Truth and Uncertainty in Political Justification

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1. Introduction

Political deliberation and decision-making typically take place in circumstances of substantial uncertainty about what the right political decision is. Here are some examples. Which political candidate is better suited for office, and what makes them suited for office? What will be the effects of not renewing an existing international trade agreement? How will the climate crisis affect our lives and what should be done to mitigate them? How to respond to the threat of a pandemic and how to balance public health, social, and economic concerns? The uncertainty that affects the deliberation and decision-making on these might concern empirical or normative facts – and typically both. Participants in political deliberation and in political decision-making often do not know all the relevant empirical and normative facts and, as a result, remain uncertain about them and about what should be done.

What are the implications of such uncertainty for the justification of political decisions? I shall focus here on pro tanto political justification in a context of political deliberation, not overall justification. For clarification, political decisions that are overall justified are politically legitimate and political deliberation should conclude that they are. If they are pro tanto justified, they are only justified in some respect. In general, a pro tanto justified claim that the government should do x is a valid contribution to political deliberation. But doing x

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may not be the politically legitimate choice, i.e. doing x may not be overall justified. I will not take a stand on overall political justification in this chapter, and only address pro tanto political justification. My key question is, thus, whether uncertainty can make a difference to the pro tanto justification of political decisions in political deliberation.

If uncertainty can make a difference to the pro tanto justification of political decisions, it is normatively significant. There is widespread agreement among philosophers that empirical uncertainty can be normatively significant: actual or proposed decisions that might be justified under certainty are unjustifiably reckless under uncertainty. To illustrate, suppose a local council considers building a much needed new child care centre. If the contamination of the soil in the relevant area could be remedied, the project should go ahead. But, everything else equal, this project might not be such a good idea if the soil contamination is known to be seriously toxic and if there is a chance that the contamination can't be eliminated. If we are uncertain about relevant empirical facts, this will be normatively significant in the sense that it can change a pro tanto justification of a political decision. Exactly how the uncertainty should be factored in is a difficult question and decision theorists argue about how to answer that question. That empirical uncertainty is typically normatively significant and that it should thus not be ignored when assessing alternative political decisions is not controversial, however.

In light of this very common view about the impact of empirical uncertainty on political justification, we might expect that normative uncertainty – uncertainty about relevant normative facts – is normatively significant as well. Surely, if there is uncertainty about relevant normative facts, this should also impact on how we should assess political decisions, and on which decisions we should support in political deliberation? For example, if we are

uncertain about moral facts such as the permissibility of eating meat, shouldn't this make us cautious and in this way affect the pro tanto justification of political decisions concerning food regulation?[1]

Interestingly, things are not as straightforward. Call the affirmative view the Symmetry View. It holds that normative uncertainty is normatively significant in the same way as empirical uncertainty is. The political version of the Symmetry View focuses on political justification. The moral version of the Symmetry View focuses on the justification of actions, more generally. Many philosophers have indeed argued in favour of the Symmetry View, in moral or political contexts (e.g. Lockhart 2000; Guerrero 2007; Sepielli 2009; Moller 2011). This way of thinking about normative uncertainty is also consistent with the broadly Rawlsian view in political philosophy, which holds that epistemic limitations affect political justification. John Rawls (1993: 56f) captured the epistemic limitations of political justification in the form of a list of the burdens of judgment and the burdens of judgments include reasons for uncertainty about both empirical and normative facts.

Call the opposing view the Asymmetry View. This view denies that normative uncertainty is normatively significant in the same way than empirical uncertainty is. This view, too, has been defended by philosophers, and the focus typically is on showing that it is a mistake to think that empirical and normative uncertainty are symmetric. Some of those arguments focus on theoretical difficulties with incorporating normative uncertainty into the framework of decision theory (e.g. Nissan 2015). But other arguments aim to show, more directly, that

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[1] I understand moral facts here as a subcategory of normative facts. Normative facts will also include prudential facts, aesthetic facts, etc.

uncertainty about relevant normative facts is not normatively significant in the way in which uncertainty about empirical facts is (see Weatherson 2014, 2019; Harman 2015). Arguments for this second view have focused on the moral context, not the political context, and there isn't much of a literature on normative uncertainty in political contexts.

