Truth and Loyalty

Matt Sleat[1] (ID)

Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between truth and loyalty as it pertains to epistemic issues within contemporary Western politics. One now familiar concern is how an increasing number of people determine their beliefs according to what demonstrating loyalty to their group requires instead of the facts of an independent and objective reality, as a proper concern for truthfulness demands. Whereas "they" base their beliefs on what is required to demonstrate loyalty to their group, "our" beliefs are justified by facts and evidence. Such contrasts pit loyalty and truth as necessarily antagonistic. This paper gives us further reason for thinking that putting loyalty against truthfulness at some very general or conceptual level is deeply misguided. More significantly, it seeks to show that the more helpful contrast to make is between those who are loyal to identities that value truthfulness in such a way that there are no other parts of that identity which are not revisable if they come into conflict with truth, and those who are loyal to identities that subordinate truth to other ends or goals. Acknowledging this allows us to better appreciate various aspects of how the relationship between truth and loyalty is playing out in contemporary politics. Chief among these is how our own commitment to truthfulness is itself embedded in a particular identity, an identity that we not only often fail to acknowledge as such but which necessitates us thinking harder about the ways in which it might itself sustain the dynamics of conflict and contestation, antagonizing those who do not share it and driving them farther away from the truthfulness we extol.

Keywords

truth, loyalty, identity, political epistemology, epistemic vice

[1]Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Matt Sleat, Reader in Political Theory, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Sheffield, Elmfield, Northumberland Road, Sheffield, S10 2TU, UK.
Email: m.sleat@sheffield.ac.uk

One of the chief concerns regarding the heightened political polarization in many Western societies today is its alleged epistemic consequences in leading people to base their beliefs on considerations other than the facts of an independent and objective reality.[1] As polarization has increased so has the number of people who allow allegiance or loyalty to their group to determine their beliefs at the expense of a proper commitment to truthfulness, with all that entails for how we form and revise our beliefs (a problem particularly acute, so it is often charged, among those who support right-wing populist parties or leaders). Examples of such accounts are not hard to find. In their penetrating analysis of contemporary politics, *The Light that Failed*, Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes write that

> for Trump and his supporters, *every statement of fact dissolves into a declaration of membership or allegiance. . . .* Giving membership priority over verifiable reality or objective truth makes it psychologically impossible to acknowledge the factual evidence presented by one's partisan enemies (such as Obama's authenticated birth certificate), for that would risk the obliteration of one's publicly announced partisan identity. . . . The willingness to repeat such factual untruths is a test of loyalty. It represents an existential decision to burn all bridges to the world of over-educated elites who still think that accuracy matters more than loyalty. (Krastev and Holmes 2019, 177; emphasis in the original)

Or as *Vox* journalist David Roberts (2017) put it, "Information is evaluated based not on conformity to common standards of evidence or correspondence to a common understanding of the world, but on whether it supports the tribe's values and goals and is vouchsafed by tribal leaders. 'Good for our side' and 'true' begin to blur into one." According to this "tribal epistemology," truthfulness is pitted against loyalty to one's group, and the way back to a more truthful politics lies in calming the excesses of political partisanship.

The main aim of this paper is to show that the relationship between truth and loyalty is more nuanced and complex than such prevalent accounts assume.[2] Failure to recognize this leads to an insufficient understanding of how that relationship is playing out in our political culture and the potential ways forward available to us. In this regard, the paper aims to contribute to the

---

1. For an interesting set of essays reflecting upon the epistemological consequences of political polarization, see Edenberg and Hannon (2021) and Hannon and de Ridder (2021).
2. The paper does not begin with definitions of truthfulness or loyalty. This is because the question of how they are best understood is part of what is at stake in this discussion. Moreover, the hope is that by attempting to get clearer about the relationship between truth and loyalty we should also find that each illuminate at least those dimensions of the other to which it is connected.

recent body of literature that has challenged the supposed conflict between group loyalty and truth and explored how identities can be made "safe for democracy" (e.g., Brinkmann 2022; Chambers 2018; Darby and Martinez 2022; Lepoutre 2020). It gives us further reason for thinking that pitting loyalty against truthfulness at some very general or conceptual level is deeply misguided, though it does so on the quite different grounds that both speak to genuine human needs or dimensions of the human condition. Any adequate way of thinking about them, individually and in relation to one another, must see them both as important elements of a human life. Recognizing this does not entail denying any possibility of tension or conflict between truthfulness and loyalty. Indeed, understanding truth and loyalty in this essentially value pluralist spirit (Berlin 1969; Gray 2000) should help sharpen our appreciation of where those frictions are to be located and to what extent they may or may not be softened (some of which shall be discussed here). It does however— and to relate the issue more directly to our contemporary politics—mean that there is little likelihood these epistemic concerns will be allayed by loosening the ties of allegiance and loyalty. A political culture characterized by fewer or weaker loyalties does not necessarily make for a more truthful one. In considering how we create a more truthful politics, we must ask ourselves how we develop more truthful identities such that the demands of loyalty and truthfulness more closely align. This is not intended as an invitation for further (often somewhat self-satisfied) declarations that "they" are the problem, that "they" need to drop their loyalties and become more truthful, though that is one dimension of the solution. What has too often been overlooked, or maybe what has been *forgotten* given that this is a central insight from Nietzsche's later philosophy, is how "we" must more honestly recognize the ways in which "our" commitment to truthfulness is itself embedded in a particular identity— one that we not only often fail to acknowledge as such but which also necessitates us thinking harder about the ways in which that identity might sustain the dynamics of conflict and contestation, antagonizing those who do not share it and driving them farther away from the truthfulness we extol.[3]

Loyalty as Epistemic Vice and/or Politically Motivated Reasoning

We can contrast two different ways of conceptualizing the purported tension between loyalty and truth. The first is to cast loyalty as an epistemic vice. "An epistemic vice," as Quassim Cassam (2021) puts it, "is a blameworthy or otherwise reprehensible character trait, attitude, or way of thinking that

