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Reflections on a Crisis: Political Disenchantment, Moral Desolation, and Political Integrity

In a recent essay for *The New Statesman*, Russel Brand expressed his disaffection with democratic politics and its practitioners: ‘Like most people I am utterly disenchanted by politics. Like most people, I regard politicians as frauds and liars’ (Brand, 2013). Brand’s declaration reflects a familiar current of modern thought and feeling, often characterised as a kind of ‘disenchantment’. The adage “‘that’s politics’”, Jack Colbert (2015, p. 468) writes, captures ‘the fatalism that surrounds popular perceptions of the contemporary political world’: ‘the commonly held belief that all politicians’ are ‘inherently compromised [and] dishonest’. Though seemingly extravagant, Colbert’s remark sits well with our political circumstances and the spirit of the burgeoning literature on political disenchantment: increasing levels of political distrust, an increase in political protests, the shift towards populist politics, marked by appeals to ‘the people’ and a rejection of ‘politics-as-usual’, are some of the commonly cited manifestations of our culture of political disaffection (Dalton, 2004; Jacoby, 2009; Dionne, 2005; Ranciere, 2006; Hay, 2007; Norris, 2011; Crouch, 2004; Boggs, 2000). The disagreements on the magnitude and symptoms of disenchantment aside, scholars, commentators and politicians of all stripes agree on this much: democratic politics is in extraordinary crisis and in need of renewal.

A good deal of energy has been expended to the task of lamenting the status of our politics and pondering over policy recommendations to tackle this perceived crisis. Yet, amid this raft of complaints and solutions lurks confusion; our apparent great familiarity with disenchantment hides bewilderment (Taylor, 1992; Stocker & Hay, 2015). This paper seeks to explore the unsystematically theorised question of what the precise nature of the crisis with which we are confronted involves, and, in so doing, to go some way toward untangling our confusion.

A lot has been written on the political crisis which the aforementioned manifestations of disenchantment entail – ‘democratic deficit’, ‘crisis of democracy’, ‘winter of democracy’, ‘death of democracy’, or ‘post-democracy’ are some of the frequently invoked phrases which serve as a short-hand for our *political* malaise (Crozier, et al., 1975; Norris, 1999; 2011; Crouch, 2004; Keane, 2009; Macedo, 2004). But my focus here is somewhat different: I am not primarily concerned with the crisis which *flows from* disenchantment, but rather with the alleged crisis which *fuels* disenchantment and our corresponding political malaise in the first place – the widespread conviction that democratic politics is afflicted with an exceptional moral crisis: that, moral goodness, virtue and integrity have been eroded by moral vice; that, the pursuit of the common good has been displaced by moral fragmentation and conflict.

Taking my cue from Machiavelli and of his value-pluralist heirs – specifically, Isaiah Berlin, Stuart Hampshire, Martin Hollis, and Bernard Williams –, I shall explore a possibility that is overlooked. I will argue that there is a distinction and discontinuity between a morally admirable and a virtuous political life. Failure to appreciate this possibility causes narrations of moral crisis to misconstrue the moral messiness of politics in ways that lead us to misunderstand how we should respond to political disenchantment¹. Specifically, I suggest that: i) our sense of crisis is, to a significant degree, misdirected: we think that we are confronted with an unprecedented moral crisis

¹ Such narrations are also rehearsed by politicians for *political* reasons. Though ineliminable from politics, it need not follow that the vision of political morality which underpins these narrations is satisfactory.

in politics partly because we have an unsatisfactorily idealistic understanding of political morality and integrity in the first place; and ii) it is a mistake to imagine that the moral purification of public life – the complete extirpation of moral vice and conflict from politics – is possible or desirable, as is often assumed. Put simply, our crisis is not moral *per se* but primarily *philosophical* in nature: it relates to the very concepts we employ – the qualities of character and context we presuppose whilst pondering over political morality and integrity.

I do not wish to suggest that, morally speaking, ‘anything goes’ in democratic politics – that, some of the scandals that hit the headlines are congenial to a virtuous politics – or, that we have no social and political problems at all. Nor do I wish to provide a comprehensive account of political morality. And, whilst I focus on the moral vices of betrayal and deception – the practice of which often prompts moral despair – I do not wish to argue that these are the *only* relevant vices in the democratic context, or, that politicians should *unconditionally* practice these. Rather, I wish to carve room for these vices in democratic politics by illustrating how these constitute inevitable by-products of our ordinary democratic rituals, and essential aspects of political integrity – the threads that hold together a virtuous political life. My discussion builds on a claim which I defended elsewhere; that, making sense of political morality entails approaching politics as a distinct way of life, with its own peculiar practices, demands, and standards of excellence (see Tillyris, 2015; 2016b; 2016c). Otherwise put, the standards of political excellence stem from *within* politics, not from an abstract moral standpoint; adequately capturing what is peculiar of political integrity requires us to take more seriously the context in which politicians operate, certain goods which are intrinsic to a virtuous political life, and the qualities of character necessary for securing these.

The discussion proceeds as follows. First, I offer a sketch of narrations of moral crisis. Second, I explore and unearth certain philosophical assumptions which fuel narrations of crisis and the vision of integrity to which these narrations converge – the conviction that political integrity should be akin to moral integrity. This vision, I then argue, displaces the moral messiness of politics: it unsatisfactorily idealises the context in which politicians operate and displaces the standards of political excellence. Politicians operate amidst a context characterized by dependence and conflict – a context ridden with a plurality of antagonistic traditions, each with its own distinct conception of the good. Satisfying the demands of politics thus requires the capacity to effectively manoeuvre amidst such a messy context and a readiness to practice the moral vices of deception and betrayal. In the fourth and final section, I consider the implications of my argument for efforts to address political disenchantment.

Political Disenchantment and Moral Crisis

The conviction that there is a moral crisis in politics constitutes an inseparable aspect of political disenchantment. The sense of disenchantment, Charles Taylor writes, is one of ‘loss and decline’: the moral impoverishment of democratic politics – its failure to satisfy our moral aspirations –, which prompts a quest for political withdrawal, or, at least, a rejection of ‘politics-as-usual’. Political disenchantment, Taylor (1991, p. 1) suggests, ‘largely derives from’ a moral malaise which afflicts modern politics.

Taylor is not alone in expressing this idea. In 2010, Bunting et al published a pamphlet titled *Citizen Ethics in a Time of Crisis*, which speaks directly to the sense of moral crisis:

In a poll for the World Economic Forum ... two thirds of people across ten G20 countries believed that the economic recession had been caused by a crisis of ethics ... The poll finding suggests that there is still a widespread public expectation that those in positions of ... power should demonstrate integrity ... This is what the crisis is really about ... 'This is wrong' has long ceased to have validity as a political statement ... Values [have] become a form of spin (Bunting, 2010, p. 5).