The issue is of great significance for political justification, however. Should we be cautious in relation to moral truth claims in a political context? Or is it, above all, important that the moral truth comes out? Consider the meat-eating example again, to illustrate the force of the idea that moral truth trumps other considerations, even in a political context. It's fair to say that there is considerable normative uncertainty about this. While some argue that existing meat-eating practices are morally akin to genocide, others maintain that eating meat is morally permissible. Now suppose the former are right. The question, then, is, given the seriousness of the moral wrong, isn't banning our meat eating practices normatively warranted even if circumstances are confusing – as they often are in politics – and if political decision-makers are not in a position to judge with sufficient robustness that this particular decision is the right one?

While the idea is forceful, my aim in this chapter is to argue that we should not be reckless in the pursuit of moral truth in political contexts. Accordance with the normative facts is not sufficient for political justification. Against those who argue in favour of the Asymmetry View, I show that uncertainty, whether it concerns empirical facts or normative facts, calls for caution in a political context. I conclude that a plausible theory of political justification must take seriously the epistemic limitations under which political decision-making typically takes place.

The chapter is structured as follows. I'll start with an overview of different types of political uncertainty (section 2). I then present the argument for the Asymmetry View and develop it for the political context (section 3). In section 4, I argue that the main problem with the argument for the Asymmetry View in a political context is its disregard of bad case scenarios – scenarios in which our normative beliefs are mistaken. Section 5 concludes.

2. Political Uncertainty

Political uncertainty comes in many guises. In this section, I spend some time distinguishing between different types of uncertainty. This taxonomy will be helpful to better understand political uncertainty and to isolate the type of political uncertainty that is the main focus of this chapter – normative uncertainty.

Before I begin, the following point of clarification will be helpful. My concern in this chapter is less with uncertainty as a feeling than with uncertainty as a relation to the world. We are uncertain, on my use of the term here, if we lack knowledge about decision-relevant properties of alternative political decisions, that is, when we don't have a good grip on what the problems are and on what the right response is. I take uncertainty in this sense to be a common predicament in a political context. Uncertainty as I understand it can be accompanied by a feeling of being uncertain, but it need not. Epistemically responsible agents aim to bring their feelings of certainty and uncertainty in line with what they know, but doing so is not always easy. And a good number of the problems that we encounter in the political context, I contend, arise from debates about uncertain issues that are held hostage by feelings of great certainty.

Focusing, then, on uncertainty as a relation to the world, a first important distinction is between uncertainty about what to believe and uncertainty about what to do. Belief uncertainty, in a political context, is uncertainty about what to believe about the properties of alternative political decisions. For example, does the proposed policy increase the health status of a particular group of the population or not? This is an example of belief uncertainty concerning relevant empirical facts. We might also be uncertain about what to believe about normative facts. Call this normative belief uncertainty. For example, we might be uncertain about whether an increase in the health status of a particular social group is a reason to implement the policy, say because of a question about the relative importance of health status versus opportunities to be healthy.

Practical uncertainty is uncertainty about what to do. In the political context, it is uncertainty about which political decision should be made. Practical uncertainty is the main guise of political uncertainty, given the emphasis on decision-making. Most political decision-making occurs under some form of practical uncertainty and this uncertainty puts a distinctive pressure on political deliberation. The reason is that while it is often possible to suspend judgment on what to believe, suspending judgment tends not to be an option as a response to practical political uncertainty. Political decision-making typically can't be suspended for long, not least because even sticking with the status quo is a political decision.

