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War

Kyle Pritz

Abstract: *This paper is an effective meditation on the morality and justification of war. Moreover, this paper explores the ways in which war is a pointless concept, an endeavor that can never be justified and is certainly not brought on by the everyday person. Rather, war is an exercise of power that only benefits the rich elite and the powerful authority figures of the world. We must strive to reveal the underlying truth in our social reactions, that we always have the power to find peace and resolve differences. Only then can we finally move beyond war.*

There are many facets of war. There is the soldier, the civilian, the combatant, the hero, the terrorist. The businessman, the collaborator, the sympathizer, and the protester. The journalist, the witness, the spectator, the collateral murder. Politicians, war hawks and dissenters. The victims and the victors. The exploited and the profiteers. The casualties. War is fueled by deception, prolonged by censorship. The dominators influence subordinate attitudes. They impose the ideas of what is acceptable and unacceptable, what norms are to be practiced and what norms should disappear. War is a god, and “in the age of faith, skepticism is the most intolerable of all insults.”¹³⁰ In Europe and America, war is viewed as a deviation from the norm; as if it is a method for edifying peace. Yet peace hasn't been attained because it is always inhibited by war. And as war is carried out, its effects permeate throughout the social spheres of the nations involved. Proposing a philosophical analysis of war in its

¹³⁰ Bourne, Robert Sillimon, *War and the Intellectuals*, (New York: The American Union Against Militarism, 1917), 5.

modernity requires a consideration for the open-ended amount of nuances. There should always be a demand for further analysis.

In this analysis, I will gloss over some concepts relating to war, giving special attention to just war theory and the idea that it can't be used to justify war. Then, I will bring under scrutiny some of the philosophical, sociological, and psychological components associated with the stages of war, alluding to the taboos that affect societies, especially here in the United States of America. I will address the unmovable obstruction that war places in the way of social progression and the state of peace. There are no longer any justifications: a set of pragmatic justifications for war can be produced, but it will fail to produce anything less sophistry. We, as sentient, sapient beings under the current social conditions, possess the capacity to reroute and counter the means and uses of warfare. The main purpose of this paper is to point out our failure to obtain a peaceful world, and this failure comes as a result of our choices.

Historically, philosophers have defined war and its conditions as it was temporally applied. Augustine said “Peace is not sought in order to provoke war, but war is waged in order to attain peace.”¹³¹ Thomas Locke defined war as a “state of Enmity, Malice, Violence, and Mutual Destruction.”¹³² Locke insisted that “the state of war, once begun, continues, with a right to the innocent Party, to destroy the other whenever he can, until the aggressor offers peace, and desires to reconciliation on such terms.”¹³³ Thomas Hobbes suspected

¹³¹ Augustine, *Augustine: Political writings*. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., Inc., 1994), 220.

¹³² Locke, Thomas. *Two Treatises of Government*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 280-81.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

that war comes from the human tendency to desire the domination of others. He reasoned “three principle causes for quarrell. First, competition; secondly diffidence; thirdly, glory.”¹³⁴ Montesquieu viewed war as a “new disease that has spread across Europe” in which it preempts the state to “keep an inordinate amount of troops,” which, in turn increases tensions between bordering states to do the same. He implies the naturalness for the dominating agents to wage war for preemptive and/or preventative measures, “because [the state’s] preservation is just.”¹³⁵ Brian Orend, author of *The Morality of War*, defines it as “a phenomenon which occurs *only* between political communities, defined as those entities which either are states or intend to become states.”¹³⁶ Journalist Chris Hedges, in an article for *The New York Times*, defines war as “an active conflict that has claimed more than 1,000 lives.”¹³⁷ These definitions broadly capture the conditions of war, but what makes a war just?

For centuries, thinkers have expounded explanations to humanize warfare. St. Thomas Aquinas, notably a significant contributor to just war theory, combines the ideas of Augustine, Aristotle, and Cicero, and extends the theory to include two categories: *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*.¹³⁸ A particular focus will be placed on *jus ad bellum*, which is the moral calculus for deciding whether or not it is just to enter a war in the first place. According to the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*,