---

3. The question of who qualifies as "us" and "them" in this context is one we shall address as the paper proceeds.

systematically obstructs the gaining, keeping, or sharing of knowledge" (23). Epistemic vices are harmful in that they *obstruct* our acquiring or maintaining true beliefs. If one is close-minded, for instance, then one will be inflexible or unreceptive to evidence that conflicts with one's existing views, regardless of its merits. Wishful thinking will lead to beliefs based on what one wishes were true rather than what happens to be the case. We can *blame or criticize* people for their epistemic vices. Being forgetful or inattentive due to, for example, chronic insomnia is certainly an obstacle to knowledge but we cannot reasonably criticize or blame people for the ways in which this obstructs their pursuit of truth. Though we might think that insomniacs suffer from intellectual defects caused by their extreme fatigue, such as poor attention spans, diminished capacity for processing new information, etc., it would be wrong to think of them as exhibiting epistemic vices. If the trait, attitude, or way of thinking can be changed (is "malleable") and the agent could change it (they are "revision responsible") then it is appropriate to deem them blameworthy. But something can reflect badly on somebody and hence rightly be the subject of criticism, without it being the case that they are blameworthy for it. We might think of something like gullibility or foolishness in these terms: we do not think that gullible or foolish people need to be blameworthy for having those traits in order to think that they are epistemic vices nonetheless, and that those individuals can rightly be critiqued for letting such vices obstruct their obtaining or retaining true beliefs (Cassam 2021, ch. 6). Epistemic vices must also normally or *systematically*, rather than invariably, get in the way of knowledge. Stupidity (in the sense of foolishness or lack of common-sense) and close-mindedness are epistemic vices in this sense. Though we might say that there are certain advantages to being close-minded—for example, it makes you less susceptible to being misled by people who know less than you—it is nevertheless true that in more cases than not it would prove to be a hindrance to truth.[4]

Cassam does not include loyalty in his discussion of the epistemic vices.[5] Yet it is not hard to see how one might understand loyalty as an epistemic vice in such terms. The account would go something like the following: loyalty obstructs the acquisition of true belief by giving undue influence to concerns about group membership—the protection of the group's most

---

4. For a discussion of the sort of contexts in which close-mindedness might qualify as a virtue, see Battaly (2018).

5. Cassam does not give a list of epistemic vices, though he does quote without qualification Linda Zagzebski's own list, which includes "intellectual pride, negligence, idleness, cowardice, conformity, carelessness, rigidity, prejudice, wishful thinking, close-mindedness, insensitivity to detail, obtuseness, and lack of thoroughness" (Zagzebski, quoted in Cassam 2021, 14).

fundamental beliefs, values, and goals, ensuring close alignment between those and individuals' commitments, aiding the ends of that group over rival groups, and so on—and hence leads people to be inappropriately responsive to new evidence or information.[6] It does so systematically in the sense that loyalty regularly or typically proves an obstacle to truth when the evidence in question relates to a group's fundamental beliefs and values (and we might further presume that it will do so to a greater degree the more directly it relates to and challenges them). Those who let loyalty obstruct acquiring true beliefs can rightly be criticized for their failure. Maybe we can blame them also, but the question of their blameworthiness does not need to be settled if loyalty is nevertheless a trait that reflects badly on those who exhibit it; it will qualify as an epistemic vice regardless of the further question of whether blame is apt.

A second way of conceptualizing the tension between truth and loyalty is to come at it via political cognition. Recent developments in our understanding of political cognition, approached in different but complementary ways by psychologists and social scientists, have provided us with a nuanced, complex, but nevertheless broadly clear picture of the myriad ways in which peoples' beliefs and attitudes are influenced by various forms of motivated reasoning. In general, motivated reasoning "refers to the tendency of individuals to unconsciously conform assessment of factual information to some goal *collateral* to assessing its truth" (Kahan 2016, 2; see also Frimer, Skitka, and Motyl 2017; Hart et al. 2009; Mercier and Sperber 2011).[7] These truth-independent goals vary but include, for instance, maintaining a positive self-conception and rationalizing self-serving behavior (Hsee 1996). In cases of *politically* motivated reasoning we can, following Dan Kahan (2016), say that the "truth-independent goal" is identity protection: "the formation of beliefs that maintain a person's status in [an] affinity group united by shared values" (2).[8] Those reasoning in this way (unconsciously) prioritize their loyalty to their group—their continued membership of it and the reinforcement of those beliefs that have become its identity-defining tokens of membership—when assessing new evidence or facts. The assessment becomes, in effect, not how the evidence might require someone to revise or adopt beliefs in light of an independent truth-convergence criteria but rather what impact crediting this

6. Keller (2007) expresses a similar thought in identifying one form of how loyalty is often expressed "in belief": "Your loyalty to X is expressed as loyalty in belief if being loyal to X inclines you to hold or resist certain beliefs, independently of the evidence" (6).

7. See also Kunda (1990).

8. See also Cohen (2003); Greene (2015); Kahan (2013); Jost, Hennes, and Lavine (2013); Sherman and Cohen (2006).

evidence and amending their beliefs accordingly would have for their alignment with the beliefs of others in the relevant identity-defining group. The more threatening the new evidence or facts are to those beliefs, the more likely it is that people will assess them in relation to the goal of protecting their status in the group rather than any concern for the truth of their beliefs. Identity protection not only provides an alternative goal to truth but might also create a significant degree of resistance to it, leading people to double-down on their false beliefs rather than amend or abandon them. All of which offers an explanation as to why in the United States, for example, there is significant and persistent polarization on "policy-relevant facts" such as the reality of human-caused global climate change or whether allowing people to carry firearms increases homicide rates, where these issues have become key signifiers of Democratic or Republican membership (Kahan and Corbin 2016; Kahan, Jenkins-Smith, and Braman 2011; Taber and Lodge 2006). Which facts we believe and utter become declarations of loyalty and membership.

We have, then, two ways of conceptualizing loyalty and its tension with truth. On the first, loyalty threatens to operate as an epistemic vice that systematically obstructs the acquisition of knowledge for which the agent can be blamed or, at least, criticized. Or, alternatively, loyalty provides a "truth-independent goal" of motivated reasoning such that individuals tend to unconsciously conform their assessment of factual information to the requirements of identity-protection collateral to assessing its truth. These conceptualizations may not be incompatible. Cassam is clear that we should be "relaxed" about admitting any variety of epistemic vice as long as they satisfy the criteria, and as this explicitly includes cognitive biases, it could in principle be extended to include forms of politically motivated reasoning also (2021, 27). If something systematically obstructs the acquisition of knowledge in ways the agent can be criticized or blamed for then it is an epistemic vice. In providing a truth-independent goal, loyalty will obstruct our gaining and maintaining true beliefs. But does it also do so *systematically*, as required, to qualify as an epistemic vice on Cassam's understanding? And, if so, is the agent to be blamed or criticized? These turn out to be deeply related questions.

