



Quarterly Essay 16 Breach of Trust: Truth, Morality and Politics

Raimond Gaita

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In the fourth Quarterly Essay of 2004, Raimond Gaita confronts essential questions about politics as it is practised today. What do politicians mean when they talk about "trust"? Why is truthfulness important? Are we as politically and morally divided as the Americans? Does the war on terror authorise leaders to do things that once were considered beyond the pale?

Gaita argues for a conception of politics in which morality is not an optional extra. He discusses why successful politicians must at times be economical with the truth, but shows a way beyond cynicism on the one hand and moralising on the other. Politics, he says, is conceivably a noble vocation, as well as potentially a tragic one. He looks closely at patriotism and its distortions, and the temptation to betray our deepest values in the act of protecting ourselves. Combining gentle evocation with gloves-off argument, *Breach of Trust* is a clarion call from one of Australia's leading thinkers.

"I have never met anyone who believes that politicians should never lie ... But of course there are limits. They are not set in the heavens, but in culture." —Raimond Gaita, *Breach Of Trust*

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