Authenticity in Political Discourse

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Abstract Judith Shklar, David Runciman, and others argue against what they see as excessive criticism of political hypocrisy. Such arguments often assume that communicating in an authentic manner is an impossible political ideal. This article challenges the characterization of authenticity as an unrealistic ideal and makes the case that its value can be grounded in a certain political realism sensitive to the threats posed by representative democracy. First, by analyzing authenticity's demands for political discourse, I show that authenticity has greater flexibility than many assume in accommodating practices common to politics, such as deception, concealment, and persuasion through rhetoric. Second, I argue that a concern for authenticity in political discourse represents a virtue, not a distraction, for representative democracy. Authenticity takes on heightened importance when the public seeks information on how representatives will act in contexts where the public is absent and unable to influence decisions. Furthermore, given the psychological mechanisms behind hypocrisy, public criticism is a sensible response for trying to limit political hypocrisy. From the perspective of democratic theory and psychology, the public has compelling reasons to value authenticity in political discourse.

Keywords Authenticity • Hypocrisy • Representation • Democracy • Rhetoric • Deception

Policy proposals alone rarely satisfy the public. Constituents also want to know their representatives' character and what motivates them. As a result, politicians face intense scrutiny—few aspects of their lives seem to be off limits. At the same time, politicians are far from helpless victims. A shrewd lot, politicians exploit to their advantage the public's interest in their character. They reference their faith and relish opportunities to include their family in photo-ops. They look to participate in activities demonstrating shared values, from joining union workers for drinks to participating in a key constituency's religious services. All these activities communicate the same message: I share your values and you can trust me—now join me.

The pressure to communicate shared values to the public often leads politicians to feign values and engage in hypocrisy. Though some have raised concerns about hypocrisy's effects on democratic politics (Furia 2009), others argue that there is *too much* criticism of political hypocrisy—a distraction from more pressing concerns (Shklar 1984; Runciman 2008; Aikin and Talisse 2008). Indeed, partisanship, negative campaigning, and the 24-hour news cycle all help drive an obsessive concern with hypocrisy, no matter how minor. But political philosophy's more permissive approach recently toward hypocrisy has had the unfortunate effect of obscuring the public's legitimate basis for valuing authenticity in political discourse. Authenticity's value, I argue, lies in a certain political realism recognizing this virtue's role in checking excesses common to representative democracy.[1]

To make this case, the article first distinguishes authenticity from the closely related concepts of sincerity and integrity, and defines it as *(1) consistently upholding the values and commitments that define one's identity for reasons that one deems legitimate, and (2) a second-order commitment to accurately represent these values and commitments*. The second section

[1] This approach draws on that taken by Karuna Mantena (2012). Though Mantena treats a different subject (nonviolent resistance), she similarly shows from a realist perspective the value of a political ideal often dismissed as overly unrealistic.

explains why politics poses acute challenges to authenticity due to the proliferation of roles in public life that often come into tension. The third section shows that authenticity, though demanding, remains a feasible ideal that allows flexibility in accommodating practices common to politics, such as deception, concealment, and persuasion through rhetoric. The fourth section counters concerns raised by Judith Shklar and David Runciman to show authenticity's value in a representative democracy. Inherent in the concept of representation is the idea that the public is not always present to influence representatives' decisions, and therefore the public seeks to know what will motivate them in these contexts, which authenticity helps reveal. The final section discusses the psychological mechanisms behind hypocrisy, and why in light of this evidence public criticism is a sensible response for limiting political hypocrisy. Rather than a distraction, the ideal of authenticity merits the public's attention when evaluating political discourse.[2]

1 What Authenticity Demands

When used to describe objects, authenticity refers to whether an object is what it purports to be. The authentic object is not a fake. Similarly, the authentic individual is not a phony: she is not ashamed of her values and feels no need to misrepresent them. In this sense, authenticity means being true to oneself (embracing and remaining committed to one's values) and to others (being transparent about one's values). Authenticity shares important aspects in common with the closely related terms of sincerity and integrity, but remains a unique concept, at least in certain contexts. To guide the analysis that follows, a definition of authenticity is developed by contrasting it with sincerity and integrity.

[2] *The Encyclopedia of Political Thought*'s entry on authenticity ends by noting: "a question that would certainly merit careful investigation in the future would be whether authenticity is advantageous in maintaining the social bonds of a democratic society" (Varga 2014, 223). Though far from a comprehensive response to that question, this article takes a step toward addressing it by examining authenticity's value in the relationship between the represented and their representatives.

Sincerity implies that an individual's statements accurately reflect her state of mind. A sincere individual does not think one thing and say another, but believes what she says (Eriksson 2011, 215; Searle 1969, 65). Authenticity sometimes is a synonym for sincerity (e.g., Markovits 2008, 21), and there is no error in using the term this way. According to one entry for authenticity in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, it means: "The quality of truthful correspondence between inner feelings and their outward expression; unaffectedness, sincerity."

