Introduction

When I began writing on the problems of political morality, in *Politics, Innocence and the Limits of Goodness*, my main interest was in how certain moral dispositions such as moral innocence might disqualify themselves from political engagement. The relation between morality and politics I saw not as a framework of principles providing a necessary constraint on politics, but as a case of moral character engaging with political demands often in circumstances of great urgency and strain. My view of those who might be described as unreflectively good, that is, those unaware of potential betrayal and hence the need for caution and prudence, was that they were capable only of a sort of hopeful trust, both in others and in the way things turn out. If moral innocents experience trust in this half-seen way I wanted to go on to ask about those who are not moral innocents how in fact they learn to exercise trust, particularly in situations where other people's intentions are often opaque. My attention turned, therefore, to the relation between trust and dirty hands. I wanted to see how it is possible for trust actually to be given to those who are likely to be called on to act badly for the sake of some political good when the chances are that those who are doing the trusting will be the victims of those actions. And to ask whether trusters base their trust in the moral character of officeholders, in rules intended to govern the behavior of officeholders qua officeholders or in the specific checks designed to control their conduct in advance.

Further, I felt that it would be wrong to examine trust in

political life in isolation from the experience of personal trust. It seems to me that one can acknowledge the conceptual differences between trust in public and private life and still address the possibility that there are important features common to both, and, indeed, I would maintain that an individual's experience of being personally betrayed and trying to recover trust is not totally remote from what it is for a community to lose and attempt to reclaim trust. This is why I have chosen to examine texts, Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*, in which the public and private worlds – specifically how trust is tested there by human goods, power relations and moral character – exist in a complex relation one with the other.

The more I thought about this problem the more I became convinced that a theory which construes individuals simply as units of uniform psychology, abstracted from ideas of moral character and from the circumstances of their lives, is not going to be sufficiently refined. By contrast, seeing the giving or withholding of trust as a feature of *narrative* in my view enables us to grasp its intelligibility and at the same time focus on those actual gaps and interstices in conduct which often create the risks of trust and go to the very heart of its moral point. Literature, of course, fulfills this narrative requirement very well – my hope is that my treatment of these literary examples furthers the philosophical discussion too.

My actual route is first to examine the general problems associated with public and private trust (Chapter 1), then in Chapter 2 to explore moral character, in particular the "best dispositions" as a possible basis for trust, leading to a consideration of the very different strategy of grounding trust in well-founded structures of rationality (Chapter 3). The shortcomings I find in these approaches lead me to try to formulate in the following chapters an alternative understanding of trust in public and private contexts. Here I analyze moral and political trust, its loss and recovery, as a feature of narrative. So I delineate the origin of trust in different contexts (Chap-

ter 4), its risks and rewards (Chapter 5), and its endings – in terms of forgiveness and forgetting (Chapter 6).

My intention is to develop three main points. First, I argue that it is a mistake to construe trust in political life as if it were simply correlative with something like discretion, merely the subjective view taken by individual citizens toward those who take decisions on their behalf. My line of thought is that the moral significance of trust is both wider and deeper than this would imply. That is to say, we do not simply trust political agents *not* to abuse their discretionary authority, but to *use* it prudently for the achievement of common ends. We do not just trust them not to put their own interests first, but to act positively, to exercise specific virtues of character to defend the way of life we value. With this emphasis on "positive trust" we see why it is necessary to place trust in political life alongside an understanding of the moral significance of trust and its risks in the face of transgression by the trusted.

Second, I interpret dirty hands problems as a species of dilemma. Here trust is clearly not free from risk, but my argument throughout is that this does not mean that trust is always to be seen as credulousness, a lazy faith in others which eliminates the need for thought or action. I argue that to see trust as a form of naïveté both in public and private worlds is to give unargued priority to the fear of being a dupe, is incompatible with any substantial sense of moral or political loyalty, merely assumes that the fault of misplaced trust is always to be laid at the truster's door and does not allow for the possibility that being trusted can sometimes make a difference to one's trustworthiness.

Finally, I concentrate on the uncertainties and frailties of trust, rejecting the view that the vulnerability to betrayal which is one of the risks of trust entails consequent withdrawal from the public realm if betrayal occurs. My point is that goodness requires such assaults if character is to be formed and if the virtue of courage in the face of disloyalty is to be developed. What controls the suspension of morality for the achievement of public and private goods certainly

places trust under great strain. Constraints may take the form of advantage, reward and benefit as well as threat; hands may be sullied by attempts to minimize the moral costs of blackmail, and also by the means necessary to reduce the fear of treachery and betrayal – a recognition that it may be necessary to lower one's sights is not always a surrender to full-scale pragmatism. Political action may be constrained as much by what has been entrusted to our friends as kept secret from our enemies. It is my view that the full intelligibility of trust – its positive strengths, its vulnerability – is best explored in narrative logic, against the background of the history of a life or a community. How trust displays itself, is tested, lost and sometimes recovered in moral and political contexts is my subject here. I begin with a discussion of the nature of public and private trust.

