over republics' (p. 438). As a teacher of ethics, Machiavelli's guiding assumption is to put forward corrupt views and actions to prompt such readers 'to step back from the political fray and learn how to give reasoned accounts (*logoi*) of the causes of political problems, and reasoned judgments about how to address them' (pp. 50–51). So encouraged, such readers seem well on their way to becoming spectators of their own historical moment rather than active and responsible citizens. To be sure, the practical purpose of stepping back to think is to step back *into* politics armed with 'philosophical modes of reasoning' that advance strong claims to have or to be seeking 'a truer account of what standards the idea of a true republic requires' (pp. 51, 59). Still, to interpret Machiavelli's aims in this way is to see him pursing a strategy of what Rawlsians would call 'metaphysical', not political, argument.

Machiavelli may not have been as hostile to philosophy as some have suggested, but his four references to 'philosophers' in his most philosophical work, the *Discourses*, which Benner draws our attention to on page 49, note 112, would not suggest to any reader that Machiavelli thought philosophy to be of much guidance for working in politics, or even for formulating standards for human and political conduct. While *Machiavelli's Ethics* is a real tour de force of highly disciplined exegesis of Machiavelli's writings, its achievement nevertheless obscures and divorces us from the window Machiavelli otherwise affords into the world of politics in which political agents are rhetorical performers who confront the vicissitudes and fortunes of the times and who cannot afford to practice a philosophical politics.

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On the ethics of war and terrorism

This intriguing and timely book takes on the topic of current just war theory in five chapters. These five chapters highlight some well-known aspects of just war thinking, which is addressed in a forthright and critical manner. Chapter one deals with 'legitimate authority'; chapter two looks at just cause

(including sub-criteria) and right intention; chapter three addresses innocents, 'double effect' and proportionality; the fourth chapter looks at non-combatant immunity and the definition of innocence (and 'non-innocence'); and the fifth chapter looks closely at the ethics of terrorism. The author comes up with some surprising conclusions. This indicates that the book is far from being a run-of-the-mill account of just war theory.

The author tells us in the introduction that 'when it comes to ethical questions of some importance' such as war and terrorism 'one is well advised to advance philosophical analysis against common points of view and to question pre-existing, socially established frameworks of discussion and prejudices'. (p. 1) He certainly does that. In the five chapters the author exhibits a highly sceptical attitude towards many facets of contemporary just war theory and partially in the concluding chapter offers a moral defence of acts of terrorism in certain defined circumstances (p. 135).

The author is very exercised by what he regards as the double standards or hypocrisy of stronger powers. They and their subjects will rail against the isolated outbreaks of terrorist activity on the part of marginal and often weak groups while turning a blind eye to the large-scale commission of acts of terrorism by large states. We should make clear at this stage that the author regards President Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki as one such act of terrorism, similarly the prolonged war that the United States engaged in against Communist North Vietnam falls under suspicion. The author rejects pacifism on the grounds that, in certain instances, it may lead to the needless loss of large numbers of innocent lives, and acts of terrorism are, in his view, permissible under certain specific circumstances. I shall try to spell those out here although there is no certainty that I shall get it entirely right, as those apparent circumstances are highly complex. What may justify acts of terrorism is where they are perpetrated by individuals that constitute a significantly less threatening power than the group or groups they are faced with. Those individuals have not to be in a position where they can constitute an existential threat to the whole of their opposing power. The wea-ker society has therefore not to be in a situation where it can deter perceived acts of aggression by the more powerful society. The object of this terrorism has also to be to protect the lives of a large number of innocents in their own society (p. 135). The author stresses that these life or death calculations always have to be undertaken in a concrete manner in the light of events. He rightly offers no easy rules for the appropriate deployment of terrorist tactics, and draws the salutary conclusion that 'terrorism is not at all the instrument of the weak, as is often claimed, but rather the routinely employed instrument of the strong, and usually only the final resort of the weak' (p. 137).

Despite its timeliness and provocative nature, I found this a difficult book to gain a grasp of and follow. On the one hand, it criticises in a refreshing way

many of the shibboleths of just war theory, such as the 'double-effect' argument and the concept of legitimate authority but, on the other, an overall line of argument is difficult to trace. There is a thesis that emerges at the end, namely, that today's international terrorists have just as much right as states to avail themselves of just war arguments in deploying force, and taken from his perspective, a great deal of conventional western thinking can be portrayed as embodying double standards. This thesis seems to me though not to be sustained throughout the book, so what in effect we are presented with is a series of essays about just war thinking. As such, it is a most welcome intervention. I agree with the author that there is room for scepticism about present-day just war theory: many of its advocates remain the 'sorry comforters' that Kant took to task. They deplore the violence of the international system while inadvertently adding to it with their codices for the appropriate use of military force. However, Steinhoff's approach endangers his own cause by being over polemical and by its confusing deployment of both seemingly deontological arguments and consequentialist reasoning. On my reading – which of course may be deficient – it is difficult to tell whether or not Steinhoff embraces fully or partially rejects rule-utilitarianism (pp. 103, 135) although I have the impression that it is nonetheless the centrepiece of the moral argument.

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Justifying the obligation to die: War, ethics and political obligation with illustrations from Zionism

This is a fascinating, stimulating, but at times problematic, even irritating book. Ilan Zvi Baron's starting point is the observation that while the