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A Guide to Political Epistemology

Michael Hannon
University of Nottingham

Elizabeth Edenberg
Baruch College, CUNY

Political epistemology is a newly flourishing area of philosophy. While scholars have been interested in topics at the intersection of political philosophy and epistemology at least since Plato, the past few years have witnessed an outpouring of new research in this area. For example, new work has been published on propaganda, fake news, political disagreement, conspiracy theories, the epistemic merits of (and challenges to) democracy, voter ignorance, climate change skepticism, the epistemic harms of echo chambers, and intellectual virtues and vices in politics. Despite this surge of interest, there is no comprehensive overview to this burgeoning field. This chapter will map out the terrain of political epistemology, highlight some of the key questions and topics of this field, draw connections across seemingly disparate areas of work, and briefly situate this field within its historical and contemporary contexts.

While political epistemology includes a diverse range of topics, this chapter will impose some structure on the terrain by grouping these topics into six sections: (i) The Epistemology of Democracy, (ii) Voter Ignorance and Irrationality, (iii) Political Disagreement and Polarization, (iv) Post-truth, Fake News, and Misinformation, (v) Trust, Doubt, and Expertise, and (vi) Epistemic Virtues and Vices in Politics. These categories are not exhaustive but they do cover a large amount of work in the emerging field of political epistemology. By carving up the field in this way, we hope to give some meaningful shape to this broad and rich area of scholarship. We will conclude by attempting to open up avenues for future research by drawing attention to some topics that deserve further exploration.

The Emergence of Political Epistemology

Political epistemology is a newly thriving field, but it has old roots. In the *Republic*, Plato attacked the epistemic merits of democracy in favor of 'epistocracy', or rule by the knowers.[1] In *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill touted the epistemic benefits of deliberation for citizens; in *Considerations on Representative Government*, Mill advocated for plural voting for those with more education in order to improve the quality of political decisions. In "Truth and Politics", Hannah Arendt analyzed the relationship between truth and political freedom. In *Political Liberalism*, John Rawls put the question of deep and persistent disagreements among citizens at the center of his political inquiry, ultimately arguing that cooperation across disagreements requires setting aside debates about the truth of particular views and instead adopting an agnostic epistemological position. Following Rawls's work, political philosophers have debated the role that truth, deliberation, justification, and the epistemic quality of decisions should play in establishing the legitimacy of democracy.

[1] The term 'epistocracy' was coined by Estlund (2007).

Since political epistemology has old roots, why has it only recently become a field in its own right? As we see it, two recent developments largely explain the emergence of political epistemology as a distinctive subfield of philosophy.

First, new research in social epistemology (itself a relatively young field) has centered on topics that bear directly on political life. This led to the development of conceptual tools that are readily applicable to political issues. For example, contemporary social epistemology has focused on the social dimensions of knowledge, trust in testimony and experts, the epistemology of disagreement, judgment aggregation, and the design of social systems to realize our epistemic goals.

Until very recently, these discussions were largely unconnected to what we regard as a distinctively political type of epistemology. For example, the political philosophy literature on reasonable disagreement has largely developed without integrating the large body of recent epistemological work on peer disagreement. Conversely, work on peer disagreement in epistemology often proceeds independently of the literature in political philosophy, even though discussions of political disagreement have taken center stage in political philosophy since Rawls's *Political Liberalism*. Only recently have scholars begun to systematically explore the ways in which the analytic and conceptual tools of epistemology bear on political philosophy, and vice versa.

A second cause of the blooming literature in political epistemology is that recent political developments cry out for epistemological analysis. Our political discourse is currently saturated with epistemic notions like 'fake news', 'post truth', 'epistemic bubbles', 'truth decay', and 'alternative facts'. This suggests that we are in the midst of a politically charged epistemic crisis. As the April 2017 issue of the *New Scientist* declared: "Philosophers of knowledge, your time has come." Philosophers have reacted by seeking to play a crucial role in understanding and shaping our response to these political developments.

While the rush of interest in political epistemology was largely sparked by the UK Brexit vote and the election of Donald Trump, the themes that motivate this new research are deeper and more philosophical. For instance, it has become increasingly difficult to discern legitimate sources of evidence, misinformation spreads faster than ever, and there is a widely felt sense that the role of truth in politics has decayed in recent years. It is therefore no coincidence that Oxford Dictionaries declared 'post-truth' its 2016 international word of the year. Now more than ever there is a need to bring together foundational discussions of truth, knowledge, democracy, polarization, pluralism, and related issues. We think of political epistemology as the child of social epistemology and political philosophy. It was born from the belief that theorizing about politics would benefit from the conceptual tools of social epistemology, and that the socio-political aspects of epistemology must incorporate insights from political philosophy.

The Epistemology of Democracy

Around the world, democracy is frequently held up as the paradigmatic case of rule by and for equals. It promises a form of political authority that respects citizens' freedom and moral equality by giving each citizen an equal share of political power. As Joshua Cohen explains, drawing on Rousseau, the ideal of democracy is to create a "free community of equals" (Cohen 2010). Democracy respects this ideal by giving each person an equal say in the laws that govern our shared political lives.

But what is the epistemic value, if any, of democracy? Does democracy leverage the wisdom of the many? Or is it more likely to dilute the influence of the smartest and most informed citizens?

Despite the moral equality of all people, we know that people have different intellectual capacities, talents, and interests. While politics captures the intellectual attention of some, many people direct their talents and curiosity towards other endeavors. As a result, the distribution of political knowledge is unequal amongst citizens. But in a democracy, voters are supposed to have equal political authority, regardless of the epistemic rigor of their political opinions. This is worrisome insofar as less informed voters could lead us down the wrong path, setting misguided policies based on inaccurate or incomplete information. Shouldn't we aim for policies that are both epistemically and morally robust? This conundrum has led to a long and wide-ranging debate about the epistemic values of (and threats to) democracy.

Plato warned that despite its initial attraction in offering freedom and equality to all, the fundamental problem lies in democracy "assigning a sort of equality to equals and unequals alike" (*Republic*, 558c5). Democracy does not distinguish between the wise, who are well qualified to govern in the best interest of society, and those who follow only their desires. Being governed by the masses will lead to a chaotic pursuit of people's desires, which may change easily on a whim (*Republic,* Book 8). In short, democracy is epistemically bankrupt as it dilutes the influence of the wise among the changing appetites of the many. Plato's challenge animates a number of contemporary critiques of democracy. But before we consider these critiques, what can be said in favor of democracy on epistemic terms? Can Plato's challenge be answered?

