Politics and Morality

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Edited by
Igor Primoratz
Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics
The University of Melbourne

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Acknowledgements

Notes on the Contributors

Andrew Alexandra is Senior Lecturer in the Philosophy Department and Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics, University of Melbourne. He has published in *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, *Social Theory and Practice*, *Professional Ethics*, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, *Business and Professional Ethics Journal*, *Ethics and Information Technology* and *Agriculture and Human Values*. He is the co-author (with John Blackler and Seumas Miller) of *Police Ethics* (2nd edition, 2006) and (with Steve Matthews and Seumas Miller) of *Reasons, Values and Institutions* (2002). He is editor of the *Australian Journal of Professional and Applied Ethics*.

C. A. J. (Tony) Coady is Professorial Fellow at the University of Melbourne division of the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics. He was Boyce Gibson Professor of Philosophy at the University of Melbourne from 1990 to 1998. His publications include *Testimony: A Philosophical Inquiry* (1992), *Terrorism and Justice: Moral Argument in a Threatened World*, (co-edited with Michael O'Keefe) (2002) and *Righteous Violence: The Ethics and Politics of Military Intervention* (co-edited with Michael O'Keefe) (2005). His most recent publication is *What's Wrong with Moralism?* (2006).

Garrett Cullity is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Head of the Philosophy Discipline at the University of Adelaide. His publications include *The Moral Demands of Affluence* (2004), *Ethics and Practical Reason* (co-edited with Berys Gaut) (1997) and articles in *Ethics*, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* and *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*.

James Gaffney is Professor Emeritus of Ethics in the Department of Religious Studies at Loyola University, New Orleans. Author of eight books, editor of one and a contributor of scores of articles to books and journals, he has a special interest in the interactions of religion and morality in both historical and contemporary settings. His most recent published writing (in *Food for Thought*, ed. Steve F. Sapontzis, 2004) was on the complex and changing motivation of vegetarian practices in

major religious traditions. His current research emphasis is on legal and ethical controversy provoked by Spanish colonial policies regarding native peoples in Latin America.

John Kleinig is Director of the Institute for Criminal Justice Ethics and Professor of Philosophy in the Department of Law and Police Science, John Jay College of Criminal Justice and in the PhD Programs in Philosophy and Criminal Justice, Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York. He also holds the Charles Sturt University Chair of Policing Ethics in the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics (Canberra, Australia). He is the author or editor of fifteen books, including *Punishment and Responsibility* (1973), *Paternalism* (1984), *Valuing Life* (1991) and *The Ethics of Policing* (1996).

Neil Levy is Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics, University of Melbourne and in the Programme on the Ethics of the New Biosciences, Oxford University. His books include *Sartre* (2002), *Moral Relativism* (2002) and *What Makes Us Moral?* (2004). He has published more than fifty book chapters and articles in journals including *The Monist*, *Philosophical Quarterly*, *Bioethics*, *Biology and Philosophy* and *Philosophical Studies*.

David W. Lovell is Professor of Politics and Head of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Forces Academy in Canberra. He has been Head of the School of Politics as well as Acting Rector of the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Forces Academy. His books include *Asia-Pacific Security* (2003), *The Transition* (2002), *Marxism and Australian Socialism* (1997), *The Sausage Makers? Parliamentarians as Legislators* (1994) and (with Chandran Kukathas and William Maley) *The Theory of Politics* (1991).

Seumas Miller is Professor of Philosophy at Charles Sturt University and the Australian National University (joint position) and Director of the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics (an Australian Research Council funded Special Research Centre). He is the author of *Social Action: A Teleological Account* (2001), *Corruption and Anti-Corruption* (with Peter Roberts and Edward Spence) (2004), *Ethical Issues in Policing* (with John Blackler) (2005) and *Police Ethics* (with John Blackler and Andrew Alexandra) (2nd edition, 2006).

Kai Nielsen is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, University of Calgary, and Adjunct Professor of Philosophy, Concordia University. He is the author of twenty-two books, including *Ethics without God* (1973), *Marxism and the Moral Point of View* (1988), *Why Be Moral?* (1989) and *Globalization and Justice* (2003).

Igor Primoratz is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Principal Research Fellow, Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics, University of Melbourne. He is the author of *Justifying Legal Punishment* (2nd edition, 1997) and *Ethics and Sex* (1999), and editor of *Human Sexuality* (1997), *Patriotism* (2002), *Terrorism: The Philosophical Issues* (2004) and *Identity, Self-Determination and Secession* (with Aleksandar Pavković) (2006).

Rob Sparrow is Lecturer at the Centre for Human Bioethics at Monash University and Honorary Research Fellow at the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics, University of Melbourne. He has published papers in the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, *Ethics and Information Technology* and *Environmental Ethics*.

Janna Thompson is Associate Professor of Philosophy at La Trobe University, Melbourne, and an Honorary Fellow in the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics. She is the author of *Justice and World Order* (1992), *Discourse and Knowledge* (1997) and *Taking Responsibility for the Past: Reparation and Historical Justice* (2002).

Stephen de Wijze teaches political theory at the University of Manchester. His publications on the topic of dirty hands include 'Tragic Remorse: The Anguish of Dirty Hands', *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* (2005) and 'Defining Evil: Insights from the Problem of "Dirty Hands"', *The Monist* (2002). He is presently completing a book on the problem of 'dirty hands'.

Jessica Wolfendale is Research Fellow at the Melbourne University division of the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics. She completed a PhD in philosophy at Monash University in 2005, in which she analysed the moral psychology of military obedience. She has published papers in *Social Theory and Practice*, *The Journal of Social Philosophy* and *Ethics and Information Technology*.

Introduction

I

The morality – or immorality – of politics is an inescapable issue for philosophers, politicians and common citizens. It is particularly topical in times of dramatic political developments that put under severe strain moral constraints on individual and collective choice and action. Today, we are facing an array of pressing issues in both national and international politics, which raise difficult moral questions. At the same time, our trust in political leaders who are entrusted with devising and implementing solutions to these issues is sorely tried by their words and actions. Under these circumstances, the problem of the relation between politics and morality takes on special urgency.

