

Integrity – Thomas Simpson

Introduction

In a play by Jean-Paul Sartre, written shortly after World War Two and set in its closing stages, an idealistic young communist called Hugo is sent on a mission to kill an older communist leader, Hoerderer. Hoerderer is in negotiations with non-socialist groups, including some nationalists, to create an alliance against the German occupying forces. This is with the aim that the communists would be in a stronger position after the war than they are at this point in the war, when they could then renege upon the alliance and bring the country into the Soviet bloc. Hugo is appalled at the treachery of allying with communists' enemies, namely the nationalists, and even more so when he learns that Hoerderer is willing to deceive fellow communists about the goals.

Hoerderer is unapologetic, however, and defends his position.

I'll lie when I must, and I have contempt for no-one. I wasn't the one who invented lying. It grew out of a society divided into classes, and each one of us has inherited it from birth. We shall not abolish lying by refusing to tell lies, but by using every means at hand to abolish classes.

Hoerderer is willing to lie for what is plausibly a political ideal, the abolition of wealth inequality.

Hugo objects to this. 'All means are not good', he says, which Hoerderer rejects—'All means are good when they are effective'—before going on to ridicule Hugo's idealism.

How you cling to your purity, young man! How afraid you are to soil your hands! All right, stay pure! What good will it do? Why did you join us? Purity is an idea for a yogi or a monk. You intellectuals and bourgeois anarchists use it as a pretext for doing nothing. To do nothing, to remain motionless, arms at your sides, wearing kid gloves. Well, I have dirty hands, right up to the elbows. I've plunged them in filth and blood. Do you think you can govern innocently?

Hoerderer's charge against Hugo is an age-old one. If you want to get anything good done in government, you need to be prepared to do things that, as a private individual, you would not be willing to. No-one governs innocently—or, at least, no-one can be effective in government and do so innocently. You have to be prepared to get your hands dirty.

Our aim here is to think through whether this is correct, examining the arguments that can be given for and against this. These questions concern what you or I as individuals might be trying to do through public service, and what the 'red lines' are which each of us may think should not be crossed. As such, they engage deeply personal issues.

Learning not to be good

The idea that politicians should be prepared to get their hands dirty is an old one, and the most well-known exponent of this view is the famous—or possibly infamous—Italian, Niccolò Machiavelli. Machiavelli was not just a philosopher, but also a practical politician, living during Florence's turbulent renaissance. Working as a civil servant during his 30s, he was responsible for organising the defence of the city, but unsuccessfully. When a member of the Medici returned to re-establish their control over the city, he was accused of being part of a conspiracy against the family, tortured, and then sacked from his job.

As a result, Machiavelli's political philosophy is not exactly idealistic. His most famous book is called *The Prince*, in which he advises princes and rulers on how to get and keep power.

Perhaps Machiavelli's most surprising piece of advice is that rulers should '*learn how not to be good*'. What does this mean, however? Many other philosophers had taken it on themselves to write handbooks for political leaders, combining wise advice with moral exhortation. Invariably, it turns out in these handbooks that to be a good political leader—that is, carrying out your job effectively—involved being a good person—where this involves making decisions that are fair and just, and being a person of virtue.

Machiavelli explicitly severs this connection, however. He thinks that being a good political leader precisely involves *not* being a virtuous person. According to Machiavelli, the good leader will be prepared to lie and manipulate others in order to get their way. They will be prepared to be cruel, as a deliberate policy, in order to instil fear in others and ensure that they do what is needed. If rulers give gifts, it is just because being thought of as generous will help them govern. And it is better to give other people's property away rather than your own, because that way you get a reputation for generosity, without incurring the costs of actually being generous.

But Machiavelli does not do away with the idea of virtue. Rather, he thinks that there really are virtues for political life, but just that these are the virtues of self-reliance, of self-discipline, and of the ability to control the way that events turn out. 'Virtues', in Machiavelli's sense, are not moral qualities. They are more like skills that someone may have. And he is interested in the skills that you need in order to get

into power, and once there, to stay there. So, we can talk about 'virtue' in the traditional sense, as a moral quality, and 'political virtue', in Machiavelli's sense. 'Political virtue' is skill in the art of using power, and that can be a very different thing—and indeed contrary to—virtue in the ordinary sense. Political virtue means, for instance, that a ruler could use cruelty well.