“[j]ust war theory contends that, for any war resolution to be justified, a political community, or state, must fulfil each and every one of the following six requirements.”¹³⁹ First, there needs to be a “just cause,” with the purpose of defending humanity and establishing peace. Intervening on behalf of helpless victims of genocide is a prime example.¹⁴⁰ Secondly, it must be with the “right intention,” in which the previous example can be reiterated. Thirdly, it must be decided by the “proper authority” and include a “proper declaration.” This involves a nation going through democratic processes entailed in their constitutional framework and an open, clear declaration to the warring opposition. Fourth, it must be a last resort. In other words, all attempts for diplomatic solutions must be exhausted before the declaration or intervention of war can be given. Fifth, there must be a high probability of success. If the intervention is likely to reverse or alter the circumstances that provoked the considerations for *jus ad bellum*, then armed intervention can be just. Lastly, “proportionality” is measured in regards the question: will this cause more harm than good? The answer can only be, yes.¹⁴¹

According to just war theory, if the benefits outweigh the costs, then a war is considered just. Before we begin to decide whether a war is or is not just, we should pose this question: whom is war being

¹³⁴ Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathon*. (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press. 1991), 76.

¹³⁵ Charles de Secondat baron de Montesquieu. *The Spirit of the Laws*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). 224.

¹³⁶ Orend, Brian. *The Morality of War*. (Toronto: broadview press, 2006), 2.

¹³⁷ Hedges, Chris. *What Everyone Should Know About War*. (New York: Free Press, 2003), 1.

¹³⁸ Orend, Brian. *The Morality of War*. (Toronto: broadview press, 2006), 15.

¹³⁹ Orend, Brian, "War", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Accessed at

<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/war>

¹⁴⁰ This is the only reason war can be justified. But even then, the reasons for the possibility of a genocide exist well beyond those carrying out the inhuman, misanthropic acts: something enables them. Whether it is an institutional order, an international collaboration, or both, etc.,

¹⁴¹ Orend, Brian, "War", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), accessed at

<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/war>

justified for? Nobel Prize recipient, Nicholas Butler states that “if we take the written public record, war is impossible.”¹⁴² This is as true now as it was then. If the declaration for war were at the discretion of the citizenry, war would be avoided. But a declaration of war is a political decision made by the people with political clout. The decisions are made from the safety of their luxury offices while those who die in wars seldom have a connection to the decision making process. The war officials are virtually detached from the citizens and the people who fight on the front lines. Respectively, the troops on the ground are also detached from the bigger picture. War correspondent Sebastian Junger, embedded with U.S. Army 503rd Infantry Regiment in the Korengal Valley of Afghanistan, explains how “soldiers worry about...the moral basis of the war... about as much as farmhands worry about the global economy.”¹⁴³ When soldiers are engaged in combat, the politics of the war they’re fighting in virtually disappear. They fight for the lives of the brave men and women beside them; it becomes an organism’s fight for survival. Political decisions made by government officials -- who are virtually detached from the public -- place people in harm’s way. This is morally questionable, especially when the war is waged on exclusively known pretenses -- a sad, recurring truth of American history.

So, who is really trying to justify war here? It isn’t the men and women on the front lines, and it isn’t the civilians who sift through the rubble for their loved ones after a drone strike. War’s justifications are left to the politicians and the businessmen of the war industry. In 2003, it was the Bush

¹⁴² Butler, Nicholas Murray. *Why war?: Essays and addresses on war and peace*. (New York: C. Scribner, 1939) 3.

¹⁴³ Junger, Sebastian. *War*, (New York: Twelve, 2010), 25.

administration that urgently waged war in Iraq under the guises of removing a brutal dictator -- who was supported by the U.S. government during his worst atrocities -- and securing Weapons of Mass Destruction. The Iraq War was a war in which many defense and oil corporations made record profits. Furthermore, this war escorted the disastrous exacerbation of sectarian violence, worsening the damaged global image of the United States of America. “Iraq is worse off now than it was under Saddam.”¹⁴⁴

How can war, which is innately nefarious, ever be justified? On moral grounds itself, it cannot be. Then, how do those who attempt to justify war campaign for that cause? Entire books have been devoted to explain this phenomenon, examining how media influence may escort the minds of the citizenry into total submission. Historically, to gain support for a war, states launch massive propaganda campaigns. Once the citizenry is ideologically mobilized behind certain military actions, those actions are socially justified for as long as they are supported. This is why there is not a need for a totalitarian force to get anyone to participate in and support aggressive, imperial wars. Noam Chomsky insists “propaganda is to a democracy what the bludgeon is to a totalitarian state.”¹⁴⁵ Media figures curb outrage through media censorship and manipulation to tailor the attitude of the citizenry to an agenda rather than informing them and encouraging them to think for themselves. Chomsky, when discussing