This book is a contribution made by philosophers working in theoretical and applied ethics to the public debate about politics and morality. They discuss both the fundamental problem of the relation of politics to morality and a number of more specific questions arising in this connection. Do moral considerations that normally apply in non-political contexts also apply to politics? Or does politics require a different morality, one more permissive with regard to such things as deception, manipulation and violence? How should we judge politicians who have morally compromised themselves on our behalf? Is moral corruption in politics distinctive in some important respects? What are the rights and wrongs of lying and deception in politics? Is patriotism a virtue, a morally indifferent preference or a vice? What are the moral costs of policies that exclude most of those seeking immigration or asylum? May we resort to torture in extreme circumstances, in particular in the course of the 'war on terror'? What are the moral hazards of military obedience?

There are two basic positions on the central question: Do rules of ordinary morality apply in political life, just as they apply in all other areas? Is it just as wrong to lie, cheat or resort to violence in politics as it is, say, in private life? On one view, it is. This view has a long history, starting with the ethical conception of the state that prevailed in ancient and medieval thought. Its most prominent advocate in modern philosophy was Kant, who argued that moral considerations trump all others. As he explains in his tract on eternal peace (1795),

conflict between morality and politics exists only subjectively, as a result of 'the self-seeking propensity of human beings', but not objectively:

> Pure principles of right have objective reality … and people within a state as well as states in their relations with one another must act in accordance with those principles, regardless of what objections empirical politics may bring against them. True politics can there-fore not take a step without having already paid homage to morals … as soon as the two conflict with each other, morals cuts the knot that politics cannot untie.[1]

Indeed, on a sterner version of an already stern view, political leaders must adhere to moral rules *more strictly* than common citizens. For, given their high office, they decide and act on behalf of those they govern. Moreover, by and large, their choices and actions affect more people, often in more serious ways, than the choices and actions of common citizens, not least as an example to others, whether good or bad. Thus Erasmus of Rotterdam wrote in *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516) that 'the good faith of princes in fulfilling their agree-ments must be such that a simple promise from them will be more sacred than any oath sworn by other men'.[2]

On the other main view, moral rules and other considerations do not apply to politics. Some find the first philosophical statement of this view as early as in Plato's *Republic*. The guardians of Plato's ideal state are exempted from one of the basic moral prohibitions, that of lying, when the good of the polity requires deceiving its enemies, and even its own citizens.[3] Yet in Plato's political philosophy, this provision is an exception rather than the rule; other precepts of morality are to be upheld by all. Like other major moral and political philosophers of antiquity and the Middle Ages, Plato believed in the unity of ethics and politics. It is thus more accurate to trace the origins of this view to Machiavelli, whose entire political theory was motivated by the need to liberate politics from ethics. Machiavelli's best-known work, *The Prince* (1513), aims to instruct princes about the ways of doing their job and doing it well, indeed excelling in it. The prize for excelling is power and glory. Machiavelli is writing against the background of a tradition, exemplified by Erasmus among others, of composing tracts that encourage princes to be paragons of virtue. That is the way of gaining the love and loyalty of their subjects, maintaining their rule and ensuring a favourable mention in history books. Machiavelli

rejects this tradition; in his judgement, that is moralism with no purchase on reality, worse than useless, a recipe for failure. For humans in general do not abide by moral precepts or practise virtue; on the contrary, they are self-interested, greedy, cowardly, fickle, ungrateful and deceitful. This is true of all with whom a prince will have to deal: other princes and his own subjects alike. In short,

> there is such a gap between how one lives and how one ought to live that anyone who abandons what is done for what ought to be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation: for a man who wishes to profess goodness at all times will come to ruin among so many who are not good. Hence it is necessary for a prince who wishes to maintain his position to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge or not to use it according to necessity.[4]

This means that a prince needs to learn how to break his promises, to dissemble and deceive, and to use force, sometimes in a cruel way and on a large scale, whenever that is required in order to maintain, strengthen and extend his power. Nor should he worry too much about others' response to his conduct. People are gullible, have short memories and judge human acts in general, and the deeds of rulers in particular, by their results, rather than by their intrinsic moral character. 'Let a prince therefore act to conquer and to maintain the state; his methods will always be judged honourable and will be praised by all; for ordinary people are always deceived by appearances and by the outcome of a thing; and in the world there is nothing but ordinary people ...'[5] Moreover, this is good counsel for political leaders and citizens alike. In discussing the choices facing the latter, Machiavelli says: 'When the safety of one's country wholly depends on the decision to be taken, no attention should be paid either to justice or injustice, to kindness or cruelty, or to its being praiseworthy or ignominious.'[6] Whatever the paramount political concern is – whether it is the power and glory of the prince or the safety of the republic – if it requires setting aside moral considerations, including even the weightiest, that is what a true prince, and a true citizen, should do.[7]

Both these views of the relation of morality and politics – that moral concern always overrides political interest, and that a sufficiently important political interest trumps morality – are so extreme that this suggests that we look for a middle-of-the-road position. Perhaps politics cannot be constrained by the same moral rules that govern our private lives; but that does not mean that it need not be constrained by

any moral considerations, that to be a politician is to be on a perma-
nent moral vacation. We should be able to develop a *political* morality:
a morality that takes into account the distinctive nature, challenges
and hazards of politics, and makes it possible to engage in it in a
morally defensible way.