This is just a portion of the plethora of expositions of the idea that politics is afflicted with a moral crisis (Vernon, 2010; Pullman, 2010; Williams, 2010a; 2010b; 2010c; Maier, 1994; Sandel, 2009; 2010). Whilst I do not wish to offer all-encompassing typology of the ways in which this idea is articulated – or, present the ensuing discussion as such – I want to outline two intertwined ways in which this idea is expressed, each of which locates the source of our moral malaise within the domain of professional politics.

The first focuses on the character of politicians: it suggests that moral goodness, integrity and virtue have been displaced by moral vice; that our politicians are immoral and lack integrity *tout court* (Bunting, 2010; Williams, 2010b; 2010c; Pullman, 2010; Lent, 2010; Pinter, 2005). Peter Osborne's diagnosis in *The Rise of Political Lying* constitutes a good example of this way of thinking: 'British MPs and ministers used to be renowned through the world for their high standards of probity and integrity. [T]he general sense of redoubtable honesty that was such an enviable element of British government has generally vanished' (Osborne, 2005, p.262). Political disaffection, Osborne (2005, p. 264) suggests, is a by-product of 'a massive change in British political culture'; 'public anger, alienation and disgust' with politics follow from an unprecedented rise in 'cheating', and 'deceiving' – the moral 'debasement of decent democratic politics'. 'In recent years', he laments, 'mendacity and deception' have become 'an entrenched feature' of politics: 'Britain now lives in a post-truth environment': 'public statements' are 'constructed to serve a purpose, dismantled and the show moves on' (Osborne, 2005, p.137). What our politics needs, Osborne surmises, is 'a change of heart'. Given that 'in a properly functioning liberal democracy' there should be no room for deception and betrayal, we should 'reclaim' our 'magnificent tradition of public integrity': our politicians should 'act once more as moral human beings' (Osborne, 2005, pp. 119 -120; p.264). Hence Osborne's proposed remedy: morally sanitising democratic politics – 'lifting of the curse' of deception and betrayal, and replacing it with 'decency and hope' – will cure our political malaise: it will 'bring back voters to the polling booths' and 'restore democracy to vigorous health' (Osborne, 2005; p. 247).

Osborne's thesis is hardly uncommon. The 1997 British Election Study, for instance, revealed that 85% of respondents believed 'that the moral standards of British politicians have declined in recent years' (Heath et al., 1999). More generally, the perception that politicians lack integrity altogether is a constant theme of media coverage of politics and of numerous opinion polls (Walker & Jones, 2004; Lloyd, 2004; Hay & Stoker, 2009; Hay, 2007; Hatier, 2010; Audit of political engagement, 2012). Our 'moral outrage', Gerry Stoker writes, flows from our perception of politics as a domain inhabited by 'lying cheats' – individuals incapable of leading an integrated life (Stoker, 2015, p.119; see also Stoker, 2006a; 2006b; 2006c; Stoker & Hay, 2009; Hatier, 2010; Hay, 2007). Matthew Flinders goes as far as to suggest that an inextricable aspect of disenchantment is the 'demonization of politicians': our perception of politicians as agents who are 'stripped of all positive

characteristics’ – visible reminders to the rest of us of ‘what we should not [morally] be’ (Flinders, 2012b, p.1-2). These findings/remarks dovetail with surveys on what citizens deem good political conduct, which echo Osborne’s account of political morality. A recent MORI survey suggests that honesty is ‘consistently the most highly rated characteristic’ that citizens believe politicians should possess and display (Russell, 2005, p.15). Similarly, Allen and Birch (2011; 2012) suggest that, for most citizens, political integrity entails basic moral virtues: loyalty, honesty, truthfulness and keeping one’s word.

The conviction our politicians lack integrity *tout court* is not just (rightly) fuelled by what we may term, following Williams (1978, pp. 55 – 56), ‘morally dubious’ but politically ‘irrelevant’ cases of sleaze and corruption – cases involving politicians who take bribes, abuse power and public funds for personal gain, and attempt to conceal these activities from the public gaze. ‘Even in countries where politics is considered to be relatively incorrupt’, Stocker writes, politicians ‘often attract more derision than admiration’ (Stocker, 2006c, p. 183). The conviction that politicians lack integrity altogether often tends to be sparked and justified by appeal to practices which constitute integral aspects of democratic politics – the need to strike compromises with one’s opponents in order to advance *some* of one’s commitments, to accommodate diverse interests and build coalitions between different, conflicting concerns (Bellamy, 2010; Stocker & Hay, 2015). As gestured elsewhere, despite the anodyne claim that democratic politics is the art of compromise, we seem allergic to compromise in politics when it happens (Tillyris, 2016a). This much emerges from a breezy reading of some of the headlines of specific compromises – headlines which echo H.L Mencken’s remark that compromises render a politician ‘indistinguishable from a streetwalker’ and are unacceptable altogether (Butterfield, 1946, p. 4). Consider the media reception of the 2010 Liberal Democrat and Conservative Coalition, which required both parties to abandon some of their manifesto commitments to become partners in government. ‘Clegg’, The Guardian reports, ‘became tarnished by ... broken promises’ (Jack, 2012). ‘The coalition’, Wilby adds, ‘brought betrayals of manifesto commitments ... unprecedented in British politics’ (Wilby, 2012). Similar cries of despair, and the corresponding denunciation of compromise as immoral and uncongenial to political integrity *in toto*, were heard against the mismatch between Obama’s pre-election promises and presidential achievements (Flinders 2012a; Gutmann & Thompson, 2011). ‘It can’t be a small thing, a typical thing, a trivial thing’, Gerson (2012, p.1) notes, ‘to ask for belief and then betray it’.

The tendency to treat compromise as uncongenial to political integrity is, I explain, partly fuelled by the problematic conviction that there should exist continuity and harmony between a morally admirable and a virtuous political life. Yet, the aforementioned cries of despair capture two important insights which are insufficiently entertained by recent, more realistic, theorisations of disenchantment which seek to vindicate compromise *in toto*²

² Russell’s endeavour to ‘defend politics’ against the symptoms of disenchantment suggests that politicians should avoid making exaggerated promises to the public and earnestly communicate that politics involves ‘negotiation and compromise, difficult choices’ (Russell, 2005; p.4; pp. 56-57). Injunctions of this sort sit uneasily with the messiness of politics – the need for politicians to conceal the betrayals inherent in their compromises. Similar problems permeate Flinders’ insightful account. Whilst Flinders (2012a, pp.26-58) acknowledges that politics is a messy game which renders compromise and some degree of duplicity necessary, his account is accompanied by a version of the moralism I wish to question: for, Flinders worries about ‘how we might break out of the cycle of broken promises that ... frustrates the public’, how to ‘cultivate a more optimistic’, ‘balanced, account of what democratic politics delivers’, and suggests that ‘very few politicians tell lies’ (Flinders, 2012a, pp.17-58; Flinders,

