

**Integrity, personal and political**

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## **Preface**

Integrity, ironically, leads a divided life. The concept is almost omnipresent in everyday moral discourse. Yet it does not have anything like the same impact within professional moral philosophy, where appeals to moral integrity are often seen as lacking adequate foundations. Elsewhere within the ivory tower, among those who study various aspects of politics, invocations of moral integrity are similarly met with suspicion, though for different reasons. Scholars of politics worry less about integrity's philosophical foundations, and more about its supposed irrelevance to messy, real-world public life, with the numerous moral compromises it inevitably forces upon those who seek or hold power.

This book tackles both sets of concerns. I argue that moral integrity can be given solid analytical foundations, but also that, properly understood, integrity is highly relevant to individual as well as collective choices in real-world politics. This dual ambition means that different chapters will likely be of interest to different sorts of readers, depending on whether their interests are more applied or "purely" philosophical.

The first two chapters of the book, devoted to extensive normative foundations, should be of most interest to readers who study the more theoretical reaches of moral and political philosophy. "Realist" political theorists and scholars of international relations may be especially interested in chapter 3, where I try (among other things) to show integrity's relevance to foreign policy and national security issues. Alongside realists, chapter 4, offering a detailed discussion of "media demagogues" and the multiple threats they pose to the value of integrity, will be most useful for scholars of political communication. Chapter 5, applying integrity ideas to the awarding and withdrawal of political honors, should be of use not only to political theorists, but also to the various disciplines – from English and art through law to social and intellectual history – that have reflected on these honors. Notwithstanding their different

starting points, I also hope, of course, that at least some readers will benefit from seeing how the book's theoretical and practical contributions stand together.

I should also say something here about the parallel, driving the book, between individual and collective integrity, and its relationship to previous essays. Much of the book is devoted to showing why the sovereign people in a liberal democracy, understood as a collective agent, can have its own morally important collective integrity. This is an idea that I have already presented in other work, including *The people's duty* (Cambridge University Press, 2019). However, my focus in that book was on combining claims regarding the people's integrity with other collectivist claims (regarding the people's property). And so I could not do full justice to integrity's import and complexity.

This book aims to do better, by offering a treatment of integrity that is broader – touching new policy areas – but that is also deeper, in at least two ways. First, in this work I give much more systematic attention to skeptics who think that invocations of moral integrity are entirely parasitic upon morality's overall verdicts: countering such skeptics is the core challenge of the book's opening part. Second, my work up to this point has said fairly little about the analytical relationship between the people's integrity and the integrity of ordinary citizens, and even less about how the people's collective integrity relates to the integrity of individual politicians. I try to fix these gaps here. In turn, these significant additions lead me to believe that the book will be of use even to readers who might be familiar with some of the collective integrity ideas discussed in chapter 2 (such as the idea of the “global integrity test”).

Even with these additions, however, I believe that much more can and should be said about integrity in public life, not least with regard to professional integrity. In future work, I hope, for instance, to examine how ideas regarding journalists' professional integrity might inform our thinking about the mass media's critical role in preserving liberal democracy. I

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could not discuss such topics here. But I will be satisfied if this work will convince readers that topics of this sort are both practically and philosophically worthwhile.

## **Introduction: “Living in the truth”**

“Václav Havel has become the symbol of our modern Czech state.” (President Václav Klaus, 2011<sup>1</sup>)

Two questions, corresponding to two morally fraught situations, provide a useful entry point into the themes of this book. The first situation was described by Czech dissident, and later President, Václav Havel, in his celebrated 1978 essay *The Power of the Powerless*.<sup>2</sup> In this essay, Havel depicts an anonymous grocer in Czechoslovakia behind the Iron Curtain. Like everyone else around him, the grocer’s daily conduct meets the expectations of the dictatorship to which he is subject. This means that Havel’s grocer leads a false life: he routinely displays outward conformity with a regime in which he does not believe. The grocer obediently participates in trade union meetings as the regime expects; he takes part in multiple regime-sponsored competitions; he participates in elections widely known to be a charade. The grocer, moreover, pronounces his loyalty to the regime in a distinctly public manner, by placing at his shop window the familiar slogan ‘Workers of the world, unite!’ Havel rhetorically asks, “why does he do it?” and answers:

I think it can safely be assumed that the overwhelming majority of shopkeepers never think about the slogans they put in their windows, nor do they use them to express their real opinions... The slogan is really a sign, and as such it contains a subliminal but very definite message. Verbally, it might be expressed this way: “I, the greengrocer XY, live here and I know what I must do. I behave in the manner expected of me. I can be depended upon and am beyond reproach. I am obedient and therefore I have the right to be left in peace.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Statement by the President of the Czech Republic Reflecting on the Death of Former Czech President Václav Havel,” December 18, 2011. Quoted in Michael Zantovsky, *Vaclav Havel: a life* (Grove Press: New York, 2014), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Václav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless,” in Havel and Paul Wilson, *Open letters: selected prose 1965-1990* (New York: Random House, 1991). Also available at <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/1979/01/the-power-of-the-powerless.pdf> - all page references are to this online source.

<sup>3</sup> Havel, *The Power of the Powerless*, 6.