Yet authenticity also can take a different meaning, which grew out of the Romantic tradition and emphasizes turning inward to understand one's identity (Taylor 1989 and 1991). Departing from the Romantic tradition's view of authenticity as self-discovery, existentialism later developed an understanding of authenticity as self-creation—that is, there is no essential self to discover but individuals rather must create the self (Sartre 1992; Levy 2011; Meyerson 1998). This article remains agnostic between these two conceptions of authenticity. Regardless of the path to it, authenticity captures the basic notion that individuals see certain values and commitments as fundamental to their identity, which should be upheld even under pressure to abandon them. With its emphasis on truthfully representing one's identity, authenticity shares sincerity's focus on the accurate representation of beliefs. But there is an important distinction: whereas sincerity entails the accurate representation of one's beliefs generally, authenticity more narrowly emphasizes the accurate representation of one's beliefs regarding those values and commitments defining one's identity.

Sincerity's value to society is self-evident: to coordinate actions with others, one must be able to trust to a certain extent that what others say accurately represents their beliefs. But controversy surrounds authenticity's value due to its perceived connection with narcissism and alienation with society (Lasch 1991; Trilling 1972). Authenticity's focus on being true to oneself

seems to privilege one's desires over others'. This concern, however, mistakenly portrays an undesirable manifestation of authenticity as the necessary consequence of pursuing it. Understandings of authenticity develop in social contexts through relations with others, a fact undermining the purported link between authenticity and narcissism. As Charles Taylor explains, "I can define my identity only against the background of things that matter…. [T]o bracket out history, nature, society, the demands of solidarity, everything but what I find in myself, would be to eliminate all candidates for what matters" (1991, 40).

Admittedly, discovering authenticity through interactions with others does not guarantee a conception of authenticity favorable to social cooperation (Williams 2002, 200). But since individuals come to understandings of authenticity in a social setting, social roles and obligations often become a core part of their identity—a point for which there is ample psychological evidence (Markus and Cross 1990). Furthermore, different psychological processes are at work with narcissism and authenticity: for the former, self-esteem largely depends on factors external to the self for validation; for the latter, self-esteem is grounded in factors internal to the self, which proves more stable and conducive to pro-social behavior (Arndt et al. 2002; Kernis and Goldman 2006; Morf and Rhodewalt 2001). There thus is little evidence establishing a strong link between narcissism and authenticity. Considering psychology's findings concerning authenticity, it is misleading to characterize it as a harmful and anti-social ideal.

Authenticity involves more than discovering and accurately communicating one's values, for it also implies consistency in living them out. To be true to oneself, one cannot frequently abandon the values and commitments defining one's identity. This requirement of authenticity links it to integrity. Integrity emphasizes an integrated self unmarred by contradiction, achieved through remaining true to one's commitments. Both integrity and authenticity entail upholding

one's principles. Integrity, though, generally implies a firm commitment to the *right* principles, whereas authenticity implies a firm commitment to one's principles, *whether right or wrong*.[3]

Lynn McFall provides an initial definition of integrity that approaches authenticity's meaning because it does not restrict the type of values that an individual of integrity can hold. According to McFall, "personal integrity requires that an agent (1) subscribe to some consistent set of principles or commitments and (2), in the face of temptation or challenge, (3) uphold these principles or commitments, (4) for what the agent takes to be the right reasons" (1987, 9). This definition captures a number of intuitions regarding authenticity's demands. To be authentic, one consistently upholds and puts into practice one's values and commitments, even when facing adversity. If an individual abandons a commitment whenever the going gets tough, that casts doubt on whether it was ever her commitment to begin with. The authentic individual also has specific reasons for deeming a commitment legitimate, and these reasons need to continually motivate her for the commitment to remain real.

Given its shared features with integrity and sincerity, then, authenticity can be defined as *(1) consistently upholding the values and commitments that define one's identity for reasons that one deems legitimate, and (2) a second-order commitment to accurately represent these values and commitments*. Put a different way, authenticity is a harmony between one's inner values and commitments, one's representation of these values and commitments to others, and one's actions. Though there is a tendency to discuss authenticity in dichotomous terms—some are authentic, others are not—it is important to remember that authenticity is an ideal that individuals approximate to a greater or lesser extent. Authenticity represents one end of a

[3] Though integrity normally has moral connotations (Babbitt 1997; Calhoun 1995; Carter 1996; Putnam 1996), some debate this point (Williams 1981, 49; Scherkoske 2012). Elizabeth Ashford (2000) distinguishes between objective and subjective integrity: the former requires commitment to the right principles, the latter commitment to whatever principles one holds.

spectrum, with the other end being hypocrisy—that is, not consistently upholding one's core values and commitments for subjectively legitimate reasons, not accurately representing these values and commitments to others, or both.[4]

Two of the elements essential to this definition of authenticity, representation of one's core values and one's actions, are (at least potentially) observable. Yet the third element, one's inner values and commitments, is hidden from others, which creates a barrier to determining with certainty whether someone is acting in an authentic manner. This limitation, however, does not render authenticity useless as an evaluative concept. The hidden nature of individuals' inner values makes identifying authenticity with certainty elusive, but it still allows for the identification of violations of authenticity—namely, when individuals' representations of their core values and commitments come in conflict with their actions. Furthermore, though it is possible that an individual's actions and representation of her values could be consistent while contrary to her inner values, such outward consistency sustained over a long period does provide compelling (even if not conclusive) evidence of authenticity.

