Go to: Title page | p181 | p182 | Information | Book index

declaration of war); a reasonable hope of success; proportionality, i.e., determining that the probable good effects outweigh the probable bad effects for all the parties affected; and right or just intention, which includes pursuit of a just cause, peace as the end of war, motives of nonhatred and regret. The criteria of the *jus in bello* include discrimination between legitimate and illegitimate targets, particularly between combatants and noncombatants, with direct attacks permitted on combatants but not on noncombatants; and, again, proportionality, i.e., balancing probable good against probable harm in particular actions in the war.

In Michael Walzer's language, I thus view war as a rule-governed activity rather than as murder or a hell where anything goes.[2] When war is viewed as hell—as pacifists and realists are inclined to do—the only moral question is whether to enter this criminal or hellish state that lacks all moral limits. The pacifist says "Don't enter"; the realist says "Enter and get out as quickly as possible"; the just warrior says "Enter reluctantly, fight fairly, and restore the peace as soon as possible." For the just warrior, it makes a moral difference how the war is fought.

Now, there is an important and irreducible difference between peace and war—so that crossing from peace to war requires discharging a heavy burden of justification—but the difference is not between day and night, not between morality on the one hand and immorality or amorality on the other hand. And criteria similar to those of the just-war tradition appear in our reflection about other conflicts of duties in peace: for example, whether to lie or whether to force someone to do something, as in involuntary hospitalization. Thus, there is an important continuity or overlap between the justification of war, which infringes on the prima facie duty not to kill, and the justification of other acts that also infringe on prima facie duties, such as the duty not to lie. This point will be important when I turn to war as metaphor.

I apologize for this quick—and perhaps cryptic—statement of my interpretation of the moral reality of war, but since my position is not totally novel, even if it is distinctive, perhaps its main lines are clear enough. After all, one shouldn't expect great originality in this area, for as one philosopher put it, "originality in social and political thought is almost always a sign of error." Or as another wag put it, originality is forgetting where you got it. My theory of just war builds on our common morality of war as expressed in the tradition of just war in dialogue with other moral traditions about war, including pacifists, realists, and crusaders.

Let's now turn our attention to some moral issues in the use of war as a metaphor in social and political discourse. Following an introduction to general