(see Flinders, 2010; 2012; Russell, 2005). First, there exists a tangled but intimate relationship between what Chiara Lepora (2012) and Joseph Carens (1979) term the *interpersonal* aspect of compromise and the *intrapersonal* aspect of it, between compromise *qua* agreement – compromise *qua* process of ‘solving’ conflicts – and compromise *simpliciter* respectively, captured by the adage that “to compromise is to compromise oneself”: it is to betray one’s principles, to form a joint agency with, and bestow a degree of legitimacy to, a party which, from the agent’s point of view, espouses morally despicable and/or misguided principles (Fumurescu, 2013). This recognition captures a point which I explored elsewhere: unlike consensus-based agreements, compromises reveal the existence of deep, insurmountable disagreement and carry a moral remainder/loss (Tillyris, 2016a; see also Lepora, 2012; May, 2005). The pursuit of compromise entails that the parties involved espouse antagonistic, incompatible principles and values, or antagonistic and incompatible conceptions of these principles and values; that, a consensus-based agreement – agreement on substantive principles of morality and/or justice via which the parties can appeal to in order to perfectly, tidily *prima facie* conflict – is unreachable. The absence of agreement on the common good or on a common set of substantive principles entails that to reach agreement, the parties are required to modify their principles *in action* (as opposed to modifying such principles altogether, in light of an overarching conception of justice or the common good) and to thereby *sacrifice* something of value at the expense of something else³ (Tillyris, 2016a; Lepora, 2012; Bellamy et al, 2012; Arnsperger & Picavet, 2004). To reach agreement and realise some of their substantive principles, each party is required, for pragmatic reasons, to cooperate with and hear the other side – even, or *especially*, when the other side and its substantive values and aspirations appear to be erroneous and loathsome – and, to refrain from doing what they consider the *tout court* morally right thing to do – to promote policies, values or principles which are perceived to be immoral and settle for a course of action which contains elements of moral rightfulness and wrongfulness (Zanetti, 2011; Lepora, 2012). Secondly, politicians who compromise are not merely (morally) guilty for betraying some of their aspirations and values. Compromises entail the violation of pre-election pledges – some of which were the reasons why citizens voted for the politicians in question in the first place. In democratic politics, the relationship between compromise and betrayal has an additional property: the victim is the electorate. There exists, therefore, an

2010). Such analyses cannot thus grapple with the recognition that *because* compromise is ubiquitous in politics, so too are betrayal and deception.

³ My conception of compromise resembles what Bellamy (2012) and Carens (1979) term ‘shallow’ or ‘pragmatic’ compromise respectively, and has affinities with Shklar’s (1989) and Williams’s (2002) ‘liberalism of fear’, and Horton’s (2010) and Gray’s (2001) *modus vivendi*. It differs from the more morally demanding notions of ‘deep compromise’ (Bellamy, 2012), ‘honourable compromise’ (van Parijs, 2012), and ‘integrative compromise’ (Carens, 1979): *principled* agreements deriving from equal respect and mutual modification of principles, *not* merely from pragmatic calculation. This type of compromise, Bellamy writes, is ‘closer to what Rawls terms overlapping consensus’ as it is the product of ‘mutual changes in the parties’ reasoning’, and entails some sort of ‘moral correction so that [the parties] can agree on an overlapping *substantive* moral core’ (Bellamy, 2012, pp. 453 – 455; my emphasise). Indeed, my suggestion that pluralism entails that agreement on a set of substantive principles and values is implausible, that conflict is ineliminable, casts doubt on the plausibility of this type of compromise (see Hampshire, 1993b; Tillyris, 2016a). This is somewhat conceded by Carens who writes that politics is characterised by ‘deep conflict’ – that, ‘if one considers the goals of one’s antagonist to be illegitimate then distributive compromise seems more plausible’ (Carens, 1979, p. 129) – and is glimpsed in Horton’s critique of moralism: ‘to demand that people should positively respect the views of others’, ‘remould their conceptions of the good to be ‘inclusive’, rather than ‘exclusive’ is to ignore the realities of politics; liberal democracies are characterized by pluralism and conflict, and ‘generate attitudes of ... contempt and mutual hostility’ (Horton, 2011, p. 299; 292). The implausibility of agreement on shared substantive principles via which the parties can perfectly resolve conflicts without remainder, entails that compromise is intertwined betrayal (Tillyris, 2016a; Lepora, 2012).

intricate relationship between compromise, betrayal, and deception; a ‘compromising disposition’ is, as I argue, integral to democratic politics, but is hardly unambiguous or morally clean.

The recognition that compromise, unlike consensus, reveals the existence of deep *interpersonal disagreement*, unearths the second way in which the idea that ours is an era of moral crisis is expressed. This way of thinking about our malaise also takes issue with our politicians’ moral lapses – the compromises which typify ‘politics-as-usual’, and the acts of betrayal and deception which compromises engender – but traces these to a wider moral decay in politics: our crisis stems from our public culture and structures of our political systems which are thought to be ‘unfit for purpose’, ‘broken’ and ‘fragmented’ (Sleat, 2013). Despite, or, perhaps, because of popular support for democracy *qua* ideal (Stocker, 2006a; Stocker & Hay, 2015), some of the institutions which comprise the fabric of democratic societies have attracted considerable opprobrium. ‘Unions, civil service, big businesses, even the democratic multi-party system itself’, Sleat writes, ‘are regularly blamed for hindering or preventing politics from delivering’ (Sleat, 2013, p. 133). Specifically, the ‘inherently adversarial’ nature of ‘the party system’ is thought to disable ‘politicians to work together towards the common good’; it ‘leads to the sort of compromises, concessions, bargaining, and negotiations’ and ‘leaves politics unable to provide the sort of radical policies that are needed’ (Sleat, 2013, p. 133).

These lamentations for the moral vacuity of politics echo Alasdair MacIntyre’s despair in *After Virtue* of our inability to realise the common good – an inability traced to the recognition that our era is marked by moral fragmentation: the absence of a coherent, common moral language (see Bunting, 2010; Glover, 2010; Gerhardt, 2010; Sandel, 2010; Williams, 2010a). Michael Sandel’s diagnosis and proposed treatment in *The Reith Lectures*, epitomises this line of thinking: ‘the restless impatience with politics as it is’ calls for ‘moral renewal’ – to think afresh about ‘the common good’ and ‘foster deeper moral ... values in our public life’. For ‘the better politics we need is a kind of politics oriented towards the pursuit of the common good’ (Sandel, 2009).