Practical political uncertainty comes itself in several guises. A first possibility, not very common in political life, I think, is pure practical uncertainty. In those cases, we're uncertain about what to do while not being theoretically uncertainty at the same time. A good example of pure practical uncertainty is when, everything else equal, possible alternatives are normatively "on a par" (Chang 2013). In those cases, practical uncertainty arises because

what we should do remains normatively underdetermined – there are normative reasons to favour either of two alternatives, and we know what they are, but no normative reasons to favour one over the other. While I think cases of pure practical uncertainty are relatively rare in a political context, they can occur. In a political context, it would be a case where we know all the relevant empirical and normative properties of two possible political decisions, but there is still uncertainty about which one is the better option. Maybe some very carefully researched proposals for a new civic building could create this sort of uncertainty: while all relevant facts are known and taken into account (suppose), citizens remain divided about which building proposal to choose because of differences in taste.

In the cases of practical uncertainty that are more typical in political life, belief uncertainty and practical uncertainty are closely linked, and that's an important point to recognise. In the cases that are common in political life, practical uncertainty stems from belief uncertainty about either empirical or normative properties of actions or decisions. Belief uncertainty about empirical properties of alternative political decisions can be practically relevant because of its effect on how we perceive their valence. In the health policy example used above, uncertainty about whether or not a policy will, in fact, increase the health status of the poor might create uncertainty about whether or not the policy should be implemented. Call this type of practical uncertainty empirical uncertainty. Empirical uncertainty is uncertainty about what to do that stems from belief uncertainty about decision-relevant empirical facts.

Practical uncertainty can also stem from belief uncertainty about normative properties of political decisions – about their moral rightness or wrongness, their moral justification, or how they honour or promote certain values, for example. Uncertainty about what to believe about decision-relevant normative facts will typically translate to uncertainty about what the

right political decision is. For example, if you're uncertain about whether saving lives or improving the quality of people's lives is more important in given circumstances, this might translate to uncertainty about the right health care reform. This type of political uncertainty, which is the main focus in this chapter, I call normative practical uncertainty, or normative uncertainty, for short.

The taxonomy I have outlined can be summarised in the following table.

	Uncertainty concerns empirical facts	**Uncertainty concerns normative facts**	**Uncertainty concerns neither empirical nor normative facts**
Uncertainty about what to believe	Empirical belief uncertainty	Normative belief uncertainty	
Uncertainty about what to do	Empirical (practical) uncertainty	**Normative** (practical) **uncertainty**	Pure practical uncertainty

Using this taxonomy, we can characterise political uncertainty as a type of practical uncertainty that concerns uncertainty about what the right political decision is. There can be pure cases of political uncertainty – cases in which the uncertainty is purely practical and not linked to belief uncertainty about empirical or normative properties of a decision. But most cases of political uncertainty arise from underlying belief uncertainty about decision-relevant empirical or normative facts, and typically both at the same time.

Before I move on to discuss the significance of normative uncertainty for political justification, let me note that the prevalence of disagreements in political life is both a symptom of the extensive practical uncertainty that surrounds political decisions and a further cause of political uncertainty. Disagreements are a symptom of political uncertainty because

the less we know about what the right decisions is, the easier it is to end up with conflicting judgments about what should be done. Political debates about abortion, for example, are, at least to some extent, characterised by normative uncertainty. If abortion was morally unproblematic in all circumstances and we knew that, this would favour a liberal abortion law, or not having a law at all. If abortion was morally problematic in all circumstances, perhaps the equivalent of murder, and we knew that, this would favour the most restrictive abortion law. The deep disagreements that persist on this issue suggest that political decisions concerning the regulation of abortion have to grapple with considerable uncertainty about the normative properties of abortion in at least some circumstances.

Political disagreements may also become causes of political uncertainty, for better or worse. Call this the disagreement effect. The disagreement effect obtains if we take the fact of disagreement as a reason to query our empirical and normative beliefs that underpin our evaluation of political decisions. In this way, a political disagreement may lead us to reduce our confidence in our political beliefs and the disagreement becomes an engine of both belief and practical uncertainty. This effect is desirable in circumstances where people uphold the wrong political decisions with unwarranted certainty. But it can be problematic if it undermines support for the right decisions.