Loyalty, Systematicity, and Blame

As with any form of motivated reasoning, there is always a question of belief selection that needs to be addressed. Take self-deception.[9] There are very

---

9. For an understanding of self-deception as a form of motivated reasoning, see, in particular, the pioneering work of Mele (1987, 1997, 2001).

many false beliefs that it would be highly convenient or advantageous for us to hold in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Yet we not only do not bring ourselves to have such self-deceived beliefs but, in an important sense, we could not. If we think of the stock examples of self-deception, they tend to be cases where the false belief in question is contextualized within a highly emotionally charged scenario (Dagleish 1997; Lodge and Taber 2005; Mele 2003). Think of the spouse who cannot accept that their partner is cheating on them despite finding compelling evidence, or the parent who refuses to believe that their child is involved in criminal activity regardless of the strong confirmatory indications. Part of the reason why these strike us as eminently plausible candidates for self-deception is because we recognize the high-level emotional stakes involved in accepting the truth. Self-deception tends to occur in relation to what Elizabeth Galeotti calls "'mortal questions,' that is matters which bear a fundamental and constitutive relationship with the self . . .," where having to let go of one's prior beliefs would be so extraordinarily painful or difficult that the prospect of facing the truth generates great fear and anxiety. Such beliefs are so vital in fulfilling a central desire-element for an agent's well-being that any negative evidence that potentially threatens them triggers the cognitive behaviors related to self-deception (Galeotti 2018, 44–45). Absent such "emotional overload," genuine self-deception is not going to be possible.

For it to be plausible that loyalty can prompt the various cognitive behaviors that shield relevant beliefs from contradictory or challenging evidence, it is essential that protecting one's identity must be the kind of "mortal question" capable of eliciting the necessary anxieties that facilitate motivated reasoning. The fact that a substantial body of evidence exists demonstrating the prevalence of politically motivated reasoning appears to offer empirical confirmation that this is indeed the case. This lends considerable weight to the thought that identity, community, and belonging matter to people at some quite fundamental level. They speak to genuine human needs (on which we shall say more in the next section).

While this tells us that loyalty can obstruct acquiring and maintaining true beliefs—in particular, around issues pertaining to identity—it does not follow that we should conceive of such politically motivated reasoning as a form of irrationality. As Kahan (2017) rightly points out, we cannot assume that the sole or even primary purpose of rationality is to form accurate beliefs, and we know that people use reason in the pursuit of very many goals. Indeed, reasoning driven by accuracy goals is no less motivated in that regard than that which seeks to protect identity (Kunda 1990). What we have here are different human goals—the protection of identity and the acquisition of true

beliefs—and reason can serve both. But not necessarily at the same time, and the pursuit of one can come at the cost of the other. The worry about loyalty from the perspective of truth should not be understood, therefore, in terms of a failure of rationality. Arguments that rely upon the notion that there is something necessarily irrational in prioritizing loyalty over truth are going to beg the question. The claim can only really make sense in terms of reasoning being politically motivated in instances when it ought to be orientated toward the goal of converging on the truth—cases where reason is being put in the service of the wrong or inappropriate ends. But if identity and related concerns touch upon crucial questions of the self then we can already see that cashing out the nature of that "ought" is going to be incredibly difficult.[10]

In addition to obstructing the acquisition of knowledge, we have good reason for thinking that loyalty meets the second necessary criterion of an epistemic vice—that it does so systematically, that people will often or usually conform assessment of evidence that challenges their status or membership within a group according to the need to protect that identity as opposed to assessing its truth. In explaining this, we have been drawn to remark upon the significance of identity in human life. But then what does that mean for whether people are blameworthy or to be criticized for their loyalty, the third criterion of epistemic vice?

If we think of close-mindedness, an arch-epistemic vice, we readily recognize this as unacceptable and believe that people who exhibit it are deserving of criticism. In many cases blame is appropriate also in the sense either that people have actively cultivated close-mindedness, in which case they have positive acquisition responsibility, or they have failed to take steps to avert its growth, when they bear negative acquisition responsibility (Cassam 2021, 42). The same can easily be said for carelessness, cowardice, or idleness, for example. Loyalty certainly seems to be something that one could be understood as responsible for in either of those senses also. There are ways one can nurture and promote the bonds of communal belonging and identification, as there are means of relaxing and diminishing them. And insofar as we take loyalty to systematically obstruct the acquisition of knowledge, some have certainly deemed this as warranting criticism. But there does seem to be a key difference in the sense that close-mindedness has very little to be said for it. It is very difficult to tell a story in which, taking its epistemic effects as granted, being close-minded (or careless, cowardly, or idle) is related to or helps realize human needs or goals.[11] Loyalty, on the other hand, and as we

---

10. This is not to say that prioritizing loyalty over truth can never be considered irrational. The point is rather that reason does not in some sense naturally or rightly serve the ends of truthfulness over all others.

11. But not impossible, a point to which we shall return.

have seen, speaks to genuine human ends. We can not only understand why people value loyalty in light of those ends but potentially think that it is admirable that they do so. This (as we shall now see) significantly complicates the question of the extent to which loyalty is to be criticized, or the loyal blamed.

Loyalty in an Ethical Life

One of the pertinent questions here is how far loyalty itself can be understood as a virtue and therefore an element of a good life. A seemingly strong part of the case against that claim is that the object of people's loyalty can be misplaced—as in the case of a loyal Nazi (Ewin 1992)—and, in such instances, loyalty is better understood as something of a vice. But this seems misguided in at least two senses. For one, all virtues require judgment as to when they ought to be applied. Acting courageously when it is not called for is foolhardy, and failure to do so when it is called for is cowardly. Loyalty likewise demands judgments as to when it is appropriate to be loyal or when disloyalty is called for. One thing we might say, therefore, is that the loyal Nazi has made a (significant) failure of judgment in their attachments, though this does not undermine the general thought that loyalty remains a virtue. Alternatively, unless we are committed to the thought that all Nazis have necessarily abandoned the ethical life completely, there do seem to be important distinctions that we can and do make between a Nazi who enthusiastically played their part in the atrocities because they happen to be a cruel and violent person and those who did so out of a sense of loyalty to the German nation or their compatriots. Both are, to be sure, contemptible. But there is a difference between the two, and at least part of what helps us make sense of that difference is that the Nazi who acted out of loyalty rather than wickedness occupied some ethical ground when acting as they did (even if it was woefully insufficient ground).