¹⁴⁴ Bolton, John. “Overthrowing Saddam Hussein was the right move for the US and its Allies.” *The Guardian*. February, 26, 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/feb/26/iraq-war-was-justified>

¹⁴⁵ Chomsky, Noam. Unknown Interviewer, *On Propaganda*, WBAI. January, 1992, <http://www.chomsky.info/interviews/199201--.htm>

some of the linguistic approaches used in public relations campaigns, says:

The point of public relations slogans like “Support our troops” is that they don’t mean anything... That’s the whole point of good propaganda. You want to create a slogan that nobody’s going to be against, and everybody’s going to be for. Nobody knows what it means, because it doesn’t mean anything. Its crucial value is that it diverts your attention from a question that does mean something: Do you support our policy? That’s the [idea] you’re not allowed to talk about.¹⁴⁶

The best way for us to support the troops is by not sending them into war.

Is War in Our Nature?

With unlimited access to surpluses of information regarding the egregious effects of war (famine, disease, economic destruction, global inequality, etc.), there are no moral grounds that can justify war. Look at World War II, for example. Preventing Adolph Hitler from dominating the world was morally just. However, it is because of the punitive consequences of the Treaty of Versailles that someone like Hitler was able to gain political momentum in the first place. World War II itself created competition between world powers -- the Soviet Union and the United States of America -- and a massive arms race and the influx of militarization; nuclear war was miraculously avoided. These examples show that war ultimately made the world a more dangerous place. We should evaluate whether war is part of human nature. It is common for one to lean towards the side of

¹⁴⁶ Chomsky, Noam. *Media Control*. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), 26.

yes, but it’s equivocally in our human nature to pursue a peaceful, harmonious life.

A society is marked by the conflict between war and peace, but war weighs heavier on the scale. So, what is it in our nature that makes warring a natural phenomenon? Are we biologically determined to go to war? Is there a war gene? Or is war no more of a social construct than race and gender? Theories of biological determinism assume we have a war gene, like “the Demonic Male hypothesis,”¹⁴⁷ but there is very little evidence that supports such arguments. Dr. Richard Wrangham’s Demonic Male Hypothesis poses that “Human males and chimps share a tendency to be aggressive... Male chimpanzees are hostile towards other groups of chimps, [and] you don’t even have to go to Arsenal to know that men are not dissimilar.”¹⁴⁸ This leads Wrangham to undertake the explanation that human males have the capacity to carry out organized violence on the grounds that we share similar types of behaviors with Chimpanzees. In contrast, evolutionary biologist David P. Barash claims we are not biologically programmed for war. Rather, “cultural, linguistic, historical and economic reasons for warfare are far too complex to be reduced to such a simplistic level.”¹⁴⁹

I have little doubt that the perspective of many evolutionary biologists and some biological anthropologists has been distorted by the seductive drama of “primitive human war.” Conflict avoidance and reconciliation — although no less “natural” or important — are considerably less attention-grabbing.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ O’Connell, Sanjida. “Apes of War: Is it in our Genes?” *The telegraph*. March 21, 2015.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Barash, David. “Are We Hard Wired for War?” *The New York Times*. September 28, 2013.

War places an evolutionary emphasis on human development, but Barash suggests that conflict resolution and problem solving “could also have been altogether ‘biological’ and positively selected for.”¹⁵¹ Are these conflicting responses attempting to answer the same question? After considering that both warring and peacemaking might be polar responses to the same question, it might be plausible to say that our capacity to wage war and destroy life are not biological inclinations. Herein lies the possibility that neither seeking peace nor warring are natural, but neutral. The problem with believing that warring is biologically determined is that if we think that way, it likely perpetuates a self-fulfilled prophecy that we won’t be able to move away from. A biopsychosocial explanation might provide a better perspective.

War is a business, not a biological determination

War, as it is today, has predominantly a Western emphasis. This Western emphasis includes wars carried out in Africa, South America, the Middle East, and South East Asia. It is not limited to wars that Western nations are directly involved in. It includes armed conflicts in which they choose to proctor in some form: direct aid, selective provisions of intelligence, etc. War is a business, there is an industry, and in the current economic model of the globalized market, business is paramount and human rights are subdued. An armed conflict is good news for private military corporations because war means business. The war industry, linguistically diluted as ‘the defense industry,’ is very lucrative. For fiscal year 2016, the U.S. military budget of \$786.6 billion speaks for

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

itself.¹⁵² Billion dollar contracts are handed out to war mongering companies such as Academi (Blackwater), Lockheed Martin, Halliburton, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, etc.¹⁵³ (To put it naively, we can speculate that these corporations influence foreign affairs). War also means that less financial attention goes to Health and Human services, health care, Housing and Urban development, infrastructure, and education.¹⁵⁴ Any strides towards peace are entirely undermined. It seems that we focused on self-destruction rather than social cohesion and sustainability. Are we just content allowing psychologically sick people continue to run the world?