3. The Argument for Asymmetry

Turning now to the main topic of this chapter: is normative political uncertainty normatively significant? The meat-eating example I introduced earlier perhaps suggests that it might not be. Shouldn't banning genocidal practices take normative priority, even if this decision is surrounded by uncertainty? Political contexts are often confusing, but that shouldn't stop us from doing the right thing. The key point is this: what justifies banning practice is that it is

genocidal. Whether citizens believe that the ban is the right decision or not, or if they are uncertain about this issue, is irrelevant. What matters, in this case, is that the practice is stopped and animals protected. More generally put, it is a mistake to think that it is the citizens' attitudes, including their uncertainty, that carry normative significance. Instead, we should recognise that it is the content of those attitudes – the moral principles or values that are endorsed, or the normative reality that relevant beliefs represent – that is, above all, normatively significant (see Enoch 2015 for this distinction).

This is an important point, which deserves careful consideration. But the question is how it can be supported. Specifically, if we want to maintain that normative uncertainty can be ignored, what explains the difference between normative uncertainty and empirical uncertainty? As we saw in the child-care example above, in cases of empirical uncertainty, we tend to think that recklessness is unjustified. The explanation has to show that empirical uncertainty warrants caution in a way that normative uncertainty doesn't. In other words, it has to show that the Symmetry View, however intuitive it may be, is mistaken, and that the Asymmetry View is correct.

Brian Weatherson (2014, 2019) has the most carefully worked out answer to this question that I'm aware of. While his argument against Symmetry focuses on the moral context, not the political context, it will be helpful to briefly explain his argument, before examining it focusing on the political context.

Weatherson claims that arguments for the normative significance of normative uncertainty rest on a faulty analogy between empirical uncertainty and normative uncertainty. The problem is, according to Weatherson, that while empirical uncertainty puts you at risk to do

something that is known to be morally wrong, there is no corresponding risk in the case of normative uncertainty.

Consider the following case of empirical uncertainty. Suppose you're baking a cake for a children's birthday party. You're unsure about whether a jar marked as baking powder might contain rat poison. In those circumstances, you shouldn't use the contents of the container: you would risk doing something very morally wrong – poisoning the children – when you can just leave out the baking powder.

Cases of normative uncertainty are importantly different, Weatherson argues, at least as long as a strong form of normative externalism is true. On the version of normative externalism that he endorses, the normative properties of our actions are independent of our judgments. Consider the case of eating meat again. Eating meat is morally wrong, in given circumstances, if the action has certain normative properties; vice versa, it is not morally wrong if it lacks the properties that would make it wrong. Suppose it would not, in fact, be morally wrong to eat meat in those given circumstances. If you eat a steak now and then, even though you can't rule out that it might be wrong – even though you have some normative uncertainty in this regard – you are not running the risk of doing something you know would be morally wrong. There is thus a clear disanalogy with the baking powder case. In the latter, you would be running the risk of doing something clearly morally wrong – poisoning the children – if you ignored your uncertainty. By contrast, if it is not morally wrong to eat meat in your circumstances, then you cannot run a risk of doing something morally wrong. Your uncertainty about this isn't normatively significant, or so Weatherson argues.

As mentioned, this argument relies on a strong form of normative externalism. If we were to apply the kind of normative externalism that Weatherson's argument is premised on to political justification, we would hold that if a political decision is the right one, then normative uncertainty does not undermine the decision's justification. That people have conflicting beliefs about what the right thing to do is, or that they would vote in favour of different choices does not, on that view, undermine the justification of the decision.

Call the relevant externalist view adapted to a political context political factualism.[2] Political factualism holds that political decisions are justified in virtue of according with normative facts that are relevant to the decision. More specifically, I want to focus here on the following externalist claim:

> Sufficiency: if a political decision accords with the normative facts, it is pro tanto justified.