Defenders of epistemic conceptions of democracy claim that democracy has *epistemic value*. They argue for this claim in various ways. Rousseau thought that, under the right conditions, democracy helps us get the right answers to political decisions by revealing the will of the people (Rousseau 1762). John Stuart Mill thought that democratic deliberation helps to educate citizens by ensuring they have a lively grasp of the truth rather than following dead dogma (Mill 1859). John Dewey emphasized the importance of bringing citizens together to identify and solve what they took to be problems of public interest (Dewey 1981). Contemporary defenses of democracy on epistemic grounds begin with Joshua Cohen's defense of the epistemic value of

voting and the institutional structures needed to ensure that votes maintain their epistemic value (Cohen 1986). David Estlund is another prominent early defender of epistemic democracy, arguing that democratic laws are legitimate because they result from a decision procedure that tends to make correct decisions (Estlund 1993; 2008). Hélène Landemore (2012) develops the Aristotelian idea that democracy has epistemic advantages because it maximizes the cognitive diversity it brings to bear on collective problems in the face of uncertainty.

On an epistemic conception of democracy, the legitimacy of political institutions and decisions at least partly depends on their epistemic outcomes. Democracy can guide us towards the right decisions either by aggregating votes or through democratic deliberation. Aggregative approaches tend to build on Condorcet's jury theorem (Condorcet 1785) to show that voting is an instrument that can help us collectively arrive at the correct answer.[2] The basic idea behind the jury theorem is that the majority's decision is more likely to be correct the larger the group of voters, provided individuals each have a slightly better than average chance of getting the correct answer. In short, this approach seeks to leverage the wisdom of the crowd.

While many epistemic democrats have appealed to Condorcet's jury theorem to defend the epistemic merits of democracy (e.g., Cohen 1986; Gaus 1997; List and Goodin 2001; Landemore 2012), it has also been subject to many critiques (Estlund 2008; Brennan 2016; Ancell 2017). First, can we assume the average voter is more likely to be correct than not? If not, the aggregate decision will be increasingly likely to be wrong according to the same theorem. Second, how can we as a community know the average competence of voters? To know the level of voter competence, we would need "independent public knowledge of the answer key – the very facts we hoped to use democratic voting to reveal" (Estlund 1993: 93). Third, the theorem is overly simplistic by failing to account for the diversity of epistemic perspectives within a democracy or the ways dynamic features of democracy's epistemic functions, such as discussion prior to voting or feedback mechanisms that can correct for error over time (Anderson 2006).

Instead of locating the epistemic value of democracy in aggregation procedures alone, many scholars turn to deliberative approaches to shore up the epistemic value of democracy. While some deliberative democrats argue for the moral value of deliberation among citizens (Rawls 1993), others seek to improve the epistemic quality of decisions made following deliberation (Cohen 1986; Bohman and Rehg 1997). The exchange of reasons envisioned by deliberative democrats helps educate citizens about public issues (Dewey 1981; Mill 1859; Cohen 1986; Ackerman and Fishkin 2002) and can help individual citizens expand their knowledge of how political proposals impact diverse others within society (Young 1997; Anderson 2006). In addition to leading to a more informed citizenry, properly structured deliberation is essential for democratic legitimacy, according to deliberative democrats. Building on Rawls's *Political*

[2] There is also a substantial literature on preference aggregation, building on Arrow's Impossibility Theorem (Arrow 1951), to show various paradoxes that can arise from majority voting. For a helpful overview of this literature, see List (2012) and citations therein.

Liberalism, Cohen argues that the outcomes of the ideal deliberative procedure "are democratically legitimate if and only if they could be the object of a free and reasoned agreement among equals" (Cohen 1989: 22). Collective choices should not only fit with ex-ante standards, but "should be made in a deliberative way" following the force of the better argument (Cohen 1989: 22; see also Habermas 1984).

On the assumption that there are independent epistemic standards for evaluating the outcome of the democratic process, the question arises: is democracy the best form of government to secure our epistemic goals?

If the legitimacy of political decisions hinges on their accuracy, then democracy may have no special role to play. Why not turn to the rule of the knowers, epistocracy? This brings us back to Plato's early critique of democracy on epistemic grounds. Some people are more knowledgeable than others about politically relevant matters. If we care about getting the answer right, why not trust the experts? When we are sick, we go to the doctor and defer to her expert authority. Moreover, we don't ask for input from our neighbors, friends, and distant others within our community to determine which medical procedure would be best. Why not the same for politics? As Jason Brennan argues, political decisions are weighty—they determine policies that impact the lives of everyone. Furthermore, voters are not merely expressing their preferences, they are seeking to impose their views on all others in a society. Political decisions wield the coercive authority of the government and are "enforced through institutionalized violence" (Brennan 2016: 241). Shouldn't it be important to ensure they are the right decisions?

In other words, the emphasis on epistemic value may push us away from democracy and toward epistocracy. There are a variety of forms this could take.[3] For example, giving those who are more educated more votes; restricting suffrage to those who pass certain competency tests; or weighing voting according to one's level of political knowledge. Other proposals are to establish an "enfranchisement lottery" wherein voting is restricted to a randomly chosen group of citizens who are provided in depth information relevant to that election (Lopez-Guerra 2010); or replacing democracy with "lottocracy" in which citizens chosen through a fair lottery learn about the relevant issues and then actually govern (Guerrero 2014).[4] While classical accounts like Plato's envision a philosopher king, contemporary accounts need not involve one individual with expansive knowledge of the truth. We need only to limit uninformed citizens from imposing a risk of harm on others. Brennan's case for epistocracy rests on an "anti-authority tenant" that ensures those who are "morally unreasonable, ignorant, or incompetent about politics" are either forbidden from exercising political authority over others or their political power is

[3] Brennan (2016) does not advocate for any particular form of epistocracy but seeks to lay the groundwork by arguing against democracy. He lists various types of epistocracy at (Brennan 2016: 15).

[4] Brennan (forthcoming) and Ahlstrom-Vij (forthcoming) recommend 'enlightened preference voting' as a way to solve the problem of public ignorance without restricting the franchise. This involves filtering the electoral input through a statistical model that simulates what the public's political preferences would have been, had they been better informed on politically relevant matters.

reduced "in order to protect innocent people from their incompetence" (Brennan 2016: 17). We will return to discuss voter ignorance in the next section.

