as they are presented in what I call the bio-reductive framework will be juxtaposed to the agentic, descriptive accounts of battlefield action to highlight the radical differences between the two. As I proceed I will offer a preliminary formulation of courageous action on the battlefield and from it specifically identify the impossibility of respecting the ethical nature of courage as Americans understand it despite the nature of

This chapter is organized by Paul Tillich

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being can be asked as the ethical question of the nature of courage. Courage can show us what being is, and being can show us what courage is” (2000: 2). I intend on demonstrating that there exists among Americans a deep and intuitive sensibility about courageous action and its form on battlefields. This sensibility, often expressed in films, popular music, analogies between military and civilian actions, and descriptions of battlefield actions, focuses the moral worth of persons who act courageously: their actions are lessons on how to act for the rest of us. The general assumption, then, is that persons have the ability to manage their actions and it is this assumption of agency—the ability to choose how, when, why one acts—that generates the basis for an ethical component to action. I will show that Americans implicitly focus on the human body as the primary resource for ethical expression in battlefield action. This American sensibility is used pervasively in process of ascribing courage to persons as part of general cultural negotiations of moral standing.

In this chapter I will also show the American conceptual landscape is dominated by biological explanatory resources that *deny* human agency and so present a contradictory understanding of human social action that results in explaining away, denying, or simply ignoring socio-cultural concepts like “courage.” This is accomplished by locating the source of human social action in