The tendency to trace our malaise to the erosion of our common moral language – specifically, the rise of pluralism, and conflict – is echoed by leading public administration scholars. The source of our crisis, Kenneth Meier suggests, is simple: the ‘electoral branches of government have failed as deliberative institutions’; they have failed to ‘resolve conflict in a reasoned manner ... with informed public policy’ (Meier, 1997, p.196). Richard Nathan laments the rise of ‘hyper-pluralism’, which, he argues, should be toned down, if politicians are to achieve ‘policy closure’ and ‘policy cohesion’ (Nathan, 1995, p.41, p.215). Similarly, Peter Hutchinson and David Osborne urge politicians to reject ‘compromise policies’; politicians they opine, should ‘move beyond’ the outworn ideological antagonisms that cripple politics, resolve conflict once-and-for-all, and seek ‘radical change rooted in common sense’, in a shared moral vision (Hutchinson & Osborne, 2004, p.334; see also Osborne & Gaebler, 1993). On this account, partisanship and/or the quest for power hinder the pursuit of the common good. Consensus on substantive values, interests, and aspirations which would enable politicians to deliberate, move beyond and resolve their *apparent* disagreements in a principled, coherent and tidy manner, has been supplanted by mere compromises: untidy and conceptually incoherent agreements – agreements which are the product of

mere bartering, and which contain a melange of jointly inconsistent, not wholeheartedly endorsed principles⁴. Achieving radical change and implementing policies tailored towards the common good, requires politicians to exercise common sense and rediscover a common moral language. Or, so it is thought.

To recap, I have sketched two manifestations of the idea that our politics is ridden with an extraordinary moral crisis: i) that, moral goodness, integrity, and virtue have been eroded by vice; and ii) that our common moral language and quest for the common good have been displaced by moral fragmentation and conflict. Versions of such narrations are not just expressed by scholars and citizens, but also by politicians. This much emerges from recent, related work on populism⁵ (see Mudde, 2004; Stocker, 2006a). Note, however, that whilst populism shares with narrations of crisis certain assumptions which, I argue, are insensitive to the realities of politics, it need not follow that populism as such should be discarded as apolitical *in toto* (*pace* Stocker, 2006a; and Flinders, 2012a). For, there exists a distinction between *populism-as-a-stance* or rhetorical device – a façade of idealism displayed for *political* reasons – and *populism-as-a-disposition* – the sincere commitment and quest to assert that idealistic vision come what may. I say more on this later. For now, I wish to highlight that the aforementioned diagnoses and proposed remedies form integral aspects of populist rhetoric: populist politicians ‘feed on the failings of democratic politics’: ‘unlike all the rest’, they ‘claim to call it as it is’ and rail ‘against the compromises ... of modern politics’; they suggest that our political landscape is sharply divided into two antagonistic, homogenous groups: ‘the pure people versus the corrupt elite’ (Mudde, 2004, p. 562; Stocker, 2006a, pp. 132 – 140). Populist discourse expresses ‘moral indignation’ about politics-as-usual (Stocker, 2006a, p. 137) and, like narrations of crisis, bears a ‘revivalist flavour’ (Canovan, 1999, p. 6); it promises to cure our moral malaise by radically reforming democratic politics: by premising our politics on moral goodness and virtue – specifically, an uncontaminated honesty – and, an uncompromising quest to realise the common good – the ‘consciousness of the people, generally referred to as *commonsense*’ (Mudde, 2004, pp. 541 – 563; Stocker, 2006a, p. 140).

Both narrations of crisis are sparked by a hopeful account of integrity, which is sustained by an alluring belief in the possibility and normality of harmony. Yet, neither that account of integrity, nor the vision of harmony which underpins it, are sensitive to the messiness of politics: they misconstrue the grubby context in which politicians operate, the standards of political excellence and what is distinctive of political integrity. Or, so I argue.

Moral Crisis, Harmony and Integrity

In *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, Berlin suggests that most utopian thought against which Machiavelli railed, rehearses a propitious, yet vulgar story:

Once upon a time there was a perfect state, then some enormous disaster took place ... the pristine unity is shivered, and the rest of human history is a continuous attempt to piece together these

⁴ Compromise does not entail that something valuable is forfeited. Whilst the agreement is grudgingly accepted, ‘the disagreements among the parties are embodied in the compromise itself’; its partial components are not acceptable to all parties (Gutmann & Thompson, 2012, p.12).

⁵ This need not suggest that there exist no differences between different theorisations of populism, or that populism can be captured by a single, substantive definition (Canovan, 1981).

fragments in order to restore serenity, so that the perfect state may be realized once again (Berlin, 1990, p. 23).

This story permeates a large strand of philosophical thought from its early beginnings (Berlin, 1990, p. 21 – 23; 46). Whilst different versions of this story differ with one another in terms of their specific content, they all follow a surgical pattern: at t_0 there exists a harmonious state; at t_1 , this harmony is temporarily shattered; and, at t_2 , unity is or can be re-established. What sustains this pattern, Berlin suggests, is a romantic vision of perfection under the aegis of harmony – a vision of what is thought to be normal and possible – at the core of which lies a seductive philosophical assumption: value-monism. Monism, postulates that ‘all truly good things ... cannot be incompatible’; ‘that the realization of the pattern formed by them is the one true end of all rational activity, both public and private’ (Berlin, 1969, p. x). It entails ‘the notion of the perfect whole, the ultimate solution, in which all good things coexist’ (Berlin, 1990, p. 13). Monism, Hampshire adds, presupposes that there should exist ‘a common basis’, ‘a single reason behind’, ‘an ultimate harmony among’ all ‘moral claims’ (Hampshire, 1983, p. 118).

It is this triadic structure and a brand of monism which fuel narrations of crisis. Such narrations, recall, suggest that moral goodness, virtue and integrity, and/or the pursuit of the common good have been eroded by moral vice and fragmentation ($t_0 - t_1$). Yet, that our politics has appealed to nefarious characters does not entail that it is impossible to sanitise political life *per se*. Nor need our current state of moral incoherence entail that the realisation of the common good is impossible. Responding to our moral malaise and revitalising democratic politics is intertwined with the task of rehabilitating political morality, of recovering something that has been lost: the notion of moral goodness, virtue and integrity as an integral aspect of political morality, and/or a shared moral language – a coherent conception of the common good or certain society-wide substantive moral values, principles and aspirations, upon which politicians, if they exercise common sense, can ascend (t_2). Hence the specific brand of monism permeating narrations of crisis: any sort of conflict at *the level of the individual* – between a morally admirable and a virtuous political life – and/or *the level of the polis* – the antagonisms which compromise the fabric of our political landscape – are, at worst, pathologies of rational thought or, at least, deviations from, what in theory constitutes, the normal, desirable, and perfect state of affairs. At best, such conflicts are mere ‘jigsaw puzzles’: mathematical problems which admit a tidy solution – a solution without remainder (Berlin, 1990, p.6).

