Public disenchantment with politics has become a key feature of the world in which we live. Politicians are increasingly viewed with suspicion and distrust, and electoral turnout in many modern democracies continues to fall. But are we right to display such contempt towards our elected representatives? Can politicians be morally good or is politics destined to involve dirty hands or the loss of integrity, as many modern philosophers claim? In this book, Susan Mendus seeks to address these important questions to assess whether this apparent tension between morality and politics is real and, if so, why.

Beginning with an account of integrity as involving a willingness to stand by ones most fundamental moral commitments, the author discusses three reasons for thinking that politics undermines integrity and is incompatible with morality. These are: the relationship between politics and utilitarian calculation; the possibility that the realm of politics is a separate realm of value; and the difficulty of reconciling the demands of different social roles. She concludes that, in the modern world, we all risk losing our integrity. To that extent, we are all politicians. Moreover, we have reason to be glad that politicians are not always morally good.

Written with verve and clarity, this book provides students and general readers an accessible guide to the philosophical debates about the complex relationship between politics and morality in the contemporary world.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Susan Mendus is Professor of Political Philosophy and a member of the Morrell Centre for Toleration at the University of York.

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