

Democracy and the Satisfaction of Individual Interests*

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Abstract

Democratic theorists disagree about not only how to use or define the concept of democracy, but also the justification of democracy. There are in general two sorts of justification of democracy: instrumental and intrinsic. This paper focuses on the instrumental justification of democracy by appealing to the notion of "satisfaction of individual interests." A distinction is made between subjectivist and objectivist accounts of interests. It explores the implications of the different conceptions of interests in different models of democracy: authoritative, juridical, pluralist, unitary and strong. The thesis of this paper is that appeal to individual interests does not necessarily imply advocating the representative mode or the direct mode of democracy. And any democratic theory should take the notion of preference intensity seriously.

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Introduction

Democracy is arguably one of the most contestable concepts in political studies. In a seminal essay "Essentially Contested Concepts," W. B. Gallie suggests democracy like many other political concepts are essentially contested concepts in the sense that such concepts "essentially involve endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users" (Gallie, 1956; Gray, 1977; Connolly, 1993: 10). It is true that theorists disagree with one another on how to use the concept of democracy. Notions such as "political democracy", "social democracy", "industrial democracy", and "economic democracy" involve desperate ways of using the concept of democracy (Sartori, 1987: 8ff). Yet most of the democratic theorists seem to agree that democracy, originated from the Greek word, *demokratia*, literally means, "rule by the people" (Graham, 1986: 13; Dahl, 1989: 3, 106; Harrison, 1993: 2; Birch, 1993: 45) or "government by the people" (Pennock, 1979: 3ff). It is useful to take this as an operational definition of democracy.

Democratic theorists disagree about not only how to use or define the concept of democracy, but also the justification of democracy. The disagreement in the justification of democracy is made more complex by the fact that different ideologies come in through the backdoor. Although it is now hard to find anyone who rejects democracy, Marxists, republicans, liberals, and communitarians all have their own ways of understanding the desirability of democracy.

There are in general two sorts of justification of democracy: instrumental and intrinsic (Christiano, 1990; 1996: 15ff). Intrinsic arguments appeal to certain intrinsic principles based on the embedded values such as, autonomy and equality. Democracy is desirable because

it exemplifies the values of autonomy and equality. The value of democracy is constitutive of the value of autonomy that if democracy is not desirable, autonomy is not desirable either. The value of democracy is constitutive of the value of equality in the sense that if democracy is not desirable, equality is not desirable either. Some theorists discuss both the values of equality and autonomy and their relation with democracy (Harrison, 1993; Christiano, 1996), while others focus on autonomy (Weale, 1999: ch.4; Held, 1996: ch.9). Yet different theorists have in mind various understandings of autonomy and equality. Liberals refers to individual autonomy, while republicans may speak of plural autonomy (Lakoff, 1996). Liberals talk about natural equality, while Marxists may appeal to material equality.

Instrumental arguments appeal to the substantive goods achieved by democracy. Theorists disagree on what count as substantive goods. Substantive goods may include the prevalence of the common good, the realization of common interests, the resolution of conflicts, the enhancement of personal self-development, the promotion of wise and effective policies, and the satisfaction of individual interests. This list is by no means a complete one. Theorists of different ideological backgrounds argue for the values of different substantive goods and hence advocate different sorts of instrumental justification.

This paper focuses on the instrumental justification of democracy by appealing to the notion of “satisfaction of individual interests.” Broadly speaking, it is about liberal justification that individual interests rather than common interests or community’s interests are fundamental. It is not intended to argue for a liberal justification of democracy. Rather, it contends that appeal to individual interests does not exclude direct majoritarian mode of democracy nor pluralist representative democracy. Section 2 discusses different conceptions of

individual interests, weak and strong subjectivist conceptions on the one hand, and weak and strong objectivist conceptions on the other. When considering the instrumental justification of democracy, we cannot take democracy as an abstract ideal but a concrete working model.

Section 3 explores the implications of the conceptions of interests in different models of democracy. In working out this relationship, we examine Barber's characterization of five models of democracy: authoritative, juridical, pluralist, unitary, and strong. The first three belong to the representative mode of democracy, while the last two belong to the direct mode of democracy. It is argued that appeals to individual interests do not necessarily imply the representative or direct modes of democracy. It depends on what conception of individual interests we hold. It is argued that Barber's model of strong democracy and Dahl's model of pluralist democracy are both compatible with the weak subjectivist conception of individual interests.

Section 4 suggests that no model of democracy may disregard the issue of preference intensity. And Dahl's pluralist model of democracy and the direct mode of majoritarian democracy have their own respective problems in dealing this issue.

The Notion of "Interest"

1. Individual interests

The political significance of individual interests has long been recognized but, as remarked by Wolin, it was not until the late seventeenth century that the satisfaction of individual interests came to

be treated as the foremost objective of politics (Wolin, 1960: 279-281). This is certainly true of the rise of the utilitarian doctrine (Bentham, 1843). If the satisfaction of individual interests is the goal of politics, public decisions have to be made and judged according to the preferences of individual citizens. It is further assumed that each person's preferences reflect his/her individual interests. And democracy is regarded as a method of aggregating preferences. Our main concern is: in what sense does democracy as a mode of governance claim superiority in achieving optimal promotion of individual interest satisfaction? To examine this issue we have to clarify the concept of "interest" first.¹ In what follows, I shall discuss both the subjectivist and objectivist accounts of "interest." I first argue that the subjective/objective distinction is a dichotomy rather than a continuum.

2. The Objectivist Account(s) of Interest

(1) Richard Flathman holds that the subjective/objective distinction is a continuum (Flathman, 1966: 16-7; 1975). At the "subjective end" of Flathman's "continuum," the relationship between a person A and x ("the substantive" object in which he/she has an interest) consists of a psychological attitude. And, as soon as "that attitude changes or terminates, the relationship is modified or brought to an end." At the "objective end," the relationship obtains (i.e. x is in

¹ The term "interest" is unfortunately ambiguous. For some political theorists, the notion of interest is closely related to the notion of "the good." As Jane Mansbridge points out, "one can easily argue that what is in your interest is what is good for you" (Mansbridge, 1980: 24). But to simply identify "what is in your interest" with "what is good for you" is problematic because "what is good for A" is no more precise than "what is in the interest of A." It is however plausible to take for granted that what is true of "in the interest of" also holds for "good for."

the interest of A) regardless of whether A is aware of the effect that x lays on him/her. In spite of Flathman's own explication, I would argue that either "interest" is subjective in the sense that only when there is an attitude or feeling of A toward "the substantive" x , A is said to have an interest, or "interest" is objective in the sense that A is said to have an interest in x regardless of whether A is aware of x 's effect on him/her or not. The objective sense is illustrated in the example suggested by Flathman that "a child has an interest in a diet which provides a certain quantity of protein." It is a dichotomy between the subjectivist and objectivist accounts of interest and they point to different directions and have disparate implications in the theory of democracy. Let us consider the objectivist ones first.

Benditt contends that the "interest" of a person is an objective term in the sense that it is independent of any person's attitudes toward what is in the interest of him/her. He identifies "X is in the interest of A" with "X will produce more benefit than harm for A." In Benditt's view, what gives more benefit than harm can be objectively determined. As what produces more benefit than harm is conducive to happiness, Benditt holds an objective account of happiness which is not defined in terms of sensations of pleasure or pain. In fact, he argues that the feelings and attitudes of a person are at most contingently related to "interest."

