unleashed forces that hasten the spread of pandemic diseases: HIV/AIDS, Ebola, West Nile Virus, avian influenza/bird flu, and SARS. Interstate and intrastate wars, civil conflict, guerilla insurgencies, and unsanitary conditions provide fertile ground for the spread of global epidemic diseases. The lessons learned from this book can help national governments, the international community, military planners, and health practitioners in devising strategies to combat war-related epidemic diseases. Richard Neustadt and Ernest May commented in their celebrated book, *Thinking in Time* (New York: The Free Press, 1988, p. 251), that history is a "time stream" in which the "future has no place to come from but the past, hence the past has predictive value" and "what matters for the future in the present is departures from the past." Therefore, to understand the present, we must reflect on the past. The lessons in this book can guide decision makers in making valuable departures from the past. Therefore, to understand the future of military wars and epidemic diseases, it is important that we reflect on their past. That is exactly what Smallman-Raynor and Cliff have attempted to do for their readers.

What is surely missing is a sociological and anthropological explanation on how various societies were either altered or transformed as a result of new disease vectors due to war and military operations. A paragraph or two on these aspects would have been extremely useful. A discussion on the impacts of war-related epidemic diseases on military organizational effectiveness in the various wars would have added new perspectives to the emerging security discourse on the potential implications of HIV/AIDS on military organizational effectiveness. Like any other publication, this book has its shortcomings; however, these do not in any way detract the reader from appreciating the wealth of information and analytical prowess of the authors. Numerous studies have documented the historical association of military operations and epidemic diseases. This book joins that well-nourished research and represents the field quite well.

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I am a Gulf War veteran, and I have a story to tell that I think matters to my significant others, the political community on behalf of which I went to war, and anyone interested in the impact of war on society. To encounter Jeff Wilson's Gulf War narra-

tive is to hear a voice that carries deontological, teleological, and virtuous significance. As such, Jeff's war story is worth something, in both an intrinsic and an extrinsic sense of value, no matter what any particular interlocutor with the story may think about war, the Gulf War, or any particular Gulf Warrior.

If I think that my Gulf War narrative has deontological significance, it is because I think that narrative has value in itself that transcends any "use" it may have to other people or groups of people extrinsic to the narrator. To tell my war story is simply to affirm that I have a war story to tell, somehow signifying my presence in war, thereby affirming that my being (in a certain place at a certain time) made a difference. My presence in the Gulf War at a particular place at a particular time testifies to a relationship I have with the series of events that happened in that temporal framework. In short, things would have been different, and I would have been different, had I not been there. More importantly, I consciously realize that the Lieutenant Colonel Jeff Wilson who reflects on this experience now is who he is because Captain Jeff Wilson was who he was in 1991. Enough said?

No, for this deontological significance must couple with teleological significance to transcend the barrier between the narrator and the interlocutor with the narrative. This is not to say that my deontological value claim cannot have value to others simply for what it is; however, the community of interlocutors with war narrative thirsts for some sort of teleological relevance *to something*. So what, asks the community of interested persons: what does one narrative have to say about this particular aspect of this particular war that will perhaps enable this particular scholar (or journalist, or fellow veteran) to interlock the singular narrative with its companion pieces to further complete the jigsaw puzzle that is the history of the war? Can individual, subjective accounts of those *in* war assist in discerning an objective truth *of* the war?

Stringing unrelated narratives together may obscure more than it reveals, if what one is looking for after the fact is some sense of unity and coherence to the series of events that led from one point in time to another. Multiple narratives of the same point in time in war can point to the fact that no one actually involved in a particular event had any sense at all of the larger event unfolding around them, or of the significance of their particular actions to the actions of those around them—both friendly and enemy.

However, if one can be content with this sort of messy truth, then the disarray that the war narrative reveals—in what one might call the cacophony of combat—is exactly what will be most satisfying to the authentic truth seeker (or, the seeker of authentic truth): that the truth in war is that there is no truth except that which exists in the mind's eye of the individual soldier, sailor, airman, or marine in that individual foxhole, cockpit, gun turret, or action station at a particular moment. The teleological significance of this coherent incoherence lies in the realization of the virtue of the acts themselves, despite the fact that historical meaning is later imposed on these individual truths from without, more often than not toward ends that bear little or no resemblance to those that brought the individuals to their places in the drama to begin with. The virtue of war narrative is that it affirms the narrative of war virtue. War, truly a

margin of human experience, is a place where one's humanity is tested and validated against the inhumanity of war itself. If we think that there can be just wars—that we can potentially morally justify defending our significant others, our values, our beliefs, and our institutions with force, then we must think that there can be just combat, which recognizes some limits on who we kill and on how much force we apply in that killing. We must be able to envision a combat where the humanity of the combatants on both the just and the unjust sides is not completely subsumed by the inhumane techniques and devices he is using in order to secure their ends. War narrative makes an inductive argument—the larger the sample, the stronger the case—that there is a definite moral cost to the individual and the collective of choosing (at the political level) to embark upon an unjust war, or in any war, to fight unjustly.

Here lies the value of *Soldier Talk: The Vietnam War in Oral Narrative*. Through the lens of Vietnam War narrative, the essayists in this eclectic volume together inductively validate the hell of war, even if the potential combatant sees little or no combat; and that, once individual soldiers allow the environment of combat to weaken their core moral sensibilities to the point where they become unjust combatants (rapists, murderers, mutilators of the dead), it is the individual soldiers themselves who suffer, some interminably. Through their rigorous and multifaceted interpretive approaches, the authors in this volume simultaneously prove and disprove commonly held perceptions of Vietnam War oral narrative, and the value of that narrative to the holistic interpretation of the war. On one hand, the plethora of conflicting narratives, even from veterans ostensibly linked in space and time to a single event, demonstrates that ground truth *in* war lies in large measure in the eye of the beholder, and that relativity must be dealt with as an absolute by anyone attempting to deconstruct a particular series of events in a particular war from the individual soldier's point of view.

On the other hand, the essayists in this volume, varying widely as they do in age, background, and scholarly orientation, dispel the notion that the Vietnam War is somehow unique, that it is so loaded in sociocultural baggage on all sides that the scholar who attempts to discern some truth *of* Vietnam from the narrative will be forever frustrated by the way that the Vietnam War can seem forever right *and* wrong, somehow both enlightening and debasing to the moral fabric of the nation whose soldiers' narratives testify to the cloth of which that fabric is woven. If the scholarship in this book does nothing else, it reaffirms an objective truth that rises above the necessary subjectivity of the individual war narrative: that the Vietnam War was, in the words of John Paul Vann, a "bright, shining lie," upon which a generation of Americans and Vietnamese staked their identity, and for which those involved, directly or indirectly, willingly or unwillingly, are still atoning.

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