Our loyalties are most often directed toward particular associations, such as families, friends, organizations, classes, professions, religions, nations, gangs, regions, sports teams, political parties, and so on. We find ourselves part of many associations throughout our lives and relatively few will evoke our loyalty to any significant degree. Some loyalties are shallow, and in such cases, it does not always seem appropriate to speak of them in terms of loyalty at all. Those associations to which we have bonds of loyalty are those with which we have come to strongly identify or develop a form of meaningful social identification with. There might be many sports teams I could support; many universities might be equally excellent employers as my own; the coffee in the shop farther down the road could be just as delicious. Indeed, in each case the alternatives might be better. But I feel loyalty to *that* team, to

that university, or *that* coffee shop, because I have come to value my association with them for their own sake.[12] That is what makes me a loyal supporter, employee, or customer. Those associations are mine, or ours if others happen to share them also, and they are the object of our loyalty because we identify with them as such.

   While judgement is clearly involved in coming to a sense of what is deserving of one's loyalty, it is right to think that loyalty cannot be based in any straightforward way on one's understanding of the value or merits of the object of loyalty (Ewin 1992, 406). That would very often underdetermine which objects we deem deserving of our loyalties. More importantly, our judgements regarding the value of those associations we identify with are themselves affected by the fact that we are bound by bonds of loyalty to them. Our judgements as to the association's merits are influenced by the fact that we identify with that association and value that bond for its own sake. Yet that we identify with that association is clearly also a reflection of the fact that we think it has value or exhibits values independent of our association with it. It *deserves* our identification, or we are right to align our identity with that association. These two aspects – the value we perceive in the object of our loyalty and the value we ascribe to our identification with that object – give loyalty a complex dual nature. One effect of this will be that the causal story which explains how we came to our loyalties will very often not be clear even to ourselves (maybe especially to ourselves): was it the sense of the association's value which motivated the identification, or was it being deeply involved with that association which motivated the sense of its worthiness? Indeed, it may often be very difficult for us to honestly distinguish between these. Simon Keller (2007) invites us to imagine, for instance, a Christian whose beliefs are causally explicable in terms of having been brought up in a Christian community yet her motivation for wanting to spread the Word is because she takes those beliefs to be true or of the greatest value (19–20). It is certainly right that it looks strange to say that such a person is acting out of loyalty to Christianity. And yet we can often perceive, more easily in others (but in ourselves also if we are reflective and honest enough), that the motivation to tell the truth as we see it is in some sense also an expression of the significance of the association in which we came to that truth in our lives.

---

12. "[A]n individual who is loyal to X must have a motive whose nature depends upon, or makes essential reference to, a special relationship that that individual takes herself and X to share. When you are loyal to X, what is presented within your motivation, so to speak, is not only X, but X as something to which you are connected in a special way. There is a distinctive kind of motive that includes this sort of reference to a special relationship" (Keller 2007, 18).

Some undoubtedly go too far in making loyalty the basis of all morality (e.g. Fletcher 1993; Oldenquist 1982; Royce 1908); others too far in thinking that our loyalties constitute the entirety of our "historical self" (Fletcher 1993; Rorty 2021). But the more modest claim that loyalty represents a dimension of ethical life is compelling. Part of why we would consider a life without any loyalties to be lacking is that it would be one in which a person has failed to either discover or maintain associations that can feature as a source of value in their lives in this dual sense. They will be without much of what makes up the content or texture of an ethical human life. They will know neither the value that comes from the strong sense of association with others ("the ties that bind"), nor the opportunity to identify with that which one takes to be good, to bind one's fate to that of objects deemed to be of great value, or to commit oneself to a cause perceived to be greater than oneself. That we often feel pity or sympathy for those who do not have any such loyalties in their lives therefore seems perfectly explicable and apt.

There may be other reasons for thinking that loyalty plays some meaningful role in human ethical life. Possibly they will be more convincing than the ones offered here. Yet if, for whatever reason, we are willing to acknowledge that loyalty does indeed represent a dimension of ethical life then how we think about its epistemic consequences needs to recognize that role. While those consequences may potentially be in many ways regrettable epistemically speaking, it would nevertheless be wrong to see them as straightforwardly negative from a more holistic perspective of a human life. A life without loyalty is in an important sense a diminished one. We can, and should, recognize this while simultaneously acknowledging that loyalty can systematically obstruct the acquisition of knowledge. What we might surmise from what has been said so far is that if loyalty does systematically obstruct obtaining knowledge, then we have here a fundamental clash between two aspects of human life—the epistemic and the ethical. But this is not quite the right way of putting the matter because, as we shall see next, we can understand the commitment to truth itself in terms of a question of identity.

Truthfulness and Identity

In George Kennan's famous "Long Telegram" of 1946, in which he sought to educate President Truman and policymakers in Washington as to what he took to be the true nature of the Soviet regime, he wrote the following of the Russian government:

> it is seemingly inaccessible to considerations of reality in its basic reactions. For it, the vast fund of objective fact about human society is not, *as with us*, the measure against which outlook is [sic] constantly being tested and re-formed,

but a grab bag from which individual items are selected arbitrarily and tendentiously to bolster an outlook already preconceived. (Kennan 1946, emphasis added)

In the terms we have been employing, we might think that the contrast Kennan is drawing here is between a Soviet system that puts loyalty to its ideology above truth and an American system where its strategies and policy decisions are formed according to what the truth is, no matter how inconvenient that might be from the perspective of any pre-existing views or frameworks. It is not just that Americans are committed to truth where the Soviets are not. The American commitment to truth is presented in contrast to ideological loyalty. Their truthfulness is explicable in part because of the absence of such loyalties. But clearly Kennan's point and purpose was also to draw attention to the sense in which that commitment to truth was characteristic of "us" and to do so for a particular purpose. He was expressing the self-image of America as a truthful nation that, regardless of how true Kennan believed it to be, he knew would have potentially powerful rhetorical effects on those he was trying to convince at the highest level of government. America stands for truth. Or, put differently, "we stand for truth *because* we are American." Part of what it means to be American is testing and reforming your outlook in light of the facts. The contrast Kennan is making is therefore essentially between two different forms of identity. There is a "them," the Soviets, who let their ideology determine their beliefs, and an "us," who base our beliefs on the facts of the matter. And, of course, part of what Kennan was trying to do in that memo was set out what he took those facts to be. The president, being a good patriot, will appreciate that being willing to revise his beliefs about the Soviet Union in response to the facts *is the American thing to do*.

We can sneer at Kennan's claim about the American commitment to truthfulness, and we know that the notion that America's foreign policy was sufficiently responsive to objective facts would come under extreme public scrutiny in subsequent decades (e.g., Arendt 1972). Regardless, what the "Long Telegram" captures is the fact that one is never speaking from the pure perspective of truth, but one does so from within an identity that values truthfulness in a particular way. And in speaking for truth, we are also expressing or demonstrating a loyalty to that identity.