Flathman criticizes Benditt on the ground that "to have an interest in X is (among other things) to have a certain attitude or feeling toward or about it" (Flathman, 1975: 282). Flathman finds Benditt's account implausible because on Benditt's account "there would be nothing conceptually peculiar about [saying] that A is uninterested in x in the sense that he takes no interest in the matter, is indifferent to or even unaware of it" (Ibid.) However, I think it is perfectly legitimate for

Benditt to hold that a person's interests (objective) are not even partially determined by his or her *ws-interests* or *ss-interests*, and thus insist on his objectivist account. A real problem arises as Benditt distinguishes between the sorts of things that are in one's interest and the things that are in one's interest at a particular time. Concerning these sorts of things in general, Benditt holds that one's interests "include such things as his wealth, his career, the well-being and welfare of his family, and his financial and social position" (Ibid.: 246). This comes close to a distinction between interests in general and interests in particular.

Benditt seems to hold that given one's background (social and personal), we can know what would produce more benefit than harm for that person, but at a particular time, there may be some internal conflicts among those interests (objective) in general, and one has to sacrifice some of those interests, as he writes: "it is sometimes not in a person's interest to pursue one of his interests" (Ibid.).²

An objectivist like Benditt may well deny the want-account and claim that N's wanting wealth at time *t* is not in his/her interest (objective) while health is in fact in N's "real" interest (objective). This means that health probably produces more benefit than harm for N. However, an objectivist needs to tell us how to assess it. One way out

² Benditt clarifies his position by an example: "health and wealth may both be interests of N's; but if an action which produces more wealth for N would be detrimental to his health, then it is (probably) in N's interest at *t* to do what is necessary to protect health, and it is not in his interest at *t* (indeed, it is probably against N's interest at *t*) to do that act which would produce the added wealth" (Ibid.). The question is: why is health objectively preferable to wealth? Benditt's use of "probably" indicates that there is no dogmatic answer in particular cases. But then how cannot one decide in a subjective way if there is no objective standard to do so (i.e. decide whether some interest (health in this case) produces more benefit than harm in comparison to another interest (wealth in this case) at a particular time *t*)?

would be to suggest that N needs health more than wealth. The objectivist account thus comes close to the identification of "x is in A's interest" with "A needs x." The differences between "desire" and "need" must be partially explored.³

Firstly, a person is always aware of what he/she desires, but he/she can be mistaken and/or ignorant about his/her needs. Secondly, desiring (or wanting) is an intentional act involving positive feelings and attitudes. "Need" does not denote a mental act at all, and needs do not necessarily involve feelings of needs. Thirdly, desires and beliefs are conceptually related whereas someone's need is independent of his/her beliefs. If someone's belief in what is desirable changes, his/her desires will also change. Someone's need for something depends on the actual desirability of that thing. An objectivist appealing to "need" is likely to be committed to some sort of value realism according to which the "actual" desirability of things can be determined in the objective reality. Thus the expression "X is in the interest of A" is equivalent to "X supplies (serves) some need of A", and as what is good for A can be determined in an objectivist way in terms of "need."

There are two objectivist positions. A weak objectivist might hold that what is in the interest of a person (i.e. what serves the need of a person) cannot be accurately determined or known before the personal experience of himself/herself. The correctness of the prediction "what will produce more benefit than harm" is established pragmatically. A strong objectivist might hold that what is in the interest of a person (one of his/her needs) can be accurately known before the actual experience of that person. The correctness is built up prior to individual

³ The differences between "desire" and "need" discussed below are generally recognized. See (Wiggins, 1985).

social experience. I shall label the “interests” corresponding to these two positions as wo-interests and so-interests.

3. The Subjectivist Account(s) of Interest

So far we have examined the objectivist account of “interest”; we may now come to the subjectivist ones. A subjectivist account comes close to the identification of “ x is in A’s interest” with “A desires x ” or “A wants x .” Accordingly, interests satisfaction is equivalent to desires or wants satisfaction. C. B. Hagen, as Brian Barry points out, holds the first sort of identification (Hagen, 1958; Barry, 1990: 175). Barry criticizes this view because it rules out a plausible question: “A wants x but is it in his interests?” Barry might argue that x may not be good for A. If Barry were to mean this, it could be illustrated by an example like the following: we may well say that a drug addict desires or wants to take drugs, but no one would say that doing so is in his/her interest in the sense that drug-taking is good for him/her. An extreme subjectivist might argue that what one values is valuable for him/her, and therefore what one thinks to be “good” is “good” for himself/herself.

Oppenheim, ostensibly holding an “objective” account, maintains that the ultimate preference of an individual is immune from criticisms because any attempt to question someone’s ultimate preference will force us into the moral realm (Oppenheim, 1975). He clarifies his position in this way: “A happens to prefer drugs and a pleasurable though short life to the painful process of drug rehabilitation; he may well act rationally if he chooses the former course of action, and in his interest as well” (Ibid.: 267). It appears confusing because he is talking

about rationality, interest as well as preference. Some clarification is necessary before we move on.

Oppenheim restricts interest-talk to actions that are seen as means to substantive end-states that are supposed to be an individual's "ultimate preference." Accordingly, an action X is in one's "interest" if it would be instrumentally "rational" for him to do X. He writes: "The assertion that it is in A's interest that he does X thus refers to two hypothetical conditions: first, were A to aim at promoting his own welfare, Y would be a state of affairs which it would be rational for A to prefer (hence, it is reasonable to expect that Y, if it materialized, would advance A's own welfare); and second, were A to prefer Y, it would be rational for him to do X (hence, it is reasonable to expect that A's action X would bring about Y)" (Ibid). It should be noticed that the "rationality" requirement works as the criterion of not only the action X but also the end-state, say Y, which is to be conducive to one's own welfare. Oppenheim's account is highly problematic: if a rationality criterion applies to both the action X and the end-state Y, how can it be plausible to rule out "stating that it is in A's interest to adopt one rather than another intrinsic preference"?

Another serious problem is that if the end-state Y is in A's own welfare, Y is no longer intrinsic but instrumental to one's own welfare which is the ultimate end. Thus actions, states of affairs and material goods are all candidates for being the interests of some person as they may be judged to be good for that person. If Oppenheim insists on his account, "X is in the interest of A" (where X is an action) is to be equated with "X is the rational means for A to achieve an end-state of affair Y ultimately preferred by A himself/herself." The problem is whether what is in A's ultimate preference is really good for A. Oppenheim might hold that what is good for A is what conduces to A's

own welfare. The problem is whether what is good for A is solely determined by the subject, A. Oppenheim believes that what A “ultimately” prefers (namely, Y) is immune from assessment by others as to whether it is good for A or not. But this seems implausible. If Y is bad for A, X cannot be said to be in the interest of A.

Oppenheim might hold that whatever A prefers, desires or wants is conducive to his/her own welfare and hence is good for A. Oppenheim seems to have held this view. In his example, the drug addict who wants a pleasurable short life rather than “a painful process of drug rehabilitation, and hence a longer healthy life.” This is counter-intuitive and entails to some sort of value relativism: it makes the value of something (or some state of affairs) totally dependent upon whether a person prefers, desires or wants it. We may call this account strong subjectivist account. To refute this view requires a substantive theory of well-being which we cannot deal with here.