War is motivated by political actors, whether governmental agencies or non-governmental agencies, like corporations. It does benefit some, but the benefits reach very few: war profiteers, and governments establishing and maintaining political control. Two-time Medal of Honor recipient, Marine Corps Major Smedley D. Butler writes:

A few profit – and the many pay. But there is a way to stop it. You can't end it by disarmament conferences. You can't eliminate it by peace parleys at Geneva. Well-meaning but impractical groups can't wipe it out by resolutions. It can be

¹⁵² Amedeo, Kimberly. “U.S. Military Budget: Components, Challenges and Growth: guess how much America spends on defense,” USEconomy.about.com

¹⁵³ “Arms Sales: who are the world’s top 100 arms producers,” *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*. Accessed at <http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/production/recent-trends-in-arms-industry>

¹⁵⁴ Amedeo, Kimberly. “U.S. Military Budget: Components, Challenges and Growth: guess how much America spends on defense,” USEconomy.about.com

smashed effectively only by taking the profit out of war.¹⁵⁵

If we take the profit out of war, it is likely that war can be avoided. However, it's a tool for establishing dominance. It is used to create controllable proxy governments for the dominant nations. War is glorified and advertised through PR campaigns to an acquiescent public, arguably the only reason it has persisted. These forces are incredibly powerful and the corporations behind these forces will sponsor terrorism to remain in their position of power. However, they are not invincible and it is not impossible to fetter them.

In order for people to kill others, the enemy has to be vilified and dehumanized. Combat veteran Karl Marlantes talks of how humanity is decreased to ease the psychologically burdensome task of taking another human beings life. He writes that the enemy "could've been [anybody of any race or religion]."¹⁵⁶ He gives a generalized post-war perspective most combat veterans face. He writes:

Ask a 23-year-old combat veteran...how he felt about killing someone. His probable angry answer, if he's honest: "Not a [f—ing] thing." Ask him when he's sixty, and if he's not too drunk to answer, it might come out very differently.¹⁵⁷

The theme is that as you are in the midst of combat, you aren't thinking about the humanness of the enemy. You don't have time think beyond self-preservation because in "combat your mind is *jammed*," but it

will catch up with you.¹⁵⁸ When one reaches the age of maturity one begins to measure one's past actions. This explains why military recruiters prey on men and women between the ages of 18 and 22. 18-year-olds seldom have the capacity for introspection, yet they are legally eligible to fight a war. It is downright immoral to take advantage of the lack of peoples' development because they don't think about the consequences of violence or war; they cannot balance the circumstances. Instead of glorifying war, if we were to engage in honest dialogue about war with our youth -about its elements of absolute fear, traumatic experiences, killing, utter annihilation of innocent human life -- war might not be considered as a rite of passage as it is in many sub-cultures. "Nobody can think and hit someone at the same time."¹⁵⁹ It takes courage to take a stand up for peace.

Closing remarks

War is a tumultuous state of armed conflict between two or more entities (since corporations have the capacity to engage) resulting in the mortality and destruction of human development, including civil engineering, cultural practices, and life. Theories that claim war as a biological disposition should be respectfully ignored because there are countless socio-political factors that construct the social pathway that lead us to war (capitalism; severe racism; agenda tailored media outlets; corrupt political figures; war and oil industry; devaluation of human rights; the undermining of education; the quietism of dissent). These factors revolve around the power structure of the United States of America.

¹⁵⁵ Butler, Smedley D. *War is a Racket*, (New York: Round Table Press, 1935), 10-11.

¹⁵⁶ Marlantes, Karl, *What it's Like to Go to War*. (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2011), 40

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 47.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 49.

¹⁵⁹ Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. (New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 118.

