

Why radical skepticism is found during war.

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Abstract: In this written report, especially in the light of war involving the West, Ukraine and Russia, I shall provide three reasons why you may be a brain-in-a-vat being fed fake experiences by computers.

Introduction

Suppose your nation-state has declared war against another nation-state, and you're a scientist who, as per the policies of your nation-state, is bound to serve during the war.

In the first scenario, suppose you, a scientist, are captured by the enemy nation-state, whose scientists collect your memory, then clear your memory, and finally turn you into a brain-in-a-vat being fed fake experiences by computers.

In the second scenario, suppose you, a scientist, discover that a high ranking politician in your nation-state has defected to the enemy nation-state, and so some scientists of your nation-state, perhaps including you, collect that politician's memory, clear that politician's memory and turn that politician into a brain-in-a-vat being fed fake experiences by computers.

Radical skeptical questions

Those two scenarios bring up at least three radical skeptical questions:

1. Since the first scenario involves a probability of you being a captured scientist who is a brain-in-a-vat being fed fake experiences by computers, should one believe any scientist at all?
2. Since the second scenario involves a small number of scientists, who presumably would have economic reasons, financial profits and political leverage in not spreading information on the defected politician, should one consider them evil even when they are discovered to have turned the defected politician into a brain-in-a-vat being fed fake experiences by computers?
3. Since the scientists in your nation-state are bound to serve during the war as per policies decided ultimately by politicians, can the scientists of your nation-state even discover a possibly defected politician, and if not, aren't you back to your position of radical skepticism?

The fundamental factors behind the radical skeptical questions during war

The fundamental factors behind each of the radical skeptical questions above are:

1. Fear
2. Uncertainty and
3. Doubt

In the case of the first question, fear exists not only in the minds of each scientist, but also in the collective minds of the individuals of the nation and this fear is characterized by the question:

“What if our scientists are systematically wrong in their findings?”

In the case of the second question, uncertainty exists not only in the small number of scientists involved, but also in the mind of the defected politician and this uncertainty is characterized by the question: “What if we are taking an epistemically wrong decision?”

In the case of the third question, doubt exists not only in the minds of each scientist but also in the collective minds of the polity that has deferred the scientific method to a political process, and this doubt is characterized by the question: “What if our agency is incompatible with our policy?”

The role of psychology and law behind the radical skeptical questions during war

It's known that psychology and law play unique roles behind the radical skeptical questions raised during war. Prisoners of war are routinely held captive until peace treaties are signed by the warring parties, and until such time, psychological assistance is generally both required and recommended to both prisoners of war and patients with symptoms of the aforementioned factors.

However, certain nation-states also conduct scientific experiments to gain information from both such prisoners of war and patients, sometimes in complete defiance of both international law and humanitarian law. Therefore, the role of both psychology and law aren't sacrosanct during war. The job of philosophy can't be completed without investigating these aspects as well.

The role of international relations and diplomacy towards radical skeptical questions during war

Since wars often raise radical skeptical questions, the role of international relations and diplomacy during wars must be sacrosanct. If not, there would be no end to wars and in such a reality, the mightier nation-state would eventually subdue the less-mighty nation-state. However, as all major nation-states today can retaliate with nuclear weapons, such a so-called “win” would come at an incalculable loss to humanity and even to the so-called “winner”. Hence, the role of international

relations and diplomacy remains sacrosanct.

The common-sense approach to radical skeptical questions during war

Because the common-sense approach to radical skeptical questions during war is usually based on metrics that are so-called “known to the layman”, but are often of no strategic importance to the sovereign, the common-sense approach to radical skeptical questions during war is flawed. For example, many sovereigns throughout time and space are known to have engaged in an amoral calculus of casualties of war. Since such knowledge is extremely private and sometimes even state secrets, the common-sense approach to radical skeptical questions is flawed and often of no consequence.

The reasons you may be a brain-in-a-vat being fed fake experiences by computers during war

The reasons you may be a brain-in-a-vat being fed fake experiences by computers during war are, but not limited to, the following:

1. You have an economic preference for being a brain-in-a-vat being fed fake experiences by computers.
2. You have a utility function in which you being a brain-in-a-vat being fed fake experiences by computers gives you positively increasing utility.
3. Your mind is being explored by your sovereign in order to gain strategic information.

Conclusion

We’ve seen how radical skepticism is found during war. We’ve ascertained that the role of science is still nascent and it’s possible for the radical skeptic to be right during war. Therefore, we conclude that being a brain-in-a-vat being fed fake experiences by computers is entirely compatible with Western economics, finance, psychology, law, political science, and ultimately warfare.