According to Benditt’s understanding, Barry’s account is an objectivist one (Benditt, 1975). But as we shall see, Barry’s own account leads to a subjectivist conclusion even though it is given the disguise of being an objectivist one. Barry’s own suggestion is that one can “say that an action or policy is in a man’s interests if it increases his opportunities to get what he wants” (Barry, 1990: 196), and further discussion forces him to assert that “X is in A’s interests” is equivalent to “A wants the results of X and the satisfactions of the desires of other persons are excluded from the range of the results wanted.”

The objectivist appearance resides in the belief that whether the opportunities to get what one wants are increased can be empirically assessed. This is shown by Oppenheim’s rationality requirement. The problem, similar to that in Oppenheim’s account, is whether the

“results” that A wants are really good for A; but Barry, like Oppenheim, never questions this. Barry’s account simply identifies one’s interests with one’s desires (preferences or wants). It suffers from the counter-intuitiveness of Hagen’s account. Barry might hold some sort of value subjectivism in order to be consistent. Thus the main claim of this sort of subjectivist account is that what is good for a person (i.e. what is in the interest of a person) is subjectively determined, dependent upon that person’s attitudes and feelings.

It is worth noticing that there is a difference between value relativism and subjectivism. According to the former, only my attitude or feeling confers value on what I desire and only when I have some attitude towards X can it have value and be in my interest. According to the latter, other persons’ attitudes can confer value even on what I do not want but their attitudes have no prescriptive force; and only my attitudes count. Thus in the former case I am the sole judge of my interest. In the latter case, though other persons can disagree with my judgment on what is in my interest, I am the best judge of what is my interest; thus my judgments about my own interests are to be preferred because it is my interests that are being considered. The former position is a relatively more radical one, which may be called the strong subjectivist position; it is concerned with “strong subjectivist interests” denoted as *ss-interests*. The later is the weak subjectivist position, concerned with “weak subjectivist interests” denoted as *ws-interests*. Oppenheim’s account is a strong subjectivist account, while it is not clear whether Barry’s account accepts that his account is a weak subjectivist account.

Robert Dahl offers a weak subjectivist account. Dahl suggests that in judging “whether some course of action or policy is in A’s interests, either we must know something about A’s preferences, wants, or needs,

or we must possess knowledge of what is good for A independently of A's own preferences, wants, or needs" (Dahl, 1989: 102). For Dahl, in most cases, the individual self "is uniquely privileged because only the self has direct access to its own awareness." Dahl acknowledges the objectivist account that the needs of human beings form a universal "objective" hierarchy. Yet he argues that even if this were true, it would only say only that some of a person's needs ought to be met "above a certain threshold before others take on equal urgency." And, more importantly, the theory makes sense only if "the relative priorities work their way into the self's awareness." In other words, individuals themselves are better judges of their respective interests.

We may further understand the difference between weak subjectivist interests and strong subjectivist interests with reference to the best judge principle. If we take interests as strong subjectivist interests, then individuals are not merely the best judges but also the *only* judges of their own interests. This is not the case of weak subjectivist interests. Although the best judge of my interests, I am not the only judge of my interests. It is not impossible for others to make sound judgments and as a consequence I change my mind. Yet even if I am not the only judge, I am the one who is responsible and liable to my interests.⁴ As Dahl claims, "whether interests are thought to be indicated by a person's preferences, wants, or needs, the knowledge of the self is likely to be superior to that of any other person and certainty, in general, no worse" (Ibid.). It does not imply the account of strong subjectivist interests. It only suggests that the self is in a privileged position to pass judgments on what amounts to individual interests.

⁴ For a useful discussion of the best judge principle, see (Goodin, 1990). Through the introduction of the distinction between strong and weak subjectivist accounts, our account is an elaboration of Goodin's.

What underlies Dahl's account is the agent-relativity of interests. Interests are relative to different individuals. Each individual is unique and "the self is privileged in its access to the particularities, and even uniqueness, of the self" (Ibid.: 103). Hence it is difficult to make any generalized claim about individual interests. As Dahl contends, we are entitled and even obliged "to look with the greatest suspicion on any claim that "another possesses objective knowledge of the good of the self that is definitely superior to the knowledge possessed by the self" (Ibid.). Dahl inclines to believe that other people may make judgments on what a person's interests are but their knowledge is not necessarily more accurate than that person himself/herself.

We will later work out the implication of the differences between the objectivist and subjectivist accounts on different models of democracy. In order to do so requires us turn to discuss the representative and direct modes of democracy first.

The Representative and the Direct Modes of Democracy

1. Five Models of democracy

Now, given the clarification of what an "interest" is and the exploration of the subjectivist and objectivist accounts, we come to the issue of how these different accounts affect the instrumental argument for democracy as a means for the satisfaction of individual interests. We first proceed to the discussion of two modes of democracy: representative and direct (Cf. Budge, 1996: Ch.2). By the

representative mode, I mean a system in which those who are affected by the public decisions are not involved in the actual decision-making process but only elect some representatives who are then entitled to make decisions for the electorate. By the direct mode, I mean a system in which all those who are affected by the decisions are involved or entitled to be involved in the decision-making process and make all decisions directly. The two modes may be refined into various models.

Barber classifies models of democracy into five ideal types: authoritative, juridical, pluralist, unitary, and strong (Barber, 1984: 140-155). The first three belong to the representative mode of democracy, while the last two belong to the direct mode of democracy. It is useful to summarize his characterization. According to the authoritative model, a democracy makes decisions "*through deferring to a representative executive elite that employs authority (power plus) in pursuit of the aggregate interests of its electoral constituency.*" Barber uses Burke's ideal English constitution as an example. Barber criticizes authoritative democracy as deficient because "it tends toward hegemony, is incompletely egalitarian, and has a weak view of citizenship."⁵

With regard to the juridical model, a democracy makes decisions "*through deferring to a representative judicial elite that, with the guidance of constitutional and preconstitutional norms, arbitrates differences and enforces constitutional rights and duties.*" Barber suggests that liberals such as Rawls, Dworkin and Ackerman all implicitly advocate this model. What Barber has in mind is the American democratic system which provides constitutional provisions

⁵ However, why is it a problem if we allow some persons to make decisions for the society? Why is a weak view of citizenship problematic? It seems that to label this model authoritative does not by itself undermine its desirability.

for protecting individual rights. Barber criticizes the juridical model as deficient because "it subverts the legislative process and has a corrosive impact on citizen activity." The juridical model intends to protect individuals from decisions that unnecessarily intrude their lives and liberties.⁶

Regarding the pluralist model, a democracy makes decisions "*through bargaining and exchange among free and equal individuals and groups, which pursue their private interests in a market setting governed by the social contract.*" Pluralist democratic theorists include Anthony Downs, Robert Dahl and Mancur Olson. Under the pluralist model, citizens are organized into groups and parties. According to Barber's understanding, the engaged citizenry in pluralist democracy "formulates and aggressively pursues private interests within a framework of competitive legislative bargaining" (Ibid.: 143). Barber criticizes the pluralist model of relying on "the fictions of free market and of the putative freedom and equality of bargaining agents" (Ibid.: 144).⁷

Barber contends that these three models of representative democracy all played a part in liberal democracy in Western countries

⁶ Ackerman once labels the American system as a two-level system: constitutional politics and daily politics (Ackerman, 1991). Constitutions and other constitutional provisions are exempt from daily operation and deliberation in the senate or parliament. Barber seems to reject such a two-level system and conflate the two into one. His position is in effect against the spirit of liberal constitutionalism.