Sufficiency states that contributions to political deliberation in support of decisions that accord with the normative facts are valid. If we do not know what the relevant normative facts are, or what decision they warrant, this does not undermine a political decision's pro tanto justification.[3] Normative uncertainty, on this political factualist view, is thus not normatively significant.

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[2] See Peter (2020) for a more extensive discussion of this view.

[3] See Srinivasan (2015) for an argument for why an externalist view of normativity should be taken seriously.

To illustrate the force of this factualist view, consider the following case. Suppose that a country is witnessing the rise of what some call a fascist party and that party receives considerable popular support. Once in power, it would inflict great harm on many. An opportunity has opened to defeat it, but there is considerable uncertainty and confusion surrounding the decision. Is it fascism? Would the net effect of the party being in power be harmful or would they also realise some new values? Etc. This kind of uncertainty about what the right decision is is typical of many political decisions. The factualist can say that this uncertainty shouldn't detract us from doing the right thing in this context. The defeat of the upcoming party is justified – in virtue of according with the normative facts – even if nobody is in a position to judge with sufficient robustness at the time that the decision is the right one.

4. Taking Bad Case Scenarios Seriously

Does the political factualist view pose a serious challenge for the more mainstream view that uncertainty about both empirical and normative facts should make us cautious, especially in a political context? My aim in this section is to argue that it doesn't.[4]

My target is the type of normative externalism that Weatherson's argument for the normative insignificance of normative uncertainty is premised on. Before showing where this argument, considered in the political context, goes wrong, let me start by pointing out an advantage of political factualism, building on the example of the fascist party. Given what is at stake in

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[4] Note that my aim here is not to reject Weatherson's defence of the irrelevance of normative uncertainty wholesale; that would require further argument. My aim is more limited as I will only question the argument's soundness in a political context.

many political decisions, it is plausible that an important criterion for assessing theories of political justification is what we might call the Right Decisions criterion. This criterion says that theories of political justification should aim to justify the right decisions – the decisions that are warranted by relevant normative facts.

Political factualism fares well in relation to the Right Decisions criterion, for obvious reasons. If we grant that there is a meaningful distinction between right and wrong political decisions that is determined by what the normative facts warrant, political factualism has the advantage that it justifies the right decisions – the decisions warranted by the normative facts.

To see this advantage of political factualism more clearly, consider this contrast with an alternative theory of political justification, one that is quite popular among political philosophers, the public reason view (Rawls 1993; Gaus 2011). On the public reason view, political decisions are justified to the extent that they can be justified to the citizens – on grounds of reasons they all can share or reasons they each can endorse. This view is vulnerable to justifying the wrong decisions, if what can be justified to the citizens differs from the decision favoured by the normative facts. Similarly, it is possible that there are right decisions that cannot be justified to the citizens because they don't recognise it as the right decision.

But supporting the right decisions isn't the only criterion that a plausible theory of political justification has to satisfy. Paraphrasing William James, who, in an epistemological context distinguished between the goal of acquiring true beliefs and the goal of avoiding false beliefs, we can say that we also need to test a theory of political justification in relation to a second criterion, which is whether it helps us making the wrong decisions. Call this the Avoiding

Wrongness criterion. In political life, making the wrong decisions can be morally very costly, catastrophic even. Aiming for the right decisions should not make us blind to the possibility of making terribly wrong political decisions, and the plausibility of a theory of political justification depends on how well it fares in relation to this second criterion.

How does political factualism fare in relation to the Avoiding Wrongness criterion? Well, just like it treats all right decisions as justified, it also treats all wrong decisions as not justified. That might be seen to count in its favour and, at first glance, it might thus appear that the factualist view fares equally well in relation to both criteria – aiming for the right decisions and avoiding wrong decisions. But this appearance is only superficial and hides a problem that political factualism has with regard to the second criterion.