He has bequeathed to the English language the term, 'Machiavellian'. If you have seen the TV show, *House of Cards*, you will know what Machiavellian behaviour looks like. Machiavelli, and others who have followed him, thought that morality is irrelevant, and possibly harmful, to political virtue. The interesting question we have to ask is: *why* did he think that?

Political life and dirty hands

Machiavelli's idea is that the 'good' politician is one who is skilful in the art of using power, which may involve cruelty and deception. We have called this 'political virtue'. As we saw from Sartre's play, *Dirty Hands*, Machiavelli is not the only one who has thought that public life might involve moral compromises. There are obvious reasons why those in positions of power might like to think that there should be no moral constraints on their action, because this gives them permission to seek their own power, wealth, and glory. But we are interested in whether there are any *good* reasons for agreeing with Machiavelli. What might these be?

One reason might be a general scepticism about morality. Some philosophers have thought that *all* moral talk is just bunk. According to this view, moral language and statements are just disguised ways of saying, 'hurrah!' or 'boo!'. We will set this possibility aside. Apart from any other objection, you are likely to have taken this course because you think that public policy probably should be grounded in moral values, and want to think through more systematically what those are.

Should we be Machiavellian?

A good place to start is with Machiavelli's reasons to be Machiavellian. (As an aside, and counter-intuitively, some interpreters think that Machiavelli did not actually think you should be Machiavellian. We will ignore that complexity here.) Machiavelli writes that a political leader 'who wishes to act up entirely to their professions of virtue soon meets with what destroys him among so much evil'. He continues in a similar vein:

Because people are wretched creatures who would not keep their word to you, you need not keep your word to them. And no prince ever lacked good excuses to colour their bad faith. ... A prince should not deviate from what is good, if that is possible, but they should know how to do evil, if that is necessary.

The central idea here is not complicated. More threateningly, perhaps, it is also quite plausible. In a world in which other people cannot be trusted to treat you properly, too much virtue is self-destructive. If the ruler behaves in a way that is above reproach, always pursuing the good, and is never willing to be cruel or to deceive, then his or her hold on power will be vulnerable to competitors and schemers who *are* prepared to manipulate and lie their way to power. People 'are wretched creatures'. In a dangerous world, it is foolish not to be prepared to use all the tricks in the book to protect yourself.

To cope with this environment, Machiavelli accordingly uses the image of a lion and a fox to characterise political leaders. Lions—king among animals—are strong, regal, and guileless. Foxes are cunning. He recommends that rulers should have a reputation for being a lion, but actually be a fox—and being a fox leads the ruler to value the reputation for being a lion.

In essence, Machiavelli's claim is that obligations to speak truthfully, and not to harm others, are *reciprocal*. That is, if others do not recognise that they are obliged to act in that way to you, then you are not obliged to act that way to them.

But it is unlikely that Machiavelli's defence of 'political virtue' depends wholly on this claim about reciprocity. For one thing, in the same passage in which he writes about people being 'wretched creatures', he also writes that 'experience shows that politicians who have achieved great things have been those who have given their word lightly, who have known how to trick others with their cunning, and who, in the end, *have overcome those people who live by honest principles*' (italics added). So, he thinks that some people are honest and presumably can be trusted, and yet praises the prince who overcomes them too. The reciprocity claim is interesting, but is likely not decisive for Machiavelli. What else is going on?

In the earlier passage, he alludes to the idea that the prince should know how to do evil, 'if that is necessary'. It is because he thinks that politics may make unpleasant methods necessary that Machiavelli is often characterised as having argued that 'the ends justify the means'. (He never used those words, but it is not inaccurate.) But necessary for what? What are the ends that doing evil may be the necessary means for?

It is fair to say that Machiavelli does not really address this question. He just assumes that his reader wants guidance on the art of getting and keeping power, but does not explore why this is so, beyond the general statement that there are some goals that every person has before them, namely 'riches and glory'.