Chapter 1

Public and private trust

> Show me the man who rules his household well: I'll show you someone fit to rule the state.
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> Sophocles, *Antigone*

> Statecraft in modern states is not: what must one do in order to be a minister, but: what one must do in order to become a minister. More than that they do not understand, and consequently they use what knowledge they have as a sort of introductory science, in order to become ministers. In that way the state will inevitably break up, for in point of fact nobody rules or governs.
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> Søren Kierkegaard, *The Journals*

If we cannot trust rulers when they appear to act well, how can we trust them when we know they are acting badly? If we cannot trust them when their hands are clean, how can we trust them when their hands are dirty? In politics we want rulers to be trustworthy, but we treat them as if "every man ought to be supposed a knave, and to have no other end . . . than private interest."[1] We want rulers to possess the morality of doves, but we wish them to act as if they were serpents. We want them to act well toward ourselves but badly toward our enemies. We hope they are successful as long as the benefit is ours and we are not the victims of their success. They should be both lion and fox, honest and deceitful in turn for the protection and furtherance of our common purposes. We wish them to be "trusting but not credulous."[2] In political morality such ambivalences are endemic. What

kind of trust is possible in such a world? What notion of moral character would merit trust in circumstances of political complexity?

Moral character, trust, and political order often collide. Rule needs to be both effective and well intentioned: Neither impractical saints nor pragmatic gangsters provide a location for trust or a basis for political legitimacy. Trust may be a realistic policy in highly constrained circumstances or it may be dangerously ill-advised. A political order that aspires to public accountability must contain offices whose rights and duties are formally constituted and upheld. And yet in politics the roles of officeholders "are not fully scripted."[3] Trust in the context of discretionary powers "risks abuse of those and the successful disguise of such abuse."[4] There may be occasions on which legitimate political purposes can be achieved only by means otherwise regarded as morally undesirable. Here great strain is placed both on the formal conditions of officeholding and on the moral character of the officeholder. How does trust express itself in such circumstances? An attitude of comprehensive distrust toward those faced with morally difficult political choices may be sustained only through political inaction or hypocrisy. Equally, a policy of trusting in appearance may lead to disaster.

Machiavelli explores these intricate relationships in a notable passage in *The Discourses*, where he discusses the conduct of Piero Soderini after his appointment as Florentine head of state.[5] Soderini had been entrusted with the preservation of order and stability in the republic. Faced with the challenge of malevolent factionalism, he responded with patience and goodness. In trusting his enemies, he betrayed the trust of the citizens who looked to him for the maintenance of civil peace. In refusing ruthlessness and guile as instruments of policy in dealing with the faction, he failed to protect those who had no power to protect themselves. Character, trust, and necessity are all present in Machiavelli's reflections in this passage. Soderini displayed genuine virtue. He possessed virtues of character – patience and goodness. He had the political sense to recognize the need for prudence and action: Aware that the

enemies of the republic were not impressed by goodness, he tried to bargain with them. Additionally, he faced a constitutional problem. The anti-republicans could be eliminated only by his assuming an extraordinary authority, which might have so alarmed the citizens that they lost faith in an office of great value to the republic, even though Soderini had no wish to use its powers tyrannically in the future. Machiavelli describes Soderini's viewpoint as "wise and good,"[6] but considers that he was fatally weak in dealing with his political opponents. Soderini faced a dilemma that many less reflective rulers might not have seen, or been troubled by if they had, but from Machiavelli's perspective it is not intractable. For Machiavelli the survival of the republic is paramount: "An evil should never be allowed to continue out of respect for a good when that good may easily be overwhelmed by that evil."[7] Soderini should have ensured that ruthless actions were seen in the context of his public reputation as a good and trustworthy man. He should have made it known that his actions were performed for the good of the republic and not for reasons of personal ambition. Constitutional arrangements should have been so regulated that "none of his successors could do with evil intent what he had done with good intent."[8] However, Machiavelli neglects important aspects of the relation between moral character and politics. A Machiavellian politician construes political morality as *raison d'état* – it refers to the measures that are necessary for the preservation of the republic. Politics is a consequentialist activity in which the achievement of the desired end leaves little room for moral doubts about the choice of means. From this perspective it is difficult to identify the specific moral problems facing political agents in those severe circumstances in which extraordinary measures may have to be employed. Here the demands of office may be seen as legitimate claims on personal moral values or they may be a stain on moral integrity, their fulfillment an indication of the presence of dirty hands. Machiavelli identifies politics as a realm of appearance. Rulers should be foxes when necessary, but "seem to be exceptionally merciful, trustworthy, upright, humane and devout."[9] Of course, dissem-

blance requires both that there are those who are deceived and that there are those who are nothing other than what they seem. But Machiavelli goes much further than this: "Men are so naive, and so much dominated by immediate needs, that a skilful deceiver always finds plenty of people who will let themselves be deceived."[10] The "always" and "let themselves" in this passage are instructive. If things were so, it is difficult to see how trust would be anything other than foolhardy or that a cautious distrust would not be the only rational policy for the prudent, the scheming, and the enlightened. Duplicity, then, is connected with necessity, and both are essential features of political capacity. Those who wish to rule in a republic should "be capable of entering upon the path of wrongdoing when this becomes necessary."[11]