All identities will have some concern for truth. It is highly improbable that there could be an identity that is genuinely and totally indifferent to truth, not least because identities will be developed around understandings of the world—the meaningfulness of particular values, experiences, histories, hopes for the future, and so on—where it is going to matter that those can be defended as, in some important sense, true. There will, of course, be

instances—indeed likely many instances in politics—where an individual decides that it is prudent or even necessary to lie about what they believe to be true out of loyalty to their side. But lying, or less pejoratively, insincerity, is not really the concern. The worry is not that people are saying things they know to be untrue, so saying not-*x* when they believe *x*, but that they are coming to *believe* what is untrue such that they are being perfectly sincere when they say not-*x*. To put it in the terms used by Bernard Williams (2002), it is accuracy, the desire for getting things right, rather than insincerity that is at stake. That is how Krastev and Holmes presents Trump's supporters. Their failure is not of sincerity but of accuracy. Yet from those supporters' perspective, they will not understand what they are doing as dissolving fact into a declaration of loyalty when they internalize or utter the untruths and conspiracy theories popular among his followers. At some level, they must think that their beliefs are true by virtue of accurately capturing the way things actually are, and their purported truth will play some role in their explanation as to how they came to hold them.

While it might be the case that all identities will have some concern for truth, nevertheless truthfulness can operate differently within different identities. The historical and social peculiarity of how we—and the "we" includes anyone for whom the following is true—value truth is so fundamental to our worldview that it is not only easy for us to overlook but hard for us to see. Truth, and, importantly, a particular understanding of what it means to be truthful, has come to occupy a central place in the modern mindset. This includes, for instance, a refusal to accept beliefs on the basis of tradition or religious authority[13]; affording a certain priority to the methodology and rigors of scientific enquiry and with it a valorization of scientists and scientific education; endorsing an ideal of reason as necessarily objective, universal, and impartial; presuming a profound connection between truth as an objective view of the world free of prejudice and bias and the creation and maintenance of human societies equally free of such vices; viewing humans as possessing some essential desire to know and understand the world as it really is, to be in touch with reality (to live "within the truth"); holding a deep political and moral suspicion of vagueness and obscurity in favor of clarity and transparency; and having a strong sense of the importance of truthfulness and the pursuit of truth to individual freedom or social justice, often contrasted with ideology, dogmatism, authoritarianism, or totalitarianism

13. A position that plays a crucial role in shaping what sort of answers are deemed appropriate to the philosophical question of the foundations of the modern state, a good account of which can be found in Waldron (1987).

(e.g., Havel 1991; Russell 2016). All of this contributes to a certain individual and collective ethical self-understanding with a strong aversion to deception and which is particularly alive to and damning of the temptations of self-deception and wishful thinking. We can see, for instance, the significance of this self-understanding to liberal identities as reflected in the critics and criticisms it attracts. It is, after all, no coincidence that critics of this broad account of truthfulness tend to be profoundly illiberal (Sorel and Nietzsche being classic examples). Even where critics' politics might be less extreme, as with many postmodernists or post-structuralists for instance, their rejection of these underlying assumptions of truthfulness have been interpreted by liberals themselves (and, indeed, by many further to the left, e.g., Callinicos 1990; Geras 1995) as undermining a vital pillar of liberal politics. The almost universally hostile reception of Richard Rorty's brand of "postmodern bourgeois" (Rorty 1983) or "ironic" liberalism (Rorty 1989) is particularly illuminating in that regard (Conant 2000; Owen 2001; Williams 2002). And critics of liberalism never tire of pointing out what they see as the hypocrisy in all this, claiming that liberals' worldview can only be sustained by epic levels of sustained wishful thinking and (self-) deception. But such criticisms only have the purchase they do because they rightly identify the value liberalism ascribes to truthfulness in the first place (that liberals lack heroism—another familiar Nietzschean refrain—or show insufficient regard for the virtues of piety, chastity, or mercy (Bull 2019) for instance, does not have the same disquieting effect on liberals themselves). Why and how this account of truthfulness developed and became embedded in different modern identities is a long and complex historical story (see, for instance, Nietzsche 2017; Pasnau 2017; Williams 2002). What matters for our purposes is just the fact that not everyone, either today or in the past, has given such prominence to truth nor considered the demands of truthfulness in the way that we do.

The contrast we need here is not between truthful and untruthful (or nontruthful) identities. We are looking for something much closer to what Nietzsche recognized as those identities that retain the ascetic "unconditional will to truth" (Nietzsche 2017), such that there is no other part of the identity that is not revisable if and when it comes into conflict with the value of truth ("Nothing is more necessary than the truth, and in relation to it, everything else has only secondary value" [Nietzsche 2003, 200]), and those where there is at least some other part of the identity that is taken to be immune to such revision in the event of such a conflict. Those who remain committed to the ascetic ideal "take *our* fire from the blaze set alight by a faith thousands of years old, that faith of the Christians, which was also

Plato's faith, that God is truth, that truth is *divine . . .*" (Nietzsche 2017, 115) with the effect that the value of truth cannot be allowed to become a problem. Truth's worth is unconditional and unquestionable. To reiterate, we must be careful here to insist that it does not follow that people for whom the will to truth is not unconditional—let us call them those with nonascetic identities (though acknowledging that this is not all Nietzsche intended to capture by the term)—do not value truthfulness at all. Conspiracy theorists, for instance, almost by definition value truth very highly, possibly even fanatically. But we can readily recognize how their pursuit of truth—and in particular their judgements as to the appropriate methods of truth-seeking, who the relevant epistemic authorities may be, their handling of evidence, and so on—is very often bent toward affirming and bolstering preexisting political beliefs and goals. What is important is not, therefore, that nonascetic identities fail to value truth but that its demands are interpreted in light of the services to which it is put.

What follows from the recognition of the place of truthfulness within our identities? Not that we must think of ourselves as in a symmetrical position to Krastev and Holmes's Trump supporters for whom (they claim) "*every statement of fact dissolves into a declaration of membership or allegiance . . .,*" as if our "facts" are also but declarations of loyalty to our identity. While it may well be true that how we understand the demands of truthfulness may depend upon its place in a wider way of life, that is different from saying that the demands of truthfulness themselves depend upon their context within a particular identity. That we can understand the epistemic failures of those with nonascetic identities as a consequence of their not prioritizing truthfulness as we do does not in any way insulate them from criticism. It does, however, draw attention to the fact that it is not loyalty to an identity as such that has had epistemically obstructive effects. That is part of but not the whole story. Loyalty to an identity that subordinates truthfulness to other ends is what has really obstructed their pursuit of the truth. Conversely, nor do we need to say that we only value truthfulness because of who we are. We must see value in the things to which we are committed that cannot simply be reduced to the fact that they are ours (to extend the previous discussion). What we should recognize, however, is that in critiquing others' truthfulness (or lack of), what is being contrasted cannot neatly be understood as their loyalty to their identity against our commitment to truth. That misses an important part of the story. A certain sort of loyalty is also being demonstrated in that critique, loyalty to an identity in which valuing truthfulness in the way that "we" do occupies a significant centrality. And this complicates the politics here substantially.