This question seems important, however. It may well be that it is necessary for princes to act in the fox-like way that Machiavelli recommends, in order to keep power. His view is, in effect, the same idea as that expressed in the French phrase, *'raison d'état'*: 'reasons of state' may mean that deception, cruelty, and even killing are justified. But, if this view is to be morally comprehensible and not just an assertion of naked self-interest, there needs to be some reason for having power which itself makes sense. 'Reasons of state' may justify public officials' non-compliance with the law, and perhaps even their non-compliance with morality. But there must be something significant and weighty about the state which explains this. If there was no such explanation, then it seems that private citizens would have the same permissions. That is a very different position indeed, being a kind of moral nihilism.

To address this question—why public officials might have this permission, but not private citizens—we need to go beyond Machiavelli.

The state and social order

Although there are some different ways of developing the insight, the central thought is that the state plays an essential role in enabling social order, and that social order is not just one valuable thing among a few others, but is the overriding and primary goal of government.

That social order is of critical importance, and is the very starting point of politics, was most forcefully expressed in the work of Thomas Hobbes—writing just over a century after Machiavelli. In the lead up to the English civil war in the mid-17th Century, and fearing for his life, Hobbes fled for Paris, where he wrote his main work, *Leviathan*. Hobbes' question is why we should obey the government, and his argument starts by asking what life would be like if no government existed. He calls this condition, 'the state of nature', and on Hobbes' view, it is a bleak place indeed. Famously, the state of nature is a 'war of every one against every one', leading to lives which are 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short'. In the state of nature, according to Hobbes, everyone enjoys what he calls the 'right of nature', which is the freedom to do whatever you think is necessary for your own self-preservation—killing others, appropriating their food, etc. Because the state of nature is so terrible, people come together to agree to set up the government—the 'Leviathan' of his title—which is a 'power able to over-awe them all'. When the government exists, everyone gives up the right of nature, with their freedom guaranteed by the government. This is the social contract—each of us gives up some individual rights, in order to have our safety guaranteed by the government.

Hobbes' political philosophy articulates two different reasons why public officials may have permission to act in cruel and deceitful ways, in a way that would be immoral for private citizens subject to the law.

First, on his view, nations still exist in the state of nature as against other nations. If there was a world government, then there would be a single power able to 'over-awe them all'. But because there is not, every nation is in a condition of war, one against all. Other nations cannot be trusted not to invade or seek their own glory at the expense of your country, so the right of self-defence is the overruling consideration. In international relations, there are prudential constraints. But there are no moral constraints, because the right of self-defence overrules all.

Hobbes' view about international relations is an archetype of what has come to be known as 'realism'. Realism has been aptly described as more of a mood than a clearly articulated set of doctrines, but what is shared by most realists is a certain opposition to idealism and morality in politics, a concern for national self-interest as a focal value for policy, and a close attention to the realities of power. The idea that public officials are permitted to do things that would otherwise be impermissible, as a matter of *raison d'etat*, finds its natural home in foreign affairs. This is where diplomacy and trade shade into great power competition, which shades into espionage, which shades into war. The realist suggests that it is naivety to expect one's rivals not to be preparing for or actively engaged in these activities. Practitioners of foreign and security policy tend to agree about this expectation, even if not all draw the same conclusions about what one's country should and should not be doing.

Hobbes' political philosophy gives another reason for thinking that public officials may have permission to act in cruel and deceitful ways. Notoriously, Hobbes espoused a state which would have absolute power. His principal reason for doing so was the conviction – based on his experience of the political disintegration that occurred in England during his lifetime, with its accompanying impoverishment, brutality and death—that a tyrannical state is less to be feared than the breakdown of social order. The burdens of government are 'scarce sensible, in respect of the miseries, and horrible calamities, that accompany a civil war'.