Max Weber's lecture 'Politics as a Vocation' (1919) presents what is
still the best-known statement of this approach. Weber distinguishes
two types of ethics: ethics of conviction (*Gesinnungsethik*) and ethics of
responsibility (*Verantwortungsethik*). The former focuses on the intrinsic
nature of actions and the purity of intentions, while disregarding the
consequences. The latter emphasizes our responsibility for a wide range
of consequences of our actions. The ethics of conviction is appropriate
in private life, but cannot serve as a guide in politics, where the vital
interests of large numbers of people are at stake. For this type of ethics
is incapable of accommodating the exigencies of politics, and enjoins
unflinching adherence to moral prescriptions and proscriptions, come
what may. As a result, when applied in the public sphere it leads to
inactivity, and eventually compromises the very values it professes to
serve. Its adherent is at pains to stay on the straight and narrow path of
morality and keep her hands clean; if her good intentions are frus-
trated by bad luck, or by the stupidity or ill-will of others, that is not
her fault. An adherent of the ethics of responsibility, on the other
hand, takes into account such things as chance or flaws in others, and
accepts responsibility for a wide range of consequences of his actions,
intended *and* unintended (but foreseen or foreseeable), direct *and* indi-
rect, including those mediated by the actions of others. The ethics of
conviction assumes that only good can come from good, and only bad
from bad. The ethics of responsibility is alive to the irrationality of the
world, and in particular the irrationality of politics. Politics is about
power, and its essential means is violence. But power and violence are
'satanic powers': it is extremely difficult to control them once they are
unleashed, and even to predict where recourse to them will take us.
A person who decides to enter politics – that is, to make sustained use
of power and violence in the public arena – makes 'a pact with satanic
powers' and must know that, as far as his actions are concerned, 'it is
not true that nothing but good comes from good and nothing but evil
from evil, but rather quite frequently the opposite is the case. Anyone
who does not realize this is in fact a mere child in political matters'.[8]
Those who propose to enter the political realm must be prepared to use
bad means that ordinary morality proscribes in order to attain a good
political end, to take responsibility for what they help bring about,

whether with or without intent to do so, and to live with the full knowledge of what they have done and the sense of guilt this knowledge must engender.

Yet the opposition between the two types of morality is not absolute. There is a limit to what a decent human being can bring himself to do in pursuit of a political end, however important the end may be. Weber apparently holds that there is no way of drawing the line that must not be crossed for all and sundry, and that each individual involved in politics is to find out for himself just where the line lies. But the fact that there is such a line for every decent person shows that the ethics of conviction and of responsibility are not utterly incompatible but rather complementary; 'only when taken together do they constitute the authentic human being who is capable of having a "vocation for politics"'.[9]

A different position, seeking the middle ground between insisting, with Erasmus and Kant, that politicians must obey the same moral rules that apply to everyone else, and giving them, with Machiavelli, an exemption from these rules whenever a paramount political aim can be pursued only by breaking them, is presented in Michael Walzer's seminal paper 'Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands' (1973). While Weber seeks to overcome the tension between politics and morality by arguing for a distinctively political morality, Walzer proposes to do so within a single moral outlook, by displaying its complex structure and highlighting a quandary that characteristically arises in political action. He sets out by reminding us of moral conflict: a situation where different moral considerations pull us in opposite directions, so that we can act in accordance with one only at the cost of not acting in accordance with the other. Some conflicts are not too difficult to resolve, as one moral consideration has more weight than the other, whether in general or at least in the particular case. When resolved accordingly, such a conflict does not leave us with a sense of unease, or even guilt. But sometimes the conflict is deeper and more troublesome: it is a moral dilemma, defined by Walzer as 'a situation where [one] must choose between two courses of action both of which it would be wrong for him to undertake'.[10] We face such a dilemma whenever we can prevent something extremely bad from happening only by breaching an important moral rule. Persons in all walks of life may have to cope with such a predicament, but those active in politics are particularly likely to have to do so.

This is a recurring topic in fiction dealing with political subjects; indeed, it is to Sartre's play *Dirty Hands* that we owe the term

commonly used in contemporary philosophical discussions to refer to such a conundrum. In the play, an experienced politician responds with exasperation to the qualms a novice has about lying for the sake of the cause: 'How you cling to your purity, young man! How afraid you are to soil your hands! All right, stay pure! What good will it do? … Well, I have dirty hands. Right up to the elbows. I've plunged them in filth and blood. But what do you hope? Do you think you can govern innocently?'[11] Walzer agrees with Sartre's politician (and with Machiavelli and Weber) that one cannot govern innocently, at least not successfully and for long. He adds that we would not want to be governed by those whose primary concern was to keep their hands clean by adhering to moral absolutes, rather than to safeguard and promote the common good. On the other hand, Walzer sees the 'dirty hands' predicament as a genuine dilemma and the troublesome feelings it generates as appropriate and important; he criticizes consequentialism for denying the reality of the dilemma and for portraying those feelings as irrational. Conventional wisdom has it that no one succeeds in politics without getting their hands dirty, and that politicians are morally worse than the rest of us. But this is as it should be. For 'sometimes it is right to try to succeed, and then it must also be right to get one's hands dirty. But one's hands get dirty from doing what it is wrong to do. And how can it be wrong to do what is right? Or, how can we get our hands dirty by doing what we ought to do?'[12]

This looks paradoxical. Yet, think of a national leader in whose capital a series of bombs will go off in the next 24 hours if they are not discovered and defused, and whose security service have captured a rebel leader who (probably) knows where they are, but refuses to tell. The only way to obtain the information and so prevent the disaster is by torturing him. The leader authorizes torture, although he believes, with the rest of us, that torture is always wrong. How should we judge the leader's decision, and how should the leader feel about it afterwards?

> When he ordered the prisoner tortured, he committed a moral crime and he accepted a moral burden. Now he is a guilty man. His willingness to acknowledge and bear (and perhaps to repent and do penance for) his guilt is evidence, and it is the only evidence he can offer us, both that he is not too good for politics and that he is good enough. Here is the moral politician: it is by his dirty hands that we know him. If he were a moral man and nothing else, his hands

would not be dirty; if he were a politician and nothing else, he would pretend that they were clean.[13]

