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# “Interest” Is a Verb

## Arthur Bentley and the Language of Interest

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The hundredth anniversary of Arthur Bentley’s *The Process of Government* is an occasion to recover his distinctive but forgotten view of interest, namely, that an appeal to “interest” is an activity of provoking political identity and agency—an activity exemplified by the “group process” of politics. Bentley’s insight has been lost as students of politics, as diversely inclined as David Truman, Bill Connolly, and many others, approach interests instead as a psychological bulwark and expression of sovereign agency. Reading Bentley prompts us to see how the language of “interest” undercuts such a picture, encouraging instead a critical theory of interests—and of politics more generally—that is sensitive to the active provocation of identity at sites of contestation.

**Keywords:** *agency; action; Bentley; concepts; Connolly; contestation; grammar; groups; interest; language; political theory; social science; Truman*

The concept of interests has long both seduced and troubled political inquiry. Students of politics want to know the interests of the persons they study. Liberals and “empirical” social scientists have been particularly keen to avoid ascribing interests, on the view that such ascriptions imposed an ideological order on persons, denying their freedom and agency rather than observing them “as they are” (Schubert 1961; Sorauf 1962; Downs 1962; Held 1970; Balbus 1971; Flathman 1966). But how to know these interests without ascribing them is not altogether clear. While empirical studies are meant to merely observe peoples’ interests (e.g., in their actions, like voting or filling out a survey), such an observation has an often-unacknowledged normative and even ascriptive side in its commitment to respecting an individual person’s determinations of her own interests. Therefore, even positivist empirical studies define interests in such a way as to hold, however implicitly, that a person’s “real interest” lies in her sovereign agency—a term we may use to describe the subject’s “condition of being an independent, self-determining agent” bearing “the aspiration to be able to act independently” (Markell 2003: 11-12). Observing interests in the course of studying politics, therefore, has in practice meant studying the behaviors of individual persons who are presumed, from the outset, to be in some critical respect autonomous.<sup>1</sup>

But the term “interest” has turned out to be ill-suited for respecting sovereign agency in political

inquiry, since even these observations of interest-revealing actions and behaviors are so easily and persistently dogged by questions of whether persons always do what’s in their interests—a question vividly illustrated by the hand-wringing reflected in *What’s the Matter with Kansas?* (Frank 2004). Critical theory has relentlessly pressed forward the question of whether persons can be said to act in or even know their interests, given social circumstances that impede the autonomy and agency that a notion of interest is meant to secure. Meanwhile interest has gone out of style in the study of politics as one after another ascendant approach in political science abandons “interest” as too fuzzy for its scientific aspirations, and advances instead other terms and foundations. These days, rational choice theorists cite agents’

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behaviors as stemming from preferences, not interests; cognitive and evolutionary psychologies point to agents' neurology, not their interests, as lying behind behaviors. Given how these variants of formalism on the one hand, and positivism on the other, have captured the idea of science for politics, it would seem that there is little or no future for interest in political science.<sup>2</sup> If the turn away from interests is consolidated in political science, what will have been lost? The hundredth anniversary of Arthur Bentley's book *The Process of Government* (Bentley 1908) is an opportunity to reflect on this development, and to recover "interest" for political inquiry.

Recent years have seen a return of political science research that eschews formal modeling and even flirts with departures from positivism. But "interest" is not foremost among the terms to be resurrected by this development. Bentley's work provides an apt example: he has been invoked as a forebear to the pragmatist "group interpretation" of politics that some have suggested may play a vital role this renaissance (LaVaque-Manty 2006). But not only did Bentley consider politics to be the phenomena of groups, his writing also suggests that groupings illuminate something critically important—if even in the renaissance of group theory forgotten—about *interest*. More particularly, Bentley holds open an aspect of the language of interest that can be examined only at sites where there is no pretense of sovereignty. Given that the group, which is neither an individual nor a whole (e.g., a nation and its state), occupies this sovereignty-less place, Bentley's close association of groups and interest (expressed in his coinage, the "interest group") may fruitfully be brought to bear beyond the recovery of group theory, and into theorizing about interests more broadly. Bentley can therefore offer a theory of interest appropriate to a time when presuming the sovereign agency of individuals, and indeed the sovereignty of political agents more generally, is (again) called into question. Such a theory is, more importantly, a critical one not for its concern to leverage an alternative social order, but rather in its attention to the constitution and dissolution of political identity more generally—and its openness to agents' contingent participation in this constitution and dissolution (Laclau 2000, 48–9).