Narrations of crisis thus converge to a monistic account of integrity. Integrity, on this account, is ‘a block of marble’ (Hampshire, 1993a); political integrity is akin to moral integrity or, what Hollis (1982) terms, the integrity, moral consistency, and innocence of the saint. Put differently, there exists an affinity between political integrity and an uncompromising, populist disposition; political integrity constitutes an unflinching expression of certain moral virtues – an unconditional loyalty to one’s principles, commitments, and public proclamations; an unswerving honesty and trustworthiness – and/or of a quest to realise the common good – certain society-wide substantive values, aspirations, and interests. From the perspective of moral integrity – the belief in the possibility and normality of harmony in individual morality (between a morally admirable and a virtuous political life), and in the *polis* (between political agents united by common sense under the aegis of agreement on the good and/or certain substantive principles and values) – the ‘mere’ compromises characterising ‘politics-as-usual’ – the

conflicts which engender these, and the acts of betrayal and deception which accompany these – amount to no integrity at all and should be discarded as immoral *tout court*; they are testament to politicians' wickedness, irrationality and confusion.

I do not deny that deception, and betrayal are moral vices, or that they pose no serious issues to democratic politics. Nor, as gestured, is it the case that compromises, especially in the democratic context, are unambiguous. Such an acknowledgement unearths some of the reasons why the monistic vision is often articulated by politicians *in public*; the quest for political success – the struggle to ascend to and remain in power – requires politicians to adopt an uncompromising, populist stance: to portray themselves as morally innocent, pure, virtuous and consistent; to present us with a vision of moral renewal which is allegedly reflective of the common good; to accuse their competitors for betrayal and deception and for not having the peoples' interests at heart. But, in the great game of politics, an uncompromising, populist *stance* need not (and should not) entail an uncompromising, populist *disposition*. The *appearance* of 'all honesty', 'all faith', and [moral] integrity', Machiavelli writes, might be politically necessary but is insufficient an indication of their *existence* (Machiavelli, 1998, p. 70). It rather exposes and is intended to veil their absence. It does not follow that these moral virtues should be unconditionally practiced in politics, that they are political virtues and definitive of political integrity. The monistic vision which fuels narrations of crisis, I contend, is unwarranted: political integrity is not akin to the integrity of the saint. For:

Many have imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or known to exist in truth; for it is so far from how one lives to how one should live that he who lets go of what is done for what should be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation ... It is necessary to a prince ... to learn to be able not to be good, and to use this and not use it according to necessity (Machiavelli, 1998, p. 61).

Machiavelli's emphasis on the realities of expedience and of their unforgiving nature, uncovers an irreconcilable rift between a morally admirable and a virtuous political life – each with its own distinct standards of excellence and conceptions of integrity which are radically opposed and which cannot be harmonised in theory or in practice. To paraphrase Berlin's (1980) words: one can either save one's soul and lead a life of moral integrity and innocence, or virtuously engage in politics, but not both at once. Politicians should subscribe to distinct standards of excellence – standards of excellence which are at odds with those of a morally admirable, innocent way of life. Practicing the virtues of faithfulness, loyalty, and truthfulness come-what-may, categorically upholding one's principles, values and commitments, might be conducive to a morally admirable way of life and moral integrity but come at the cost of political powerlessness and impotence. The qualities of a virtuous politician are prudential; if one innocently indulges oneself with one's purity and moral integrity whilst leading a political life, one had better stay away from politics. Innocence, purity, and consistency might be morally admirable but are not political virtues. They are vices. A prerequisite of virtuous political life, Hampshire writes, is the disposition of experience – the *complete* antithesis to innocence and *sine qua non* of political virtue: 'a person of experience' takes the demands of politics seriously and is cognizant 'that his usual choice will be the lesser of two or more evils'. For, politics entails irresolvable conflicts and is inescapably intertwined with 'squalor and imperfection', 'necessary disappointments and mixed results, of half success and half failure' (Hampshire, 1989, p. 170). These are neither

hapless, nor exceptional, uncommon episodes. They are essential aspects of political life and integrity. Political integrity thus resembles the integrity of a ‘burglar who is ready to change direction when he runs up against an obstacle in the dark’ (Hampshire, 1989, p. 163); it involves the fox-like ability to ‘keep dancing’ amid conflict – to satisfy certain demands and goods which are distinctive of politics by dealing adroitly with situations in which ‘it is impossible to remove one inconvenience without another emerging’ (Machiavelli, 1985, p. 121). And this, Machiavelli (1998; 1985) and heirs emphasize, entails the capacity to preserve a moral facade, by pretending to be innocent, unconditionally truthful and loyal to one’s principles and to others, whilst practicing the moral vices of deception, betrayal, and disloyalty when occasion demands.

Political integrity might thus appear ‘shallower’, more ‘difficult to recognise or admire’ (Philp, 2007, p. 3) –, especially to those who conflate a morally admirable and a virtuous political life –, but is not vacuous or deplorable altogether. And, whilst it is intertwined with moral vice, fragmentation and moral inconsistency, this is not to say that political integrity is entwined with inconstancy *in toto*. This point is glimpsed by Berlin:

To be a physician is to be a professional, ready to burn, to cauterise, to amputate; if that is what the disease requires, then to stop half-way because of personal qualms, or some rule unrelated to your art and its technique, is a sign of muddle and weakness and will always give you the worst of both worlds (Berlin, 1980, p.59).

Political integrity entails firmness of commitment to the distinctive demands of politics and the goods which politics shelters and secures. It resembles what Andy Sabl terms ‘democratic constancy’: ‘affection for the polity’, ‘the effective pursuit of interest’, and ‘perseverance’ amid conflict and contestation – a domain ridden with a plurality of antagonistic, incompatible principles and interests (Sabl, 2002, p. 9, p. 57, p.95; p. 299).

Making sense of political morality and political integrity, then, requires us to conceive of politics as a distinct way of life with its own standards of excellence and demands. Approaching political morality, Philp writes, ‘requires an understanding of political rule that identifies the standards that are intrinsic and internal to it’: ‘politics and political conduct’ should ‘be understood largely, although not entirely on its own terms’ (2007, p.2; p.4). An adequate account of political integrity, then, must draw on the resources and realities of politics itself, not ‘by imagining republics or principalities that have never been seen’. Whereas for monists political integrity is defined by appeal to an extra-terrestrial, abstract moral standpoint, for Machiavelli and his heirs, political integrity is defined from *within* politics and the messy context in which political practitioners operate – a ‘battlefield in which there are conflicts between and within groups’ (Berlin, 1980, p.43; Machiavelli, 1998; 1996; Hollis, 1982; Hampshire, 2000; Mansfield, 1996; Philp, 2007; Sabl, 2002). The rift at the level of the individual – between a morally admirable and a virtuous political life; between the dictates of conscience and political responsibility – is, in part, couched on the recognition that conflict is also manifested externally, at the level of the *polis* – that, we should not expect agreement on the common good or a consensus on substantive principles of morality and/or justice. Politicians operate in an arena ridden with conflict and amid intricate webs of dependencies which condition what is possible even under the most ideal of circumstances and which mould the standards of political excellence and the nature of political integrity. It is this recognition, I argue, which renders compromise, betrayal,

and deception necessary. To elide political integrity with moral integrity, then, would be to commit a cardinal philosophical sin: it would be, to use Williams's (2002, p. 2) words, to 'make the moral prior to the political': it would be to misrepresent politics *qua* domain and way of life and the peculiar nature of political integrity.