A further implication of the above definition is that authenticity requires attentiveness to one's core values and commitments (Jenni 2003)—after all, a complete lack of values and commitments dooms the pursuit of authenticity before it begins. Attentiveness also entails thinking through the implications of values so that core commitments do not continually come into conflict. This point comes with the caveat that tension between values is still possible even

[4] This definition of hypocrisy is broader than others. Some exclude self-deception and weakness of will as possible causes of hypocrisy, and limit it to the intentional deception of others through a false representation of oneself (Monin and Merritt 2012). Such a narrow definition results in what at times can be a caricature of the hypocrite's motivations: she always is fully aware and intentional when deceiving others about the inconsistencies between her actions and purported values. But as Daniel Statman (1997) points out, even the worse hypocrites are not always as calculating as is assumed and can fall victim to pitfalls such as self-deception. In line with this view, experimental evidence shows that common understandings of hypocrisy include inconsistencies stemming from self-deception and weakness of will (Alicke et al. 2013)—a possibility left open by the definition of hypocrisy used here.

after making a good-faith effort to reflect and think through their implications. Especially for value pluralists, who recognize various values that can be incommensurable with one another, tension between values can arise (Nagel 1979, 128-41; Williams 1981). In such cases, authenticity requires a willingness to be open about this tension and how to navigate it. Authenticity does not require a perfect solution that entirely eliminates tension between values, but it does require, despite this tension, finding consistency in action that avoids repeatedly forsaking core commitments.

Occasionally, attentiveness to one's values transforms an initial tension between them into an obligation to revise them. Though core values are not to be abandoned lightly, rethinking a value does not automatically imply a lack of authenticity or selling out. Especially when individuals encounter new information and perspectives, it would be surprising if their values *never* changed. If new information causes an individual to conclude that her reasons for a commitment are in error, it would be inauthentic of her to hold onto that commitment for illegitimate reasons.

The potential for revisions in values compatible with authenticity creates challenges in distinguishing between authentic and inauthentic action. In the case of the politician changing positions on a key policy, for instance, does authenticity or political expediency motivate the shift? Making such determinations inevitably is challenging, but there are several indicators consistent with authenticity: forthrightness about past errors, concrete actions to atone for past errors, and a sustained commitment to the new value even in adversity. Authentic change prompts a pattern of action consistent with the newly adopted value rather than a temporary shift lasting only as long as it proves expedient.

2 How Politics Threatens Authenticity

Threats to authenticity stem from a dilemma not unique to political life but often exacerbated by it: multiple roles making conflicting demands. Any social context with a modicum of complexity results in actors occupying multiple roles. As an individual takes on more roles, the risk of them coming into conflict increases. In politics, whoever becomes a legislator experiences a proliferation of roles due to new responsibilities to a broader range of individuals. An electoral victory means taking on the new role of legislator. But in reality it means taking on numerous new roles: district representative, defender of the party, distributor of constituent services, advocate for local industry, committee member, voice for an underrepresented group, and the list goes on. These different political roles do not necessarily fit together in a coherent whole. Successful politicians rely on others to get into elected office, and these relations of dependence—often with people they disagree with—can pressure politicians to be hypocritical and support questionable causes so as to please influential backers (Grant 1997). Representatives also remain in certain pre-political roles that can cause tension with their new political roles. This tension from various directions makes it difficult for representatives to fulfill all their roles and remain authentic.

It is important to look more closely at the nature of roles to understand why the proliferation of roles presents an unavoidable challenge for the representative. If a role allows an action, some conclude that the action is morally acceptable. But an action permitted in one role may conflict with another role. To deem such an action moral requires the assumption that the demands of other roles fade away. Arthur Applbaum explains why it is a mistake to believe that some roles, especially professional ones, always trump other responsibilities:

> [I]nstitutions and the roles they create ordinarily cannot mint moral permissions to do what otherwise would be prohibited. They cannot because the filtering of reasons and

> redescription of actions and actors that adversary roles demand do not properly have a grip on the judgments of role players who are also persons simply, and … face all the reasons for action that apply to persons simply. (1999, 257-58)

An institution's existence neither makes it moral nor justifies roles associated with it. A role's morality hinges on the nature of the institution it furthers. Also, even morally just institutions may permit blameworthy actions when prohibiting them requires overly intrusive action (Applbaum 1999, 114). Thus many roles allow actions that, in light of other roles, are forbidden.

Applbaum and others (e.g., Luban 1988) seeking to rein in the excesses of professional roles have a tendency to pit role morality against ordinary or impartial morality. In one sense, this perceived conflict captures a real aspect of one's moral experience: at times, one steps back from following a role's prescriptions and asks if it is possible to justify the role in the context of one's broader values. But setting role morality in opposition to ordinary morality is an oversimplification. The demands of one role often conflict with those of other roles deeply embedded into—not distinct from—individuals' moral reasoning. Roles are a persistent aspect of ethical thought because, as Judith Andre explains (1991), they provide needed predictability to social life. Certainly, some societal roles are oppressive and impossible to justify, so occasions arise when it is necessary to question the morality of particular roles. Still, the pervasive nature of roles in social life results in a complex network from which it is difficult to fully extricate oneself, especially in the realm of moral reasoning. To question a role and its demands, one usually does so from the perspective of other roles that one already occupies.