II

Walzer's analysis of the 'dirty hands' predicament has provided the stimulus and set the stage for contemporary discussions by philosophers and others, which show no signs of abating. The first three contributions to this book are devoted to it. Stephen de Wijze and Kai Nielsen argue the two sides of the issue. De Wijze (chapter 1) rejects the criticism that the very notion of 'dirty hands' is incoherent or that whoever seriously entertains it shows a corrupt mind. 'Dirty hands' are a real and highly significant part of our moral experience, and any ethical theory that leaves no room for it is flawed. Yet it is not obvious just how this phenomenon is to be analysed, just what is the locus of the 'dirt'. According to Walzer, 'dirty hands' cases involve a conflict between deontological considerations that guide us in our private lives and weighty consequentialist considerations likely to come up in public, political life. De Wijze begs to differ: one may be obliged to dirty one's hands when facing a conflict between two cherished moral principles, as Sophocles' Antigone did when she decided to fulfil her family obligations at the price of betraying her city. De Wijze undertakes to spell out the necessary and sufficient conditions for a 'dirty hands' predicament, and to identify the source of the 'dirt' involved. Such a predicament is one of moral dilemma, or moral conflict *simpliciter*, generated by circumstances deliberately created by other human beings, where one is moved by moral considerations to betray a person, a group or a moral value or principle, and collaborate in others' immoral project. Such collaboration with evil is justified, as the alternative is an even greater evil. Afterwards, the agent feels remorse, or what Bernard Williams has termed 'agent-regret'. A paradigmatic example of the particularly troublesome type of 'dirty hands' scenario, that involving a moral dilemma, is the choice forced on the hero of William Styron's novel *Sophie's Choice*. Sophie, a Nazi concentration camp inmate, is invited by a camp guard to choose which of her two children will live. If she refuses, both will die.

Sophie's is a private, not a public, political choice. Neither de Wijze nor Walzer wants to restrict the phenomenon of 'dirty hands' to the political arena. But both point out that it is most at home there, because, as Walzer puts it, in politics 'we claim to act for others but also serve ourselves, rule over others, and use violence against them'.[14]

Whether political or not, 'dirty hands' show that the world is a complex, uncertain, indeed tragic place, in which – contrary to what adherents of Weber's 'ethics of conviction' believe – our moral record does not reflect only our own, deliberate choice and action, but also depends, sometimes critically, on the choices and actions of others, which can force us to betray things we hold dear and commit shameful, gravely immoral acts.

In the view of Kai Nielsen (chapter 2), all talk about having to do wrong in order to do right, and about feeling guilty for having done so, is 'paradox-mongering'. It is true that a political leader sometimes has to do things that normally would be moral crimes. However, Nielsen complains, Walzer and others argue that these actions are not only *normally* moral crimes, but are moral crimes *sans phrase*. They grant that the conscientious politician must sometimes dirty her hands in this way, but maintain that in doing so she becomes guilty of committing a morally criminal act. According to Walzer and other proponents of the 'dirty hands' view, such individuals are caught in the dilemma that to do right they must do wrong. Nielsen rejects this. There is no dilemma; rather, such individuals are caught in the horrible situation of having to choose between grave evils. The right thing for them to do is to choose the lesser one.

Philosophers subscribing to the 'dirty hands' view tend to assume that those who reject this view must be in the grip of utilitarianism – a monistic conception of morality that interprets all moral considerations in terms of the good and bad consequences of our actions. But this assumption is mistaken. Nielsen adopts a position that can be termed 'weak consequentialism'. This position is compatible with utilitarianism, but does not require it. It is also compatible with (and perhaps more congenial to) pluralistic non-consequentialism. Its central claim is that there is no class of cases that can be defined in advance such that the consequences of performing or failing to perform them are never relevant to the question of what is the right thing to do. Weak consequentialism boils down to rejection of absolutism: there are no actions that are either obligatory or prohibited absolutely, whatever the circumstances and whatever the consequences of performing or failing to perform them, respectively.

Deploying this theory of morality, Nielsen scrutinizes the problem of 'dirty hands' as illustrated by Walzer's example of authorizing the use of torture in order to prevent the killing of many innocent people. The conclusions he reaches are, first, that a 'dirty hands' case presents no moral dilemma. On the contrary, we often can discover what we ought

to do in such a case. Second, when we do, and then act accordingly, we have no reason to feel guilty. Evil, such as killing, destruction, oppression or suffering, is inescapable in the world we live in. Sometimes we must choose between alternatives that are both evil. Under such circumstances, we sometimes have good reasons for believing that resort to what are normally morally impermissible means will make for less evil in the world, and that our *not* resorting to those means will most likely immediately lead to greater evil. It is often not easy to establish whether these conditions obtain. But when we have established that they do, we ought to use otherwise morally impermissible means. Morality itself demands that we seize the day and take measures it prohibits in more ordinary circumstances; to deny this is moral evasion. There are no categorical prescriptions and proscriptions built into nature, including human nature, or into our choosing selves. 'In morality, it all depends' (p. 35).[15]

Walzer's classic version of the 'dirty hands' view is developed against the background of a critique of several earlier analyses of this phenomenon. His objection to Machiavelli is that the prince who has 'learned how not to be good' and is now practising this skill 'has no inwardness'. Machiavelli says nothing about the mental state appropriate to his prince, nor about the penalties for not being good. 'What he thinks of himself we don't know. … Yet we do want to know; above all, we want a record of his anguish.'[16] Weber goes some way towards remedying this, but his account is unsatisfactory, since the matter is resolved entirely within the confines of individual conscience. A politician who has dirtied his hands for the sake of the community certainly ought to have appropriate thoughts and feelings. But this is not enough. The feelings of guilt and the suffering they engender ought to have public expression in order to reassert publicly and reinforce the moral principle that has been violated, and also to limit that suffering. After all, the politician has committed a determinate crime, and must pay a determinate penalty, rather than come to be considered by others, and by himself, a lost soul. As Walzer rightly says, 'we don't want to be ruled by men who have lost their souls'.[17]

Yet it is not clear just how Walzer proposes to deal with this. He speaks of a determinate penalty that needs to be exacted, and of penance one needs to undergo, for an action that leaves one's hands 'dirty'. He also suggests that the agent should be honoured for acting, all things considered, as she should have acted, *and* dishonoured for the wrong she did when so acting. Neil Levy (chapter 3) examines this issue, arguing that both requirements are misguided. Punishment can

be justified either in consequentialist or in retributive terms, but neither justification is available to those who propose to punish politicians with 'dirty hands'. Punishment based on a consequentialist rationale is meant to discourage the person punished, and others, from repeating the wrongdoing; but in a 'dirty hands' case, what was done was right, all things considered, and therefore ought to be done again should the same circumstances obtain. Punishment based on a retributive rationale is justified because it is deserved, but the politician with 'dirty hands' did what she should have done, all things considered, and so does not deserve to be punished. By the same token, it will not do to dishonour the politician in some public way, instead of punishing her, for doing what she did; for what she did was, after all, what she should have done. Nor is it clear how we can both honour and dishonour someone for one and the same action.