History shows us that war creates more war. The “war to end all wars” empowered Adolph Hitler and Nazi Germany. It didn’t “make the world safe for democracy,”¹⁶⁰ it made World War II possible. World War II led to the Cold War, which lasted more than four decades, brought us to the brink of nuclear holocaust, and ushered in proxy wars. Russia’s occupation of Afghanistan invoked U.S. aid to Osama bin Laden and the Mujahideen, which gave birth to the Taliban and 9/11. The War on Terror spawned sectarian violence and the Islamic State (IS). Alone, World War I and II each led to a catastrophic amount of human death, with civilians as the largest demographic (a combined death toll 81,000,000).¹⁶¹ While we fundamentally destroy ourselves with war, we also possess the capability to prevent and end war. It cannot be the excuse for failing to achieve peace. We must toss that idea because it never has and never will be a reasonable excuse. That logic merely serves as a negative feed-back loop that has brings us back to self destruction.

When we are faced with a threat like the Islamic State, it shouldn't be taken lightly. It is important to recognize the causes that brought IS about in the first place. Habitually, terrorism is answered with bigger, louder terrorism. This response undermines the fact that terrorism exists because of the preexisting conditions of severe and violent oppression. Responding to terrorism with the same approach that created it is utterly insane. “Everyone’s

worried about stopping terrorism. Well, there’s a really easy way: stop participating in it.”¹⁶² Terrorism is the wrong response to the right question: how can we reverse brute domination? I am not naive or hubristic enough to offer a solution for the abolishment of war, nor will I pretend that I know what it will take to bring on a golden era of peace. But talking and questioning, openly and honestly, about war and the subtleties behind-the-scenes is a start. We simply don't do that today. Through discourse we can find ways to transition away from war, closer to peace. The problem with this is there are too many constraints that hinder the volume of honest dialogue relating to war and the underlying cause of major social issues. We cannot solely rely on popular forms of media because of the magnitude of censorship and diversion. At the end of the day, if we hope to end war and democratically control the trajectory of humankind, massive social change that uproots the deeply embedded institutional hegemony is undeniably required. If we care about the future of humanity at all, or how our society will be understood by future generations to come, we have to do something now. We have to get honest about the concurrent state of the world and all of its affairs.

¹⁶⁰ The Wilson Administration -Commission of Public Information (CPI) and the Creel Commission helped lead a passive nation into war hunger by campaigning for military mobilization with slogans as well as many other propaganda tactics. Prior to this, Wilson successfully campaigned for a second term, using slogans like “He kept us out of war.”

¹⁶¹ Source List and Detailed Death Tolls for the Primary Megadeaths of the Twentieth Century, necrometrics.com.

¹⁶² Chomsky, Noam, “How to Stop Terrorism,” Noam Chomsky Interviews, *youtube.com.*, December 25, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPj89C7bzO0>

Book Reviews:

John R. Searle. *Seeing Things As They Are* (Oxford University Press, 2015). ISBN 978-0-19-938515-7. \$24.95. Reviewed by Michael S. Dauber.

John Searle is no newcomer to philosophy: he has written several influential books on the philosophy of mind, language, and perception, and is perhaps best known for his Speech Act Theory and his work on intentional consciousness. *Seeing Things As They Are*¹⁶³ picks up on his earlier theory of intentionality established in 1983¹⁶⁴, expanding the theory to include an account of perception and how the nature of objects helps determine our subjective experiences. Searle's theory is well argued, well written, and accurately and methodically responds to the errors of some of the most famous and influential philosophers of consciousness and epistemology.

The first several chapters set up an evaluation of the philosophical landscape before our current research. Searle is primarily concerned with individuals that support Conceptual Dualism, the view that we never actually perceive real objects or the real world itself, but only ever perceive sense data, or representations of the things themselves. This interpretation of the world leads some to conclude that the world itself is ontologically subjective, meaning that the world is essentially composed of subjective experiences. This either leads one to worry that what they are experiencing is not actually the way the world objectively is (i.e. the sense data does not accurately depict the world), or that the world actually *is* just a collection of subjective sense data

without any ontologically objective objects. Instead of perceiving objects, we only perceive sense data. Support for Conceptual Dualism turns on the skeptical worry that one is constantly in a state in which one may or may not be hallucinating: it is always possible that what I see is simply a hallucination. Since the subjective experience is the same in both the veridical case in which the sense data corresponds to the actual object *and* in the hallucination, in which there is no object, we must treat the two experiences as the same. Thus the only conclusion one can draw is that you only ever see sense data since that is what is present in both cases.