To see the problem, it will help to take a close look at what political factualism implies for political justification in good case and in bad case scenarios. The distinction I have in mind is the following. In the good case, a political decision accords with what the normative facts favour; in the bad case, it does not. In the good case, political factualism is buoyed by epistemic and moral fortuitousness. If accordance with the normative facts is of prime importance, then, in the good case, no further justification is required. Support for this view comes from the thought that should care about making the right decision, but not about whether it is the right decision. If we are about to make the right political decision, worrying about whether it is the right decision can be seen as fetishist (e.g. Smith 1994; Weatherson 2019: 45ff).

Now contrast this scenario with a bad case scenario. In the bad case, when a decision does not accord with what the normative facts favour, we encounter a puzzle. If we are advocating

or are about to make a wrong decision, we cannot remain unconcerned about this prospect. We would be acting on false beliefs and we are at risk of making a moral error – potentially a very serious one. Consider political decision-making at the time of a new pandemic threat. Advocating the wrong trade-off between protecting people's lives and protecting their livelihoods potentially results in hundreds of thousands of avoidable deaths. Similarly, consider political decision-making under moral ignorance of the significance of race or gender injustice: making the wrong decisions can perpetuate very serious forms social injustice.

In the bad case scenario, there are thus both epistemic and moral pressures to avoid advocating and making political wrong decisions, which we must take seriously and to which we must respond. In the bad case scenario, we cannot settle for whatever the normative facts imply for the justification of a decision. Instead, both epistemic and moral considerations push us to question whether the political decision is justified. The good case and the bad case are importantly different in this regard.

The good case and bad case scenarios warrant different responses because the epistemic and moral fortuitousness that is distinctive of the good case is absent in the bad case. While I grant that there is some plausibility to the claim that we shouldn't worry about whether it is the right decision in the good case, a parallel argument cannot be made in the bad case. The attitude that can be, with some justification, criticised as fetishist in the good case, looks very different in the bad case. Not worrying about whether a decision is, in fact, the right one comes across as unwarranted complacency in the bad case: if we're at risk of making (or advocating) a wrong decision, we should be wary of making a moral mistake and should look

for ways to avoid it. In the bad case, we must take an interest in the question of whether or not the decision is the right one and respond if there is a possibility that it is not.

Focusing on the Avoiding Wrongness criterion, and bad case scenarios, thus reveals an important problem for the factualist view of political justification. The problem is that while the Right Decisions criterion is normatively self-fulfilling on this view, so to speak, the Avoiding Wrongness Criterion is not. In bad case scenarios, or in scenarios that might be bad cases, we cannot be content with what the normative facts imply. To satisfy the Avoiding Wrongness criterion, we must satisfy ourselves, to the extent possible in the circumstances, that we're not about to make a moral mistake. The Avoiding Wrongness criterion thus brings into view that the factualist view of political justification is, at best, incomplete.

Admittedly, the type of problem that bad case scenarios pose might not be equally serious in all contexts. In the political context, however, bad case scenarios clearly matter and a plausible theory of political justification must take such scenarios seriously. First, there are significant costs attached to making the wrong political decisions as political decisions affect the lives of vast numbers of people. Second, bad case scenarios are likely in the political context. The epistemic circumstances of political decision-making are often such that we lack a good grasp of all the relevant normative (and empirical) facts. Third, the problem that bad case scenarios create for political deliberation and political decision-making is further exacerbated by the fact that it is often impossible to know whether we're in a good case or a bad case scenario when considering alternative political decisions. While the good case and the bad case are morally and epistemically distinct, they will often be doxastically indistinguishable. There is great potential for political deliberators or decision-makers to mistakenly believe that they are in a good case scenario when they are in a bad case scenario

and vice versa. Relatedly, there are plenty of examples of terribly wrong political decisions that have been defended with great certainty and there are probably also many right decisions that remain very controversial. In sum, given the seriousness of bad case scenarios in political contexts, their likelihood, and their frequent indistinguishability from good case scenarios, the default assumption cannot be that we're in a good case scenario. It has to be that we're in a bad case scenario.