Political scientists' loss of Bentley's distinctive theory of interest has a history of its own, one that is vividly illustrated by David Truman's (Truman 1953) appropriation of Bentley's group theory of politics. Subsequent to his appropriation by Truman, Bentley became the figure whom ascendant group theorists

most often invoked as their maverick intellectual ancestor. He also, therefore, took much critical heat on their behalf (Crick 1959; Weinstein 1962). Both Bentley's association with behaviorist group theory and the status of Truman as his successor have stood the test of time.<sup>3</sup> Yet Bentley's own contribution to political inquiry lends little support to behaviorism; early commentators noted, partly in response to behaviorism's ascendancy, that "[Bentley's] work was guided by a thoroughly philosophic orientation and intention," which they doubted "even his acknowledged followers [had] begun to understand, let alone accept" (Schaar and Wolin 1963, 127). A couple of later contributors (Kress 1970; Ward 1984) examined the extent to which none of these uses and abuses of Bentley's work took sufficient stock of his larger philosophical enterprise. Most important for the purposes of my argument, Ward (Ward 1984) and Schaar and Wolin (Schaar and Wolin 1963) in particular drew attention to a critical, if difficult insight in Bentley's work regarding how the languages of politics—that is, everyday ways that citizens and others talk about political life—inform and support academic political inquiry, even as language misleads scientists, citizens, and others by the illusion that its business is to *represent* things and states of affairs. Countering this tendency, Bentley holds to a view (similar to one developed by his contemporary Charles Sanders Peirce and one explored later in the century by Ludwig Wittgenstein) that language is the business of explaining, exhorting, excusing, expounding, and so on. Language is an activity that exceeds representation.

Truman's appropriation of the group interpretation of politics abandons the most promising insights that Bentley drew from the language of interest—that interests are formed in contestation, and that they are *not* simply phenomena of individual persons. Truman's work instead restricts interest to individuals, and indeed to individual psychology, even as he presses forward a pluralist group theory of politics. Truman's individualizing of interest, the extralinguistic scientific techniques he advocates to render these individual interests positively available to the social scientist, and the way he therefore conceives of group activity as representing interests that individuals have prior to political engagement, altogether excludes the contested and identity-provoking dimension of interest that, as I will argue, animated Bentley's work. The foreclosure of Bentley's theory of interest, represented by Truman's reduction of interest to the individual and psychological, has survived the declining fortunes of

behavioralist research programs and the transformations of pluralist social science, despite the trouble interests present as an object of positivist inquiry. Indeed the presumption that interests are individual and in some measure psychological goes uncontested by some of behavioralism's most astute critics.

William Connolly's (Connolly 1993) celebrated study, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, begins to address these difficulties, but in this work I nonetheless see a missed opportunity to recover the connection between interests, constitution, and contestation. Connolly in particular, I argue, passes over this opportunity because he shares postwar political science's concern to respect—and to buttress—the link between interest and sovereign agency.<sup>4</sup> But the language of interest, as I explore it by way of grammatical observations, neither respects nor buttresses the sovereignty of its subjects.<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, it renders sovereignty doubtful if not impossible. Insofar as Bentley's writing reflects these aspects of the language of interest, I turn to his work to elaborate the politics of "interest" and its implications for present-day political inquiry.

It goes without saying that a theoretical enterprise as ambitious, and at times as difficult and equivocal, as Bentley's cannot be given its full due in the space of an essay. For my argument, the question is less whether *The Process of Government* is a failsafe tool for political inquiry than how we may return to such a richly ambiguous and ambiguously influential text to achieve a more limited and immediately useful aim: prospecting some as-yet-unrealized potential in the language of interest for political inquiry, in how appeals to "interest" work to constitute and to contest the identities of political agents. On this basis, I see invocations of "interest" (in political inquiry, and in political discourse) as occasions for the articulation, elaboration, revision, and attenuation of political identities that cannot coincide with the modern notion of sovereign, indivisible agency. The way that the language of interest in politics is a vehicle for the contestation of these identities is a resource for the elaboration of a post-positivist social science of interests, rather than a hindrance to be avoided.