For this reason, it is unrealistic to expect that a politician can safeguard her authenticity simply through an act of will redefining her roles and values—her identity—so that they never interfere with her political pursuits. Many value their existing roles and commitments too much to ever consider this approach to authenticity. But there are deeper reasons to question this

approach, since it assumes that a politician by conscious choice can transform her beliefs regarding her roles and values. As Jon Elster explains, "it is conceptually impossible to believe at will" (1983, 141-42). Though individuals have different criteria for judging truth and arriving at beliefs, what is common is some criteria that must be met before adopting a belief. If those criteria go unmet, one cannot bypass the process of arriving at a belief through a mere act of will (instances of self-deception are one possible exception). It is easy to say that one believes *P*, but that does not mean one *actually* believes *P*.

Beliefs about roles depend to a certain extent on the roles one chooses when the choice is open. Roles governed by contracts and transactions provide a straightforward process for entering and exiting them. But other roles are "sticky"—that is, they continue to exert normative force even as one tries to escape them. In particular, roles within families, friendships, and professions are often sticky. For example, if Sarah ends her friendship with Oliver after he spread false rumors about her, her decision prompts sadness but not guilt because her reason for ending the friendship is legitimate from her perspective. If, however, Sarah ends her friendship with Oliver because his past associations could cause controversy during her campaign (an illegitimate reason in her mind), she doubts her decision and still feels an obligation to him. Even when one acts like a role is over, escaping its hold still can prove difficult.

The sticky nature of roles, then, frustrates the politician trying to redefine her identity and escape inconvenient roles. Her options instead are more limited. Sometimes she can retire and step out of a role. For other roles with shared obligations, she can renegotiate her obligations to avoid potential conflicts with her political life. Yet even after these efforts, she never fully removes herself from the network of sticky roles characterizing her life in and out of politics. In

other words, there is no shortcut to authenticity—she is stuck with this tension. Her authenticity depends on how she responds to this tension when navigating politics.

3 The Feasibility of Authenticity in Political Discourse

In light of these challenges, this section turns to outlining authenticity's specific implications for political discourse. As a politician seeks to convince different audiences to support her policy or electoral ends, she feels pressure to tailor her message in ways that further her goals but threaten her authenticity. If a commitment to authenticity necessarily frustrates a politician's pursuit of activities common to politics, there would be good reason to conclude, at least from a realist perspective, that it is an infeasible political ideal. Yet contrary to what many assume, authenticity proves to be adaptable to the demands of politics, as is evident in its prescriptions to the following three questions: (1) When to deceive? (2) What to conceal? and (3) How to persuade?

When to deceive? The modes of deception available to a politician are diverse. She can deceive—intentionally cause others to arrive at a false belief—through making a statement she knows to be false (a lie), making a statement without concern for the truth ("bullshit," as termed by the philosopher Harry Frankfurt), or making a technically true statement that implies a false conclusion due to the context (a conversational implicature) (Frankfurt 2005; Grice 1989; Williams 2002). Some treat lies as more deserving of moral blame than other types of deception, but this position amounts to little more than "fetishizing assertion," as Bernard Williams puts it (2002, 100-110). If the *intention* and the *consequence* are the same—to deceive—it becomes difficult to make meaningful moral distinctions between lies, bullshit, and conversational implicatures. Given their moral equivalency, we should not expect one type of deception to threaten authenticity more than others, with the caveat that individual conceptions of authenticity

can include a strong commitment to avoid a certain type of deception. For instance, if one caught Frankfurt, an outspoken opponent of bullshit, deceiving a colleague through bullshitting, one rightly would say that he acted in an inauthentic manner.

Besides such exceptions, authenticity places restrictions on the *content*, not *manner*, of deception. Authenticity demands accurately representing values and commitments integral to one's identity, and thus bans deception about these values and commitments rather than categorically banning all deception. As Runciman explains, lying need not imply hypocrisy: "A lie creates the immediate impression that one believes something that happens to be false, but that does not mean that one is not what one seems (indeed, people who have a well-deserved reputation for lying may by telling a lie be confirming exactly who they are). Hypocrisy turns on questions of character rather than simply coincidence with the truth" (2008, 9; see also Taylor and Gaita 1981, 152-54). Because of the distinction between truthfulness and authenticity, it opens the possibility for the authentic individual to deceive.

This flexibility speaks in authenticity's favor as an ideal that, though demanding, can handle the practical challenges posed by politics. Certainly, much of the deception in politics is impossible to justify. But a certain element of deception may prove inescapable (Arendt 1972; Jay 2010), especially in matters of security since deceiving foes abroad through public messages necessarily entails deceiving citizens at home, too (Williams 2002, 207). Authenticity, at least certain conceptions of it, makes room for deception in these cases. Still, with that option, most authentic politicians are wary of engaging in frequent deception, since they likely value their constituents' trust. The politician who places little intrinsic value on avoiding deception nevertheless recognizes (if prudent) that frequent deceptions raise the risk of destroying constituents' trust in her (Bok 1978, 25-26), which in turn would undermine projects she values.

Deception in politics is compatible with authenticity, but at the same time an authentic politician's constellation of values places limits on the extent of her deception.