On this view, what stands between a peaceful and prosperous society, and the terrors of the state of nature, is a strong government. If this is so, then it is not just that the state enjoys a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, as Max Weber described it. The state should also use force in order to ensure that peace is not threatened, and that all comply with the law. This is the 'power that over-awes all'. The state's fundamental domestic responsibility is to guarantee social order. In doing so, it provides the framework within which people can conduct themselves in accordance with law, and indeed in accordance with morality. It also provides the framework within which politics takes place. But the work involved in ensuring that the framework is resilient is, in some sense, outside of and prior to the law, politics, and even ordinary, day-to-day morality.

Both of these Hobbes-inspired ideas—for international relations and domestically—posit a discontinuity between the day-to-day morality of the ordinary citizen, and the permissions that a political leader or public official may have. The idea is that the morality of the political realm is separate from, and has distinct principles to, the morality of the personal realm. Hobbes' views about the role of the state given a principled case for supposing that this might be so.

Do the ends justify the means?

It should be noted, however, that there could be a way of justifying something like Machiavelli's conclusion—that rulers should learn how not to be good—by appealing to the *continuity* of the political realm with the personal. There is a family of moral theories which argue that what makes an act morally right is the consequences that come from it. It does not matter what people may deserve from what they have done; what matters is how to improve things as much as possible for the future. The leading theory of this type is utilitarianism. For the utilitarian, there is nothing more to say about whether an act is right other than whether it maximises the best outcomes for as many individuals as possible.

For the utilitarian, the situations posed in the opening exercise—of whether the central banker should lie, or the party deputy engage in corruption, or whether the terrorist should be tortured—might be tricky decisions to work out in practice, but this is not because they are not morally complicated. The only question the utilitarian has to ask is, what act in this situation would lead to the best consequences overall? She would have to think about the long-term consequences as well as short term ones, and there may be a lot of uncertainty and risk she has to consider in doing so. But having done so, there is no uncertainty about what to do. Accordingly, when discussing these kinds of cases, one of the classical utilitarians, Henry Sidgwick, remarked that, 'the end must always justify the means. There is no other way in which the use of any means whatever could be justified'.

For the utilitarian, then, there is no sense in which she 'stands outside' of morality when getting her hands dirty. She is just doing what morality demands. If she tortures the terrorist, to get the information and saves lives, she may regret that this is what she has to do, but she should not feel guilty about it. For the Machiavellian, however, there is something a bit more puzzling. In following Machiavelli's advice and learning 'how not to be good', the prince is consciously doing something that is, in an important sense, contrary to morality. While we have seen some ways of making this stance morally comprehensible, there is ultimately a sense of paradox about it. And surely this is what Machiavelli intended.

Returning to the example with which we opened, of Sartre's play *Dirty Hands*, while it is not totally clear why Hoerderer thinks that he is justified in manipulating other groups into a short-term alliance which he will then renege on, and lying and exploiting other communist comrades, it seems that he appeals to a

combination of some of these ideas. His first claim is that the ideal of a class-less society is (on his view) of great value: that is, the ends really matter. His second claim is that lying is a universal feature of a class-based society. That is, he can't be blamed for the means, because everyone is doing it. Put these together and you get the classic thought: that the end justifies the means.

Integrity and role morality

Machiavelli posed the provocative thought that rulers—and by extension, those involved in government—may need to 'learn how not to be good'. Another way of expressing the idea is that those involved in public service cannot afford the luxury of moral innocence, but may need to get their hands dirty.

This is not a theoretical concern. It has been our observation that the more experience people have of public service, and particularly at senior levels, then the more pressing and sometimes haunting becomes the sense of threatened moral compromise. This is not because it is bad people engaged in governance. Rather, it is precisely the opposite. The people who have this concern are those who think seriously about why they are engaged in public life and who want to make a positive difference—but the structural conditions of the work seem often to create challenges to one's personal moral framework.

We have examined some of the arguments that may be given in favour of Machiavelli's conclusion. While Machiavellian conduct seems to be a perennial feature of politics and of those who exercise power, including governmental power, his position that this is how things should be is, as noted, provocative and controversial. Much of the struggle to improve people's lives, in particular by improving governance, has consisted in the fight *against* Machiavellian individuals, who would use their power in amoral ways and for personal benefit. So, what are the arguments against?