One consequence that must be accepted upfront is that insofar as truthfulness occupies a central role within identities, it will have the potential to serve as a trigger for the various cognitive behaviors associated with identity protection. Maintaining our confidence that we are (individually and collectively) truthful becomes a truth-independent goal, and in doing so opens avenues for self-deception, hypocrisy, and wishful thinking as to how far we actually meet the standards of truthfulness to which we are committed (Sleat 2022). Truthfulness has the advantage over other commitments that could trigger those protection mechanisms to the extent that imminent within it are the resources for recognizing and rectifying where any self-deception and wishful thinking might be occurring. And yet we need to take very seriously Nietzsche's cautioning that few elements of an identity may survive the full scrutiny of truthfulness, including the fundamental question of the value of truth itself. We must also recognize how the demands of truthfulness necessarily put pressure on our capacity to recognize its place in our identity. The misgivings about the epistemic effects of loyalty discussed before are well-grounded. To be truthful is going to mean not only resisting those effects but, by virtue of representing such an epistemic risk, being inherently distrustful of loyalty and possibly adopting a cynical stance toward the very act of strongly identifying with or valuing any group. As loyalty to one's identity becomes an enemy of truthfulness, so we are going to become more uncomfortable recognizing ourselves as having a particular identity in the first place, even if that identity is one in which truthfulness is fundamental. What is generated is a dynamic in which the psychological forces that act to protect our identity will work to obscure evidence of the identity to the individual or group, leaving the commitment to truthfulness prominent in our consciousnesses but continuously obfuscating the wider identity of which it is a part. Protecting such an identity means obscuring it *as an* identity. The extent to which giving such a priority to truthfulness is to be a certain sort of person or people easily drops out of the picture. This is at least part of the reason why those so committed to truthfulness tend to be part of the only tribe that does not think of itself as a tribe, which is itself a sort of self-deception.

That truthfulness is part of an identity is going to be more visible from the outside than the inside. Its opponents are, somewhat ironically, better placed to see the identity for what it is than those who inhabit it. Better recognizing the centrality of truthfulness to our identity allows us to at least bring into focus the role identity is playing in our disagreements with others. Where we might think that we are simply acting as truthfulness demands when we, say, endorse the integrity of mainstream media, support experts

and their findings in relation to climate change and vaccinations, reject conspiracy theories or the notion of "alternative facts," and so on, it is going to be experienced as a defense of an identity by those for whom truth-fulness plays a different role in theirs. Claims that we are just "on the side of truth" will appear deeply disingenuous and hypocritical (and they may well *be* disingenuous and hypocritical). To our ears, the notion that it is somehow elitist to trust scientists or to base one's beliefs on facts makes no sense. It is to mix up sociological and epistemic categories. And hence such charges are often met with genuine bemusement. But when identity is fore-grounded, *on both sides of the divide*, the charge is at least a little more understandable. Placing such high epistemic trust in scientists is what those with a certain sort of identity do (Nietzsche [2017] rightly saw that science and asceticism are "allies" [116]), and it is an identity that many have come to view as elitist and inherently skewed toward one side of the political spectrum.[14] In no small part this is because science *is* inherently an elitist enterprise, prioritizing certain sorts of knowledge, skills, and training, and, therefore, particular forms and levels of education that bear clear relations to questions of class, wealth, race, and so on. Scientists, and academics more generally, just are elites in that regard (Gross 2013).

Likely more important here, however, is the extent to which the very notion of basing one's beliefs on evidence and facts has come to be negatively con-trasted with basing them on feelings and "lived experience" and especially the lived experience of those who most often feel marginalized within society. An excellent example of this was provided by Newt Gingrich in 2016 who, when presented with statistics from the FBI that showed violent crime was down, responded "The average American . . . does not think crime is down, does not think they are safer." He went further: "The current view is that liberals have a whole set of statistics that theoretically might be right, but it's not where human beings are." And ended with: "As a political candidate, I'll go with how people feel and I'll let you [the interviewer] go with the theoreticians." The rhetorical devices through which liberalism is equated with an elitism that bases beliefs on theory and statistics in contrast to Gingrich's anti-elitism, which gives prior-ity to peoples' lived experience and feelings, are crude, but this demonstrates how far truthfulness has become implicated in a much broader set of political and social contestations (Krange, Kaltenborn, and Hultman 2021; Mann and

---

14. See Mann and Schleifer (2020) for an interesting discussion of how among those with stable conservative identities combine continued high trust in scientific research with low trust in the scientific community itself.

Schleifer 2020; Merkley 2020; Motta 2018a, 2018b).[15] Without being the direct focus of contestation itself, the notion that beliefs should track objective facts rather than subjective feelings has become a distinguishing marker of the identities lined up on one side of those conflicts. Putting faith in scientists or statisticians above lived experience or feelings is something a certain sort of person does. While it is reductive to say that we value truthfulness because of who we are, in supporting truthfulness we often are also simultaneously demonstrating our loyalty to our identity and protecting truthfulness as one of its central components. This need not be our intention; we are rarely conscious of any such purpose in our actions. And it is obviously impossible to stand up for one's values without also standing up for the identities in which they feature. This is neither avoidable nor necessarily regrettable. The point is, however, that we need to take seriously that defenses of truthfulness will often be *experienced* as defenses of an identity from the outside by those with rival identities, and we ought not to think that this is a complete misinterpretation or one being made purely in bad faith.