For the sake of argument, let's admit that some voters are ignorant and some people are better at making political decisions than others. These facts do not yet suggest that epistocracy would be legitimate. The authority to command compliance needs to be legitimate, and this has important moral requirements. When we turn to experts for guidance, we can choose to take their advice or ignore it. The experts cannot command compliance on the basis of their superior knowledge. Estlund calls this the *expert/boss fallacy*. He writes, "you might be correct, but what makes you boss?" (Estlund 2008: 3). Citizens should not be expected to defer to experts and surrender their own judgments on important matters (Estlund 2003: 75-78). Furthermore, citizens will reasonably disagree about who the experts are and "unless all reasonable citizens actually agreed with the decisions of some agreed moral/political guru, no one could legitimately rule on the basis of wisdom" (Estlund 2003: 75).

Estlund offers an alternative account of democratic legitimacy, *epistemic proceduralism*. Given the diversity of viewpoints in society, there will be no publicly agreed upon experts whose expertise can be recognized as authoritative for all of the diverse members of a political community (Estlund 1993, 2003, 2008). Nevertheless, democracy is epistemically best among morally available options (Estlund 2008: 8). Legitimacy does not hinge on the correctness of the decision, but rather the epistemic value of the democratic procedure itself. Democratic procedures "have a tendency to make correct decisions" but are fallible. Their true advantage is that "the procedure has epistemic value that is publicly recognizable" (Estlund 2008: 8).[5] This view attempts to balance moral value with epistemic value, while avoiding the objections to both non-epistemic and epistocratic views.

Even when citizens are motivated to discuss political issues with one another in a spirit of openness and respect—deliberation frequently reveals at least as much disagreement as it does consensus. What is the significance of disagreement amongst citizens for deliberative democracy? Drawing inspiration from feminist epistemology (see the chapter by Kristen Intemann in this volume) and philosophy of science, feminist philosophers have argued that explicitly incorporating diverse perspectives in democratic deliberation improves our social knowledge and is not simply a moral requirement grounded in equality.[6] Iris Marion Young argues that structural relations of power between groups afford each a distinct perspective on shared social problems (1997, 2000). Deliberation can expand citizens' understanding of one another, but also leads to "a more comprehensive social knowledge" that "better enables [citizens] to arrive at wise solutions to collective problems" (Young 1997: 404). Likewise, Elizabeth Anderson argues that in a segregated society, different social groups "must work together to share their asymmetrical knowledge" because "certain vital forms of knowledge

[5] Fabienne Peter (2009) expands on epistemic proceduralism, turning to Helen Longino's (2002) view to explain the epistemic value of the democratic procedure.
[6] See Harding (2004) for an influential collection of essays on feminist standpoint theory.

[including knowledge of the public interest] cannot be known by groups in isolation but are essentially the product of people from different groups working together" (Anderson 2010: 109). Anderson argues that an epistemic defense of democracy should be able to account for "the epistemic powers of all three constitutive features of democracy: diversity, discussion, and dynamism (feedback)" (2006: 13-14). Her own defense of democratic deliberation leverages citizens' situated knowledge wherein information that is crucial for making good decisions and evaluating their efficacy is asymmetrically distributed across society (Anderson 2006, 2010), while advocating for the importance of integration to "realize [democracy's] promise of universal and equal standing" (2010: 89).

These debates about the epistemic merits of (and threats to) democracy also set the stage for many topics that have occupied political epistemologists. What is required to promote voter competence? Can experts be trusted to guide politically relevant decisions, and if so, how do we identify who qualifies as an expert? What is the significance of political disagreement for the legitimacy of government authority? Can disagreement be epistemically productive for a political community and if so, under what conditions? How do threats like the spread of false, manipulative, or misleading information impact our society both epistemically and morally? Finally, which epistemic virtues are important for a well-functioning society? We now turn to these questions.

Voter Ignorance and Political Irrationality

A common belief is that democracies require informed voters to function well. But are citizens competent enough to vote responsibly and exercise political power over others?

One of the most consistent findings in political science over the past 60 years is the staggering depth of citizens' ignorance about politics.[7] The average voter is abysmally ignorant of even the most basic political information, such as who their elected officials are, what their opponents believe, and whether the economy is doing better or worse.

Voter ignorance is a significant problem for democracy. When voters make poor decisions out of ignorance, they harm the common good. For example, the false belief that climate change is not the result of human activity has blocked policies that would reduce global emissions. This illustrates that citizens often lack the knowledge necessary to make informed political decisions. It is for this reason that Plato said democracy is defective. In *The Gorgias*, he criticized democracies for adopting policies based on the views of the ignorant common citizens and neglecting the better informed counsel of experts. More recently, Ilya Somin (2013), Jason Brennan (2016), and Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels (2016) argue that citizens are unable to satisfy the demands outlined by many theories of democracy.

[7] For depressing surveys of voter ignorance, see Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996), Somin (2013), Brennan (2016), Achen and Bartels (2016), and Duffy (2018).

A critical component of citizenship is knowledge about politics. However, political ignorance may actually be rational.[8] After all, the vast size and complexity of modern government make it almost impossible for ordinary citizens to be adequately informed on most issues. Moreover, an individual voter has virtually no chance of influencing electoral outcomes. In the 2008 U.S. presidential election, for example, the chance of an individual vote having a decisive impact was approximately 1 in 60 million (Gelman et al. 2010). As a result, the incentive to become a smarter voter is vanishingly small. The theory of rational ignorance says that citizens know (at least implicitly) that the costs of acquiring political knowledge outweigh the benefits of possessing it; hence, their ignorance is rational.

What does this mean for democracy?

One important lesson is that voters are not simply "stupid." The act of learning has an opportunity cost: it takes time and effort that we could use for other valuable things. However, widespread political ignorance is a problem *whether it is rational or not*. Indeed, the rationality of ignorance makes it an even more difficult challenge to democracy than it might be otherwise (Somin 2013: 75). When the price to be adequately informed is too high, we lack the incentives to meet the epistemic requirements of democracy. As a result, democracy is defective.

An even bigger social problem than ignorance is the illusion of knowledge. While an ignorant voter knows little or nothing about politics, some people actually know *less than nothing*. They are misinformed, not just uninformed. Being misinformed is far more pernicious than ignorance because believing incorrect information tends to preclude doubt and obstructs the attainment of truth. When we *think* that we know something, we confidently hold onto our false beliefs. In this way, the misinformed are doubly ignorant: they do not even know how ignorant they are. The illusion of knowledge is therefore a more formidable enemy of truth than mere ignorance.

Voters may also be too *biased* or *irrational* for democracy to flourish. When reasoning about politics, our thinking is often corrupted by a host of cognitive biases and errors. For example, a vast amount of work in cognitive psychology indicates that we all frequently interpret and filter evidence in ways that fit with our antecedent worldview.[9] We also tend to uncritically accept (and better remember) evidence that is favourable to our view, whereas we are far more critical (and forgetful) of counterevidence. This general human tendency is known as *confirmation bias* (Lord et al. 1979). When this occurs, two people can look at the exact same body of evidence and yet walk away with radically different conclusions about what the evidence shows, thereby drawing undue support for their initial positions.[10]

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[8] Downs (1957), Somin (2013), and Brennan (2011, 2016) defend the rational ignorance theory.