Integrity

The contrary position to Machiavelli may usefully be described as one that advocates **integrity** for leaders and public officials. 'Integrity' has a dual sense in English. There is the common sense, particularly in moral contexts, in which the person of integrity is the person of robust moral principles—upright, honest and sincere—who lives according to those principles even when there are challenges that would push a weaker-willed person to renege on them.

There is another sense of 'integrity', which involves being in an undivided or unbroken state, of being an integral whole, of having no part taken away or lacking. This is the sense used in the phrase, 'bodily integrity'—if someone is stabbed, their bodily integrity has been violated.

For our purposes, both senses matter. In rejecting Machiavelli's conclusion, one advocates integrity as a goal for the public official—that is, a resolute commitment to doing what is right, being upright, honest, incorruptible, and so on—and one does so because morality is an integral whole, with public officials not exempt from the demands that each of us are also personally subject to.

We may summarise the arguments for integrity as consisting in two strands. A first strand takes issue with the Hobbesian account of the powers and role of the state which we explored above. A second strand explores why it is so intuitively compelling to suppose that public officials are permitted to act in ways that private citizens are not, and finds an explanation for this in what is called 'role morality'.

Moral limits on what the state can do

Start with the first. On Hobbes' view, there are no limits to what the state can do. Most centrally, he thinks this because of his assessment of the state of nature. Recall that, in the state of nature, Hobbes thinks that everyone enjoys an unlimited right of self-defence; this is the 'right of nature'. He says that, 'in the state of nature, to have all, and do all, is lawful for all'. What should we make of this, however? It is highly plausible to think that everyone enjoys a right of self-defence, which allows you to resist others' attacks, and so forth. It is also plausible that the right of self-defence may allow you, sometimes, to act pre-emptively – when doing so is necessary to stop an attack, and it is a proportionate response to the threat. But it is much less plausible that there is an *unlimited* right of self-defence. Just because you can defend yourself against someone who would harm you pre-emptively does not mean that you have a right to attack anyone you want.

If there are moral limits on individuals' use of force to protect life, then it seems like there will be the same limits when it is the state using force. In both cases, force must be used only when it is necessary, and the force used must be a proportionate response to the threat. Moreover, if the limits of necessity and proportionality apply even when force is being used to protect life, then it would be surprising if it was permissible to use *more* force in cases where the goal was less weighty than saving life. If this is persuasive, what it means is it would be surprising if there is a blanket permission for the state—or those who act on its behalf—to engage in cruelty and deception whenever it suits them.

This objection can be developed further. The Machiavellian picture is that the ruler should be cruel or deceive others when it is necessary to, and we have suggested that one comprehensible goal that it should be necessary for is in order to sustain social order—that is, preventing the excesses of anarchy. It may well be asked, however, that if the most central, founding purpose of the state is to create social order—building trust, and minimising arbitrary force—how comprehensible is it that agents of the state should be permitted to undermine by their actions the very goal which they are supposed to be working towards? How can deceit and arbitrary force actually promote trust and social order? That seems puzzling, to say the least. The objector may continue, too, arguing that the social order may be a lot more resilient than we think. Appeals to *raison d'état* may be superficially plausible, but politicians are prone to confuse the national interest with their personal interest, and the corruption of their judgment by power.

To the degree that the foregoing is persuasive, it provides a principled case for supposing that the state, and those involved in public service, are subject to moral limits on what they can do. It is a case against the idea that there is a fundamental 'discontinuity' between the ethics of the personal realm, and of the political.

It may be wondered, however, whether this really does justice to the experience of public service. As noted above, many in public service feel a sense of conflict between what they are asked to do in their job, and how they seek to live personally. This sense of conflict is not to be ignored, and we turn to consider a way to understand it.

Role morality

Most jobs are advertised with a job description—a statement of what the successful candidate is expected to do, and sometimes, what they are expected not to do. Much of a job description will just consist in a list of skills or competences that a person is expected to have. For some jobs, this is about as far as it will go; being a fork-lift truck driver, for instance, requires some skill at driving and operating the machinery, but beyond that, just the standard characteristics of being a trustworthy person.