⁷ It is not at all clear what Barber means by "bargaining agents." If it is understood as individuals, then Barber misses the point because it is groups rather than individuals that are the basic actors in pluralist democracy. If it is understood as groups, then it is not plausible to require that we need equality between these groups before they are engaged in democratic process. It is precisely because of the inequalities between groups that motivate individuals to join various groups and fight for their purposes.

over the last two centuries.⁸ They are all versions of weak democracy in the sense that they introduce into politics some “banished independent ground” (Barber, 1984: 146-7). In the authoritative model, the independent ground is “the wisdom of an authoritative elite.” With regard to the juridical model, it is “natural right, higher law and the constitution.” In the pluralist model, it is the “free market.” Through admitting independent grounds, representative models of democracy “subvert the very political process that was supposed to meet and overcome the absence of such grounds” (Barber, 1984: 147). Barber envisages an active participatory citizenry such that all citizens actively express their viewpoints, deliberate on various subjects and make the final decisions by themselves. In Barber’s account, there are two models of direct democracy: unitary and strong.

Under the unitary model, citizens make decisions “*through community consensus as defined by the identification of individuals and their interests with a symbolic collectivity and its interests*” (Ibid.: 149). It aims at settling political issues unanimously through the collective will of a homogeneous community identified symbolically as a race or nation. Barber claims that it is not genuinely political or participatory. He criticizes this model as conformist, collectivist, and even coercive because it “subordinates participation in a greater whole to identification with that whole and turns autonomy and self-legislation into unity and group self-realization” (Ibid.: 148).⁹

⁸ Barber’s conception of liberalism seems rather broad, including Burke’s thinking. But for the sake of arguments, we accept this broad conception.

⁹ For Barber, the unitary model is inevitably collectivist. Individual interests are subordinate to collectivist interests of the community. But, as we shall argue, the unitary model does not necessarily presuppose the notion of collectivist interests. And this model is compatible with the strong subjectivist account of individual interests.

The model that Barber himself advocates is the model of strong democracy, according to which decisions are made "*through a participatory process of ongoing, proximate self-legislation and the creation of a political community capable of transforming dependent private individuals into free citizens and partial and private interests into public goods*" (Ibid.: 151). Barber's basic contention is that private interests are inevitably partial and should be transformed into impartial viewpoints. And it seems for Barber that the ultimate aim of democracy is to search for and realize the public goods. Thus democracy is about making collective decisions of the public goods. In order to do so requires an elaborate process of deliberation, decision, and action instead of mere aggregate of preferences.

These five models presuppose some notions of interests that Barber has overlooked. And although Barber does not closely examine the relationship between these models of democracy and notions of interests, it is worth doing so for our purpose.

2. Representative Democracy and Interest Satisfaction

(1) Representing means making present something that is not literally present. In representing, the representative should do what his/her principal (relationship between a lawyer and a client) would do, that is, should act as though the principal himself/herself would act. However, in democratic representation, we have to think of a representative acting for a whole constituency (whatever its size) rather than for a single principal. But how can a representative make millions or even tens of persons present? In what senses do representatives who

are those actually making decisions (executive or legislative) promote optimally the satisfaction of the individual interests of the constituents?

These considerations raise three further issues regarding (i) the degree of independence of the representatives in relation to their constituents, (ii) whether there is a difference between the representation of constituents in terms of their interests and that in terms of their mere opinions,¹⁰ (iii) how a representative functions to pursue common interests rather than individual interests. The third issue is left to the latter discussion of the holistic argument. The first issue is in fact concerned with the following questions: should a representative do what his/her constituents want or desire, that is, to be bound by their explicit preferences in the form of instructions or orders (in the case of political democracy, should the elected officials or legislators act like “servants”?), or should he/she be autonomous to act in accordance with what he/she thinks to be the best way of serving the constituents’ interests?

It constitutes a continuum with two extreme positions at the poles. One is to maintain that genuine representation occurs only when the representative “acts on explicit instructions from his/her constituents,” and that “any exercise of discretion is a deviation from true representation” (Pitkin, 1967: 146). At the other extreme, there is complete independence so that once a representative is elected he/she must be completely autonomous to use his/her own judgments. Between these two extremes, there are a variety of positions. Accordingly, there are two types of representative democratic theory, coming close to Holden’s distinction between “conventional” and

¹⁰ The distinction between interest and opinion is made by Edmund Burke. The plausibility of his view will be discussed briefly. See (Burke, 1949).

“radical” theories (Holden, 1988: 60-1).¹¹ Those inclined to the first extreme may advocate a radical theory of democratic representation. According to the radical theory, the ideas or acts of the elected representatives are closely controlled by their electorate. The representatives act merely as delegates conveying information and presenting the ideas made by the constituents at regular referenda held in different local areas. The representatives act in the representative assembly voting according to the decisions made by the constituents themselves.

On the contrary, those who incline to the other extreme uphold a conventional view that the people assume the passive role of choosing, at regular elections, among options presented to them. The choices of policy presented are general and broad rather than detailed and specific and thus there is substantial autonomy for the representatives to make decisions.

To reconcile these two extremes requires a common agreement that a representative must act in his/her constituents’ interests. Hence, it can be postulated that the representative’s obligation is to the constituents’ interests. But the representative need not always follow the constituents’ preferences. He/she must however take them seriously into consideration, especially when these revealed preferences are in conflict with what he/she considers to be the constituents’ “real” interests.

(2) The issue forces us back to the objectivist/subjectivist distinction.

¹¹ Some modifications are made here that we presuppose a proportional representation in terms of geographical distribution of the constituents. But it also works in other types of proportional representation with regard to say classes, functional groups, parties etc.

This issue is central to Edmund Burke's view on the dichotomy between "interests" and "opinions." Burke holds that "the objective, fixed 'interest' of a constituency is quite different from the opinions of some or even all of the people that compose it... and since people's wishes are usually based on their opinions, which are often wrong, the representative may have to pursue the interest of his constituency even against their will, ... and their representative owes the people devotion to their interests rather than submission to their will" (Burke, 1949:13).

For Burke, "interests" are essentially objective (as so-interests) which are rationally discoverable whereas opinions may have grown out of feelings or sentiments. The constituents as ordinary people do not know their so-interests properly; the representative as a wise guide should discover these for them and act on their behalf. This may be also why Barber calls this model authoritative. The Burkean authoritative model is perfectly compatible with elitism. Even if we accept the strong objectivist view, a further question remains: which sort of interests, the common interest, sectional interests or individual interests, can rationally be discovered by "wise" representatives? In what follows, I will deal with the second and third sorts respectively.

Burke seems to have maintained that the second sort can be discovered by wise representatives. He holds that the representatives of different constituencies are able to discover the objective so-interests of their own constituencies. This presupposes that there is a shared sectional interest, an interest shared by all of the individuals in each constituency, which can be discovered. But what is the relation between these objective shared interests, if they exist, and the individual so-interests?