Searle labels this “The Bad Argument”¹⁶⁵ because it commits a fallacy most philosophers have traditionally overlooked. The traditional argument uses the notion of “awareness of” or “consciousness of” in two senses: one can be aware of an object, in one instance, or aware of the experience or sensations the object gives you (Searle uses the example of pain caused by an object without necessarily being aware of the object itself).¹⁶⁶ The difference between the hallucination and the veridical case is thus clear: in the veridical case I am aware of the object itself and the intentional content, whereas in the hallucination I still have intentional content but *there is no object to be aware of*. The result of such a fallacy leads one to reject Direct Realism, the notion that we perceive ontologically objective objects themselves that give us subjective experiences, in favor of Conceptual Dualism or Disjunctivism.

Having thus done away with Dualism, Searle proceeds to explain his own theory of perception and intentional consciousness. With the worry over sense data removed, we can easily conclude that we directly perceive the objects themselves,

¹⁶³ John R. Searle. *Seeing Things As They Are* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁶⁴ John R. Searle. *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

¹⁶⁵ John R. Searle, *Seeing Things As They Are*, 20.

¹⁶⁶ Searle, 24.

which, as Searle points out, makes intuitive sense and corresponds to our implicit conventional and operational wisdom as we go through life. When we fix our intention on an object (meaning we direct our conscious perception at something), we directly perceive the ontologically objective object. It is crucial to note, however, that our experience of that object is not itself objective, which explains why we may be misled, as skeptics have argued. Instead, we have ontologically subjective experiences of ontologically objective objects and features of the world. But if our experiences are subjective, how can we know what properties the objects possess? Because the experiences are causal in the sense that our perception of the objects causes us to have a certain experience, Searle argues that for an object to have a certain property it must be capable of causing that subjective experience. Searle presents the example of the color red: for an object to be red, it must be capable of causing subjective experiences of red. At the same time, a person with spectrum inversion might see this object as green, and so unless there is one objectively correct way of seeing (which is largely in doubt), then the object is also green in the sense that it is capable, in certain cases, of causing a perceiver to experience a green object. What is always the case in veridical situations, however, is that there *is* an object of perception; in hallucinations, we are having subjective experiences without an object of perception.

The final section of the book focuses on refuting the position known as Disjunctivism, the view that there is no content in common between veridical perception and hallucinations. The theory is posed as a way to avoid the Cartesian skeptical worry that we are all enjoying a grand hallucination without refuting the fallacious sense data theory. However, as Searle notes, this theory runs completely

counterintuitive to our own experiences of hallucinations, does not resolve the skeptical worry, does little to explain how perception operates, and is in some sense impossible: the Disjunctivist must show that the content in each case is different, which he cannot do, nor has he attempted to do.¹⁶⁷

There are only two deficiencies that stick out in Searle's work. The first is that, while stating that hallucinations are subjective experiences without an object of perception, he does little to explain *why* they occur or how to distinguish between veridical cases and illusions (although the latter, he says, is not his project)¹⁶⁸. In the classic brain-in-a-vat scenario, the hallucination is simply due to being fed a specific subjective experience. But what about other situations? We are left to assume that in cases of mental illness some internal physical or cognitive error causes the experiences without us actually perceiving an object. The same holds true in what he calls "recreational"¹⁶⁹ cases: the illicit substance causes subjective experiences without an object of perception.

The other flaw lies in his account of how we distinguish between familiar, identical objects (for example, between my car and an identical copy). Although there is no feature of the object itself that enables us to distinguish between the two, Searle asserts that repeated exposure to one of the objects and the experiences it causes somehow gives one a feeling that one is familiar, and thus belongs to them. This is perhaps the weakest moment in the book: he admits in the identical case that there is no perceptual difference, but we recognize one simply because it is ours. There is no perceptual claim involved in such a

¹⁶⁷ Searle, 173.

¹⁶⁸ Searle, 217-218.

¹⁶⁹ Searle, 163.

distinction, but rather a claim about metaphysics that we have no way of explaining. In addition, the argument falls apart insofar as it is purely theoretical: he uses the example as a case of something that occurs in real life, when in fact no two objects are identical; I recognize my car because of its license plate, a stain near the gas cap, and two small dents in the bumper. If there were truly an identical car next to it, I would have no earthly way of distinguishing between the two and would need to resort to an arbitrary choice.

Overall, Searle presents a clear, disciplined approach to perception and intentionality that is well worth the read. While the work has been described as well-written and easily accessible to the average reader, professional philosophers may find this book extremely repetitive: Searle often repeats the same distinctions unnecessarily in successive paragraphs or sections, making it easier for the average reader to follow but monotonous and redundant at times for experienced philosophers. As far as the theory goes, however, Searle's work is excellent and just may change how we think about traditional philosophies of perception.