Leading a (Political) Life amidst Conflict and Dependence: Betrayal, Deception, and Political Integrity

My claim, *pace* narrations of crisis, that betrayal and deception are ineliminable features of democratic politics and of political integrity, is premised on my suggestion that making sense of political morality requires us to conceive of politics as a distinct way of life, with its own demands and standards of excellence. Politics, especially in its democratic form, involves a struggle to secure some degree of order and security⁶, to ascend to power, to transform power into authority, to achieve certain more substantive values, commitments, and policy outcomes which stem from one's tradition or party, without reproducing a 'war of all against all', and to preserve tenure against competition and public opinion (Williams, 1978, 2002; Berlin, 1990; Hampshire, 1989; 2000; Philp, 2007). Excelling in democratic politics requires politicians to 'compete for the limited good of elected office', to have 'considerable capacities to win allies', 'to make good bargains', and 'to reveal or to conceal [their] aims depending on the necessities of the political game' (Kis, 2008, p. 28). Making sense of political morality and integrity, I gestured, also entails taking the grubby domain in which politicians operate more seriously – a domain ridden with competing traditions, each with its own conflicting substantive aspirations and values, each with its own distinct, radically different conception of the good.

The very notion of 'the political', Williams notes, 'is to an important degree focused in the idea of political disagreement' and 'political difference is of the essence of politics' (Williams, 2002, pp. 77 – 78). To suggest that the monistic belief in societal harmony under the aegis of agreement on the common good or a consensus on substantive values and aspirations is insensitive to political reality, is not just to say that that belief is practically difficult to achieve but conceptually plausible (*pace* Gutmann and Thompson, 2012; Philp, 2007; Valentini, 2012; Hamlin and Stemplowska, 2012). What is at stake here is not merely a question of practical 'feasibility', but rather a question of what should be seen as plausible and normal *even* in theory, *even* under the most ideal of circumstances. The 'concept of a common good', Berlin notes (1990, p. 43), 'rests on a cardinal mistake': to proceed by endorsing the possibility of social harmony is to depart from 'a world [that is] beyond our ken' (Berlin, 1990, p. 13). 'We must', Berlin emphasizes, 'fall back on the ordinary resources of empirical observation and ordinary human knowledge'. And, 'these certainly give us no warrant for supposing' that 'a harmony of true values is somewhere to be found' (Berlin, 1969, pp. 168 – 169). 'When uncorrupted by [moralist] theory', Hampshire adds, we identify 'a multiplicity of moral claims which ... conflict with each another'; we identify that 'different men and different social groups recognize rather different moral necessities in the same essential areas of moral concern' (Hampshire, 1978, p. 42; 1983, p. 94). Our world scatters numerous differences and conflicts before us 'which cannot plausibly be represented as contributing to a common good': different and competing traditions, different and competing ideals and interests, different and competing conceptions of these ideals and interests, passionately pursued and defended (Hampshire, 1989; pp. 72 – 73).

⁶ This need not entail that order and security are unconditional goods. Securing these 'negative goods', however, is a condition for pursuing other positive goods and substantive values (see Berlin, 1990; Williams, 2002; Hampshire, 1989; 2000).

The trouble with the vision of societal harmony which fuels narrations of crisis and which sustains the monistic conception of integrity, is that it rests on a problematic picture of the faculty of reason, or of common sense. The idea here is that common sense has a convergent property: it enables those who possess and can exercise that capacity to converge towards and reach agreement on the common good or on certain substantive moral principles and values. Yet, Hampshire notes (1983; 1993b; 2000), there is nowhere evidence that common sense or the exercise of reason tends naturally to converge in the way narrations of crisis presuppose. History reveals that exactly the opposite is the case: ‘all determination is negation’. Historically, groups have defined themselves – their substantive conception of the good and justice – in oppositional terms: not merely with reference to *who they are* and *what they espouse* but also with reference to *who they are not* and *what they reject*:

Some forms of fundamentalism ... define themselves as a principled rejection of secular, liberal and permissive moralities ... The essence of liberal morality is the rejection of any final and exclusive authority, natural and supernatural, and of the accompanying compulsion and censorship ... freedom itself is felt and is cherished, as a negative notion: no walls of dogma, no unquestionable rules from priests and politicians ... The liberal’s adversary is disgusted ... by this negativity... the looseness of undirected living. The ensuing conflict is dark and bitter (Hampshire, 2000, pp. 34 – 35).

Similarly, a liberal may ‘rightfully criticize the distribution of wealth and of income in America or Britain today as grossly and substantially unjust’. This ‘is done in the light of a particular conception of distributive justice, which is part of a whole moral outlook and a particular conception of the good’. But ‘we will expect opposition from conservatives who have another conception of justice that ... is part of their own conception of good, stressing property rights and the autonomy of individuals’ (Hampshire, 2000, p. 160). Inasmuch as political practitioners are aligned with conflicting traditions, have different life stories, experiences, memories, and imaginations, we should not expect common sense to lead democratic politicians (or citizens) to agree on a common, substantive conception of the good or on certain neat, tidy comprehensive principles, interests and aspirations. Conflict – within and between communities – constitutes the ‘normal’ condition of mankind and cannot be expected to cease neither theory nor in practice (Hampshire, 2000, p. 33; 36; 1983, p.1; Berlin, 1980, pp. 74 -75)

Herein arises the impetus to betrayal and deception. Leading a virtuous political life in this grubby context by relying on one’s ‘good arms’ is impossible; ‘good friends’ are also necessary: ‘finding yourself uncovered and without friends’, entails that you shall be ‘ruined’ (Machiavelli, 1996, I, 41, p. 90). One is unsuited for political life if one is armed with the innocent belief that one is self-sufficient, or that conflict and competition for power are not constitutive and in-eliminable features of it. ‘Political prudence’, Hampshire remarks, ‘expects a perpetual contest between hostile conceptions of justice’ (Hampshire, 1991, p. 1). By implication, political prudence also entails a capacity to realize what is politically viable, to adroitly exploit conflict and the dependencies in which one is entangled by building and sustaining useful political relationships with a plethora of others – by building and sustaining trust via the difficult rituals of persuasion and rhetoric, as opposed to transparent, brute coercion (Kane & Patapan, 2012). Given that societal harmony is inconceivable – that, democratic societies are bound to

comprise of a plurality of antagonistic, irreconcilable traditions and moral languages – support can only be cultivated by appealing to a plurality of audiences, whose interests, aspirations, and conceptions of the good conflict and are irreconcilable with each other *and* with those of the politician. A democratic politician, Hollis writes, should:

Keep a kind of faith with several groups, who lay conflicting claims of loyalty upon [them] ... [A] local councillor ... must answer doctrinally to party workers in the language of the manifesto, must care pragmatically for the interests of constituents with words of common sense ... must manoeuvre humanely among pressure groups, each with its own single criterion of progress ... Each claim is legitimate; each sets a standard for what is best, which he will not meet. Confronted with a plurality of aims and of values and of languages he can only plead that the best is the enemy of the good (Hollis, 1982, p. 396).

Politicians operate in a domain where the competing, incompatible claims and aspirations of different traditions and groups render the paying of lip-service to certain high-minded values, aspirations and principles, and the feigning of innocence and moral integrity, difficult to avoid. The impetus to betrayal and deception emerges from the recognition that our ordinary, seemingly mundane, democratic politics involves enduring, irresolvable conflicts and difficult choices. Given that the claims, aspirations, and interests of the various groups and traditions which comprise the fabric of liberal democratic cultures are plural, conflicting, and irresolvable without remainder or loss – that, a consensus on substantive principles and aspirations is implausible –, any attempt to accommodate these claims, aspirations, and interests is bound to result in a messy compromise – the abandonment of some of those claims. Securing even the basic goods of politics, then, requires democratic politicians to cultivate trust by maintaining a moral front: to put on a theatrical act in order to persuade others on whom they are dependent of their uncompromising credentials and innocence – of their *ex ante* impossible loyalty, trustworthiness, and consistency.

Consider the rhetorical dexterity of Tony Blair. No less a moralist than Osborne writes that Blair's success was, to a considerable extent, the product of his 'chameleon quality': his ability 'to give opposing groups the impression that he is on both of their sides' via the use 'of camouflage', and 'sleight of hand' (Osborne, 2005, p. 102). For instance, at a 2003 TUC dinner, Blair 'created the impression' that he intended 'to attack the Labour left and the unions': he asserted that 'opposition to public service reform would be "as big a mistake as when the 1970s Labour Government rejected council house sales"', labelled the possibility of a left-wing alternative to the Blair government 'the abiding delusion of 100 years of our party', and declared that the "'far left'" should be 'defeated'. None of these was mentioned, though, when Blair delivered his speech privately to trade union leaders: 'there was no reference to either council house sales', to 'an "abiding delusion"', or 'the "far left"' (Osborne, 2005, p. 104).

The recognition that politics takes place amidst conflict and dependence, however, casts the necessity of betrayal and deception farther. For, politicians are required to excel in and satisfy the demands of two distinct practices –

the rituals of campaigning and ‘building a base’, and the rituals of governing and policy-making –, each of which lays distinct, incompatible moral claims upon them⁷. This is glimpsed by Mario Cuomo:

You campaign in poetry. But when we’re elected, we’re forced to govern in prose. And when we govern – as distinguished from when we campaign – we come to understand the difference between speech and statute. It’s here that noble aspirations, neat promises, and slogans of a campaign get bent out of recognition or even break as you try to nail them down to ... reality (Quindlen, 1994)

Excelling in campaigning and governing requires politicians to secure the cooperation of two distinct groups on which they are dependent – their rivals and the demos –, each which pulls them into radically different directions.

Dependence on one’s Rivals: Governing and Betrayal

Political prudence and experience, I gestured, entails a capacity to realize what is possible under the circumstances, to satisfy certain distinctively political goods by exploiting conflict and the dependencies in which one is enmeshed. That often requires building useful political relationships with one’s opponents – individuals who are not affiliated with one’s tradition or party and who espouse radically different, antagonistic substantive principles, values and aspirations. Given that political antagonisms are ineliminable, such cooperation is neither forthcoming nor possible, unless each side is willing to trim and betray some of its principles, values, and commitments (Bellamy et al, 2010; Hampshire, 2000). Herein emerges what I termed elsewhere the paradox of compromise: commitment to a set of principles entails commitment to seeing them realized, but in politics it also entails betraying some of them (Tillyris, 2016a). To repeat, an uncompromising, populist *disposition*, though morally admirable and conducive to moral integrity is not a political virtue or definitive of political integrity. ‘A successful politician’, Hampshire emphasises, ‘is always rather loose in his think, flexible, not bound by principles or by or by theories, not bound even by his own intentions’ (Hampshire, 1989, p. 163).

Put simply, an unyielding, populist disposition, is apolitical: those who cannot abide compromise, and betrayal, who concede nothing to those who espouse opposing substantive principles, values and conceptions of the good, are characterized by a dogmatic rigidity which is unsuited for politics – they shut their eyes to ‘the moral nuances of political life’, ‘without ... abolishing them’ (Hollis, 1982, p.390). At best, a peremptory refusal to compromise with one’s rivals on legislation or policy formation signifies lack of commitment to get the public business done, and constitutes an abdication of the responsibility of governing; for, it entails betraying one’s principles, commitments, and values *altogether*, abandoning any hope of changing the *status quo*⁸ and of realizing *some* of one’s principles and values. At worst, an uncompromising disposition – the unswerving commitment to one’s conscience and substantive moral principles and aspirations come-what-may – might prove to be ‘a recipe for bloodshed’ (Berlin, 1990; p. 19). It might manifest itself into a violent, Robespierian will to impose one’s

⁷ This idea is glimpsed by Guttman and Thompson (2012; 2010) who argue that whilst governing and policy-making render compromises necessary, campaigning prohibits it.

⁸ An uncompromising disposition might also jeopardise additional political goods: rising to power (Author, 2016; McLean, 2012).

principles though the heavens fall – an endeavour ‘to distort or bend reality into conformity with our [own] wills’, to reduce the chaotic plurality of conceptions of the good and of human experiences into ‘neat uniforms demanded by dogmatically believed-in schemes’ (Berlin, 1990, p.19), into a ‘Procrustean bed of some rigid dogma’ (Berlin, 1999, p.77). The quest for salvation and purity might be thus purchased at a terrible price – ‘by creating a hell on earth to save us all’; it might imperil stability, security and order, goods which politics should shelter (Bellamy, 2010, p. 417; 427).