While it cannot be right to say that truth is something we value *because* of who we are, it is still the case that people "like us" do value truth. Our loyalty to our identity must play some role in sustaining our commitment to truth, especially when the demands of truthfulness are particularly burdensome and the temptations of wishful thinking or self-deception strongly felt (as they very often are). This does not in itself tell us much, but it does tell us that it cannot be appropriate to simply think that truth and loyalty are inherently antagonistic. Rather, just as loyalty to an identity in which nationalism is central is likely going to make one strive to achieve the goals and values associated with that nationalism, so you would expect that loyalty to an identity in which truthfulness is prominent will lead at least to the aspiration of meeting the demands of truthfulness. The issue therefore becomes whether identities foster appropriate concern for truthfulness or not.[16] If that is right then it cannot straightforwardly be the case that loyalty is an epistemic vice, at least not when truthfulness is a central feature of the identity of the groups to which we are loyal. Where that is the case, loyalty might be seen as having

15. In Nietzsche's (2017) genealogical retelling, "truthful" was a label the aristocracy *purposefully* applied to themselves in contrast to the "deceitful common man" (14).
16. Included in which will be a concern for how we can retain confidence in the value of truthfulness itself in light of Nietzsche's otherwise highly destabilizing insights (Williams 2002).

significant benefits in developing and sustaining the right epistemic attitudes, dispositions, and practices. Defending one's identity and being truthful no longer necessarily pulls one in different directions. Loyalty may then become an important collective resource for sustaining the institutions and social practices that promote truthfulness and help defend us against self-deception and wishful thinking. Moreover, rather than seeing such loyalty in terms of a form of politically motivated reasoning that is necessarily detrimental to truth, we can rather view it as a way of further buttressing truthfulness. In this regard, Keller (2007) is surely wrong to assume that demonstrating "loyalty-in-belief," as he puts it, means to hold false beliefs or to employ lax epistemic standards to how one assesses evidence or new information (6–7). This can, to be sure, occur when it is loyalty to identities where truthfulness is not taken to be immune to revision in conflicts with other values. But that is a contingent matter and does not exclude the possibility of loyalty working to support the commitment to truthfulness.

For those who have been concerned about recent "truth-decay" (Kavanagh and Rich 2018), the corollary question is always something like how to increase peoples' commitment to truthfulness. From what has been seen here, that does not quite capture the problem we face. Simple appeals to the value of truth, the importance of facts, etc., have proven largely ineffectual when pitched at that level of abstraction. This is not a surprise once we recognize the extent to which truthfulness is embedded in wider issues of identity. The question is therefore more like how we foster more truthful identities. That is quite a different problem. It requires us to foreground issues of power and incentives: Which groups have the ability to demand their members diminish the value they give to truthfulness as a matter of loyalty, and how do they benefit from that politically? What are the various incentives for groups and individuals to value accuracy? How do those who are committed to truthfulness work on assembling the power needed to successfully promote that value in other groups, and does doing so require departures from truthfulness? Are there alternative institutions that might support truthfulness while being judged more trustworthy by those with nonascetic identities? Such questions are inherently fraught, though our current politics complicates matters further by virtue of the fact that truthfulness itself has become at least totemic of the disputes currently being played out. Asking how we foster greater concern for truth will be interpreted, and again not necessarily unfairly or inaccurately, as asking how we make "you" more like "us," with all the haughty, patronizing, and condescending implications that that brings with it. No surprise, therefore, if the invitation is often not so politely declined.

Conclusion

Much recent political discourse has employed a distinction between those who value loyalty to their groups against those who value truth. We have seen that this is unsatisfactory, and it is better to see the issue as between those who are loyal to different identities in which truth and the demands of truthfulness are given different significance. This does not in itself resolve anything, of course. But there is clearly value in better understanding the nature of our predicament. Moreover, a proper recognition of the somewhat unique place of truthfulness within our identities and understanding of what it demands should increase our own self-awareness and help us acknowledge the role those identities play in fueling the polarization that appeals to truthfulness are intended to overcome. Where we might take heart from this analysis is that it gives us further reason for thinking that the problems affecting contemporary liberal democratic societies are not rooted in permanent features of human life but are due to contingent aspects of our current social identities. What is not clear, however, and where we might have good grounds for pessimism, is just how far the dynamics of truthfulness and loyalty we have been discussing will necessarily impede efforts to encourage more truthful identities once they have taken on their present intensity. The prospects for any successful resolution to these issues is itself one that truthfulness demands we approach without wishful thinking.

ORCID iD

Matt Sleat 🔟 https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2518-6940

Bibliography

Arendt, Hannah. 1972. *Crises of the Republic*. London: Harcourt Brace.

Battaly, Heather. 2018. "Close-Mindedness and Dogmatism." *Episteme 15* (3): 261–82.

Berlin, Isaiah. 1969. "Two Concepts of Liberty." In *Four Essays on Liberty*, edited by Isaiah Berlin, 118–72. London: Oxford University Press.

Brinkmann, Matthias. 2022. "In Defence of Non-Ideal Political Deference." *Episteme 19*: 264–85.

Bull, Malcolm. 2019. *On Mercy*. Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Callinicos, Alex. 1990. *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique*. Cambridge: Polity.

Cassam, Quassim. 2021. *Vices of the Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chambers, Simone. 2018. "Human Life Is Group Life: Deliberative Democracy for Realists." *Critical Review 30* (1–2): 36–48.

Cohen, Geoffrey L. 2003. "Party Over Policy: The Dominating Impact of Group Influence on Political Beliefs." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 85* (5): 808–22.

Conant, James. 2000. "Freedom, Cruelty and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell." In *Rorty and His Critics*, edited by Robert B. Brandom, 268–341. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Dagleish, Tim. 1997. "Once More with Feeling: The Role of Emotion in Self-Deception." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences 20*: 110–11.

Darby, Derrick, and Eduardo J. Martinez. 2022. "Making Identities Safe for Democracy." *Journal of Political Philosophy 30* (3): 273–97.

Edenberg, Elizabeth, and Michael Hannon, eds. 2021. *Political Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ewin, R. E. 1992. "Loyalty and Virtues." *The Philosophical Quarterly 42* (169): 403–19.

Fletcher, Geroge P. 1993. *Loyalty: An Essay on the Morality of Relationships*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Frimer, Jeremy A., Linda J. Skitka, and Matt Motyl. 2017. "Liberals and Conservatives Are Similarly Motivated to Avoid Exposure to One Another's Opinions." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology 72*: 1–12.

Galeotti, Anna Elisabetta. 2018. *Political Self-Deception*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Geras, Norman. 1995. *Solidarity in the Conversation of Humankind*. London: Verso Books.

Gray, John. 2000. *Two Faces of Liberalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Greene, Joshua. 2015. *Moral Tribes - Emotion, Reason, and the Gap between Us and Them*. London: Atlantic Books.

Gross, Neil. 2013. *Why Are Professors Liberal and Why Do Conservatives Care?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hannon, Michael, and Jeroen de Ridder, eds. 2021. *The Routledge Handbook of Political Epistemology*. Oxon: Routledge.