At a later point in the essay, however, Havel asks his readers to envision a day in which “something in our greengrocer snaps and he stops putting up the slogans merely to ingratiate himself:”

He stops voting in elections he knows are a farce. He begins to say what he really thinks at political meetings. And he even finds the strength in himself to express solidarity with those whom his conscience commands him to support. In this revolt the greengrocer steps out of living within the lie. He rejects the ritual and breaks the rules of the game. He discovers once more his suppressed identity and dignity. He gives his freedom a concrete significance. His revolt is an attempt to live within the truth.<sup>1</sup>

Now, at least in some parts of the essay, Havel clearly maintains the hope that if a sufficient number of individuals similarly attempt to “live within the truth,” their courage will be contagious, encouraging others to follow their lead, and ultimately generating seismic political change.<sup>2</sup> But it is not hard to imagine circumstances where a dissident living under a dictatorship is deprived of hope of any such positive consequences. Thus for example, it may be that others have clearly succumbed to the regime’s propaganda. Or it may be that the regime presents extremely compelling evidence showing that one is virtually alone in dissenting – a predicament that Havel himself experienced during his first prison spell.<sup>3</sup> Considering such a dire situation from the moral point of view, it is far from obvious that one’s familiar moral duties towards others point in any way towards dissent.<sup>4</sup> But then, how are we to explain the

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<sup>1</sup> Havel, *The Power of the Powerless*, 18.

<sup>2</sup> At least one influential social scientist has argued that it was precisely such a snowball effect which led to the remarkably quick collapse of Eastern European dictatorships. See Timur Kuran, “Now out of never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989,” *World Politics* 44 (1991): 7-48.

<sup>3</sup> That he let himself be convinced by the regime’s evidence was a source of long-lasting torment for Havel, even though his resulting promises to the dictatorship, to refrain from future dissidence in exchange for an early release from prison, were widely agreed to have caused no harm to other people. As one of Havel’s biographers put it: “Of all the people who found Havel’s failure to defend his integrity when face to face with his interrogators inexplicable, he was the most unforgiving...it was a matter of his own inner identity...whereas it would seem absurd to feel any pangs of conscience over misleading his enemies, and whereas he could feel safe in the knowledge that his conduct was understood and accepted by his friends, he was still unable to make it acceptable to his innermost self.” Zantovsky, *Havel*, 187, 191.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, if one is, for example, a parent to young children, and these children will predictably be harmed in some way by the regime in case one opposes the regime, then it may seem as if one’s other-regarding duties (at least when considered as a whole) point quite firmly *against* dissent.

moral unease generated by the thought of our would-be-dissident remaining entangled with the regime?

Bearing this question in mind, consider the second morally fraught situation. This situation pertains not to any particular Czech individual, but rather to the policy that the Czech people, as a collective agent acting through its government, is currently pursuing with regard to foreign dictatorships in general, and the Chinese dictatorship in particular. The most recent Czech governments have pursued “normal” diplomatic and commercial ties with the Chinese regime.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, this pursuit has added to the dictatorship’s international standing, and has further enhanced its material power-base. On the other hand, given the nature of international politics, any China-related commercial opportunities that the Czech ignore are bound to be taken up by less scrupulous nations, who are unlikely to even try to use any influence they may acquire over the Chinese regime to push it to reform its repressive ways.

All this suggests that our observation about the individual Czech grocer also seems to apply to the foreign policy of the Czech people as a collective agent. Here too, it is not clear that our compunction about this agent’s entanglement in (foreign) dictatorship can be grounded in any simple consequentialist arithmetic. Nor, for that matter, can this compunction be grounded in a familiar appeal to the rights of the dictatorship’s victims. After all, there is no obvious reason to think that any victims of the Chinese dictatorship would prefer that the Czech avoid cooperating with the dictatorship.<sup>2</sup> So it is not implausible to think that, given the opportunity, the dictatorship’s victims would actually consent to – and thus waive any rights they may have against - Czech involvement with the Chinese dictatorship, however repressive

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian and Emily Tamkin, “Prague Opened the Door to Chinese Influence. Now It May Need to Change Course,” *Foreign Policy*, March 16, 2018, at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/16/prague-to-czech-chinese-influence-cefc-energy-communist-party/>

<sup>2</sup> Just as there is no obvious reason to think that the victims of other dictatorships would prefer outsiders to take distance from the regime oppressing them, if such distance would only lead the regime to respond by “digging in its heels.” For the latest example, see, e.g., Ben Hubbard, “Saudi Arabia Escalates Feud With Canada Over Rights Criticism,” *New York Times*, August 8, 2018.

this dictatorship may be at present. Therefore, in the collective as in the individual case, we should at the very least entertain the possibility, that other-regarding moral considerations cannot ground our instinctive compunction regarding entanglement in political repression. And so here too the question naturally arises: how can this compunction be explained?

The first key aim of this book is to defend a specific answer, which applies both to the sovereign people in a liberal democracy, as a collective agent, and to individual agents.<sup>1</sup> According to this answer, an agent's *own moral integrity* can provide an *independent* moral reason to engage in (and refrain from) certain actions and practices. This moral reason is defeasible. But it is genuine. In particular, this self-regarding moral reason is not simply reducible to what the agent owes to others. This is true, for example, in the case of our individual Czech grocer: this grocer has an integrity-based moral reason to disentangle himself from the dictatorship he loathes, which is not simply reducible to his moral duties towards anyone else. But the same is also true for the Czech people as a collective agent: this people's own moral integrity gives it an independent moral reason not to be entangled (for instance) in the wrongs perpetrated by the Chinese dictatorship – a reason that is *not* simply reducible to the moral reasons that pertain to the rights and interests of this dictatorship's victims.