There may be two suggestions: (a) the so-interests of each constituent is identical with that objective common interest of his/her constituency; (b) there is a common interest transcending individual interests but at the same time shared by the constituents of each constituency. The former suggestion is implausible for it allows no space for individuality. The latter one faces the problem of how the representative does justice to each individual, for it cannot be assumed that advocating the sectional shared interest will satisfy fairly each individual's so-interests. Since it is plausible to suppose that the representatives from the same section are equally wise, but on what ground does each of them claim to be the best judge of that shared interest of his/her constituency (if it in fact is objectively discoverable)?

Moreover, unless it is further assumed that there is a single common interest of all sections that transcends the conflicting objective sectional interests of different constituencies, otherwise, how can the conflict among sectional interests be resolved? As all objectively legitimate interests claim equal concern, any majoritarian solution would deliberately neglect the interests of minority sections. One way out of this impasse is for the representatives of each constituency to bargain, debate, and negotiate with one another while seriously considering sectional interests other than that of their own constituents. It might be considered as an acceptable though unsatisfactory way to promote optimally individual interests satisfaction through the maximal consideration of all of the so-called "objective" sectional interests.

What about the case for the representatives who are to represent individuals proper rather than groups of individuals who have sectional shared interest? According to Burkean view, as it is the representative

who properly bows your best so-interests, he/she has thus shown that his/her views ought to be acted upon. Your view (or in Burke's term, opinion) reflects only your feelings and sentiments; the representative has presumably shown that your expressions about your interests are no more than description of your emotional states, irrelevant to the question of what is in your "real" interest, and what would serve it in particular.

Granted that the representative is the best judge of his/her own so-interests, yet it is obviously inconceivable that he/she could be the best judge of the interests of other persons. Even if it were possible, there would be no way for him/her to resolve the probable conflicts among what he/she took to be the so-interests of those individuals without violating the democratic principle of equal consideration of interests. These are the serious difficulties of the strong objectivistic account of interests satisfaction in the representative mode of democracy.

Consider the implication of Benditt's objectivist account of interest. It is open to the representative to show that what you think is in your interest will not actually enhance your "happiness." What Benditt advocates is an objectivist account of happiness without any regard to the state of mind of pleasure or displeasure. Given the similarity of human psyche, it is not impossible for the representatives to infer constituents' wo-interests. This constitutes the foundation of the juridical model of democracy.

According to the juridical model, the representatives are trustees of their constituents. The constituents delegate their power to the representative believing that he/she acts in their interests. The representative does not have to claim that he/she is the best judge of the constituents' wo-interests but only that he/she is a competent judge.

The constituents transfer their responsibility and liability of political decision-making to the representatives. The representatives are responsible for the consequences of political decisions and liable to any damages thus caused. The actions of the representatives are constrained by constitutional provisions, including judicial review or bill of rights.

Barber is dissatisfied with representative democracy because of "the reintroduction into supposedly autonomous politics of surreptitious independent grounds." With regard to the Burkean authoritative model, it introduces "into the domain of politics, under the camouflage of "wisdom," an independent ground that becomes a surrogate for autonomous politics" (Barber, 1984: 142). Barber is discontent with its elitist tendency. In the case of juridical model, the independent grounds are disguised as "natural right, higher law, and the constitution" (Ibid.: 143). Barber is unhappy with the fact that people do not and could not directly make decisions that affect themselves. With regard to the pluralist model, the independent ground is "the illusions of the free market and of the invisible hand" and "the simplistic utilitarianism" by which "the pursuit of private interests is miraculously made to yield the public good" (Ibid.: 144). As a response to Barber, one might wonder what justifies more direct participation in the decision-making process. Let us now turn to the relation between direct democracy and subjectivist interests.

3. Direct Democracy and Subjectivist Interests

(1) From the subjectivist perspective, each individual is the best judge of his/her own interests. If this is so, how can another represent my own interests? The answer seems negative in the subjectivist

account, as it is I who best know my interests. The inference has been drawn in radical representative democratic theory that the representatives elected to the assembly act as delegates, simply conveying the wants of their constituents.

Problems arise when there are conflicts among the delegated wants of the constituents. Since compromises that follow any bargaining may well violate the constituents' original wills, how can those conflicts be resolved and how can the representative really act in his/her constituents' best interests? And it also seems unlikely that the representative can be prevented from advancing his/her own personal ws-interests in any plausible disguised form.

There might be two suggestions. The first suggestion comes close to the view that as a member of the "community," a representative's interests are to be identical with the interests of the whole "community" and he/she does not promote his/her own interests. Unless we accept the objectivist account or advocates a total homogeneity of the community with persons having similar interests, this kind of suggestion is far from convincing. The second one is that the most intense preference of a representative qua representative is to remain in office, being elected in the next election. Accordingly, he/she will very likely promote the constituents' "interests" rather than his/her own. This empirical assumption depends on the psychological condition and the personality of the representative in actual situations. It seems open to easy refutation because even a virtuous representative may not be able resist the temptation of material goods, or be tough enough to resist the influence of the wealthy persons or the great entrepreneurs. In order to prevent abuse of power requires a detailed and rational design of political institutions.

(2) The internal logic of democracy based on subjectivist interests (strong or weak) seems to imply some form of direct democracy instead of representative democracy. It is only under practical considerations say, the size of the electorate, the inconvenience of mass assembly etc. that a radical representative mode is allowed to work. Nevertheless, in its radical form, the representative mode is in effect the direct one because representatives only function as delegates conveying the decisions of the constituents to the representative assembly.

In direct democracy, decisions have to be made by all constituents themselves. But as people have different and probably irreconcilable individual interests, how can they decide and in what sense does the direct mode of democracy optimally promote individual interests? It is perfectly conceivable that it cannot satisfy everyone in every instance when particular issues are to be settled. Therefore, the best thing to do is to satisfy as many as possible. The constituents should adopt a decision-rule beforehand, ranging from simply majority to unanimity, so as to establish a workable mechanism.

Apparently, the unanimity rule may seem the best. It underlies what Barber calls the unitary model of democracy. The strong subjectivist position is compatible with the unanimity rule. As I am the only judge of my own interests, it is only when my interests coincide with those of the others that I can accept the collective decision. However, it is conceivable that the unanimity rule may run perfectly in small communities but not in large-scale nation-state.¹²

¹² Ironically, the strong subjectivist position is what underlies anarchism. Anarchism rejects an overarching government who might rule without fully respecting of individuals. The best way to organize collective life is to form small communities in which the unanimity rule may operate smoothly. For a

In large-scale nation-state, it seems that the simple majority rule is desirable. If the required majority is set higher than 51%, i.e. say 66%, it will in effect give the minority i.e. 34% a veto power. The consequence is that the decision rule satisfies the 34% minority at the expense of the 66% majority. Adopting rules other than the simple majority rule fails to maximize aggregate satisfaction in the democratic community. But in what way does the maximization of aggregate satisfaction contribute to the optimal promotion of the interest of each individual understood from the weak subjectivist perspective (as there would be a simple minority dissatisfied)?

Majoritarian democracy assumes that there is no permanent minority in the sense because each individual has an equal chance to be a constituent of the circulating majority. However, whether this holds true depends on the correctness of another assumption, namely, that individuals are discrete entities holding disparate subjectivist interests that are independent of social influence. In so far as this assumption is unrealistic, classical liberals like Mill are rightly anxious about the probable oppression of the permanent minorities by the majority. The usual way to cope with this is to qualify majoritarianism by the assertion of individual rights and other constitutional constraints.¹³

However, Barber is obviously against the introduction of constitutional constraints but opts for more direct participation and

philosophical defense of anarchism, see (Wolff, 1976).