Hart, William, Dolores Albarracín, Alice H. Eagly, Inge Brechan, Matthew J. Lindberg, and Lisa Merrill. 2009. "Feeling Validated versus Being Correct: A Meta-Analysis of Selective Exposure to Information." *Psychological Bulletin 135* (4): 555–88.

Havel, Václev. 1991. "The Power of the Powerless." In *Open Letters - Selected Writings 1965-1990*, edited by Paul Wilson, 125–214. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Hsee, Christopher K. 1996. "Elastic Justification: How Unjustifiable Factors Influence Judgments." *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes 66*: 122–29.

Jost, John T., Erin P. Hennes, and Howard Lavine. 2013. "'Hot' Political Cognition: Its Self-, Group-, and System-Serving Purposes." In *Oxford Handbook of Social Cognition*, edited by Donal E. Carlston, 851–75. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kahan, Dan M. 2013. "Ideology, Motivated Reasoning, and Cognition Reflection: An Experimental Study." *Judgment and Decision Making 8*: 407–24.

———.2016. "The Politically Motivated Reasoning Paradigm, Part 1: What Politically Motivated Reasoning Is and How to Measure It." In *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Sciences: An Interdisciplinary, Searchable, and Linkable Resource*, edited by Robert A. Scott and Marlis C. Buchmann. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. doi:10.1002/9781118900772.etrds0417.

———. 2017. "The Expressive Rationality of Inaccurate Perceptions." *Behavioral & Brain Sciences 40*: E6. doi:10.1017/S0140525X15002332.

Kahan, Dan M., and Jonathan C. Corbin. 2016. "A Note on the Perverse Effects of Actively Open-Minded Thinking on Climate-Change Polarization." *Research & Politics 3*(4): 1–5.

Kahan, Dan M., Hank Jenkins-Smith, and Donald Braman. 2011. "Cultural Cognition of Scientific Consensus." *Journal of Risk Research 14* (2): 147–74.

Kavanagh, Jennifer, and Michael D. Rich. 2018. "Truth Decay - An Initial Exploration of the Diminishing Role of Facts and Analysis in American Public Life." Research Reports, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA.

Keller, Simon. 2007. *The Limits of Loyalty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kennan, George. 1946. "George Kennan's 'Long Telegram'.*"* https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/george-kennans-long-telegram.

Krange, Olve, Bjørn P. Kaltenborn, and Martin Hultman. 2021. ""Don't Confuse Me with Facts"—How Right Wing Populism Affects Trust in Agencies Advocating Anthropogenic Climate Change as a Reality." *Humanities and Social Communication 8*: 255.

Krastev, Ivan, and Stephen Holmes. 2019. *The Light That Failed - A Reckoning*. Great Britain: Allen Lane.

Kunda, Ziva. 1990. "The Case for Motivated Reasoning." *Psychological Bulletin 108* (3): 480–98.

Lepoutre, Maxime. 2020. "Democratic Group Cognition." *Philosophy & Public Affairs 48* (1): 40–78.

Lodge, Milton, and Charles S. Taber. 2005. "The Automaticity of Affect for Political Leaders, Groups, and Issues: An Experimental Test." *Political Psychology 26* (3): 455–82.

Mann, Marcus, and Cyrus Schleifer. 2020. "Love the Science, Hate the Scientists: Conservative Identity Protects Belief in Science and Undermines Trust in Scientists." *Social Forces 99* (1): 305–32.

Mele, Alfred R. 1987. *Irrationality - An Essay on Akrasia, Self-Deception and Self-Control*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 1997. "Real Self Deception." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences 20*: 91–136.

———. 2001. *Self-Deception Unmasked*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

———. 2003. "Emotion and Desire in Self-Deception." *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement 52*: 163–79.

Mercier, Hugo, and Sperber, Dan. 2011. "Why Do Humans Reason? Arguments for an Argumentative Theory." *Behavioral & Brain Sciences 34* (2): 57–74.

Merkley, Eric. 2020. "Anti-Intellectualism, Populism, and Motivated Resistance to Expert Consensus." *Public Opinion Quarterly 84* (1): 24–48.

Motta, Matthew. 2018a. "The Dynamics and Political Implications of Anti-Intellectualism in the United States." *American Politics Research 46* (3): 465–98.

———. 2018b. "The Polarizing Effect of the March for Science on Attitudes toward Scientists." *PS: Political Science & Politics 51* (4): 782–88.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2003. *The Gay Science*. Edited by Bernard Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2017. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Edited by Keith Ansell-Pearson. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oldenquist, Andrew. 1982. "Loyalties." *The Journal of Philosophy 79* (4): 173–93.

Owen, David. 2001. "The Avoidance of Cruelty: Joshing Rorty on Liberalism, Scepticism, and Ironism." In *Richard Rorty: Critical Dialogues*, edited by Matthew Festenstein and Simon Thompson, 93–110. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Pasnau, Robert. 2017. *After Certainty: A History of Our Epistemic Ideals and Illusions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Roberts, David. 2017. "Donald Trump and the Rise of Tribal Epistemology." *Vox* (blog). May 19. https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/3/22/14762030/donald-trump-tribal-epistemology.

Rorty, Richard. 1983. "Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism." *The Journal of Philosophy 80* (10): 583–89.

———. 1989. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2021. "Justice as a Larger Loyalty." In *Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism*, edited by Richard Rorty, 144–58. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.

Royce, Josiah. 1908. *The Philosophy of Loyalty*. New York, NY: Macmillan.

Russell, Bertrand. 2016. *Philosophy and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sherman, David K., and Geoffrey L. Cohen. 2006. "The Psychology of Self-Defense: Self-Affirmation Theory." In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 38, edited by Mark P. Zanna, 183–242: San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Sleat, Matt. 2022. "Self-Deception about Truthfulness." *European Journal of Philosophy 30* (2): 693–708.

Taber, Charles S., and Milton Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science 50* (3): 755–69.

Waldron, Jeremy. 1987. "Theoretical Foundations of Liberalism." *The Philosophical Quarterly 37* (147): 127–50.

Williams, Bernard. 2002. *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy*. Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press.

Author Biography

Matt Sleat is reader in political theory at the University of Sheffield. He is the author of *Liberal Realism – A Realist Theory of Liberal Politics*, editor of *Politics Recovered: Realist Thought in Theory and Practice*, and has published over 20 articles, including most recently "Self Deception about Truthfulness' (*European Journal of Philosophy*) and "Realism and Political Normativity" (*Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*).