This parallel is surprising, insofar as we do not commonly think of “the people” or “the polity”<sup>2</sup> as a candidate for having its own moral integrity.<sup>3</sup> I argue, however, that we can and

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the book, I take liberalism and democracy to revolve around a shared egalitarian core (as I go on to elaborate). I therefore allow myself (for example) to use “liberal societies” and “democratic societies” interchangeably. Like many other theorists, I consider it a key task of contemporary political philosophy, to show how liberal and democratic values can be reconciled despite apparent conflicts (See, e.g., Ronald Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000]; Joshua Cohen, “A More Democratic Liberalism,” *Michigan Law Review* 92 [1994]: 1503–1546; Jürgen Habermas, “Constitutional Democracy: A Paradoxical Union of Contradictory Principles?” *Political Theory* 29 [2001]: 766–781. One of the ambitions underlying my account of collective integrity is to contribute to this task.

<sup>2</sup> I will use these two terms interchangeably, though I am aware that this involves a certain awkwardness.

<sup>3</sup> Even if some theorists have argued that “systems of governance” can have their own integrity. See for example Matthew Kramer's *Capital punishment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) and *Liberalism with excellence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), which place far less weight than I do on the idea of the sovereign people in a liberal democracy as a collective agent. Kramer (as an absolute deontologist) is also far more suspicious than I will be here of attempts to forge common ground with consequentialists regarding integrity. Other philosophical and practical differences between our views will become clear as I proceed.



should think about a liberal polity, at least, in this way. More specifically – to anticipate some of my main contentions – I argue that we should view a liberal polity as an agent with its own fundamental moral commitments, revolving around certain collective institutions. These institutional commitments parallel the fundamental moral commitments that we hope to find in the case of individual persons. And these institutional commitments, I contend, can form the core of a morally important collective integrity, in much the same way that an individual's fundamental moral commitments can form the core of a morally important personal integrity.

Now, prior to philosophical reflection, one might very well expect it to be the case that “the people's” moral integrity, if it can be given content at all, would turn out to be (at best) a fairly pale version of individual integrity. In the pages that follow, however, I seek to prove otherwise. My second key aim in the book is to show that, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, the moral force of integrity considerations is actually *easier to defend* when reflecting on a liberal people as a collective agent, in comparison to individual agents.

The book's ultimate ambition builds on both of the aims I just outlined. Relying on the idea that a liberal people as a collective agent can have its own morally important integrity, my ultimate goal is to illuminate multiple aspects of the complex relationship between this collective integrity, and the integrity of individual persons. In chapters 1 and 2, as well as in the early stages of chapter 3, I advance this goal by examining the relationship between a liberal polity's collective integrity and the integrity of ordinary individuals. In the latter part of chapter 3, as well as in chapters 4 and 5, I focus on the intricate relationship between a liberal polity's collective integrity and the integrity of individual political actors. More generally, throughout the book, I seek to show that integrity inquiries yield both broad philosophical dividends, and important practical judgements, concerning individual as well as collective conduct.

The remainder of this introduction sketches the book's core claims in a bit more detail. I start with the basic concept of moral integrity, and with the defense of its moral significance

that I will offer in the first two chapters, both of which are devoted to philosophical foundations. I then briefly summarize the content of chapters 3, 4, and 5, which move from foundations to concrete political problems. Following this summary, I distinguish between two different contributions that integrity ideas can make to our moral thinking, both of which run throughout the book. Finally, I further motivate the book's structure, by explaining why it gives such sustained attention to critics of "integrity talk."

### **"My moral truth," "our moral truth," and *the* moral truth**

If a person has lived a blameless life 'according to his lights'...the question always arises – were his lights good enough, or could they have been better? (Stuart Hampshire<sup>1</sup>)

[Even] the notion that one might sacrifice one's moral integrity justifiably...is an incoherent notion. For if one were justified in making such a sacrifice...then one would not be sacrificing one's moral integrity by adopting that course: one would be preserving it. (Thomas Nagel<sup>2</sup>)

"Despite the terrible press which he has had, it is not obvious to me that *integrity* required him to protect a just man at the cost of a riot. Integrity does not offer a separate lever. The question is what it was right for the Roman Governor of Judaea to do and, once that question is answered, integrity simply demands that the Governor go ahead and do it." (Martin Hollis on Pontius Pilate<sup>3</sup>)

On my usage, an agent's 'integrity' consists in fidelity to those commitments which are central to the agent's self-conception.<sup>4</sup> My interest in this book is specifically in *moral* integrity, which I take to consist in fidelity to those *moral* commitments that are central to the agent's self-conception (or, as I shall also call them, "fundamental" commitments). An agent whose actions and most fundamental moral commitments conflict is bound (especially in those cases where the conflict extends over time) to experience a kind of *self-betrayal*. This, I assume, is the experience that lies at the heart of our grocer's predicament, for example. A key part of my

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Hampshire, *Morality and conflict* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 159.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Nagel, "War and Massacre," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1 (1972): 123-144, at 132-133.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Hollis, "Dirty Hands," *British Journal of Political Science* 12 (1982): 385-398, at 394. Italics in the original.