Some suggest that a politician's deception can extend to misrepresenting her identity without eroding her authenticity—a view seemingly at odds with the above definition of authenticity. The justification for this approach comes from understanding politics through the metaphor of the theater (Hobbes 1996, 111-15; Markovits 2008, 174-90; Runciman 2008, 36-41). The politician is an actor who adopts for the political sphere a persona masking her true identity. This tactic is compatible with authenticity in politics, the argument goes, for the same reason that it is compatible with authenticity in the theater: the political stage, like the theater, is a context where participants portray themselves as something they are not and everyone expects this. Though the actor assumes an identity different than her actual identity, no one accuses her of inauthenticity. Her role on stage is to imitate another. Politics mirrors the theater because of its artificiality and the shared expectation that representatives mask their identities.

This analogy has its limits, however. Though theater and politics share common features, these two contexts differ in important ways. If someone criticizes an actor on stage for feigning values and commitments not her own, this critic obviously does not understand the practice of acting. If someone similarly criticizes a politician, it is more difficult to dismiss the critic as someone who simply misunderstands politics. The person questioning a politician's authenticity faces the charge of being naïve and not appreciating political realities. Yet the critic of the politician is not guilty of the same error as the critic of the actor: imitation of an identity other than one's own is intrinsic and necessary to acting but not politics. Though many in politics misrepresent their identity, others make a good-faith effort to represent it accurately. Importantly, accurate representation of one's identity does not necessarily preclude the pursuit of

politics. Moreover, unlike the theater, there is an underlying expectation that politicians faithfully communicate their values and commitments. Few politicians admit that their political identity is a sham. They avoid such admissions, even if true, because they know that many constituents expect authenticity from them. Unlike the theater, then, the demands of authenticity still hold in politics and bar deceiving others about one's identity.

What to conceal? Concealing certain matters as private creates complications for the concept of authenticity. On the one hand, authenticity demands the accurate representation of core values and commitments, which implies transparency. On the other hand, individuals inevitably come to have commitments to themselves and others to guard intimate information—vulnerabilities, shared confidences, unfinished plans—as private. A strict interpretation of authenticity's emphasis on transparency leaves little room for an individual to keep any commitments secret.

This conclusion is too strong. Secrecy, though it can have pernicious effects, occupies a valuable place in social life. Because secrecy's benefits are so pervasive, it is easy to miss its role in making a variety of activities possible: the pursuit of creative projects without an outsider stealing them; the exploration of inchoate aspects of one's identity without enduring painful public scrutiny; the honest airing of views without fear of backlash; the possession by two lovers of experiences and objects that are uniquely theirs (Bok 1983, 18-24). Without some secrecy, notes Sissela Bok, "human beings could not remain either sane or free" (1983, 24).

Since individuals almost invariably value secrecy or privacy, upholding this value takes on importance from the perspective of authenticity. One strategy for upholding this value is recognizing a private sphere immune from public scrutiny. The lines demarcating this sphere are blurry, but Dennis Thompson sketches its basic outlines:

> We usually expect privacy for our physical condition and our personal relations with family, friends, and certain associates (those with whom we have "privileged" relationships), and for activities carried on "in private" at home. The boundaries of what is intimate are neither precise nor absolute, and even the most intimate facts about public officials may not be protected if the facts are highly relevant to the performance of their duties. But we should be inclined to say that the more intimate the activity, the more compelling must be the connection with the official's position. (1987, 132)

Many roles, along with the values and commitments embedded within them, have elements that are private and others that are public. For example, spouses enjoy the presumption of privacy in many areas of marriage, yet the marriage commitment itself is public. This dual aspect of marriage means that the authentic spouse does not shy away from sharing how this commitment shapes her identity but also keeps aspects of the relationship private. As in marriage, roles often involve layers of values and commitments extending across the public and private spheres. An understanding of authenticity accommodating this feature of roles calls for transparency regarding values and commitments at a more general level while respecting the bounds of privacy concealing more intimate values and commitments. For politicians under intense public scrutiny, it is important to be able to shield intimate parts of life while remaining authentic.

Secrecy also serves an essential role in political deliberation. A guarantee of confidentiality allows politicians to honestly share their views, assess opposing viewpoints, and be open to changing their mind while not worrying about the media's response. Without an assurance of confidentiality, fear over the political repercussions of comments can inhibit discussions and create barriers to building trust with allies and opponents. If a politician recognizes the value of private deliberation and commits to confidentiality, authenticity not only allows secrecy but also requires it in political deliberation.

Even with these privacy protections for certain spheres of activity, the politician striving for authenticity still faces a dilemma: for those values and commitments that do not enjoy a

presumption of privacy, to what extent should she share them? Rarely if ever does she find herself in a context where it is expected to communicate an exhaustive list of her values and commitments. Contexts and roles naturally highlight some aspects of her identity but not others. Partial representations of her identity emerge in her roles, with the fullest—yet still incomplete—representations of her identity most likely in long-held roles with a foundation of trust. An identity is too complex to expect a complete representation of it in any context, let alone every context. Given the impossibility of this expectation, a more reasonable interpretation of authenticity is that it requires an *accurate* representation of one's core values and commitments, not a *complete* representation of them. On this view, it is unfair to accuse an individual of inauthenticity for failing to communicate particular values and commitments, as long as the ones communicated are accurate and not contradicted by values and commitments left unsaid.