Levy turns next to the question of the responsibility of the public. A politician claims not to be acting as a private person, but rather on behalf of the public. While this claim may or may not be true in a nondemocratic polity, it is true in a democracy. Accordingly, the responsibility for 'dirty-handed' actions in a democratic polity is widely shared. So long as such actions are a predictable feature of political life, when we elect officials, we entrust them with the burden of performing such justified, but nevertheless wrong, actions on our behalf. It might be argued that asking others to bear this burden is itself a 'dirty' act. Be that as it may, when politicians commit 'dirty' actions in circumstances that imply consent of their constituency, responsibility for those actions becomes widely shared. When our politicians perform morally wrong yet justified actions, all of us end up with 'dirty hands'.

The 'dirty hands' quandary is only one facet of the general problem of the relation of morality and politics. In the next four essays this relation is explored from other points of view. Garrett Cullity approaches it by looking into another type of consideration that may be thought to restrict the reach of morality or to trump its mandates: considerations of personal well-being (chapter 4). What is the relation between moral judgements and judgements about what is personally most fulfilling? They can be thought to present 1) two different sets of reasons for action which, when in conflict, allow for finding out what should be done all things considered, or 2) two incommensurable sets of such reasons which, when in conflict, at least in some cases leave no possibility of establishing what should be done all things considered. Position 1) includes two views: on one, the conflict is always to be resolved in favour of morality, while on the other such conflict may in

some cases be resolved in favour of what is personally fulfilling. Only the latter view is to the point. On this view, a moral rule that does not allow for exceptions can pull us in one direction, while a consideration of personal well-being pulls us in another, and such conflict can sometimes be decided in favour of breaking the rule for the sake of personal well-being. In such a case, breaking the moral rule is what, all things considered, one should do. Yet breaking it is not thereby rendered *morally* acceptable; it remains morally wrong. The problem with this account is that 'if, given the actions that are recommended by moral reasons, we are sometimes justified by personal reasons in not performing them and sometimes not, then we will always have the distinction between "morality" and "morality-when-it's-justified"; and the latter, not the former, is what [is] important' (p. 62). Morality as such no longer seems to count for very much. Position 2), on the other hand, sees moral and personal reasons as incommensurable and refuses, at least in some cases of conflict, to tell us what it is that we ought to do, all things considered. If we do what morality demands, we will sustain a personal loss; if we do what is personally fulfilling, we will pay a moral price; and neither of these losses is justified by the reasons enjoining the choice that brings it about. There is, then, no action that is justified, all things considered, but only an action that is morally justified and another that is justified from the personal point of view. The problem with this is that a 'personal justification', however satisfactory to the person offering it, is quite unlikely to impress those adversely affected by the action at issue. In truth, it is no justification at all.

The idea of a 'political justification' as 1) one that is different from moral justification and sometimes can override it, or as 2) one that is incommensurable with moral justification, is vulnerable to criticism along the same lines. The former strips morality of its importance (thereby also making the claim that politics can override it uninteresting). The latter, while likely to be appreciated by the agent and the beneficiaries of the action at issue, is bound to be rejected by those adversely affected by it, and is actually no justification at all.

However, the notion of an action that is justified all things considered, and still morally wrong, still something that makes remorse intelligible and indeed appropriate, may yet have some purchase. I may be facing a situation where what I ought to do, all things considered, is to go against a moral rule, through no fault of mine; or I may be responsible for having ended up in such a situation. In the first case, I can justify my action to those adversely affected by it, and the appropriate

attitude on my part is regret, but not remorse. I have not wronged them. In the second case, I can justify my action to them in the limited sense of showing how, given the predicament I was in, I did what, all things considered, I should have done. But since my predicament was my own fault, this is not the end of the story. I cannot justify to them my actions that led to the predicament in which I had to act as I did; when that is taken into account, it is clear that I have wronged them, and I should feel not only regret, but remorse as well. What I did was, after all, both something I should have done, all things considered, and also morally wrong. This is a general point about morality, but it may have special application in politics, if we accept the claim that a politician characteristically has to represent different group interests liable to come into conflict. If so, that explains why moral wrongdoing that ought to be committed, all things considered, is endemic to political life.

Can we hope for a professional ethics for politicians that would help reduce the moral hazards of their profession? Are they a profession? These questions are addressed by Andrew Alexandra (chapter 5). He points out that there are important differences between various kinds of political actors and the moral rules that apply to them, and focuses on those who hold political office in modern states. They are called 'professional politicians', and there are indeed sufficient similarities between them and members of recognized professions such as lawyers or doctors to justify the usage. Now a professional is not simply a person performing a certain social role; such a person also holds an office that regulates the performance of the role. There is an array of reasons why roles should become offices, and these reasons apply to politics as well. Politicians, too, could and indeed should have their own professional ethics. Its rules should regulate the activities of politicians: not merely their performing of the role that defines their profession, but doing so in ways prescribed by their office, which is part and parcel of the institutional structure of the modern state. Thus their activities must be in line with, rather than subversive of, this structure. That means there will be circumstances where a professional politician ought not to act in a way likely to directly advance the *goal* she is committed to as a politician, namely the good of her constituency, but rather stick to the *rules* defining her office. Alexandra cites an example of a 'dirty hands' scenario from Walzer's discussion: a person runs for office in order to implement some admirable goals, which include 'clean politics', but in order to be elected must strike a 'dirty' deal with a corrupt ward boss. According to Walzer, the candidate ought to make

the deal, since when she decided to run, she committed herself to doing whatever it takes to win 'within rational limits'. Alexandra wonders about these limits: 'Since willingness to make such a deal must be contrary to any sane system of role morality for professional politicians (it clearly could not be universalized, for example, or publicly professed), the deal cannot be justified by appeal to the demands of that morality' (p. 89).