<sup>4</sup> This conception of integrity has traditionally played a key role in the philosophical literature on the concept – a role that continues in recent scholarship. See, e.g., Greg Scherkoske, "Whither integrity I: Recent faces of integrity," *Philosophy Compass* 8 (2013): 28–39.

effort here will be to defend the thought that such self-betrayal - when connected to certain moral principles - has its own moral significance.

Now, why is such a defense necessary? Why isn't the significance of moral integrity simply self-evident? Multiple reasons can be offered, but the most important reasons are usefully captured in the above-quoted concerns. Moral integrity - being true to one's deepest moral convictions - may seem like a noble aspiration on first blush, but, as Hampshire suggests, it becomes far less noble in cases where one's deepest moral convictions happen to be deeply flawed. A person who truly believes in the morality of Stalinism, for example, including the most extreme elements of Stalinist repression, may very well experience self-betrayal akin to that of the grocer if forced – for instance, by social or economic pressures – to pretend that he is delighted to live in a society that firmly distances itself from Stalin's legacy. Should we therefore say that this person's predicament is on a par, morally speaking, with the predicament of Havel's grocer? Does the deeply committed Stalinist have a genuine *moral* reason to make public, for example, his contempt for all of those "soft liberals" who fail to see the "virtues" of (say) Stalin's gulags?<sup>1</sup>

I do not think that we should endorse such a view. At the very least, I do not think that the idea of moral integrity would be of much interest – philosophically or practically – if we were to treat it in this way, as *purely* subjective. However, if we refuse to do this – if we assume, as I will here, that there must be some objective constraints on the kinds of fundamental moral commitments that agents may adopt – then we must also deal with a further challenge, neatly captured by Nagel and Hollis. Once we incorporate objective morality into our thinking about moral integrity – once we bear in mind that "integrity talk" about "commitment to my moral truth" must be constrained by some objective judgement as to what is *the* moral truth - why not

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<sup>1</sup> For examples in similar spirit, see Susan Mendus, *Politics and Morality* (London: Polity, 2009), chap. 1.

go further? Why not say that the only “fundamental commitment” that really matters morally is simply the commitment to do what morality, all-things-considered, objectively requires?<sup>1</sup>

If this were true – if an agent’s moral integrity were simply identical to action in accordance with morality’s overall requirements – then integrity would once again turn out to be devoid of philosophical and practical interest. Integrity would be only a trivial *output* of morality’s all-things-considered requirements in any given situation, rather than an input informing these requirements. Havel’s grocer, for instance, would not have any independent reasons of moral integrity to dissent from the regime under which he lives. Rather, if it turns out that, all-things-considered, Havel’s grocer ought *not* engage in dissent (say, because of his moral duties to care for his children, who would be imperilled if he made himself “an enemy of the state”), then the grocer ought to see conformity to the regime as aligning, rather than as conflicting with, his moral integrity. Similarly, according to the “integrity skeptic,” if the Czech people as a collective agent has compelling, all-things-considered moral reasons to foster ties with the Chinese dictatorship, presumably because of the benefits that such ties might yield for this dictatorship’s victims (at least in the long run), then *that* is what collective integrity requires. To invoke “Czech collective integrity” as an independent moral reason – whether for or against any action – would therefore be simply confused.

The principal effort of chapters 1 and 2 is to vindicate integrity’s independent moral significance, in the face of this skepticism. More specifically, I argue that it is *easier* to defeat this skepticism when reflecting on a liberal people’s collective integrity, as compared to the integrity of an individual person. This comparative ease, in turn, is central to my claim that

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<sup>1</sup> Here and throughout, like most moral and political philosophers, I use the term “all-things-considered” as a shorthand for “taking all relevant moral considerations into account.” Similarly following standard philosophical terminology, when referring to “presumptive,” “prima-facie,” or “pro-tanto” moral considerations, I have in mind considerations that, in the relevant circumstances, are susceptible to being outweighed by countervailing moral factors.

integrity's moral significance is easier to defend in the collective as compared to the individual realm.

Although I shall leave the specific elements of my defense to the relevant chapters, it might be helpful to give already here an example of the kind of defense I shall offer. This defense starts with the temporal nature of the very notion of a “commitment,” which I briefly left undefined. On one definition, which I find quite attractive and which I shall assume throughout this book, a “commitment” is “a normative determination made in the past to govern the future.”<sup>1</sup> Once we adopt this understanding of “commitment,” talk about agents' fidelity to their fundamental moral commitments acquires a historical dimension. At least in some circumstances, this talk is sensitive to the particular moral commitments that agents have adopted in their past, to govern their future conduct.