[9] See Gilovich (2008) for an overview.

[10] These biases are sometimes collectively referred to as "motivated reasoning", which is "the tendency to seek out, interpret, evaluate, and weigh evidence and arguments in ways that are systematically biased toward conclusions that we 'want' to reach for reasons independent of their truth or warrant" (Ancell 2019: 418). See also Kunda (1990); Ditto, Pizarro, and Tannenbaum (2009); Lodge and Taber (2013).

Our reasoning is especially prone to error or bias with respect to beliefs that *matter to us*; e.g., our political, moral, and personal beliefs that are partly constitutive of our identity (Haidt 2012). As Joseph Schumpeter (1942: 262) writes: "The typical citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field. He argues and analyzes in a way which he would readily recognize as infantile within the sphere of his real interests. He becomes a primitive again." This contradicts Mill's claim that political participation makes us smarter and nobler. Instead, politics tends to "stultify and corrupt us" (Brennan 2016: 2).

However, voters may have incentives to engage in highly biased evaluation of political information. Bryan Caplan (2007) calls this "rational irrationality". When the price to be adequately informed is too high, it makes sense for voters to guide their beliefs not by the truth but rather by their desire for comfort, affiliation, and belonging. By indulging our biases, we can avoid challenges to our identities, confirm our pre-existing beliefs, and bolster group loyalties. This provides psychological gratification, helps us feel accepted by our community, and leads to happiness. Thus, it may not only be rational for voters to be ignorant; it may also be rational for them to be partisan and epistemically tribalistic. In short, it may be *instrumentally* rational for individuals to be *epistemically* irrational on most political issues.[11]

Can anything be done to improve citizens' knowledge about politics and correct for common cognitive biases that impair voter judgment?

John Stuart Mill believed that an increase in the availability of information and formal education could create an informed electorate. However, as Somin (2013: 20) notes, "A relatively stable level of ignorance has persisted even in the face of massive increases in educational attainment and an unprecedented expansion in the quantity and quality of information available to the general public at little cost." Moreover, the spread of new information technology has done little, if anything, to increase voter knowledge since the beginning of mass survey research in the late 1930s (Somin 2013).

We cannot expect people to become more knowledgeable (or less biased) if their ignorance (or irrationality) is rational.[12] If ignorance is instrumentally rational, this would explain why so many people remain uninformed about the most basic political issues even in a world in which information is easily accessible through the media and internet. As Somin (2013: 13) says, "The main constraint on political learning is not the availability of information, but the willingness of voters to take the time and effort needed to learn and understand it." As a result, he suggests that we instead try to reduce the impact of ignorance by limiting and decentralizing government power. Alternatively, Brennan (2016) argues that voter incompetence is a reason to consider replacing democracy with epistocracy.

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[11] See Lynch (2019) for a discussion of epistemic tribalism in politics.

[12] Ignorance is also difficult to undo and correct when it is *active*, that is, when it might be self-sustaining and self-defensive in ways that make it resistant to education. For a discussion of active ignorance, see the chapter on collective ignorance by Rik Peels and Thirza Lagewaard in this handbook. Also see Medina (2013).

Political Disagreement and Polarization

Disagreement is ubiquitous in politics. Political opponents cannot agree on matters concerning the economy, foreign affairs, education, energy, health care, the environment, privatization, immigration, and much else besides. In the United States, nearly half of all Republicans and Democrats say they "almost never" agree with the other party's positions (Doherty et al. 2016).

Political disagreement is often a good thing for a healthy democracy. We expect values and preferences to differ in a pluralistic society, and reasonable citizens understand that people of good will can disagree about moral and political issues. However, political disagreements often go beyond political values and even include disputes about matters of fact (Bartels 2002; Kappel 2017). Moreover, political debates are increasingly polarized in democratic societies (Sinnott-Armstrong 2018). As a result, political opponents are unable to find agreement and they also have highly unfavourable views of each other, regarding one another as immoral, stupid, and lazy (Iyengar et al. 2012). This is a significant problem for democratic politics. Political disagreements are becoming increasingly unreasonable, which makes it difficult to productively deliberate with others and find political compromise.

Political philosophers have long been interested in the nature, causes, and significance of political disagreement (e.g., Rawls 1989, 1993; Mason 1993). More recently, epistemologists have studied the epistemic significance of disagreement (e.g., Feldman and Warfield 2010; Christensen and Lackey 2013). The *political epistemology of disagreement* aims to bring together these two literatures. However, bridging these two literatures takes work, as the debates are often pitched at different levels of analysis and abstraction.[13] Thus far, much of the literature on peer disagreement considers what an *individual* is justified in believing. In political philosophy, by contrast, an individual's beliefs take second stage to political justification in a diverse community. Moreover, epistemologists tend to focus on idealized cases involving 'epistemic peers' (agents who share the evidence, have roughly equally intelligence and track record with regard to the dispute, and are free from bias or other distorting factors), while political philosophers tend to focus on disagreements involving people with different evidence and varying intellectual abilities.

A central question in the epistemology of disagreement is: What response does rationality require when epistemic peers disagree over a question? Suppose Alison and Bob are epistemic peers but Alison believes *p* and Bob believes not-*p*. How should they each respond when they recognize this fact? Should they lose confidence in their own beliefs, reject their beliefs, adopt others' beliefs, suspend judgment on the issue, or something else? *Conciliatory* views maintain that you are rationally required to decrease your confidence in your belief, if not give up your

[13] For a more detailed analysis of important differences between the epistemology and political philosophy of disagreement, see Edenberg (forthcoming).

belief altogether (e.g., Christensen 2007, Elga 2007, Feldman 2006). *Steadfast* views claim that it can be rational to continue believing just as you did before (e.g., Kelly 2005, Goldman 2010).[14]

The peer disagreement debate also has been taken to have political significance. For example, some political philosophers have appealed to particular positions within the peer disagreement literature in epistemology to defend (e.g. Peter 2013) or critique (e.g. van Wietmarschen 2018) Rawlsian political liberalism and public reason. Others have argued that citizens ought to fully conciliate when disagreeing with their peers on political questions, thereby accepting concilitarory views as correct and arguing that these debates directly apply to how citizens should deliberate about politics (Ebeling 2017). However, this type of position has also been critiqued for failing to acknowledge the genuine epistemic role of reasonable disagreements by turning disagreement into a 'solvable' problem (Liveriero 2015; Gelfert 2011).