For other jobs, however, there may be a richer set of responsibilities, which can lead to morally complex situations. For instance, a lawyer is expected not just to be competent in knowing the law and how it will usually apply to particular circumstances. She is also expected to act in the best interests of her client. This principle seems like a truism when it is stated like that, but it is not trivial at all. One of its effects is that the good lawyer will work hard and may be successful in defending her client, even when she knows that he is guilty. This applies even to the most serious offences, such as child sexual abuse. From a bird's eye view, thinking about what justice requires, such offenders should be convicted. But from the view within the legal system, justice also requires that each defendant should receive the best possible

defence. The individual lawyer may experience deep personal conflict in such a situation, but her obligation, nonetheless, is to fulfil her role and defend her client. In doing so, she is exempt from moral criticism. This does not mean that there can be no criticisms of an adversarial system of justice; there may be a real debate as to whether such a system is the best way to secure justice, or whether there may be a better alternative. But given that the lawyer is working within an adversarial legal system, it seems that her job may require her to seek the acquittal of someone she knows to be guilty.

This example illustrates some wider lessons. For one, someone's role may change what they would otherwise be expected to do, including what they are morally expected to do. For another, evaluating the moral demands of someone's role may make sense only in the context of a wider social system. What is permissible *within* a given social context may make little or no sense *independently* of it. We may call these observations, 'role morality'. Considerations drawn from role morality show up in lots of different areas of life. For instance, Chief Executive Officers of business corporations often feel a sense of moral conflict, perhaps because their role obliges them to maximise profit for their shareholders, while their conscience says that they should minimise the environmental impact of their company's operations. When role conflicts with personal moral principles, it is not always simple working out what the right thing to do is.

Considerations from role morality may affect those involved in public service in a number of different ways. Here are three.

The first concerns what is possibly the sharpest conflict between the ethics of personal life and that of the political realm, namely the use of force. In day-to-day life, it is expected that you should avoid violence. But not only so, many of us would seek to be gentle and kind, and think that it is praiseworthy to be such a person. By contrast, the work of the soldier, police officer, and other security and intelligence officers, often involves the calculated and sometimes ruthless application of force. This may be in the expectation that decisive action now results in less force being used in the long-run, and presumably should be used only when necessary and proportionate. Nonetheless, these roles tend to be performed by people with a different motivational psychology to that which seeks to be gentle and kind. (One of us testifies to this from personal experience as a soldier.) Role morality would suggest, however, that this conflict between what is expected of the civilian and soldier is not morally incomprehensible. All of us have rights to use force in self-defence anyway. The significance of uniformed personnel is that they have a presumptive responsibility to exercise force in defence of others, so absolving civilians of the need to do so, and on some occasions, perhaps making it impermissible for them to. The key point is that one need not agree that going to war involves, in some sense, stepping outside of the demands of morality.

There is a second way in which role morality may generate moral permissions which are different for public officials as for private citizens. Consider an analogy with poker. In poker, players are expected to bluff and seek to mislead others about the strength of their hand. This is part of the game. If you're squeamish about bluffing, then you should not play. It is not inconceivable that there is an analogy from poker to aspects of public life. The 'rules of the game' may allow you to engage in some behaviour—lying and breaking promises, for instance, or allying yourself with those who are reprehensible—which in ordinary life you should not. It has been said that "all's fair in love and war". Some of those involved in the hurly-burly of elections and parties—as distinct from public administration—seem to suggest that politics should be included as well. That there should be different 'rules of the game' for different areas of life is not itself a contested idea. It is controversial, however, what the rules of the game should be for political life, and working this out may be complex. It is likely to involve considering what the actual norms and practices are in a given context, and comparing those with what the ideal would be.

A third way in which role morality may create moral conflict is in the tension between someone's personal moral code, and the public expectations that their role may answer to. For instance, consider an official responsible for administering visas for intended immigrants. She may have a principled view that all people who wish to migrate from a developing world country should be allowed to do so, but the policies she is required to enact, we may suppose, are both lawful and impose more stringent restrictions. Her decision to refuse a visa would go against her conscience, in an important sense, and yet be an obligation deriving from her public role. Indeed, democracy is not possible unless public officials generally subordinate their personal views to the laws and policies which enjoy democratic support and which they are mandated to enact. Many public roles have this kind of demand for neutrality built into them—it is a feature not only of the civil service, but also of the judiciary and public broadcasting, for instance.