This flexibility proves important in politics. At times the public demands to know where a politician stands, and authenticity requires her to acknowledge her commitments. But not all issues have the same salience. For issues low on the public agenda not requiring immediate action, a politician has discretion in deciding whether to actively support a cause and make her commitments known. Prudence recommends prioritizing commitments: for some issues the politician proactively advances them, whereas for others she takes a responsive approach. Such decisions are unavoidable inside and outside of politics. Since individuals have various values and limited capacities, it is impossible to act on all values with equal devotion. It is thus a mistake to interpret authenticity as requiring a politician to reveal and act on all her values. To uphold her values effectively, she needs to prioritize where to dedicate her energy. Strategic considerations influence these decisions, such as when a politician turns down being the lead sponsor on legislation important to her but controversial to key allies on another project. Her

choice need not imply a lack of authenticity, for she does not turn her back on or misrepresent a value. Instead, given her limited capacities, she recognizes that to uphold her commitments she needs to be careful in taking on new ones.

How to persuade? If an elected official only references her values without considering her audience's values, she will lack effectiveness as a communicator. Moreover, such a narrow focus closes her off from understanding more deeply her constituents' diverse values. Fortunately for the representative, authenticity makes room for a rhetorical approach to political discourse, which takes seriously and appeals to the values of one's audience. Rhetoric, notes Ronald Beiner, "involves understanding of the emotions, character, and moral purpose of one's listeners" (1983, 83). This approach expands the politician's ken and can instill a newfound respect for others' values.

A rhetorical mindset broadens the politician's understanding without necessarily rendering her inauthentic. "The effort of attention that persuasion requires," writes Bryan Garsten, is "often motivated by our partial and political passions, but it nevertheless draws us out of ourselves. Trying to persuade others requires us to step outside our particular perspectives without asking us to leave our particular commitments behind" (2006, 210). Nothing inherent in the rhetorical approach—trying to understand and connect with an audience's perspective—is incompatible with authenticity. In fact, this approach helps one to genuinely appreciate others' values, which makes appeals to those values more authentic.

The rhetorical approach has its limits. Sometimes, even after attempting to understand a group's values, a politician finds them incomprehensible or morally bankrupt. If a politician reaches this conclusion, it would be inauthentic of her to appeal to values she does not share. In such cases, several options consistent with authenticity are open to her: (1) not engage the group,

(2) engage the group hoping to shift its values, or (3) send a different messenger sharing the group's values to engage it. The politician valuing authenticity recognizes that sometimes she should refrain from engaging groups and entrust that task to others.

Another dilemma is engaging individuals who only will support a policy for reasons that, from the politician's perspective, should be irrelevant. As the organizer Saul Alinsky puts it, "With very rare exceptions, the right things are done for the wrong reasons. It is futile to demand that men do the right thing for the right reason—this is a fight with a windmill" (1971, 76). Fortunately, appealing to reasons that a politician finds irrelevant poses a less serious threat to authenticity than appealing to values she finds reprehensible. When arguing for a policy, a politician striving to be compelling provides her audience with various reasons for it. If concerned with authenticity, she avoids pandering and appealing to values she disagrees with (e.g., racist sentiments). Yet she can appeal to reasons that, though unimportant to her, at least are not illegitimate from her perspective. For example, a politician lobbying her colleagues on criminal justice reform recognizes their concerns about reelection, but feels that a far more pressing concern is reuniting families ravaged by the drug war. Still, she is free to couple with her passionate arguments for reform polling data showing that voting to decriminalize certain drugs does not hurt reelection campaigns. With this approach, the politician provides various reasons to her audience, who ultimately decide whether to change their minds and, if so, why.

From this analysis, authenticity emerges as a demanding ideal that precludes the option of denying values and commitments when they prove inconvenient. But authenticity also is sensitive to political realities by accommodating forms of deception, concealment, and rhetoric common to politics. Rather than doomed to futility, the authentic politician has available to her strategies for navigating the challenges of political discourse.

4 Authenticity's Value for Representative Democracy

Since authenticity does not specify one's commitments, not all of its manifestations are desirable. Inauthentic politicians can be preferable to authentic ones proudly touting reprehensible values. But despite this possibility, authenticity remains an important political virtue for the public, which is evident when other factors are held constant. For instance, experimental evidence suggests that the public judges misdeeds by politicians more severely when they include an element of hypocrisy, such as a scandal involving behavior contrary to a politician's campaign messages. Scandals generate negative reactions from the public, but scandals involving hypocrisy prompt the further judgment that politicians are less competent in their professional role (McDermott et al. 2015). This section makes the case that there is a legitimate basis for the public's tendency to value authenticity and see hypocrisy as a threat in politics. When individuals entrust the responsibility of governing to representatives, they seek to know their representative's core commitments. Authenticity in political discourse helps meet this need by providing insight into what will motivate elected officials when the public is helpless to constrain them. For this reason, authenticity counts as a virtue in a representative democracy.