This point, in turn, allows us to capture a simple and powerful, but also elusive, moral intuition – namely, that an agent's particular moral history can bear on its moral situation, including in the kinds of entanglement cases introduced above. To make this thought more concrete, and show why it matters, we can go back to the case of the Czech relationship with China. Some of us, I assume, hesitate when confronted with the skeptic's claim, that the Czech people as an agent should see the demands of its own moral integrity with regard to the Chinese dictatorship as entirely parasitic upon the overall moral judgement as to how to deal with this dictatorship. In turn, I believe that at least part of this hesitation is due to Czech moral history and its formative influence on Czech foreign policy. Directly continuing the dissident legacy of the “Prague Spring” and the “Velvet Revolution,” Czech foreign policy following the Cold War firmly emphasized opposition to dictatorship, and support for peaceful protesters against repression. Moreover, this stance, so central not only to Havel's presidency but also to much

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<sup>1</sup> I borrow this definition from Jed Rubenfeld, *Freedom and Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), at 92. See also Cheshire Calhoun, “What good is commitment,” *Ethics* 119 (2009): 613-641. I should note that virtually any plausible understanding of the term “commitment” can align with most if not all of the claims I want to make in this book.

of Czech civil society, has been perhaps most evident in traditional Czech support of Tibet's peaceful struggle to liberate itself from Chinese rule, as well as in general criticism of China's human rights record.<sup>1</sup> And this particular Czech history, I believe, matters morally. It matters, furthermore, not just for morality in general, but for the moral integrity of the Czech polity in particular. This history means that for the Czech Republic to effectively turn its back on Tibet and its dissidents, for example, arguably amounts not just to a betrayal of the Tibetan struggle, but also to a form of collective *self*-betrayal, given the Czech Republic's own history. And this (historical) self-betrayal means that, contrary to the integrity skeptic, the Czech Republic has especially stringent and weighty integrity reasons *not* to cooperate, legitimate, and reap benefits from the Chinese dictatorship.<sup>2</sup>

Now, there are several grounds for why I think such 'historical' arguments are more powerful when bearing on the integrity of a liberal polity, as compared to the integrity of an individual person. These grounds – as well as skeptical responses, my rejoinders, and so on - will have to wait for chapters 1 and (especially) 2. The aim of the last pair of paragraphs was merely to provide more of a glimpse of the kinds of arguments that these chapters will develop.

### **Integrity on the ground**

Having argued in the opening part of the book that both personal and political integrity can function as an independent moral factor, I turn in its latter, more applied part to discuss multiple resulting questions.

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<sup>1</sup> This support, in turn, was manifest not only when Havel as President extended official recognition to the Dalai Lama, for example, but also when hundreds of Czech towns simultaneously raised flags commemorating past Tibetan protests violently crushed by the Chinese regime. See, e.g., "Hundreds of Czech towns hoist flags in support of Tibet," *Prague Daily Monitor*, March 11, 2016, at <http://praguemonitor.com/2016/03/11/hundreds-czech-towns-hoist-flags-support-tibet>

<sup>2</sup> To be clear: it is not my claim that liberal democracies which lack the relevant moral history do not have such integrity reasons. As chapters 1 and 2 will explain, I simply believe that these reasons are especially evident, and important, where the relevant history does obtain. I also believe that once we see integrity reasons to be operative in historically laden cases, it is easier to be convinced of their broader independent existence.

In chapter 3, I take up the concerns of those who worry that, even if integrity is an independent moral factor, putting integrity at the center of our moral outlook seems objectionably self-absorbed. I seek to undermine the appeal of this charge, and, in the process, establish further ways in which integrity can contribute to our practical reflections, on both personal and political morality.

The self-absorption concern on which I focus has a distinctly practical form. It holds that integrity talk dangerously pushes us to prioritize our own clean hands at the expense of others' needs – even quite vulnerable others. After explaining why this particular form of the self-absorption complaint should be our focus, I develop multiple responses to this complaint. For one thing, I contend that even when integrity's dictates push in the opposite direction from the rights and preferences of vulnerable others, there are still important cases where acting on these dictates will *improve* the position of the vulnerable. Moreover – and more centrally - I challenge the familiar equation of “integrity” with “clean hands,” arguing that there are important cases where integrity might be compatible with “dirty hands,” and may even actively push agents to dirty their hands. Integrity's relationship to “clean hands,” I suggest, is causally contingent: agents ought to engage in an honest assessment of the causal pathways bearing on to their conduct options, in order for their moral integrity to align with “dirty deeds.”

Such assessment, in turn, exposes further weaknesses in the self-absorption charge. This charge, I contend, ignores the effort that ought to precede a binary choice between our own integrity and others' needs – namely, the effort to validate the causal premises on which such a binary choice rests. Moreover, I argue that since integrity demands of us to engage in this effort as a necessary condition for “dirtying hands,” integrity's pressures, rather than leading us to neglect vulnerable others, typically *protect* vulnerable others – especially the likely victims of our potential dirty deeds. I illustrate this claim using the key example of ethically fraught decisions by corporate executives, and then turn to the political realm, where

I discuss for the first time the integrity of individual politicians.

Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, I suggest that the self-absorption charge is particularly inappropriate when it comes to political decision making. Not only does it ignore the process of verifying that the only relevant policy choices really are between “our own purity” and others’ practical needs. The self-absorption charge also ignores the significant political question of who is it that sets the policy-making agenda in these binary terms. In the context of international affairs, at least, I suggest that the answer once again points to self-seeking corporations, who cannot be relied upon to provide anything like the honest causal analysis that integrity requires. Given the familiar thought that “integrity talk” is particularly out of place in international politics, this is an important finding. And this finding, I further argue, turns out to be especially applicable to national security issues, which often demand “dirty deeds.”

