

Time Pressure Can Squeeze the Truth

November 06, 2019

The idea that we have two minds, an authentic inner core and a false outer layer, is as ancient as Plato and as current as the new hit movie “Joker.” If our real identities are packed away, hidden even from ourselves, we seldom reveal what we really think and instead cultivate appearances—or so many psychologists believe. According to this view, the best way to get people to tell the truth is by eliciting lightning-quick responses, before they can reflect and dissemble.

But this may not be so, says a study published last month in the journal *Psychological Science*. It found that people are more likely to lie about themselves when under time pressure. “Asking people to respond quickly just makes them give you the answer you want to hear,” said John Protzko, the study’s first author and a postdoctoral scholar at the University of California, Santa Barbara.