It does seem that many political philosophers make epistemological claims. David Enoch (2017) critiques public reason theorists for frequently make epistemological claims (e.g., about reasonable persons, justifying principles to others, etc.) without connecting them to contemporary epistemology. For example, proponents of public reason argue that citizens can disagree about fundamental moral or religious doctrines and yet both people can be reasonable (and regard each other as reasonable). Thus, he argues, the public reason liberal may be committed to the idea that both views are 'epistemically permissible' on the evidence. However, permissivism is a hotly debated issue and the public reason theorists may not wish to tie the acceptability of their theory to "a gamble on the future of epistemology" (Enoch 2017).[15]

A widely shared intuition about disagreement in politics is that we should learn to live with them—citizens will never come to agree on many political matters. Andrew Mason (1993) outlines two broad conceptions of political disagreement: the 'imperfect conception' assumes that political disagreement is a result of one party making an error; the 'contestability conception' maintains that the proper use of political terms allows for a variety of reasonable interpretations. As Rawls (1993) notes, however, reasonable disagreement is an inescapable fact of political life—fair cooperation should not require citizens to change their deep commitments. One might therefore wonder about the political significance of certain theses in the epistemology of disagreement.

Let's now consider the relationship between political disagreement and political polarization.

It is important to first distinguish between various things we might mean by 'polarization'. For example, we can be increasingly polarized in terms of our *attitudes* toward each other. In this sense, groups are more polarized when they feel more anger, loathing, fear, or other negative

[14] These are early and influential examples of each type of view. The peer disagreement debate is extensive, including a number of alternate articulations of conciliatory, steadfast, and alternative theories.

[15] The uniqueness thesis holds that there is a unique rational response to any particular body of evidence (Feldman 2007). Permissivism maintains that reasonable people can disagree even when confronted with the same body of evidence (Douven 2009).

emotions toward political opponents. Let's call this *affective polarization*.[16] We can also regard a populace as increasingly politically polarized when large sections of the population have consistently diverging views on the *issues*. When this happens, there is less overlap (or common ground) between the different political groups. We'll call this *issue polarization*.[17] We can also think of groups as increasingly polarized when their members become more *homogeneous* in terms of social and demographic traits (Mason 2018). We'll call this *social polarization*. In addition, we can think of polarization as an unwillingness to *cooperate* or compromise with those who do not share our beliefs and values. We'll call this *gridlock polarization* (Sinnott-Armstrong 2018: 21). Further, we can regard a particular group as polarized when its members shift to more radical versions of their previously held views. This is the classic version of what Cass Sunstein (2002) calls *group polarization*.[18] When this type of polarization occurs, there is a shift in the view *internal* to a group. This contrasts with 'political polarization' outlined above, which refers to a lack of shared values *between* groups.[19] Finally, there are cases in which two people who initially disagree will strengthen their disagreement after seeing the same evidence (Lord et al. 1979). Let's call this *belief polarization*. This is the primary focus of social psychology, whereas sociologists and political scientists have focused on group polarization.

These phenomena are not unrelated. Belief polarization leads to political polarization, while social polarization fuels affective polarization. As Lilliana Mason (2018) argues, the less we view our political opponents as 'like us', the more inclined we are to dislike them.

The distinction between these various types of polarization is important because it shapes our view of the nature, extent, and significance of political disagreement.[20] For example, if the electorate is increasingly polarized in terms of their *attitudes* but not in terms of the *issues*, then there may be less disagreement in politics than we think. As Mason (2018) puts it, politics is increasingly characterized by "uncivil agreement". Voters have grown more partisan, angry, and biased against their political opponents, but these reactions have almost nothing to do with their opinions about the issues. We are simply behaving *as if we disagree*. This, in turn, may explain why political conversations often go so poorly. The more we hate and fear those with whom we (think we) disagree, the less willing we are to engage with them productively. These negative feelings threaten to undermine the norms of civility and mutual respect in political debate (as outlined by political liberals and deliberative democrats). Compromise is seen as an unnecessary concession to "the enemy" and politics becomes about scoring a victory and winning for its own sake (Achen and Bartels 2016; Brennan 2016).

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[16] We take this label from Iyengar et al. (2012). Mason (2018) calls it 'behavioural polarization'.
[17] See Pew (2017). Mason (2018) calls this "issue polarization".
[18] Talisse (2019) calls 'belief polarization', but we will use this label for a different type of polarization. Unfortunately, the literature on polarization uses a variety of different labels and has no fixed vocabulary.
[19] For various senses of 'polarization', see Sinnott-Armstrong (2018: 19-21) and Talisse (2019).
[20] Polarization is also connected to foundational topics in epistemology, such as evidentialism. Thomas Kelly (2008) investigates the mechanisms that underlie belief polarization and asks whether these processes undermine the justification of polarized beliefs. He concludes that justification is not undermined by polarization on an evidentialist framework. However, Emily McWilliams (2019) challenges this conclusion, arguing that on plausible versions of evidentialism, the beliefs that result from these routes to polarization are not justified.

Post-Truth, Fake News, and Misinformation

Recently, popular discussions of politics invoke epistemic notions like 'post-truth,' 'fake news,' and 'misinformation' to explain the perceived increase in polarization and hostility in politics around the world. Our epistemic environment seems to be more hostile than ever, which makes it increasingly difficult to know whom to trust. The manipulation of facts and the difficulty of discerning legitimate sources of information have threatened liberal democratic institutions. In fact, undermining the role and value of truth has been a deliberate political tactic designed to spur discontent and promote the interests of certain political platforms. These popular discussions have fueled the increased philosophical attention to the subfield of political epistemology. In particular, philosophers have been exploring questions such as: Have we really entered a uniquely post-truth era? To what extent are people deceived or misled by the spread of fake news and misinformation? Has modern technology exacerbated our epistemic vulnerabilities and fostered intellectual vices?

Philosophers have long been interested in tension between objective truth and political power. From Socrates's trial, to Machiavelli's Prince, to Nietzsche's ubermensch, there is a long history demonstrating that the powerful have strong incentives to bend the truth towards their ends and tend to react violently to those who threaten to set the record straight. Hannah Arendt warns that "it may be in the nature of the political realm to be at war with truth in all its forms" (1967: 52). While we might expect philosophical truths to be contested, even factual truths, "so obviously within the grasp of everybody" suffer contestation in politics by being "countered not by lies and deliberate falsehoods" but by "the tendency to transform fact into opinion, to blur the dividing line between them" (Arendt 1967: 51-52). Arendt's analysis continues to strike home for thinking through our contemporary version of post-factual politics (see MacMullen 2020). The mechanisms for spreading misinformation and propaganda may have changed, but the problems are all too familiar.