¹³ In their simplest form, individual rights are accorded to each person so that no one including the majority can violate individual rights without the consent of any individuals. Therefore, while a minority (or an individual) may have to concede in many cases, it (or he/she) need not do so when its (or his/her) rights are at issue. Nevertheless, whether the language of rights is appropriate for the purpose of protecting the essential interests of individuals or minorities is to be considered in more details. Yet this is out of the scope of our present concern.

face-to-face deliberation. What underlies Barber's criticisms of liberal models of representative democracy is that they inevitably ignore common interests and public goods. Of course, for Barber, there is no need to suppose the existence of the general will which in turn assumes a super-individual entity. If this is what Barber believes, then he cannot assume that private interests have no bearings on the notion of public interests. Barber seems to think that more participation in terms of "strong democratic talk" will transcend private interests into public goods (Barber, 1984: Ch. 8). In Barber's view, liberal democracy in its natural law, utilitarian or contractarian versions denies "the possibility of a public good" which is "more than an aggregate of individual and particular good" (Ibid.: 171). It seems that for Barber, democracy is justified not because it is conducive to the satisfaction of individual interests but because it helps promoting public goods or interests. But, as I shall argue, from Barber's perspective, we need not attempt to justify democracy by appealing to its consequences.

Barber's contention involves a certain form of public/private distinction that is supported by presumptions rather than arguments. For Barber, there seems to be an unbridgeable gap between private and public interests. The plausibility of this presumption is open to question. Any public decision has bearings on individual interests. Public policies, ranging from defense policies to family policies, have positive or negative effects on individual interests of citizens. Family policies such as granting paid-holidays for pregnant women have positive effects on women's interests but negative effects on employers. The issue is not whether one's preference is about private or public interests, or whether the aggregate of individual preferences will lead to a public interest, but how far individual preferences are justifiable.

Even on Barber's account of strong democracy, it seems implausible and impossible to demand citizens to neglect the impact of public policies on their individual interests when they deliberate. It is hard to imagine how deliberation may be held if a woman or an employer does not consider the impact of paid-holidays on their respective interests.

The model of strong democracy does not necessarily reject the notion of individual interests. In fact, the model of strong democracy is compatible with the weak subjectivist account of interests, despite the fact that Barber has not even explicitly considered this possibility. Barber seems to be able to accept the weak subjectivist account, as he writes, "we must develop a form of political consciousness that will enlarge the understanding and the sympathies of interest-motivated individuals and transform them into citizens capable of reassessing themselves and their interests in terms of the newly invented communal norms and newly imagined public goods" (Ibid.: 173). However, it is not at all clear what the "newly imagined public goods" are. But it seems clear that Barber does not reject the relevance of individual interests of citizens but demand them a constant reassessment of what their own interests are. It may then be postulated that democracy is not merely about showing preferences in voting, but to know what the one's "real" interests are.

The notion of "real" interests suggested here comes close to Connolly's characterization. According to his formulation, "[p]olicy x is more in A's real interest than policy y if A, were he to experience the *results* of both x and y, would *choose* x as the result he would rather have for himself" (Connolly, 1993: 64; italics original). However,

appeals to this notion of real interests do not match Barber's requirement.¹⁴

The model of strong democracy requires citizens to reassess their interests constantly through public dialogue and deliberation. But it is not clear how appeals to public goods may resolve their disagreements. In fact, Barber does not discuss what public goods are. But without an account of public goods, it is hard to see how a correct decision can be made. Interestingly enough, Barber's response seems to be that what matters is not correct decisions.

When differentiating his model of strong democracy from liberal democracy, Barber claims that "What will we choose?" is the question that disturbs liberal democrats, while "How do we will?" is the one that bothers strong democrats (Ibid.: 200). What matters is not "how to make the correct choices" but "how to make choices correctly." From Barber's perspective, we should focus on the process rather than the result of democratic decision-making. This strategy of argumentation can avoid the necessity to give a precise account of public goods. However, public goods would then become mysterious entities, the roles of which remain unclear. There are two possible accounts of the roles of public goods. First, they exist before the process of deliberation and act as constraints of the process. Second, they are the results of the process of strong democratic deliberation and decision and, whatever they are, should be followed.

¹⁴ Suppose A is a married woman who plans to have her first baby, x is the policy that grant pregnant women one whole year of paid holidays from their employers, and y is the policy that grant two weeks of paid holidays. If there are only these two alternatives, it is obvious that policy x is from A's own perspective in her "real" interests. But for a male employer, B, who employs quite a few young married women, policy y is in his "real" interests. Hence it does not help if both appeal to the notion of real interests.

The first option seems inconceivable because if public goods exist before the democratic process, it seems redundant to go through the democratic process *per se*. With regard to the second option, it should be noticed that Barber rejects the idea that the results of mere aggregate of preferences constitutes the public goods (Ibid.: 171ff). If the results of preference aggregation are not public goods, it is hard to see why the results of strong democratic deliberation are public goods. Strong democracy is justified not because it is conducive to public goods but because democratic deliberation *per se* is good.

It is not clear why liberals who hold a weak subjectivist account of interests should reject the idea that it is desirable to have all citizens involved in deliberation and dialogue. From the perspective of weak subjectivism, I am the best judge of my interests and responsible and liable to my decisions. Thus I have an obligation to myself to know what my interests are. My viewpoint of what constitutes my interests may change after deliberation and dialogue. After deliberation, my interests are articulate interests. It is through more participation and deliberation that I can have a clearer understanding of what my interests are. Yet my viewpoint is open to criticism and subject to future changes. Voting is necessary but it is only the result of prolonged deliberation and active participation. Of course, majority rule would be in place for most of the collective decision-making occasions. The direct mode of democracy based on the weak subjectivist account requires deliberation before making collective decisions by the majority rule. We may call this model of democracy, direct majoritarian democracy.

Liberal democrats would not necessarily reject democratic deliberation. In fact, Ackerman and other liberals support more

deliberation (Ackerman and Fishkin, 2004).¹⁵ But in reality as people are free to decide whether they participate in deliberation, it is not desirable to force all citizens to involve in participatory politics. In addition, liberals insist that deliberation should be restricted by constitutional constraints that aim to protect individual liberties and rights from majority decisions.

What Barber and many other democrats overlook is the fact that different groups of individuals may have various degrees of preference intensity. The issue of preference intensity informs Dahl's account of pluralist democracy.

Preference Intensity and Minorities Rule

1. Political Equality and the Majority Rule

The basic question that any democrat should face is: why should we not allow the minority will to prevail? The most probable answer from a democrat is that to do so is to allow the vote of each individual in the minority to count for more than the vote of each person in the majority. This typical answer commits one to political egalitarianism: "one person one vote, and each vote counts once." Majority rule satisfies the two formal equality conditions in Sen's terminology: anonymity and neutrality (Sen, 1970: 68-73). The condition of

¹⁵ As response to media manipulation and widespread political apathy in American politics, Ackerman and Fishkin suggest that US citizens can revitalize and strengthen their democracy. They propose a national holiday called Deliberation Day for each presidential election year. On this day citizens throughout the country meet in public arenas and engage in well-organized debates about issues that divide people's opinions in the forthcoming presidential election.