Dependence on the Demos: Campaigning and Deception

Whilst securing ‘even some of the moral ends of politics’, to use Williams’s words (1978, p. 62), is often impossible without compromise, these very ends might be jeopardized if politicians are not careful with the way they publicly present their compromises. Because politicians are also dependent on the demos, and because compromises carry a moral remainder, rising to power and remaining in it becomes difficult without glossing one’s compromises; without diverting the public’s attention away from the remainder inherent in them – the betrayals which these engender. For, candidates are less successful in galvanising support if they candidly acknowledge that their pledges and commitments will not materialize *tout court*. Despite our vigorous preoccupation with truth-tellers, it seems difficult for us to be inspired by, or place our trust in, a politician who talks about prudent compromises and who is transparent about her betrayals (Gutmann & Thompson, 2012; Hay & Stocker, 2015). *Pace* Russell, we may want politicians to be honest about what can be achieved and which commitments they plan to compromise at the negotiation table, but, as Hollis reminds us, ‘if we know’, the politician ‘has failed’; ‘our agent’s [political] duty is to conceal’ her vices ‘from us’ (Hollis, 1982, p. 396). Since democratic politics entails on-going power struggles and politicians’ public statements are used in that context, publicly disclosing their moral vices might be misused against them. No politician who wants to rise to power or remain in office can allow herself to earnestly talk about her moral vices without giving due attention to the strategic aspect of her statements: whilst a good politician should occasionally practice the vices, Machiavelli emphasises, he should also ‘know how to avoid incurring infamy of those vices that would take his state from him’ (Machiavelli, 1998, p.62).

As president, George Bush learned this lesson the hard way from his autumn 1990 compromise with congressional Democrats which violated his ‘read my lips, no new taxes’ pledge (Bush, 2011, pp. 5 - 15). Bush’s pledge served a politically legitimate strategic imperative: mobilize the base. It was a factor in Bush’s victory, differentiating him from his Democratic rival. Once elected however, Bush could make no headway with a Democrat-controlled Congress. Whilst Bush opted for the ‘lesser-evil’ – rather than let the budget expand further, he agreed to raise several taxes – he ‘got caught in the act’: he failed to deflect voters’ attention from his compromises. Bush’s innocence enabled his rivals to portray him as purely unprincipled – as someone who lacks integrity – and contributed to his demise (Boudreaux & Lee, 1997). Political experience and integrity do not *just* thus entail dirty hands, but also the capacity to ‘wear clean gloves’ (Bellamy, 2010, p.416). Support cannot be cultivated or sustained without hortatory, populist *rhetoric*: rising to power and preserving tenure depends on a public reaffirmation of a consistent commitment to certain principles, and aspirations, combined with a private acknowledgement of their hollowness.

Put more broadly, excelling in the practice of political campaigning requires democratic politicians to galvanise and unite the preponderance of citizens under the aegis of a vision of collective hope and to persuade the majority of the nation that they can be entrusted with its enactment and realisation. Yet, in democratic societies, – societies ridden with acute, intractable, and insurmountable conflicts and disagreements, – any vision of collective hope is bound to be frivolous and implausible, both in theory and in practice; for, since a uniform, harmonious majority based on a consensus on certain substantive values, interests, and aspirations is inconceivable, one might well expect that the fulfilment of one's hopes and aspirations might well entail the disappointment and defeat of the deeply-held hopes and aspirations of one's fellow citizens (Tillyris, 2016b). Deception and betrayal are thus inescapable: political campaigning, the rituals of amassing support and base-building, require politicians to adopt a populist stance and employ populist discourse: to publicly endorse and proclaim their unflinching allegiance to a fictitious vision of the common good – a vision which presupposes shared values, aspirations, and interests – the realisation of which would, even under the most ideal of circumstances, be fractional, insalubrious and compromised.

Conclusion

The prevalent diagnosis that our politics is afflicted with an extraordinary moral crisis is, to a considerable extent, mistaken: we think that we are confronted with a moral crisis because we espouse an idealistic account of political morality. So too, is the widespread proposed remedy: it is a mistake to imagine that the moral purification of public life – the complete extirpation of moral vice and conflict from politics – is possible or desirable. The conviction that, moral goodness, virtue and integrity have been eroded by vice or, that the pursuit of the common good has been displaced by fragmentation and conflict rests on an unsatisfactory monism – an idealisation of political integrity. Political integrity, I suggested following Machiavelli and his value-pluralist heirs, resembles a 'swarm of bees', 'not a block of marble' (Hampshire, 1993). Political integrity is the 'integrity of the trimmer' and is incompatible with moral integrity – the innocence, and moral consistency of the saint (Hollis, 1982, p. 397). It is intertwined with the capacity to manoeuvre amidst conflict and dependence – to live with and exploit contradictions, unresolvable conflicts, at the level of the individual *and* the *polis* – and involves the recognition that in politics one's choices are often the lesser of two evils; that, deception, betrayal, uneasy conciliations between conflicting, incompatible moral claims are inevitable.

Narrations of crisis thus misconstrue the moral messiness of politics in ways that lead us to misunderstand how we should respond to the phenomenon of disenchantment. Our crisis is not moral *per se*, but primarily philosophical – it relates to certain assumptions which pervade and distort our thinking: the qualities of character and context we presuppose whilst pondering over political morality and integrity. What follows from this is that we should recalibrate our moral expectations of politics and our politicians. For:

Neither in a social order, nor in the experience of an individual, is a state of conflict ... a deviation from the normal state of a city or of a nation, and it is not a deviation from the normal course of a person's experience. To follow through the ethical implications of these

propositions about the normality of conflict ... a kind of moral conversion is needed, a new way of looking at the virtues (Hampshire, 2000, pp. 33 – 34).

The point is not that we must *lower* our expectations as is often thought (see Russell, 2005; Flinders, 2009). For, as I suggested, it is not the case that harmony at the level of the individual – between a morally admirable and virtuous political life – or the *polis* – between different political agents – is practically difficult to achieve but, in theory, plausible or normal. Rather, our failure to recognise that conflict, compromise, betrayal, and deception are normal, ineliminable aspects of political integrity and democratic politics, entails that *our whole system of expectations* rests on a misunderstanding of the way in which politics relates to our moral purposes.

Yet, whilst such recalibration is necessary if we are to tether the feelings of despair and outrage often associated with disenchantment, there is a tragic possibility here: if the value-pluralist point that harmony is implausible – that a society in which ‘all its members live in peace, love one another, are free from want’ and ‘frustration’ is inconceivable (Berlin, 1990, p. 20); that we define ourselves by what we reject; that we are bound recognize ‘different moral necessities in the same essential areas of moral concern’ (Hampshire, 1978, p. 42) – then, we should not expect disenchantment to completely wither away, regardless of how realistic about politics we might become. The cultivation of hope and its ineluctable disappointment might well be essential aspects of democratic politics.

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