From Kellyanne Conway's "alternative facts" to Trump's diatribes against the "fake news media," attempts to undercut opponent's claims by calling into question their sources and motives has been a deliberate political tactic. Philosophers have seized on the term 'fake news', seeking to clarify its relation to propaganda and the individual epistemic vices or virtues that allow for its spread (see Bernecker, Flowerree, and Grundmann forthcoming). Philosophical analyses converge on the idea that fake news is the deliberate presentation of false or misleading claims designed to mimic traditional media (Rini 2017: E-45; Gelfert 2018: 85-86), often with the aim of being widely re-transmitted and deceiving at least some of its audience (Rini 2017). The creators and purveyors of fake news often aim for it to go viral on social media, capturing our attention by exploiting cognitive biases (Levy 2017). Much of the misinformation spread through social media platforms seeks to either promote or challenge particular political viewpoints.

The phenomenon is not one that can be analyzed by looking merely at how individual believers can be deceived. A broader social analysis is required. We form our beliefs in communities with other knowers and these communities influence how we interpret the information that is presented to us. Individually rational agents can form irrational groups (O'Connor and Weatherall 2019). Misinformation is typically politically charged and to understand its impact, we should look to how partisan testimony impacts belief. Regina Rini (2017) argues that some forms of privileging partisan testimony are consistent with epistemic virtues. Caitlin O'Connor and James Owen Weatherall analyze the social mechanisms that explain how beliefs (both true and false) spread within a community and argue that the same mechanisms that contribute to the spread of misinformation and false beliefs "are often invaluable to us in our attempts to reach the truth" (2019: 11).[21] Étienne Brown (2019) argues that misinformation threatens the epistemic potential of democratic decision-making.

The tight connections between the spread of misinformation in a community, the effects that socially salient identities have on belief formation, and the politically charged aim of the purveyors of the fake news and propaganda make this a ripe topic for social epistemologists and political philosophers to work together on both analysis of the current epistemic environment and proposed solutions.

Trust, Doubt, and Expertise

A defining theme of social epistemology is our epistemic reliance on others. As recent work in the epistemology of testimony makes clear, the vast majority of what we know comes to us from the say-so of other people (see Coady 1992 and Lackey 2008). Such epistemic dependence introduces a host of philosophical questions; for example: When are beliefs based on testimony justified, and why? When do they amount to knowledge, and why? These questions have been heavily theorized in social epistemology (see the chapter by Axel Gelfert in this volume). However, our epistemic dependence on others also raises interesting and unique problems for political epistemologists, as we'll explain below.

Democratic deliberation serves epistemic and practical purposes. It aims to "enhance our understanding of the interests of all the members of society" and "advance those interests in a just and equitable way" (Christiano 2012: 27). Citizens rely on the testimony of others to expand their knowledge of the impact of policies on citizens (Young 1989; Anderson 2006). But many public problems involve some kind of technical knowledge. In these cases, ordinary citizens must rely on the testimony of *experts*.[22] For example, ordinary citizens wouldn't even know about anthropogenic climate change without the work of scientific experts. Moreover, expertise is

[21] For more formal work on social network epistemology, see Zollman (2007), Singer et al. (2019), and Sullivan et al. (forthcoming).

[22] We will not investigate what it takes to be an expert (see Grundmann in this volume; Goldman 2001; Croce 2019). Rather we will rely on an intuitive conception of expertise.

required to design, implement, and evaluate public policies on a wide range of issues. In modern societies, the hyper-specialized division of cognitive labor makes our reliance on expert opinion both ubiquitous and indispensable.

But the relationship between expertise and democracy is fraught. While expert knowledge helps facilitate the public apprehension of problems, it also threatens to exclude the public from important decisions in technical domains. If we privilege the opinions of experts, then citizens will not play an equal role in the democratic process. This violates the widely accepted idea that, in a democracy, the State should not favor the opinions of any particular group. By relying too heavily on expert knowledge, we risk bypassing democratic processes (or replacing them with epistocratic ones). Thus, we must find a way to integrate the idea that some people know more about certain issues than others with the democratic ideals of equality and freedom (Kitcher 2011; Christiano 2012).

A central challenge for political epistemology is to find the right procedures and rules to balance epistemic and political authority, without one reducing to the other (Origgi 2015: 164). In short, how can public policy be both *epistemically* responsible and *democratically* legitimate? One possible answer, suggested by Christiano (2012), is that both citizens and experts play valuable roles in the division of cognitive labor, but citizens play *a more fundamental role*. In particular, citizens are the driving element of society in that they choose the basic aims of society.[23] In contrast, experts are needed for the development of legislation and policy that secures these aims. As Christiano says, "citizens rule over the society by choosing the aims of the society", while experts are "charged with the tasks of implementing these aims with the help of their specialized knowledge" (2012: 51). Thus, experts can tell us the means and consequences of pursuing society's aims, but only citizens can decide which aims we ought to pursue.

Our dependence on experts raises numerous other questions for political epistemologists. How do non-experts identify which experts to trust? Does our reliance on expertise require blind trust? What should we do in the face of expert disagreement? Are we in the midst of a "crisis of expertise"? If so, what are its causes and how can we restore trust in experts? If experts have no special authority in politics, does this reduce to populism (Moore 2017)? Unfortunately, we do not have space to explore these questions in detail; but we will make a few brief remarks.

Ordinary citizens often lack the skills and knowledge required to directly evaluate the claims made by experts; however, epistemologists have argued that non-experts can use indirect sources of evidence to assess the competence and trustworthiness of experts. Alvin Goldman (2001) identifies a number of important indicators of expert competence: (i) we may consider the track record and credentials of experts; (ii) we can evaluate the 'dialectical superiority' of experts (e.g., does one expert seem more rattled by the objections made by her opponent; or is one of the experts always more ready with a response?); (iii) we may consult the numbers, or

[23] By 'basic aims', Christiano means "all the non-instrumental values and the trade-offs between those values. The non-instrumental values can include side constraints on state action as well as goals to be pursued." (2012: 33)

degree of consensus, among all relevant (putative) experts; (iv) we may also look for evidence of corrupting interests and biases (e.g., was this study on the health benefits of smoking funded by a tobacco company?). In a similar vein, Anderson (2011) uses the example of anthropogenic global warming to develop criteria for ordinary citizens to assess scientific testimony. Her criteria cover four dimensions of assessment: credentials, honesty, epistemic responsibility, and expert consensus. She claims that applying these criteria is easy for anyone of ordinary education (i.e. high school diploma) and basic knowledge of how to use the internet.[24]

This illustrates that our reliance on expertise need not be *blind*. Blind trust implies that a layperson cannot be rationally justified in trusting an expert. But even if non-experts cannot evaluate the esoteric claims made by experts, they can use social indicators and heuristics to evaluate their expertise. In this way, the public may be engaged with experts without risking elitism or diminishing the role of expertise in guiding policies.