Like the book’s opening chapters, chapter 3 largely highlights cases where individual and collective integrity point in the same direction – not only sharing an analytical structure, but also aligning in their practical verdicts. In contrast, the last two chapters of the book highlight issues on which individual and collective integrity seem to provide conflicting practical guidance. More specifically, the last two chapters examine important circumstances where the integrity of individual *political actors* seems to conflict with the polity’s integrity. I therefore try to show how the resulting “integrity indeterminacy” can be resolved in a systematic fashion.

In chapter 4, I focus on the apparent indeterminacy brought about by elected leaders whom I label “media demagogues.” Media demagogues are distinguished by their combination of dangerous populism, systematic lies and manipulation, and an overwhelming reliance on media activity as a substitute for substantive government work. Using Donald Trump, Silvio



Berlusconi, and Binyamin Netanyahu as my running examples,<sup>1</sup> I explore the integrity stakes involved in the decisions of those who are considering whether to serve or ally with media demagogues. These decisions fundamentally concern “dirty hands” – lying and manipulating for the demagogue, and more generally becoming complicit in his wrongdoing.

Initially, it may seem that such dirty deeds can align with integrity’s dictates. In particular, it may seem as if one can advance one’s fundamental public policy commitments by working with a media demagogue who is in power, and that one’s personal integrity points towards such work. I argue, however, that the predictable threat which media demagogues pose to the integrity of liberal democracy has moral primacy. This threat provides extremely weighty reasons against collaborating with media demagogues. I end the chapter by explaining why ignoring these threats to collective integrity, and collaborating with media demagogues out of a blind devotion to extremely narrow policies that one wishes to advance, is a mark not of moral integrity, but rather of morally dangerous fanaticism.

This discussion of the relationship between dirty hands and integrity connects chapter 4’s inquiries to the more familiar concerns taken up in chapter 3.<sup>2</sup> But I should stress, already here, that my discussion of media demagogues’ (actual and potential) allies and servants is also meant to expand upon these familiar concerns, by going beyond political theory’s classic “dirty hands” debates. Parting with these debates’ virtually exclusive focus on leaders at the apex of political power,<sup>3</sup> I aim to show the philosophical and practical value of reflection on those

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<sup>1</sup> My choice of these three examples is not meant in any way to suggest that media demagogues are to be found only on the political right. Rather, this choice is driven by the thought that ring-wing populism, led by such demagogues, is especially salient to the current political climate.

<sup>2</sup> I am aware that there may seem to be a tension between the two chapters, since chapter 3 shows how integrity can be compatible with dirty hands, whereas chapter 4 shows that integrity prohibits getting our hands dirty in certain ways. But this apparent tension dissolves once we get a clear understanding of the specific conditions under which dirty hands are morally justified: showing that these conditions cannot be met in the case of media demagogues will be a key part of chapter 4’s task.

<sup>3</sup> For still-too-rare exceptions, see Dennis Thompson, “Responsibility for failures of government: the problem of many hands,” *The American Review of Public Administration* 44 (2014): 259-273; Matthew Kramer, *The ethics of capital punishment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), chap. 6.

standing under, and next to, such leaders.<sup>1</sup> In the process, I hope to update the scholarly discussions of “dirty hands problems.” Whereas these discussions still reflect a structure going back to the renaissance, it is important to adjust this structure in a way that is attuned to the tremendous political impact of contemporary mass media.

If the claims of chapter 4 will be cogent, then they will help to further dispel the familiar suspicion to which much of chapter 3 is also dedicated: that “integrity talk” is fundamentally ill-suited to the dirty realities of politics, and specifically to the fact that real-world politics is dominated by actors whose integrity is often questionable at best. This theme is also central to the book’s final chapter, in which I examine one more aspect of the complex relationship between collective integrity and the integrity of individual political actors: the way in which integrity considerations should guide collective decisions about symbolic political honors in general, and symbolic honors to individual politicians in particular.

The topic of political honors has been generating extensive public attention around the world, from the United States (consider heated controversies surrounding monuments to confederate leaders<sup>2</sup>), through the United Kingdom (consider the “Rhodes must fall” protests<sup>3</sup>) to the former Soviet Union (where debates persist about the proper commemoration of communist-era leadership<sup>4</sup>). Yet normative political philosophy has had remarkably little to

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<sup>1</sup> Admittedly, the renewed philosophical interest in political parties, evident in recent years, may lead to more attention to those standing “next to” leaders. But I take this recent scholarly trend to be largely concerned with more abstract questions than the ones on which I focus here. See, e.g., Nancy Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), Russell Muirhead, *The Promise of Party in a Polarized Age* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 2014). Jonathan White and Lea Ypi, *The Meaning of Partisanship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Tegan Wendland, “With Lee Statue’s Removal, Another Battle Of New Orleans Comes To A Close,” *NPR*, May 20, 2017, at <http://www.npr.org/2017/05/20/529232823/with-lee-statues-removal-another-battle-of-new-orleans-comes-to-a-close>.

