Deliberation without sincerity

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Problem

Generally, theorists who intend to take public deliberation seriously tend to claim that citizens engaging in deliberation should be sincere about the information they have and their true intentions and interests

> A number of normative principles of sincerity citizens need to conform to when they exchange reasons in public discourse have been defended

But they seem inconsistent

Question: Is sincerity a necessary requirement for deliberation? Are there any alternatives out there?

Relevance

Theory: sincerity is something that is usually taken for granted about deliberation without much conceptual work

Practice: sincerity is a problem for political scientists concerned with deliberative democracy > "Sincerity is the deliberative criterion that is most poorly empirically investigated because it is also the most difficult to grasp […] the existing measurements of sincerity are limited and weak. The textual analysis approach [and] the survey analysis and interviews […] are problematic" (Bächtiger A., Niemeyer S., Neblo M., Steenbergen M., Steiner J. 2010)

Hypothesis: the criterion of sincerity (so far defended) is inconsistent and weak

Aims: to unpack the problems concerning sincerity in deliberation and attempt to find a better suited alternative

Outline

1) The role of the principle of sincerity in deliberative theories

2) Contra Rawls, Schwartzman, J. Cohen, Gaus

3) Sincerity as a slippery concept

4) Reliability in Deliberation

Preliminary remarks

> No particular theory or conception
of deliberative democracy

> "Deliberation" = situation in which different
individuals reason together to take a collective decision

> No interest in levels of deliberation
(small-scale, large-scale, citizens, representatives,
minipublics, ecc)

> It is not a critique of sincerity per se,
but of sincerity within the specific context of deliberation

The benefits of sincerity

Sincerity is a fundamental validity claim for a form of rational communication apt to enable individuals to reach shared social and political understandings (Habermas 1984; 1966)

Sincerity promotes "free discussion and open debate [that] allow relevant information to be distributed,mistaken reasoning to be exposed, and all the reasons for and against laws to be debated and considered" (Freeman 2000, 383)

Sincerity expresses respect among citizens in the form of "equal membership of all in the sovereign political body" (Cohen 1997

Sincerity fosters civic friendship (Rawls 1997)

Sincerity is an antidote against rhetoric and manipulation (Quong 2011)

Sincerity secures relations of trust among citizens and generate *shared commitments* (Googin 2008)

> Sincerity blocks manipulation and dishonesty

John Rawls

"It is important that it be clear and established that the *proviso* is to be appropriately satisfied in good faith. Yet the details about how to satisfy this proviso must be worked out in practice and cannot feasibly be governed by a clear family of rules given in advanced" (Rawls 1997, 784)

> It is not clear what the principle of good faith actually prescribes

> The reason *why* individuals should conform to the principle of sincerity is unexplained

As it stands, Rawls's argument is *ad hoc*

Joshua Cohen

Argument 1: "I <u>stipulated</u> that the members of the association are committed to resolving their differences through deliberation, and thus to providing reasons that they <u>sincerely</u> expect to be persuasive to others who share that commitment. In short, this stipulation rules out the problem" (Cohen 1989)

> Stipulation is not a justification

Argument 2 "[The argument] rests on a claim about the effects of deliberation on the motivations of deliberators […] the practice of presenting reasons <u>will</u> contribute to the formation of a commitment to the deliberative resolution of political questions. Given that commitment, the likelihood of a sincere representation of preferences and convictions <u>should</u> increase, while the likelihood of their strategic misrepresentation declines" (Cohen 1989)

> This is an unsupported empirical claim

Micah Schwartzman

Principle of Sincere Public Justification *(SPJ)*: *A* ought to advocate proposal *p* if, and only if, *A* (i) believes that (R1 → *p*), and (ii) publicly asserts *R1* as sufficient to justify *p* (Schwartzman 2011, 385)

> It works with a minimal understanding of the concept of sincerity
> SPJ preserves nicely and elegantly the possibility for citizens to hold on to their non-public reasons