“anonymity” requires that the result of an election be unaffected by who votes on which options. In other words, it requires each individual’s vote be counted the same as those of the others and the outcome depends solely on the number of persons voting for one option or the other. The condition of “neutrality requires that the voting procedure be neutral among the options being voted on.”

In effect, it simply requires each option to have an equal chance to win. Although Sen states the two conditions with respect to collective social welfare, we may suggest they also hold for the case of an egalitarian commitment to interests satisfaction based on the assumption previously stated: as a particular individual has equal opportunity to be a constituent in a majority, thus his/her individual interests expressed in the preferences are promoted with equal consideration in the long run.

For Dahl, the notion of political equality is tied to the satisfactions of individual interests. He writes: “If the good or interests of everyone should be weighed equally, and if each adult person is in general the best judge of his or her goods or interests, than *every adult member* of an association is sufficiently well qualified, taken all around, to participate in making binding collective decisions that affect his or her good or interests, that is, to be a *full citizen* of the demos” (Dahl, 1989: 105). It seems that in principle what is required is a direct mode of democracy. But, for Dahl, the size of modern nations poses limitations on the feasibility of direct democracy (Dahl, 1970: 40-56). More importantly, as we shall see, Dahl thinks that any democratic theory should take the intensity of preferences seriously and direct democracy may not be the best way to deal with it.

Suppose the individual interests of the participants are in conflict and they are equally insistent in their views. The participants will each

recognize that if the conflict is to be resolved, they are likely to agree that each person's vote counts equally. It is usually assumed that fairness is constituted by procedural equality in voting. But the contention that formal procedural equality constitutes fairness becomes problematic when intensity of preference is taken into account.

As mentioned above, Dahl in fact upholds a version of weak subjectivist account of interests. But Dahl himself does not consider how far his pluralist model is compatible with the weak subjectivist account. As Dahl accepts that the satisfaction of personal interests is one of the basic reasons why we should choose democracy (Dahl, 1989: 93ff, 103ff), he has to show that his pluralist model actually fulfills the aspiration of satisfying individual interests.

2. Minorities Rule

(1) Dahl, in his classic *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, notices the intensity problem according to which he finds that it is not obviously acceptable for very slight preferences of a 52% "apathetic majority" to prevail over the strong preferences of a 48% "intense minority" (Dahl, 1956: ch.4).¹⁶

The justification for democracy being considered here is its optimal promotion of individual interests. Each person's preferences are equally at stake over a wide range of issues. If we treat each person's preference intensity with equal respect, there will be nothing

¹⁶ Despite being published for nearly five decades, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* remains one of the most articulate works that takes the problems of majority rule as the focus of concern. For a similar comment, see (Saward, 1998: 72). Dahl is perhaps the first political theorist who takes the issue of preference intensity seriously.

unfair about weighing the intensity of preferences. It involves not only how many people's interests are involved but also how much each individual thinks his/her interests are affected.

If the aim of democracy is to promote optimal satisfaction of individual interests, preference intensity cannot be disregarded. It is probable that a greater balance of good over evil will result from satisfying the "intense" minority rather than the "apathetic majority." Does this conviction harm majoritarianism and its egalitarian commitment? A majoritarian might concede to the intensity problem but hold that majoritarian considerations can be extended to take intensity of preferences into account so that individuals are treated equally with regard to the standard of intensity measurement. This sort of reply may be plausible if we can provide an objective standard for measuring intensities and the technical problems of acquiring precise information about individuals' preferences intensity. Dahl in fact does not deal with the intensity problem within the context of direct mode of democracy but instead tries to show that the pluralist representative mode is superior to, rather than merely the least bad alternative for, the direct mode.

(2) For Dahl, political activity and politics at large "is to a significant extent a function of relative intensity" (Ibid.: 134). The point is simply that people will take up the costs and inconveniences of political activity only when they feel sufficiently intensely for it to be worth their while to do so. And the more intensely they experience their preferences the more active they will be. Another hypothesis is that, other things being equal, "the outcome of a policy decision will be determined by the relative intensity of preference among members of a group (Ibid.: 135). Dahl focuses on the activities of pressure groups.

The two hypotheses may suggest that the pressures exerted upon a government and the probable responses of the government to those pressures are dependent on the intensities of the preferences of those groups of individuals involved.

Accordingly, in Dahl's view, the elected government in representative democracy should be sensitive to the relative intensities of preferences. Being sensitive to intensities is what the direct majoritarian mode of merely aggregating the number of votes even after deliberation cannot attain. But Dahl has not shown that the theoretical and technical problems of the direct majoritarian mode to take intensity seriously are insurmountable. The superiority of some sort of direct majoritarian mode is not yet refuted.

(3) In Dahl's pluralist democracy, what is novel is the claim that the problem of the tyranny of the majority is illusory. What distinguishes democracy (or what he calls polyarchy in reality) from dictatorship is not the distinction between majority and minority government, but rather one between government by minorities and government by a minority (Ibid.: 133). For Dahl, there are in general two processes which in effect allocate political power to determine government policies in Western democracies.

Firstly, under multi-party (or two-party) systems, competing parties trying to win votes in elections may adapt their policies to the wants of intense minorities (as many as possible) whose voting decisions depend on the attitudes of those parties to some particular cluster of issues. When the majority of constituents are apathetic and the minorities' views and preferences are intense, parties will probably give deference to the minorities. The second way through which "minorities rule" arises is when the activities of various organizations and pressure groups try to promote their objectives by influencing

government policies. This process gives the effective influential power not to all minorities in all areas of issues but to the intense ones within some specific areas of particular importance.

In Dahl's view, through these two sorts of processes the intensity problem is solved by the mechanism of "minorities rule," by which "all the active and legitimate groups in the population can make themselves heard at some crucial stage in the process of decision" (Ibid.: 137). Before we examine the theoretical difficulties of Dahl's account, it is interesting to look briefly into the relationship between the pluralist model of democracy and the weak subjectivist account of democracy. It is not impossible that, through participating in political activities organized by pressure groups and political parties, participants may look beyond their narrow and egoistic perspectives and form articulate preferences that take others' perspectives seriously. Accordingly when people bring his/her viewpoints in political arena, these viewpoints are open to criticisms and subsequent changes.

Dahl's account however faces serious difficulties. His contention is largely based on the two hypotheses: (i) political activity is a function of relative intensity; (ii) a policy decision is determined by the relative intensity of preference of a group. Let us consider the first. Dahl may think that the desire to engage in political activity is dependent upon the relative intensity. It may be empirically dubious that engagement in political activity necessarily indicates greater intensity among those involved than among the silent. What we observe in political movements may just be propagandas launched by those who attempt to command resources. Yet there is still reason to expect some contingent relation both between intensity of preferences and political activity, and between intensity of preference and political

outcome in Dahl's polyarchy. But this is far from showing that "minorities rule" constitutes political fairness.