To stress the capacity to rule, as Machiavelli does, distances ruling from the Socratic understanding of it as a skill exercised for the good of the ruled. For Socrates, rule is an expression of wisdom and judgment in accordance with the idea of justice. By contrast, capacity implies an image of ruling as a mechanism for the production of specific effects. In the absence of any reference to the nature of human agency and character it is difficult to see how capacity could include such moral qualities as fortitude, determination, and resolution. In the Machiavellian view, rulers are trusted if they possess the capacity to act in accordance with political necessity. In the Socratic view, trust in rulers is justified because ruling is a craft conducted by reference to standards derived from the nature of moral knowledge. The notion of trusting rulers implies that we have some conception of the kind of agency involved in being both the truster and the trusted. Utilitarian and contractarian accounts of agency emphasize powers and capacities. They stress the ability required to maximize utility or to make rational agreements that will be of mutual benefit. However, to describe trusters solely in terms of the rational capacity to further a moderate self-interest is to attenuate our conception of substantive human character and hence to say nothing about the state of mind that bestows trust or the moral qualities that may inspire it.

The giving and receiving of trust in morally complex political circumstances are both crucial and problematic. From the Machiavellian viewpoint, trust seems mysterious and puzzling: In politics the trustworthy are precisely those we should not trust. But why must it be the case that those who trust are the foolhardy and the easily deceived? Is the moral value of trust so easily diminished? Socrates associates trust with just actions and policies, though his conception of ruling as a craft assumes an agreement on rules, standards, and personal attributes that may not be sustainable. We are all too familiar with the courageous defense of unjust causes, with intelligence used in the service of evil ends, and we have suffered the consequences of attempts to transform the world in the image of ideology. The Platonic association of reason, justice, and ruling might seem to provide a basis for trust in those who rule in accordance with their philosophic natures by reference to the form of justice and with the aim of sustaining the good of the whole community. Nevertheless, even here Plato allows for the telling of a noble lie by the guardians, albeit in the context of the ideal state and with the common good of the ruled in mind.[12] Plato may have thought of the lie as a kind of treatment, in which case those who are told a lie trust in much the same way as the ill trust their physicians to act in their best interests even when what is prescribed to them appears harmful. In the *Republic*, trust depends on the natures of the trusted and the trusting. And so it may be that Plato was not so much thinking of rulers as experts, but drawing our attention to what it means to act on behalf of others in a political community. In so doing he raises the possibility that one of the unavoidable features of politics is the need for concealment and secrecy, and he is pressing us to consider how trust may or may not survive such withholding.

In the political world outside Plato's *Republic*, however, it is the ignoble lie that rules. Here, lies may be told to further reputation, power, and interest. Awareness of such motives puts us on our guard when deception is defended as the only way of protecting or benefiting us. In these circumstances the ruled may be justifiably concerned that they are being

exploited as a convenient means to the achievement of ends that serve the interests of others. They may suspect that they are victims sacrificed for political convenience. The question of perspective is central to problems in political morality, and it has been neglected by Kantian or utilitarian attempts to ascertain an impartial standpoint from which agent choices may be scrutinized. But who bears the burden of hard choices? What moral difference arises if we take the standpoint of the victims rather than a neutral assessment of outcomes? In *Les mains sales* Sartre poses the dilemma of a revolutionary party committed to the abolition of exploitation and deceit, but faced with using lies in order to achieve it. In one respect, the choice is between the good and the effective. More important, it is not that the means to be employed are morally neutral – that any methods can be used as long as they are technically efficient in achieving ends. In Sartre's play the proposed means are subject to the conflicting *moral* perspectives of the political agents involved. It is their contrasting moral standpoints that provide the focus for our ethical attention, a point stressed by Michael Walzer as crucial in understanding decisions made in dirty hands cases:

> 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]

To whom should rule be entrusted when such decisions have to be made? A utilitarian conception of ruling requires that it evaluate rival considerations in the light of their consequences for the general welfare. A contractarian theory requires that ruling is in accordance with principles of justice pre-agreed by rational agents who are moderately self-interested. In both accounts substantive questions concern-