Conceptual: SPJ < Principle of Respect

2 Arguments

Instrumental: Sincerity improves deliberation
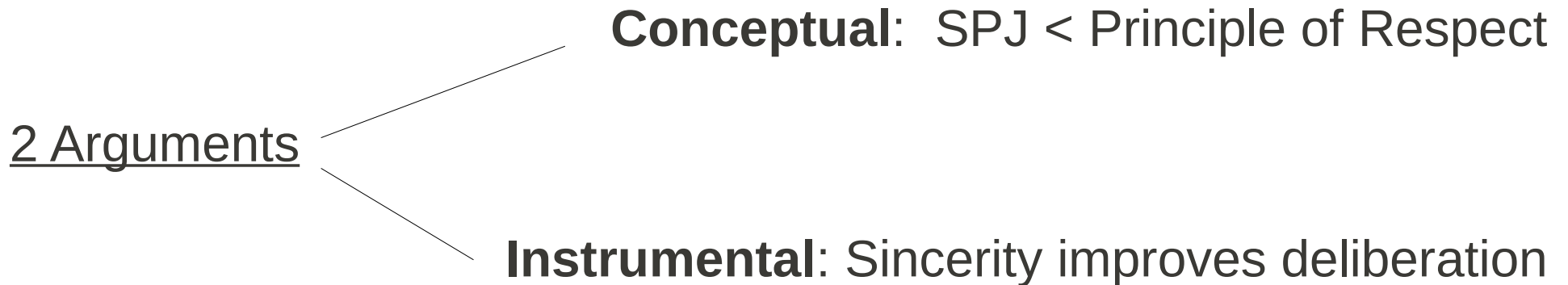
Against Schwartzman 1

PR triggers SPJ:

"Those who engage in political advocacy without satisfying the requirement violate the duty of civility. They fail to justify their political claims to others and so demonstrate a lack of respect for the reasonableness of their fellow citizens" (Schwartzman 2011, 386)

However, SPJ is in tension with *reasoning by conjecture*, which Schwartzman strongly adheres to (2012)

SPJ and RbC cannot be both implied by PR: if RbC is possible, then PR does not always prescribe SPJ

> Either Schwartzman drops RbC or provides a more robust and sophisticated argument for respect

Against Schwartzman 2

SPJ is justified beacuse of the benefits it provides deliberation with

"If everyone expects others to act strategically offering insincere reasons, then the *epistemic* value of deliberation is diminished if not all together extinguished" (Schwartzman 2011, 386)

But, why putting a constraint on reason, admitting only sincere public ones to the political domain, should ameliorate deliberation?

If what is important of deliberation is to evaluate and verify the correctness of political positions and justifications, then all reasons should be, in principle, admissible for all reasons could help.

Gerald Gaus

From a convergence point of view, a citizen can provide others with reasons she does not believe in, as long as these are consistent with their systems of beliefs, while holding on to her convictions.

Is it possible to sincerely believing a fellow citizen justified when one does not share her set of beliefs and considers it wrong?

> Possible counter-argument: relativism about reasons is true

2 Responses:
a) relativism is controversial philosophical position
b) even if relativism was true, it is unrealistic and too demanding to require all citizens to believe so

Another Principle of Sincerity?

Is sincerity a good candidate?

2 concepts of sincerity:

(a) **Sincerity as authenticity**: intrapersonal; concerns inner mental states; singleness of mind
(b) **Sincerity as truthfulness**: interpersonal; sincerity as a property of statements; correspondence

Both understandings don't work because they refer to indivuals' intentions and inner lives

> Liberalism has always been skeptical of sincerity

Principle of Reliability in Deliberation

PRD < global reliability (Audi 2008)

1) Stability in character / Reflexivity

2) Predictability / Reciprocity

3) Correctness / (a) not to defend ideas which are in sharp contrast with the general and basic moral claims; (b) not to rely on evidence, that one knows it is not true

Principle of deliberative reliability (PDR): A should not advocate proposal P if (i) A has no justification for P; (ii) does not discuss her reason R in a predictable manner; (iii) knows that P is in opposition with general normative understanding and that R is not true, or based on false evidence.

PRD vs Cheating

- It neither demands nor prohibits citizens to be sincere about their reasons
- It requires citizens only to be honest
- It allows strategic behaviour, but blocks cheating

Cheating: A advocates for proposal P by means of achieving Q, but his/her reason R is incompatible with Q

Strategic Behaviour: A advocates for proposal P by means of achieving Q, but Q is compatible with his/her reason R