Further, Dahl's implicit presumption that individuals with similar ws-interests would come together forming groups to advance their shared ws-interests is problematic.¹⁷ However, it is not easy to see what will motivate poor people to join an organization of the poor even if it probably promotes their shared interests. Despite the lack of resources, there are two ways to explain this phenomenon. In Marxist terminology, the solidarity of some group of individuals is undermined by the "false consciousness" of members who are influenced by ideologies to accept the status quo as just or legitimate and they misunderstand their genuine "interests." Another way to explain it is that a self-interested person would not be willing to join a group advancing collective goals if the probability of success is in doubt and this person may have to sacrifice a lot before he/she can gain any benefit.

Now let us turn to the second hypothesis. Dahl believes that through the mediation of the representative system, preference intensity would be translated into policy outcome. In other words, intense preferences of minorities would eventually influence policy decisions. However, the political mechanisms of polyarchy might favor already privileged groups because they may feel more "intensely" on a broad range of issues than less privileged groups, especially those on governmental welfare programs. Each member of the minority, say the employers, would lose to a progressive tax much more than what each

¹⁷ As Jack Lively rightly points out, political activity is also a function of ability to act and the ability in terms of organizational skills, money, easy access to governmental agencies and even the media; the ability to translate a desire to act, no matter how "intense", into activity "is patently likely to be unevenly distributed in the community" (Lively, 1975: 22).

member of the majority, namely, the workers. It is likely that “minorities rule” in the long run will be used by the privileged to protect their privileges. Furthermore, the parties that are financially supported by some big corporations will very likely defend the advantages of their financial supporters. All of the above considerations suggest inequality in economic power will inevitably lead to political unfairness.¹⁸

But the more acute problem that Dahl seems to have avoided is: minorities become the minority in a broad sense, and hence minorities rule become the minority rules. Leftist democrats would be quick to point out members of political parties, elected representatives, government officials and capitalists in effect form a dominant coalition that maintain political, economic and cultural hegemony over the mass of people.

In face of the charges from theories of minority domination offered by theorists such as Gaetano Mosca and Robert Michels, Dahl responds that it may not be possible to verify or disprove theories of domination (Dahl, 1989: 272ff). Such a response is far from satisfactory. Dahl believes that “direct domination over the government of the state became more difficult for a single minority to achieve in polyarchies with a broad suffrage” and it is difficult to prove that there exists indirect domination between the ruling minority and the ruled majority (Ibid.: 277). Dahl attempts to shift the burdens of proof to the theorists of minority domination. But neither side seems to offer conclusive proofs.

¹⁸ Of course, Dahl does not naïvely believe that this will not happen. At the time he wrote *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy*, Dahl thought that economic inequality had not been an issue in American politics, but he acknowledged that it would be so in the future (Dahl, 1982: 172ff). Let us grant that this is a correct observation.

(4) Let us now return to the direct majoritarian mode of democracy: is it possible to devise a method so as to take preference intensity seriously into account? The usual method is called point voting. Voters under point voting are each given an equal number of votes. Instead of each voter being confined to one vote on each issue, they are able to distribute their votes over issues as they choose. The way each voter distributes his/her votes among issues indicates his/her relative intensities of preference on those issues.

In the simplest version of point voting, the votes on each issue are summed to produce the decision. Point voting seems to be a more useful method to secure decisions which are in accord with voters' preference intensity than other methods.¹⁹ But this method is problematic if "strategic voting" occurs. If someone can anticipate how the others will vote, he/she will only need to apportion one more vote for particular option in one issue so as to secure its adoption. He/she can thus use the remaining votes in favor of some particular option in another issue using same strategy. In order for this method to be fair each voter is given the same number of votes to apportion. Point voting is satisfactory only if we assume that the sum of utilities (utility is taken here as the degree of ws-interests satisfaction) at stake over the set of issues is the same for all voters. But in most cases it is not.

One person, A, may happen to have strong intensity of preferences in all issues because all decisions are of crucial importance to him/her

¹⁹ In this simplest form, a vote is counted as a point corresponding to one unit of utility and then the sum of total points of each option in each issue is calculated, the option with the greatest points is the collective choice. Some more complex versions, like that in Sen, use a system calculating the product, rather than the sum of utilities (Sen, 1970: 118-120). For the discussion of the difficulty of another method, namely, "vote-trading", see (W. H. Riker and S. T. Brams, 1973: 1235- 1247) and (D.C. Mueller, 1979: 52-55).

whereas another person B may happen to be apathetic in all issues. In this situation, votes in the hands of A and B are of different total utilities. The problem of point voting is that there is no way to make interpersonal comparisons of utility and hence only intra-personal comparisons are possible. As Saward questions: "How are we to know whether your voting (say) eight tokens for x expresses an equivalent level of preference intensity to my eight tokens for y?" He believes the answer is negative (Saward, 1998: 77-78). Indeed, since there is no objective standard to measure preference intensity of persons in each issue, point voting still cannot be a satisfactory solution of the intensity problem. So, the intensity problem still presents serious difficulties to direct majoritarian democracy.

It remains to be seen how far the direct majoritarian model of democracy can cope with the problem of preference intensity. We might assume that through persistent participation and extensive deliberation, everybody may know the intensity of the preferences of all others. Yet insofar as voting is required to make the final decision, the majority rule is adopted for selecting the final result. No theory of democracy that is based on a weak subjectivist account of interests can avoid the problem of preference intensity.

Concluding Remarks

This paper explores an aspect of the normative foundations of democracy, namely, its instrumental desirability in the satisfaction of individual interests. We distinguish subjectivist from objectivist accounts of interests. The satisfaction of a person's subjectivist interests (ws or ss), i.e. what he/she happens to desire, is not

necessarily beneficial to the person involved. Yet it is disputable that what is beneficial to a person is what other persons think to be his/her interests. This is because though we pass judgments on what his/her interests (wo or so) are, he/she may not really have interests in what we think are his/her interests.

Appeals to individual interests do not necessarily imply the representative mode or the direct mode of democracy. For instrumentals, to argue for a particular model of representative democracy, they have to argue for the plausibility of the correlated conception of interests. Similarly, for critics of the representative mode of democracy, they have to argue for the plausibility of a particular conception of individual interests. Of course, as an advocate of the so-called "strong democracy," Barber would simply disagree with the contention that politics is about the satisfaction of individual interests. Indeed, appeals to the satisfaction of individual interests do not exhaust the instrumental desirability of democracy. For many critics of liberal democracy, the public goods or interests also matter. Politics is more than the aggregating of individual "interests." But how far individual interests may be transcended remains to be examined.

Barber wrongly assumes that direct democracy could not be founded on the satisfaction of individual interests. We argue that the unitary model and the model of strong democracy may be modified and thereby understood in terms of individual interests. The modified unitary model is based on strong subjectivist account of interests, whereas the modified model of strong democracy is founded on the weak subjectivist account of interests. While the unitary model buttresses some form of anarchism, the modified model of strong democracy, namely the direct majoritarian model, implies more deliberation.

It should be noticed that the correlation between interests and preferences is not so direct as it first appears. Even if we grant that it is plausible to equate revealed preferences with weak subjectivist interests, we still have to face the problem of preference intensity. We compare Dahl's pluralist democracy and the direct majoritarian model in their ability to deal with the problem of preference intensity. Both models have their own difficulties and it is not at all clear which model could claim superiority in this aspect.

To conclude, appeal to individual interests does not support direct majoritarian mode or pluralist representative mode of democracy as a plausible mode of democracy. Any theory of democracy should take the problem of preference intensity seriously.

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