The deal would be an immoral act and an instance of 'dirty hands'; it would also be a case of political corruption, at least on a broad understanding of such corruption. Political corruption is sometimes understood as the abuse of political office for private gain. On another conception, political corruption need not be motivated by private gain, but must be the abuse of political office. Seumas Miller (chapter 6) rejects both views. The former is probably accurate as far as most corruption going on in politics is concerned, but nevertheless too narrow; there are cases we would want to portray as corruption where the motive is not private gain, but what the agent holds to be the common good. The latter view is overly narrow too, as it rules out common citizens as agents of political corruption. Miller first offers a general account of corruption as a moral and causal concept. Corruption is always *prima facie* immoral. It takes place against the background of some uncorrupted state, which may be defined either by an ideal or by a (minimum) moral standard. It is always corruption *of* someone or something: it causes a change for the worse in someone's moral character or in an institutional process, role or purpose. Unlike corrosion, it is an act done intentionally, or at least knowingly or out of culpable ignorance. Moreover, persons who get corrupted have, to some degree, allowed themselves to be corrupted; they are participants in their own corruption.

Miller next turns to 'noble cause corruption'. We usually think of corruption as driven by some base motive, but Miller's analysis allows for corruption in a good cause. Even so, it is still corruption, and therefore normally immoral. But there may be instances of 'noble cause corruption' that are morally justified, all things considered. Faced with such a case, we might say that it is not one of corruption after all, or that it is one of those rare cases of corruption that are morally justified, all things considered. This analysis is then applied to politics. Miller rejects the tradition represented by thinkers such as Machiavelli, Weber and Walzer, and in this volume by de Wijze (chapter 1), according to which dirty hands are an inescapable, almost defining, feature of politics. But he advances a weaker claim that in politics (and elsewhere)

'dirty' methods in general, and 'noble cause corruption' as a particular type of such methods, may sometimes be morally justified. He recounts the pursuit and assassination of Pablo Escobar, the notorious Colombian 'drugs baron', which involved an array of undoubtedly corrupting actions, as a case in point.

When Machiavelli's views about politics and morality, discussed earlier, are projected onto international relations, we get the position known as 'realism' as it is commonly understood. Tony Coady challenges this understanding of realism (chapter 7). Both proponents and opponents tend to take realism to be opposed to any role for morality in international affairs, and fail to distinguish between morality and moralism. Realism need not be taken as calling for banishing all *morality* from international relations; it is better viewed as calling for international politics to be rid of *moralism*. Now 'moralism' is obviously a distortion of genuine morality; but beyond that, it is a wide and elusive notion. Coady seeks to clarify its meaning and scope by means of a typology. He looks into moralism of scope, which makes a moral issue of matters that have no moral significance; moralism of imposition, which insists that others defer to our moral judgement rather than being guided by their own; moralism of abstraction, which pronounces moral judgement at a level much too abstract and far removed from the contingencies of interest and power; absolutist moralism, which claims that some moral rules bind absolutely, whatever the circumstances and whatever the price for abiding by them; and finally, moralism of deluded power, which has an exaggerated trust in the power of moral criticism and moral stand. All these are misguided and indeed dangerous if allowed to inform international politics; accordingly, Coady shows considerable sympathy for the negative part of the realist case.

Yet realism remains flawed in two important respects. Having conflated moralism with morality, its adherents tend to reject some policies that are not moralistic at all. Moreover, the positive prong of realism proposes to substitute the pursuit of national interest for moral concerns. The mistake here is similar to that committed by proponents of ethical egoism, who advocate single-minded pursuit of individual self-interest in the belief that, if practised by all, it will lead to best results all round. But universal selfishness is not likely to have any such consequences unless it is complemented by wider moral concerns. The same is true with regard to the pursuit of national interest. Appeals to national interest are best seen as calling for prudence; but prudence, in Coady's view, is itself a moral virtue that makes little sense in isolation

from other such virtues. In the final analysis, 'the right replacement for moralism is not national self-interest, but a suitably nuanced and attentive international morality' (p. 129).

III

While the essays comprising Part I discuss the relation of morality and politics at a fairly general level, those in Part II address it by looking at a number of specific moral issues contemporary national and international politics give rise to.

One is patriotism. It is invariably conceived as morally significant and, more often than not, as morally valuable or even mandatory. But there is a minority view that rejects it, and does so for expressly moral reasons. James Gaffney (chapter 8) examines the moral standing of patriotism. The meaning of 'patriotism' has changed considerably over time, so there can be no single, sweeping judgement of its morality or immorality. Initially, it meant simply love of one's country and polity, a special concern for its well-being and a readiness to work and make sacrifices for it. In the eighteenth century, patriotism came to be understood as love of, and loyalty to, one's country and its people as distinguished from, and often opposed to, loyalty to its ruler. In the nineteenth century, with the rise of nation-states, patriotism got submerged in nationalism. The rhetoric of patriotism no longer assumed a contrast between two political camps within one's country, but rather between the interests of one's country and those of other countries. As critics such as Leo Tolstoy have pointed out, this type of patriotism readily evolves into collective egoism and a negative, even hostile attitude to countries and peoples not 'one's own', leading to international tension and conflict. It is with this type of patriotism, which has been with us for more than a century, that Gaffney is primarily concerned. He takes a critical look at Alasdair MacIntyre's lecture 'Is Patriotism a Virtue?' (1984), a philosophical statement of a robust version of patriotism, and Stephen Nathanson's subsequent defence of 'moderate patriotism', and finds both unacceptable. The former is too uncritical and bellicose; the latter is ultimately no better than 'moderate racism'. The revival of patriotism in the United States and elsewhere in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 must also be viewed with suspicion. More often than not, Gaffney writes, it involves 'attitudes of international distrust and undertakings of international violence sanctimoniously encouraged by government. They are taken up by many with a kind of blind faith, and by many more from a fear of the conse-

quences of affronting such blind faith. Most often they are, as Tolstoy said, "stupid and immoral"' (p. 150).