In summary, then, role morality seems a plausible explanation for why public servants often feel a sense of conflict between their personal moral code, and the seeming demands of the job. We have seen three possible ways in which this might come about. If this is correct, however, it does not settle what someone should do in a particular situation in which they experience moral conflict. Rather, it seems that careful reflection will be needed in that particular situation, to work out what the source of the conflict is. And then – perhaps more importantly—both one's personal moral code, and the seeming demands of the job, will need to be interrogated to address how the tension should be resolved.

Resigning, whistleblowing, loyalty

We have seen how conflict can arise between one's personal moral code and the seeming demands of the job. Sometimes this tension is dissolved as a result of reflecting on the morality of your role. But suppose you go through a process of reflection, and still conclude that you are being asked to do something that you deeply disagree with. Perhaps you are a hospital manager who has principled objections to abortion, and you are being asked to lead the ward that conducts terminations. Or perhaps you are a civil servant who views the human rights declarations as one of the key means of social progress in the last 70 years or so, and you have been tasked with drafting the law that would involve your country withdrawing from an international declaration. What should you do then?

In outline, you have two options. The least disruptive option is that you could decide to do something that goes against your conscience, on the basis that, in the long term, there is more good that you can do by staying 'within' the system rather than from outside it. In the opening exercise, in the scenario that the party deputy found him- or herself in, you were asked to weigh up how much the long-term matters. There are many questions that should properly be asked of someone who decides to go against their conscience, because of the prospects of long-term influence. How likely is it that you will actually get into a position of power in future? Is it just fear of the consequences that is causing you to make that compromise? If you compromise now, how do you know that you will not make just the same compromise in future? After a while, you will find that what you thought was a mask, concealing your true character, has become your face.

The alternative is to refuse to be complicit in wrongdoing. This may require revealing publicly some hidden, wrongful activity (like bribery or torture). Or it may require refusing to be part of an activity which is public and (at least in your view) gravely wrong. In both cases – whistleblowing and recusal – some organisations will allow you to keep your job, while others will seek to remove from it. And, indeed, it cannot be guaranteed in advance that the problem is not an isolated instance within an organisation, but rather corrupts the whole institution – so that the only way to avoid being complicit is to resign or otherwise leave.

It is not clear that there is a single correct answer to what one should do: resigning or blowing the whistle, on the one hand, or on the other, being loyal and working from within. Each is the counter-argument to the other. There is an obvious moral imperative in refusing to be complicit. Fully acknowledging that, it also remains the case that leaders have particular power, and that to implement positive change, good people need to be in positions of leadership. It is not easy to avoid the dilemma.

What we can say is that, although each case will be different, we can identify some of the factors which are relevant in working out what to do. One factor is *how* wrongful the matter in question is. Moral wrongfulness comes in degrees. It is also likely to be relevant whether the action is democratically approved, or commanded by an otherwise legitimate government. Another factor concerns how much it will matter if I don't support this action. And on the other side of the question is the uncertainty about how much prospect there really is of good coming from working within. In some circumstances, the odds of any good happening are just so low, and the social structures that a dissenter may be working against are so emphatic, that the only morally respectable option is to refuse to have any involvement at all.

There is another more general point we can identify. There are some scenarios where the only morally responsible thing to do is to refuse to be complicit—to get out. But we know from psychological research that you are much more likely to follow through on what you intend to do, if you have thought about it in advance. One strategy is to identify in advance a specific prompt or a cue, and what you are going to do when that cue happens. These are called, 'implementation intentions'. In the situation we are discussing here, the issue is, in effect: what will I refuse to be complicit in? What are the things that I know now that I will not do, or that, if my organisation is trying to do, I cannot be part of? In effect, what are my red lines? Doing the work now of identifying your own red lines is likely to make it easier to be critical and reflective if the pressure to be complicit does arise.