Given the significance of bad case scenarios in a political context, I conclude that the problem I have highlighted is a serious problem for political factualism. In the bad case, we're inclined towards the wrong political decision – a decision that doesn't accord with what the normative facts imply should be done. Political factualism has no problem with identifying such a decision as unjustified, of course. But, unlike in the good case, where there is some plausibility for the claim that making the right decision is all that matters, we should be concerned about the prospect of making wrong decisions. Focusing on bad case scenarios has shown that political justification depends on how we respond to what we don't know, including to normative uncertainty. I have also argued that because the good case and the bad case are often doxastically indistinguishable, the problem that bad case scenarios pose for political justification affects most instances of political deliberation and political decision-making. In other words, the problem that bad case scenarios pose arises whenever we don't have robust knowledge of what the right decision is, which is the vast majority of cases of political deliberation and decision-making.

5. Against Recklessness in Political Justification

The problem with political factualism that I have just highlighted undermines the argument for the irrelevance of normative uncertainty in a political context. Normative uncertainty matters in a political context and we should not be reckless in the pursuit of moral truth.

The target of my objection was the following sufficiency claim:

> Sufficiency: if a political decision accords with the normative facts, it is pro tanto justified.

Sufficiency invites us to focus on the good case because it invites us to consider the implications of a political decision that accords with the normative facts. If Sufficiency were defensible, and if a political decision accords with the normative facts, the decision is justified and there would be nothing wrong with contributions to political deliberation or decision-making that ignore normative uncertainty.

More generally, in contexts where it is appropriate to focus on good case scenarios only, and to only care about making the right political decisions, ignoring normative uncertainty might be defensible. It is the exclusive focus on the good case, and the epistemic and moral fortuitousness that characterises the good case, that invites moral recklessness as a response. Once we start focusing on the bad case, the Asymmetry View, which holds that normative uncertainty does not warrant the same caution as empirical uncertainty, loses plausibility.

In the political context, bad case scenarios matter, I have argued. Once bad case scenarios come into view as well, we can't rely on the epistemic and moral fortuitousness that

characterises the good case. In assessing political claims or in making political decisions in circumstances of normative uncertainty, we can't rule out that we're in a bad case scenario. We must respond to the possibility that our beliefs are incorrect and that we are about to make or have made a serious moral mistake.

Taking seriously bad case scenarios puts a break on the reckless pursuit of what we perceive to be moral truths. If there is a possibility that we are in a bad case scenario, which is the standard case in political deliberation, we cannot be content with what the normative facts imply for the justification of our claims and decisions. That a political decision accords with the normative facts is not, therefore, sufficient for political justification, contrary to what Sufficiency claims.

If Sufficiency is rejected, this implies that the validity of contributions to political deliberation depends on factors other than the truth of a claim. The truth of a claim made does not, as such, confer validity. Or, as we might also put it, political justification is not governed by a truth norm. Instead, we must conclude that political justification depends on how we respond to what we don't know, including to normative uncertainty.

What about the case of the fascist party, you might object? Isn't that an example of where the good case scenario matters in a political context? It is. But the case doesn't undermine my argument against the Asymmetry View and against the Sufficiency claim that a political factualist might want to make. How we assess the case of the rise of the fascist party very much depends on what we assume about what is known. The case will look very different from the perspective of an observer who knows what's going on even as political confusion reigns. If we know that there is a threat from a fascist party, then we have a basis to validly

claim that the party should be banned. It's important to note, however, that what makes the claim valid, in this case, is not accordance with the normative facts as such, contrary to Sufficiency. It is our knowledge of the party's harmfulness that makes the claim valid.

When we don't have a good grip on what's going on, which is the more normal case in politics, we're back in the scenarios that I have highlighted. Most political decisions are not clear cut and they are surrounded by great normative uncertainty, in addition to uncertainty about relevant empirical facts. The validity of claims made in political deliberation in those scenarios depends on how we respond to what we do not know.

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