<sup>3</sup> Yussef Robinson, “Oxford’s Cecil Rhodes statue must fall – it stands in the way of inclusivity,” *The Guardian*, June 19, 2016, at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jan/19/rhodes-fall-oxford-university-inclusivity-black-students>

<sup>4</sup> See e.g., Sarah Rainsford, “Russian communists look to reinstate 'Iron Felix' statue,” *BBC News*, July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-33549850/russian-communists-look-to-reinstate-iron-felix-statue>

say about this topic. Seeking to fix this gap, I consider what an integrity-based perspective might have to say about political honors.

Initially, it may seem as if an integrity-centered perspective would lead us to focus political honors on individual leaders who, on the spectrum of moral admiration, stand on the opposite end from media demagogues. The aforementioned Havel (recently honored by renaming Prague's international airport after him<sup>1</sup>) is only one case in point. Emblematic public monuments honoring Mandela, Gandhi, and Lincoln could be offered along similar lines. But I argue that, despite its initial appeal, there are serious problems with the idea of hinging political honors on the honorees' individual integrity, no matter how admirable these honorees may have been in many ways. Several of these problems, moreover, follow quite directly from collective integrity concerns, not least due to the collective manipulation that inevitably accompanies any attempt to cast flesh-and-blood political leaders as modern-day saints.

Building on this and other problems, I defend a conception of political honors that reconceives their moral function. Political honors should not aim to honor individual integrity – nor, for that matter, should such honors aim to honor individual desert, contrary to the conventional wisdom. Rather, decisions about both the awarding and the withdrawal of political honors should aim to mark and reinforce morally appropriate collective commitments.

Political honors, I contend, can typically fulfil their central collectivist functions even when they involve no individual honorees – when revolving instead around “anonymous heroes,” around substantive laws or policies, or even around non-human animals. I show how this collectivist approach can account for important cases where there is a particularly firm intuition that political leaders should be at the center of political honors, and argue that this intuition is compatible even with honoring individual leaders whose personal integrity could

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<sup>1</sup> “Prague airport renamed after Czech ex-leader Vaclav Havel,” *BBC News*, Dec. 5, 2012, at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-19854293>

well be questioned. I similarly argue that the collectivist outlook can provide compelling guidance with regard to the withdrawal of honors given to political leaders, without falling back on either individual integrity or individual desert claims.

### **Integrity's multiple roles**

The preceding paragraphs were meant to provide not only an overview of each chapter of the book, but also an initial sense of its structure - starting with abstract philosophical questions about integrity, and gradually moving towards concrete political questions on which integrity, both personal and political, can be usefully brought to bear.

Even with this basic narrative arc in view, however, it will be helpful to note here a few other important features of the relationship among the different chapters. One such feature, which may have already occurred to the reader, is that the invocation of integrity plays a somewhat different philosophical role in different chapters. This difference is intentional, since I believe that we can and should expect the idea of moral integrity to play more than one role in our moral thinking.

One essential philosophical role of moral integrity was already made explicit above – that is, the role of an independent moral consideration. If my arguments in the opening part of the book will be convincing, they will establish that moral integrity can be an independent moral factor, to be weighed alongside familiar moral factors such as rights and interests, when trying to identify what is it that we ought to do. However, alongside this philosophical role, I shall also try to show that the idea of integrity advances our moral thinking by increasing the *unity* of our moral outlook.

The idea of moral integrity can play a unifying role in our moral thinking, by fruitfully bringing together a variety of moral concerns that typically seem quite removed from one another. Consider, for instance, a liberal democracy's commemoration of its most emblematic

moral failures and successes (a theme that will be prominent in chapters 2 and especially 5). The language of collective integrity may not be unique in capturing the moral significance of such collective commemoration. But the idea of collective integrity nonetheless makes a contribution to our reflection on commemorative practices, by allowing us to see often-overlooked connections between them and other morally important phenomena. To go back to my earlier, Czech examples: we may not need the language of collective integrity in order to agree that there is moral value in the Czech Republic remembering the Czech dissidents who undertook the most severe risks to bring democracy to the country. But it is partly because the language of integrity provides an especially ready way to capture the moral significance of this collective memory – of making this memory essential to “who we are as a people” – that it is also able to illuminate how this collective identity might bear on moral problems that might initially seem quite removed, such as the aforementioned problem of Czech engagement with the Chinese dictatorship.

I also believe that the idea of integrity can play a fruitful unifying role in our moral thinking by bringing together a variety of moral concepts that are commonly understood to lie in its vicinity, showing how these concepts can be combined to form a whole greater than its parts. Steadfastness and self-respect, for example, are often thought to be allies of integrity, whereas self-seeking rationalizations and self-deception are commonly understood to be antithetical to integrity.<sup>1</sup> To be sure, all of these concepts can be invoked and discussed without reference to the core notion of integrity – that is, without referring to any “fidelity to fundamental commitments.” But while keeping this core notion firmly in mind, we can *also*

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<sup>1</sup> There are difficult philosophical questions as to whether self-deception is, upon examination, actually possible. I am inclined to think that self-deception is indeed possible, and that it is best understood, following Donald Davidson, in terms of a “partitioned mind.” See Davidson’s “Who is fooled,” in his *Problems of rationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 213-230, at 220, as well as (in the same volume) “Deception and division.”

think about integrity as a *broader moral framework* – one featuring multiple moral concepts that orbit around the core notion.