Epistemic Virtues and Vices in Politics

Epistemologists have long been interested in the nature and significance of epistemic virtues—those character traits that promote intellectual well being. This has led to the blooming field of 'virtue epistemology' (for a recent overview of this literature, see Turri, Alfano, and Greco 2011). More recently, epistemologists have begun systematically studying the nature and significance of epistemic vices—those traits that obstruct intellectual flourishing. This has led to the emerging field of 'vice epistemology' (see Cassam 2016).

There is an expansive literature on civic virtues from a wide range of political theories stretching throughout the history of philosophy. However, the vast majority of work in virtue or vice epistemology has not focused on politics.[25] This is unfortunate for at least three reasons. First, the world of politics provides ample material to build our understanding of the nature of epistemic virtues and vices. Second, many epistemic virtues and vices have political significance; for instance, we may better understand political behavior if we view it in terms of epistemic virtues and vices. Third, once we have an account of what epistemic virtues are required for a political system to work well, we can consider how to improve democracy in order to achieve these aims. We elaborate on these ideas below.

Politics can help us to better understand how the mind works. By exploring the ways in which intellectual virtues and vices manifest in political contexts, we can better understand the nature of these virtues and vices. Quassim Cassam defines an 'epistemic vice' as a psychological quality that systematically obstructs knowledge acquisition, retention, and transmission, and for which the individual is blameworthy or criticizable (2019: 23). Closed-mindedness, arrogance, prejudice, and epistemic insouciance (lack of concern for the truth) are all epistemic vices.

[24] Guerrero (2016) and Brennan (2020) challenge the criteria outlined by Goldman (2001) and Anderson (2011).
[25] Exceptions are Anderson (2006), Fricker (2007), Medina (2013), Lynch (2019), and Cassam (2019).

Cassam draws on various political events to deepen his account of epistemic vice. Political history is, after all, rife with examples of arrogance, stubbornness, prejudice, and decisions that expose egregious intellectual incompetence. By appealing to politics, Cassam illustrates that vices are psychological qualities that come in three types: character traits (e.g., such as closed-mindedness), attitudes (e.g. prejudice), and ways of thinking (e.g. wishful thinking). Moreover, he draws on politics to demonstrate that negative *consequences* (rather than bad motivations) are the essence of what makes an epistemic vice epistemically bad.

Many theorists have used politics to investigate particular epistemic vices. For example, Alessandra Tanesini (2016) develops an account of intellectual arrogance that uses the case of a 2011 Commons debate, in which UK Prime Minister David Cameron told Angela Eagle to "calm down, dear". Tanesini argues that intellectual arrogance tends to create and maintain various forms of ignorance, specifically by silencing others and fostering self-delusion in arrogant individuals. Similarly, Michael Lynch (2019) provides an account of "tribal epistemic arrogance" that builds on observations about the polarized political culture in America. If we think that groups constitute epistemic agents over and above their individual members (see Kallestrup forthcoming; also the chapters by Jennifer Lackey and Rik Peels and Thirza Lagewaard in this handbook), then we can also ascribe epistemic virtues and vices to political groups.

Feminist work on epistemic injustice (see Aidan McGlynn's chapter in this handbook) identifies distinct epistemic injustices resulting from unjust power structures. In her foundational work on epistemic injustice, Miranda Fricker highlights the importance of the corresponding "virtues of epistemic justice" (2007: 176). Epistemic justice requires, first, an ability to detect and correct the influence of identity prejudice on the hearer's credibility judgments; second, it requires the hearer to exercise a reflexive critical sensitivity to any reduced intelligibility incurred by the speaker owing to a gap in collective hermeneutical resources. These virtues are both epistemic and ethical, according to Fricker (2007: 7). Anderson (2012) extends Fricker's notion of epistemic justice to the level of social systems. She says we must scale up the virtue of epistemic justice from individuals to systems and she considers what is required for epistemic justice as a virtue of social systems. José Medina (2013), who also draws on Fricker, claims that we have a responsibility to cultivate epistemic virtues like humility and open-mindedness (which he calls "virtues of the oppressed"), as well as eliminate epistemic vices like arrogance and closed-mindedness (which he calls "vices of the privileged").

While politics may help us better understand the nature of epistemic virtues and vices, we can also appeal to epistemic virtues and vices to better understand how politics works. In the case of epistemic virtues, Michael Hannon (2019) argues that real life political debates are often unproductive due to a lack of 'empathetic understanding'. He outlines an epistemic version of deliberative democracy that is grounded in the empathetic understanding of others. More broadly, Allen Buchanan (2004) considers epistemic virtue at the institutional level. Our profound epistemic dependence on others makes us vulnerable to socially-inculcated false beliefs. Buchanan argues that the proper response to this vulnerability, contrary to Descartes, is

not free ourselves of our epistemic dependence on others. Rather, we must rely on liberal institutions that have epistemic virtues to safeguard citizens from false beliefs.

Turning to epistemic vices in politics, Michael Lynch (2018) argues that epistemic arrogance is politically harmful because it undermines the ideal of democracy as a 'space of reasons'. To achieve a common space of reasons, we must have attitudes conducive to mutual trust and not open hostility, including certain "epistemic attitudes" (Lynch 2018: 283). According to Lynch, epistemic arrogance prevents the exchange of reasons and harms public discourse. It discourages participation, undermines mutual accountability and epistemic trust, and diminishes the value of truth. It can even lead to "despotism and tyranny" (Lynch 2018: 295). Likewise, Cassam (2019) illustrates the political significance of epistemic virtues and vices by exploring real-life political cases where epistemic vices led to disastrous consequences.[26]

While Cassam's focus is primarily on the behavior of powerful politicians, we may also appeal to virtues and vices to understand voter behavior. In *Against Democracy*, Brennan argues that "political participation tends to corrupt rather than improve our intellectual and moral character" (2016: 18). Although he does not use the framework of vice epistemology, Brennan draws on psychology to illustrate that many intellectual vices are a *consequence* of political engagement. Politics is bad for us, he says, and most of us should minimize our involvement in politics for the sake of our characters.