In a polity whose citizens are patriots in the original sense, that is, public-spirited, the problem of political participation would not arise. In many contemporary polities, however, public spirit is lacking, and political participation tends to be intermittent, superficial and generally poor, even at election time. This raises a serious moral issue when a democratic government introduces immoral policies. Aren't citizens, too, responsible for them? Don't they have a duty to do something about that: to protest, vote against and oust the government that implements those immoral policies on their behalf? On the other hand, each citizen can say that the outcome will be decided by what others do, that her single protest or vote will make no difference, and that therefore she need not bother to do anything. Janna Thompson takes on this problem – one of collective action, sometimes termed 'the problem of many hands' (chapter 9). The view that it is neither rational nor morally required to act since what one does will not make a difference, she argues, rests on a mistaken understanding of collective responsibility according to which one is responsible for an outcome only when what one does could make a difference to that outcome. She first discusses, and rejects, two attempts at solving the 'many hands' problem: the view that the responsibility of individuals for collective action is not determined by the contribution they make to its outcome, but rather by their *intention*, which overlaps with the like intention of others, to participate in a group action, and the view that responsibility arises from making a *commitment* to a joint action. The former line of argument cannot explain how those who fail to protest or vote have an intention to participate in a group action; the latter does not provide a convincing account of just how citizens become committed to the activities of their state, or why such a commitment requires voting in elections.

Thompson offers a two-step account of collective responsibility of democratic citizens for what their government does that also makes use of the idea of commitment, but at a more fundamental level. A democratic citizen can avail herself of procedures and institutions capable of changing immoral laws and policies. Assuming that she is concerned to promote justice and other moral causes, she has a good reason to make use of these procedures and institutions for that purpose. This still does not explain why she has a *duty* to use them. In Thompson's view, this duty obtains if the citizen has reason to believe that a considerable number of fellow citizens are committed to joining

her in making their democracy work. This belief comes from her encounters with other citizens in the public arena. Such a commitment can be shared not only with like-minded citizens but also with those whose political and moral views are otherwise different from one's own; it constitutes the moral and political foundations of well-functioning democracy

The problem of 'dirty hands' in politics, discussed at length in the first three chapters of Part I, is considered again, from a different angle, by Rob Sparrow (chapter 10). In its usual version, the problem arises *within* politics: it highlights seriously wrong actions that nevertheless ought to be performed for the sake of a paramount political end. According to Sparrow, the tension between morality and politics goes deeper. The very existence of the *realm of politics* requires that morality be routinely violated, because political community as such – its very identity and continued existence – is predicated on the denial of the moral claims of non-members. Politics is a practice within a political community; it concerns relations between its citizens. Morality is a set of obligations that we owe to any person by virtue of our shared humanity. One of these obligations is that of justifying our actions *to* the particular persons adversely affected by them. Morality is universal, while politics has to be partial. The existence of distinct political communities requires borders, which serve to exclude outsiders. There are five main lines of moral argument in favour of state borders: such borders and the exclusion they entail may be justified as a means to some important political goods, as a way of preserving some important cultural goods, in terms of freedom of association, as an inevitable consequence of the existence of distinct political communities, and as part and parcel of our political practices whose elimination is well-nigh impossible to envisage. Taken together, these arguments provide a strong case for the necessity of borders.

However, while state borders may well be politically necessary, they are morally arbitrary. Their location is a matter of historical contingency. More importantly, the distribution of persons across borders is morally arbitrary: which persons are members of which political community is not determined by any morally respectable principles, and the benefits of belonging to any such community are neither earned nor deserved in some other way. When we prevent people from crossing our borders, we can offer no justification to them – to each one of them separately – why we are on this side of the border while they are, and must remain, on the other. If they have compelling reasons for wanting to cross our border – for instance, if they are refugees – when

we exclude them, we default on our moral obligation to justify our decision to them. For 'the policy concerns which explain why it might be a bad thing to do to let them in are oblivious to the moral demands of *this* person' (p. 182). Yet, if we are to ensure the continued existence of our political community, we cannot admit all those who want to become its members. The price of political community, then, is the immoral exclusion of others. The 'barbarians' in Sparrow's title are not foreigners converging on our gates and clamouring to be let in. The word refers to *us*, who keep the gates shut, although we cannot offer a sound moral justification for doing so to those we condemn to remain outside. But we do not have a choice. For a political community to exist, we must act like barbarians at the gates. A problem of 'dirty hands' seems to lurk at the very foundations of politics.

The next three contributions address further topical issues arising in the intersection of politics and morality: lying and deception in politics, the use of torture, and military obedience. The current wide-spread disillusion with politics and cynicism about politicians is due to a large extent to what the public perceives as deception and out-right lying endemic in democratic politics, especially at election time. David Lovell undertakes a qualified defence of democratic politics, arguing that the notion of 'lying' used in this context needs to be deployed more carefully than sparring politicians and the media usually do (chapter 10). There is a range of speech acts covered by the popular use of the term 'lying'. The literal understanding of lying as deliberate deception is often conflated with other, complex phenom-ena of democratic politics, such as politicians changing their minds on issues, making (and then breaking) promises and keeping secrets. A particularly insidious form of lying in politics is ideological lying, where both reason and reality are ignored or submerged in order to maintain ideological tenets, and where self-deception precedes decep-tion of others. While these more complex types of lack of truthful-ness or consistency are indeed part and parcel of political discourse, Lovell claims, lying in the strict sense is rare, for the simple reason that it is usually easy to detect; if some recent examples can be readily cited, that is because they are exceptional. The popular dis-illusionment with politics may be due more to a simplistic view of the nature of political discourse and unrealistic expectations of politi-cians than to deliberate deception on their part. Lovell is also scepti-cal about the prospects of laying down rules concerning lying and deception in politics; political speech is highly contextual and does not lend itself to such regulation.