This broader framework is powerful – I shall argue – insofar as the concepts it brings together carry extra dividends once combined. These dividends will be evident, for example, in chapter 1’s discussion of how attention to self-respect undermines the appeal of integrity skepticism. These dividends will also be evident in chapter 3’s discussion of how self-seeking rationalizations generate false binary choices between compromising our most fundamental commitments and dirtying our hands. And these dividends will similarly be manifest in chapter 4’s discussion of how media demagogues’ self-deception directly contributes to the threats they pose to the integrity of liberal democracy.

I should stress that while this unifying moral framework is ambitious in some respects, it is also modest in others. In particular, this framework is modest insofar as it does not necessarily involve a uniqueness claim. I certainly do *not* mean to say that *every single* moral problem that I discuss in this book can be grasped *only* by referring to integrity – either in the narrow sense, of fidelity to fundamental commitments, or in the broader sense, encompassing the additional concepts I just mentioned. But I do think that the idea of integrity allows us to see, in a very immediate way, crucial connections among several moral problems – including problems that existing philosophical frameworks have virtually ignored.<sup>1</sup>

I should also note that in different stages of the book, I will develop my arguments by highlighting different elements of – or different “orbiting concepts” within – the integrity framework. In particular, the book’s earlier chapters will focus on how the orbiting concepts

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 4’s inquiries into the menace of media demagogues and their collaborators provide an especially sharp example of this point. I do not mean to suggest that without the language of individual and collective integrity, we have *no way* to condemn either the personal failings of media demagogues, or the grave damage they inflict on core institutions of liberal democracy. But, for one thing, thinking about distinctive dangers posed by media demagogues – and even by their collaborators – is something that analytical political theory has yet to do. Moreover, the prism of integrity allows us to draw *immediate links* among multiple dynamics – both individual and collective – that (together) render these dangers particularly acute.

of self-respect, self-deception and self-seeking rationalizations relate to the central notion of fidelity to fundamental commitments. The book's later chapters will add to these concepts other moral ideas that are naturally associated with integrity – such as wholeness, honesty, and reflection on one's commitments.

My attempt to bring all of these ideas under the umbrella of integrity should not be seen as a way of making “integrity” a moving target. Rather, this attempt simply reflects the concept's inherent complexity. Integrity, as some philosophers have already noted, is best thought of as a “cluster concept,”<sup>1</sup> which, like other “plural ideals,”<sup>2</sup> weaves together multiple notions.<sup>3</sup> If the specific weaving I shall propose here will be successful, it will allow us to *regiment* this concept – and to keep its core meaning firmly in sight - *without* rendering it artificially narrow.

### **Integrity and its critics**

Before turning to the book's substantive arguments, I want to offer a last set of remarks about its setup. Specifically, I want to explain why I think it is essential to devote so much space, in the opening chapters of the book, to integrity skeptics. I am aware that this strategy may seem to give the early stages of my argument an overly “negative” structure. But I think that there are at least three reasons to opt for this structure nonetheless.

First, even the brief sketch of integrity skepticism provided earlier should show its considerable intuitive appeal. Moreover, this appeal – as I go on to stress in chapter 1 – is arguably so obvious to so many philosophers, that they take the force of integrity skepticism

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Damian Cox, Marguerite La Caze, and Michael Levine, *Integrity and the Fragile Self* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> I borrow this phrase from James Wilson's characterization of social equality in his *Democratic equality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> Different philosophers can obviously disagree on which are the relevant notions here. Cheshire Calhoun, for example, concludes that integrity is a “master virtue” which “presses into service” a wide range of “other virtues,” including “self-knowledge, strength of will, courage, honesty, loyalty, humility, civility, respect, and self-respect.” See Cheshire Calhoun, “Standing for Something,” *Journal of Philosophy* XCII (1995): 235-260, at 260. My own list, as we will see in due course, partly overlaps with Calhoun's.

to be self-evident. But if that is true, then no discussion of integrity's independent practical import, in either private conduct or public life, can really get off the ground and until we have at least tentative reasons to oppose integrity skepticism. That is partly why I wish to present the reader with such reasons very early on.

Second, as should become clear in what follows, my presentation of integrity's positive contributions, and my "defensive" effort to undermine integrity skepticism, will turn out to represent in many ways two sides of the same coin. Even when I will be advancing 'negative' arguments, countering those dismissive of integrity's moral significance, my arguments will have a clear constructive edge. I hope that this edge will be evident from the very start.

Finally, I believe that integrity skepticism lies at the root of the key discrepancy I noted in the preface, between everyday moral discourse on the one hand, and professional moral philosophy on the other. "Integrity talk" – even talk that focuses specifically on the sense of moral integrity I am deploying here, of fidelity to one's deepest moral convictions - is ubiquitous in everyday discussions of morality. But such talk is not nearly as influential, at least not in present times, within professional moral and political philosophy. I believe that this divide speaks against professional philosophy, and should be closed by bringing philosophy closer to everyday moral discourse. Closing this divide – partly by confronting integrity skepticism – will be a key part of my task.