Others remain skeptical about authenticity's value, seeing it as an impossible virtue that causes more harm than good by demonizing hypocrisy. According to Shklar (1984), people make too much of a fuss over hypocrisy. Usually the worst hypocrites—those who never live up to the impossible standards they expect in others—emphasize hypocrisy's gravity as a vice. In expressing reservations about criticizing hypocrisy, Shklar stops short of endorsing it. She instead makes a more modest point: it would be wise to focus on criticizing truly harmful vices, such as cruelty, instead of hypocrisy.

Runciman goes further than Shklar in defending hypocrisy. On his view, "many forms of political hypocrisy are unavoidable, and therefore not worth worrying about" (2008, 226). Liberal democracies and the politicians in them claim to promote ideals such as freedom, equality, and transparency that they cannot live up to. Given this reality, Runciman finds little worrisome in what he terms first-order hypocrisy: "the ubiquitous practice of concealing vice as virtue" (2008, 53). Since people never are what they appear, first order hypocrisy is necessary to facilitate social and political life. What should raise concerns is when self-deception sets in and politicians become blind to their own hypocrisy and criticize others guilty of the same hypocrisy—behavior that Runciman calls second-order hypocrisy (2008, 53-54, 200-01, 212-13).

His permissive approach to first-order hypocrisy has important implications for democratic politics. Runciman is left without grounds to distinguish between or criticize politicians' first-order hypocrisy, which is evident from the following passage:

> Democratic politicians should be sincere about maintaining the conditions under which democracy is possible, and should place a higher premium on that than on any other sort of sincerity. The system of democratic politics will require them to play a part, but they should play their part in a way that is truthful to the demands of the system itself. Their individual hypocrisy—that is, their hypocrisy judged as individuals—does not matter. (2008, 213)

As long as politicians remain committed to upholding democratic institutions, the extent to which they depart from their purported values matters little. Runciman reaches this conclusion because, due to first-order hypocrisy's broadly inescapable presence in democratic politics, politicians cannot be faulted for engaging in it.

But surely there are better and worse first-order hypocrites and good reasons for the public to make these distinctions. People make these distinctions all the time outside of politics. From a spouse's perspective, misrepresenting one's fidelity counts as a more egregious form of hypocrisy than misrepresenting one's enthusiasm for the theater. Similarly, if a candidate touts a

strong anti-war stance, there are real differences between her voting for reductions in defense spending less than promised and her voting to go to war. First-order hypocrisy may be inevitable, but it would be foolish to be equally enthusiastic about its various forms.[5]

Runciman's argument runs into problems because it fails to recognize first-order hypocrisy's threat to representative democracy. This point becomes clear from looking more closely at the concept of representation. Hannah Pitkin in her influential study on representation draws attention to the paradox inherent within it: "[R]epresentation … means the making present *in some sense* of something which is nevertheless *not* present literally or in fact" (1967, 8-9). In a representative democracy, the people entrust the task of ruling to representatives with the expectation of maintaining some connection to their actions—but at a distance. Some decisions by representatives are public, yet others take place behind closed doors and remain secret until after their impact is felt. Unforeseen events also can demand a quick decision that, though public, leaves the people with little opportunity to communicate their views to their representatives beforehand. In these cases, representation purportedly guarantees the people's presence in decisions about which they know little and cannot meaningfully voice their opinions. A key feature of representation for Pitkin, responsiveness—the people's ability to express their wishes and a mechanism requiring representatives to respond (1967, 232-33)—takes on a diminished role in these cases, since responsiveness occurs (if at all) after the deed is done and its consequences are felt.

There is no easy solution to this dilemma, but authenticity in political discourse does provide constituents some connection to representatives who make decisions insulated from the

[5] This argument shows that distinctions between forms of first-order hypocrisy are reasonable and legitimate, but it does not develop a typology for it. Space constraints do not permit outlining such a typology here. Doing so necessarily would intersect psychology and philosophy, and involve identifying people's intuitions concerning hypocrisy and subjecting them to ethical analysis. For initial work in this direction, see Alicke et al. (2013).

public. For decisions where no meaningful presence by the people is possible, their best hope is to learn to the greatest extent possible *what will be present* in those decisions. In other words, the people strive to learn what core commitments will motivate a representative when they are not looking. Authenticity by a representative—openness about her core commitments and consistency in upholding them—gives constituents a glimpse into how she will act when they have little hope of influencing her. They seek authenticity to understand the representative's character and determine whether anything in it will constrain her actions when they cannot. In this way, authenticity enables a mechanism for oversight before certain actions take place. Hypocrisy, on the other hand, obscures a representative's character and motivations. Given the sundry factors competing to influence a politician, hypocrisy represents a dangerous source of instability. It is for good reason, then, that constituents criticize hypocrisy and count authenticity as a virtue in their representatives. Instead of a distraction from the real work of politics, demands for authenticity have a legitimate basis that stem from recognizing the limits of representative democracy.

Interestingly, despite defending hypocrisy, Runciman is sensitive to the paradox of representation raised by Pitkin—presence and non-presence—and the problem it poses for democratic oversight. In his article "The Paradox of Political Representation," Runciman writes that members of the public "remain the arbiters of political representation," and to "fulfil that role they need access to the kind of information that enables them to form judgments about their representatives, and access to the kind of outlets that enable them to pass such judgments as they make" (2007, 108). Runciman's analysis sketches the basic elements needed for democratic oversight but lacks recognition of hypocrisy's danger of obscuring information key to the

public's judgment: a representative's core commitments, which provide clues to how she will act out of the public's view.