Recent examples of deliberate deception by politicians include those to do with the 'war on terror', waged in response to the terrorist attacks in the United States, United Kingdom and elsewhere since 2001. This 'war' gives rise to further difficult moral issues, as liberal democracies try to prosecute it while staying within the bounds of morality and legality. One of the most dramatic of these issues, that of torture, is used as an example of a 'dirty hands' scenario in several discussions in Part I; it is the subject of the contribution of John Kleinig (chapter 11). Kleinig gives an account of torture – of what it is and what is morally wrong with it – that highlights pain or suffering deliberately inflicted, but also its features that explain why we find torturing *humans* so repugnant: the person tortured is utterly defenseless, at the mercy of the torturer, who seeks to undermine the distinctively human capacities of the victim and reduce her to a mere object and who, in doing so, brutalizes both the victim and himself. Torture of humans is both inhumane and inhuman. Obviously, torture is morally wrong in itself, and to an extremely high degree. But is it wrong absolutely, *never* to be resorted to, whatever the circumstances and whatever the price of refusing to employ it? At this point we have to face the 'ticking bomb' argument, deployed by Walzer and others to show that extreme circumstances call for extreme measures (see above, p. xvi). Kleinig points out the high epistemic requirements the argument assumes; they are acknowledged by philosophers and legal thinkers debating the admissibility of torture, but tend to be disregarded by those actually deciding on its use. He rejects the 'dirty hands' position. In such cases we do better to acknowledge that morality can no longer tell us what we ought to do: 'to recognize that in some situations however we act we act badly. An official confronted with a ticking bomb will not be justified in using torture to reveal its location; but neither will that official be justified in jeopardizing a large population of innocents' (p. 219). The best such an official can do is to act in a way partly analogous to civil disobedience. If fully convinced that he is facing such a situation, he might authorize, or employ, torture, thus violating an extremely stringent moral prohibition and breaking the law, and be prepared to face the consequences. He should then defend his action in court, hoping that the court, and society at large, will recognize the dilemma he faced and understand the choice he had to make. All this has to do with torture as a 'one-off' matter, and presupposes that there is no *policy* that permits torture. At the level of policy, we should reject torture altogether, rather than try to minimize it by proffering a moral refuge for it.

Recourse to torture in the 'war on terror' indicates another array of problems in the relation between morality and politics: those arising in military ethics. The military is part and parcel of the state, and war is politics carried out by other means. When the use of torture in Abu Ghraib prison was publicized, it was seen as casting a shadow on the moral credentials of the US military in Iraq and on its moral and professional integrity in general. The same is true of a string of cases of soldiers' brutality towards, including deliberate killing of, Iraqi civilians. Some of the military personnel involved in the Abu Ghraib case claimed in court that they had merely done what they had been ordered to do; but since the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal, 'following orders' is no longer a defence to charges of grave breaches of the laws and customs of war. 'Crimes of obedience' are indeed crimes. Officers and soldiers are expected to adhere to the laws of war and to disobey orders that violate those laws. On the other hand, obedience has always been considered a central military virtue. This tension between the moral and legal restraints on war and the requirement of obedience in the military is explored by Jessica Wolfendale (chapter 13). The obvious way to overcome, or at least attenuate, this tension is to provide for reflective, rather than unthinking, blind, unlimited obedience – for obedience that is informed by the values and principles defining the morally acceptable ways of waging war, and that is accordingly critical and limited. Yet, as Wolfendale shows, military training methods currently in use (as opposed to the rhetoric about the military profession and its virtues and ideals) are quite unlikely to help develop such obedience. On the contrary, they make for blind obedience, desensitize soldiers to the moral hazards of what they do and ultimately undermine their moral agency. They facilitate, rather than help prevent, crimes of obedience. There is thus a fundamental inconsistency between the rhetoric of the military profession and the reality of military training, which casts doubts about the moral foundations of the military institution.

There are, to be sure, further topics to do with the morality – or immorality – of politics not discussed in this collection. Foreign aid, humanitarian armed intervention or the justification of political violence, and in particular of terrorism, are some of the issues that come to mind that had to be left out here for lack of space. Still, this volume as a whole offers a sustained and comprehensive exploration of the complex and troublesome relation between politics and morality. The contributions in Part I examine this relation at a general level, while those comprising Part II do so by addressing a number of concrete

moral issues arising in political action. None of the essays separately, nor the book as a whole, can be expected to settle any of these issues, let alone resolve, once and for all, the fundamental theoretical problem of whether, and how, moral values and principles apply in the realm of politics. But I trust the book will provide much food for thought for anyone engaging with these questions.

Notes

1 I. Kant, 'Toward Perpetual Peace', *Practical Philosophy*, ed. and trans. M. Gregor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 346–7.

2 Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, trans. N. M. Cheshire and M. J. Heath, ed. L. Jardine, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 94.

3 Plato, *The Republic*, 389b.

4 N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. P. Bondanella, trans. P. Bondanella and M. Musa, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 52.

5 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 60.

6 N. Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, ed. B. Crick, trans. L. J. Walker, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1998, p. 515.

7 In another famous passage, Machiavelli praises the citizens of Florence who were willing to jeopardize their immortal souls for the sake of their city. See *The Florentine History*, trans. N. H. Thomson, London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1906, vol. I, p. 175.

8 M. Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', *The Vocation Lectures*, ed. D. Owen and T. B. Strong, trans. R. Livingstone, Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004, p. 86.

9 Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', p. 92; emphasis deleted.

10 M. Walzer, 'Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 2 (1972/73), p. 160.

11 J. P. Sartre, *No Exit and Three Other Plays*, trans. Stuart Gilbert and Lionel Abel, New York: Vintage Books, 1955, pp. 223–4.

12 Walzer, 'Political Action', p. 164.

13 Walzer, 'Political Action', pp. 167–8.

14 Walzer, 'Political Action', p. 174.

15 See further the exchange between de Wijze and Nielsen that followed the publication of Nielsen's paper: S. de Wijze, 'The Real Issues Concerning Dirty Hands: A Response to Kai Nielsen', and K. Nielsen, 'There Is No Dilemma of Dirty Hands: Response to Stephen de Wijze', both in *South African Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 15 (1996). For a wide-ranging selection of views and arguments concerning the 'dirty hands' issue, see P. Rynard and D. P. Shugarman (eds.), *Cruelty and Deception: The Controversy over Dirty Hands in Politics*, Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2000.

16 Walzer, 'Political Action', p. 176.

17 Walzer, 'Political Actions', p. 177.