In addition to *fostering* epistemic vice, politics may also lead citizens to unjustifiably *accuse* others of epistemic vice. There is a connection here between political polarization and 'epistemic vice-charging' (Kidd 2016), which is the critical practice of charging other persons with epistemic vice. As the literature on polarization makes clear, Democrats and Republicans not only dislike each other but also attribute negative traits to one another, such as closed-minded, arrogant, and irrational (Mason 2018; Lynch 2019; Talisse 2019). These reactions prevent partisans from seeking diverse perspectives on political issues (Valentino et al. 2008).

A related area of research is whether some epistemic vices are instrumentally rational. Epistemologists are often quick to criticize individuals for exhibiting epistemic vices, including epistemic vices in political contexts. However, a large body of research in psychology indicates that epistemic failings are often prudentially rational. As discussed earlier, there may be good reasons for voters to be stubborn, incurious, or dogmatic about political information that threatens their worldview. This raises questions about whether epistemic vices always merit criticism. According to Cassam, epistemic vices must get in the way of knowledge and do so in a way that deserves criticism (2019: 23). However, it is unclear whether individuals who are

[26] While Cassam expects epistemic vices to do real explanatory work, he worries about the explanatory depth of vice explanations (2019: 49-51). In more recent work, he is far more critical of vice explanations in politics (see Cassam forthcoming).

rationally ignorant or rationally irrational ultimately merit criticism.[27] If they do not, then neither political ignorance nor political irrationality would be epistemic vices.

In addition, epistemic virtues like open-mindedness and tolerance are *negatively* correlated with political participation. As Diana Mutz (2006) shows, civic-minded citizens who expose themselves to diverse political views are actually less likely to participate in politics. This may lead us to wonder how closely epistemic virtues should relate to political virtues. On this theme, Thomas Nadelhoffer et al. (forthcoming) find that people who value humility are more likely to "*overestimate* the epistemic virtues of in-group members while both *underestimating* the epistemic virtues of out-group members and *negatively evaluating* them for lacking highly valued epistemic traits." For example, people who value humility are more likely to view their political opponents as less humble, more arrogant, and more closed-minded. Encouraging people to value humility may thus backfire and *increase* polarization. In this way, another epistemic virtue may actually be a political vice. If this is correct, then calls to humility (e.g., Lynch 2019) may be misguided. Instead of diminishing polarization, encouraging humility may actually exacerbate it.[28]

Virtue and vice epistemology is not merely diagnostic or explanatory. This research has also political and social importance because it can provide us with tools to address urgent political issues. Once we have an account of what epistemic virtues are required for a political system to work (as well as an understanding of the epistemic vices that threaten democracy), we can aim to improve our political systems. For example, cultivating intellectual virtues may be required for 'deliberative democracy' to function the way democratic theorists have envisioned. As Anderson (2006: 16) writes, "To realize the epistemic powers of democracy, citizens must follow norms that welcome or at least tolerate diversity and dissent, that recognize the equality of participants in discussion by giving all a respectful hearing, regardless of their social status, and that institute deliberation and reason-giving, rather than threats and insults, as the basis of their communication with one another." Applied virtue epistemology could help find ways to cultivate responsible epistemic agency in citizens.[29]

There is an urgent need for citizens of a democracy to think well; but to determine how to promote good thinking, we need to better understand how humans actually think and inquire. A proper understanding of our intellectual virtues (e.g., open-mindedness, humility, and integrity) and intellectual vices (e.g., closed-mindedness, prejudice, and arrogance) may allow us to better diagnose and tackle the problems in current politics.

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[27] Perhaps they merit 'epistemic blame' but not moral blame (see Brown this volume).

[28] That said, there is also evidence that people who are intellectually humble display greater openness and less hostility towards conflicting viewpoints (Krumrei-Mancuso & Rouse, 2016; Hopkin et al., 2014; Porter & Schumann, 2018), and that people low in intellectual humility have more negatively valenced reactions to ideas, information, and people that disagree with them (Hook et al., 2017; Hopkin et al., 2014; Leary et al., 2017; Porter & Schuman, 2018; Van Tongeren et al., 2016).

[29] Some remain skeptical that civic and political activity will lead to responsible epistemic agency. For example, Brennan (2016) says we don't seem to know how to encourage more epistemically responsible behavior and most of the activities that have been advocated fail.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to survey the field of political epistemology. While we hope to have provided a useful guide to many key questions and issues in this area, several topics were inevitably left out. We will conclude by briefly mentioning a few areas that we were not able to discuss in this overview, and then we will point to areas of future research.

First, we have not covered much of the early and groundbreaking work by feminist philosophers and critical race theorists at the intersection of epistemology and political philosophy (see Alcoff and Potter 1993; Grasswick 2018). While we touched on the epistemic injustice literature, we did not explore standpoint theory (Harding 2004 and Intemann in this volume), the relevance of feminist and anti-racist philosophy to traditional epistemological debates (Medina 2013), the epistemology of ignorance (Sullivan and Tuana 2007), and epistemic objectification (McGlynn 2019). An important area of political epistemology concerns the connections between structural and political features of how knowledge is produced and recognized (e.g., Foucault 1975, 1980; Longino 1990, 2002), as well as how different social positions contribute to the social knowledge of a political community (e.g., Young 1997).

Second, political epistemology inherits a dispute in political philosophy about the role of ideal theory. This debate centers on questions like: What is ideal theory? What, if anything, is wrong with it? Is non-ideal theory preferable; and if so, why? Surprisingly, there isn't a parallel debate about ideal theory in epistemology (although much work in social epistemology would qualify as non-ideal theory). Political epistemologists also aim to address questions like: Do epistemic conceptions of democracy rely on idealized assumptions about the rationality of citizens? Does the psychology of actual voters make it likely that they will become epistemically worse when deliberating about politics (Brennan 2016)? Is it a problem to use unrealistic epistemic ideals when theorizing about politics (Estlund 2008)?

Finally, we will point to some directions for future research that bring classic epistemological issues into contact with political philosophy. For example, there are potentially interesting connections between *expressivist* theories of discourse and political assertions. Are political assertions genuine assertions or are factual statements sometimes used to express attitudes? There is also a connection between *pragmatic encroachment* (the view that whether one knows can vary with pragmatic factors) and politics. For instance, is politics a domain in which the standards for knowledge are shaped by what is at stake? We might also think about the relationship between *modal epistemology* (e.g., safety or sensitivity theories of knowledge) and misinformation. In our epistemically hostile environments, do we meet these modal conditions for knowledge? Lastly, scholars might consider the ways in which our epistemic dependence on others threatens both political and intellectual autonomy. These are just a few ways in which

epistemological considerations can (and should) figure into contemporary discussions about political philosophy, and vice versa.

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