5 Limiting Political Hypocrisy

If the above argument is correct and the public has compelling reason to value authenticity in political discourse, the public faces the challenge of confronting and limiting hypocrisy among those in political power. This task certainly comes with risks, since the public can fall victim to bias, deception, and other errors when making judgments about hypocrisy. But abandoning the task of making such judgments poses its own dangers, for it removes potential checks on hypocrisy in an environment where it is prone to flourish.

This point becomes clear from examining power relations between representatives and whom they represent. Representatives occupy positions of power, which can activate psychological mechanisms directly relevant to authenticity and hypocrisy. On the one hand, the subjective experience of power tends to decrease individuals' inhibitions (Anderson and Berdahl 2002; Keltner et al. 2003), and as result makes them less susceptible to pressures to conform and more apt to express their true attitudes (Galinsky et al. 2008). On the other hand, power makes people more likely to judge others severely, while also making them feel less constrained by the moral and social norms they expect others to follow (since power weakens inhibitions). In this way, power has a tendency to exacerbate hypocrisy, which Joris Lammers and his colleagues (2010) found evidence for over a series of experiments. When representatives exhibit political hypocrisy, the public is far from helpless in checking it due to the bidirectional nature of power relations. That is, instead of existing in a merely passive role, group members have means available for limiting the power of leaders as well as empowering them. Some of these means are

formal—e.g., elections—and others informal. Examples of the latter include gossip and criticism, which group members often use to constrain those in power and prevent others from gaining power (Keltner et al. 2008). Such action can draw attention to hypocrisy and make those in power self-aware of their hypocrisy.

Indeed, one effective antidote to hypocrisy is prompting self-awareness of it. In a series of revealing experiments, Daniel Batson (2008) found that, when given a coin to flip in private to decide the assignment of a desirable and undesirable task between oneself and another participant, individuals assigned themselves the favorable task well beyond what was statistically likely. In other words, many in the experiment claimed to use an impartial method for assigning the two tasks but in fact lied about the coin flip for their benefit. Such hypocrisy disappeared, however, after the experiment included a variable to increase self-awareness—specifically, a mirror that participants faced when flipping the coin.

It is, of course, naïve to believe that holding up a mirror to political hypocrisy in the form of public attention could eliminate it as quickly and effectively as the mirror in Batson's experiment. In some cases, public attention on hypocrisy motivates individuals to become defensive in justifying past hypocrisy rather than to change behavior (Stone and Fernandez 2008). But even with this risk stemming from the public nature of politics, it is puzzling to suggest that constituents should pay *less attention* to political hypocrisy and raise *less awareness* of it. If current levels of political hypocrisy are frustrating, it likely would worsen under conditions where there were fewer pressures in the public sphere to make politicians aware of their hypocrisy. The public is imperfect in its criticism of hypocrisy, but a political environment generally sensitive to hypocrisy does force greater awareness of it. And when such awareness

fails to stop a particular representative's hypocrisy, public criticism still can serve a constructive role by signaling disapproval and helping deter future hypocrisy.

The further worry remains that criticism of political hypocrisy only manifests itself in hopelessly biased and therefore unproductive ways. "[M]oralising about [politics] is absurd," writes Runciman. "If we moralise about it, we will simply reveal ourselves to be hypocrites and fools" (2008, 66). There are valid reasons for Runciman's concern about bias infecting judgments regarding political hypocrisy. One study found that partisans criticize more severely the hypocrisy of opposing party politicians (Bhatti et al. 2013). Another study found more generally that people judge more harshly the hypocrisy of out-group members than that of in-group members (Valdesolo and DeSteno 2007).

This evidence, however, shows that some individuals are in a better position to evaluate authenticity and hypocrisy in politics—namely, those without strong partisan sympathies—not that such evaluations have no place. For charges of hypocrisy, at their best, serve an important role: drawing attention to discrepancies between a representative's purported commitments and those revealed by her actions, and thus raising concerns over her motivations. In clear instances of political hypocrisy, constituents have legitimate reason for concern in a democratic system where representatives make decisions at a distance from the public. Voicing such concern provides a sensible (albeit not always effectual) check on hypocrisy. Considering the psychological mechanisms associated with hypocrisy, it is neither feasible nor prudent for constituents to abandon a critical stance toward displays of hypocrisy by their political leaders.

6 Conclusion

It is a mistake to expect perfect authenticity in politics or, for that matter, any sphere of life. But it is a further mistake to conclude that authenticity amounts to nothing more than a puritanical ideal that lacks practical moral guidance for political discourse. Authenticity's value does not rest on an idealism blind to political realities, but on a sober recognition of these realities and authenticity's role in limiting excesses common to politics. For the public, authenticity provides insight into a representative's core commitments and facilitates the public's task of exercising oversight. Public criticism, though it cannot eliminate hypocrisy entirely, does bring awareness to it and thus can help limit it. Ultimately, authenticity's value is grounded in a certain political realism that complements more idealistic motivations for expecting representatives to make a good-faith effort to uphold this virtue.

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