## Political Languages and Political Inquiry

Bentley epigraphically and famously offered *The Process of Government* as "an attempt to fashion a tool" for modern political science. The book is a generous offering indeed given that its author never held a

permanent academic position (Ward 1984, 16–44). The work's influence on the field has been complex. Although pluralism was mostly introduced by Harold Laski (1917; 1919), and Bentley's work on groups is therefore less seminal than is usually implied (Gunnell 2004, 21, 105), *The Process of Government* nonetheless revolutionized the field in that it centered the emerging science of politics on the category of interests and the political phenomena he called the "interest group" (Ward 1984, 44; Ross 1991, 330–4). It may therefore be said that *interest*, rather than the group, is Bentley's signal contribution to the study of politics. And even then, the importance generally cited these days for Bentley's inaugural contribution is his choice of the (interest) group as object rather than his exploration of the language of politics as critical to the possibility of its study. In short, Bentley's greatest innovation, his theorizing the language of interest, has yet to be realized in the work of political inquiry.

Restoring Bentley's framework and method requires attending to a distinction, commonly drawn by philosophers of science and important also to Bentley, between "natural" and "scientific" languages and understanding. The natural refers to commonplace or everyday ways of speaking and thinking about objects and events. While natural language is obviously the starting point of inquiry, Bentley was keenly aware that, to paraphrase the later Wittgenstein (1958, 187), words are as likely to mislead as to lead us. Particularly problematic, from Bentley's (Bentley 1908, 3–4) point of view, are natural languages' attributions of causation, particularly when it came to invisible phenomena like ideas and desires. Scientific language, by contrast, refers to a specialized idiom developed in the course of study that is hoped to improve on or supplant natural languages altogether, by replacing the misleading notions that natural languages promote with unambiguous, univocal, or plainly observable ones—often in the form of "operationalizable" concepts.

Bentley's choice of interest as the central category for political study appears quite improbable and striking. It's easy to see why commentators would find Bentley advocating a scientific and indeed technical language of interest to the exclusion of natural ones, given how dramatically Bentley crusades against the most at-hand ways of talking about politics, many of which are closely associated with "interest" in natural languages. To cite only a couple of examples from what verges on a harangue, Bentley denounces "the common way of explaining what goes on in society, including of course the processes of government . . .

in terms of the feelings and ideas of the men who make up the society” (Bentley 1908, 3). He is uncompromising in his view that “motives, feelings, desires, emotions, instincts, impulses, or similar mental states, elements, or qualities” are not properly the “raw materials” of politics to be studied by political science (p. 4). But Bentley’s choice of interest—a term that is heavily deployed in political language—as his central category reveals what the most prominent commentators (Weinstein 1962; Crick 1959) have overlooked, namely, Bentley’s commitment to seeing the contribution of natural languages to political inquiry (Ward 1984, 11; Schaar and Wolin 1963, 140), and his awareness of these languages’ potential to lead the student of politics (Bentley 1908, 167). And so while Bentley rejects a view promoted by natural language that has interest as a psychological cause on the one side, and he also rejects transcendent (e.g., “common” or “national”) interests as “spooks” on the other, Bentley nonetheless draws on the natural language of interest to open political inquiry to phenomena and to forms of agency to which it has become closed.

Bentley’s attack on psychological and ideal interests is earnest, but it is also polemical and rhetorical; its target is the ever-present tendency among social theorists (of his time, and ours) to treat interest as essentially psychological.<sup>6</sup> Yet Bentley’s intervention was more to arrest than to expunge this tendency; a reader who steps back from his rhetorical cant against psychological interest finds suggestions in Bentley’s work that he instead wants students of politics to view the natural “psychological” language of interest in a proper light. So when we read that “in the political world, if we take the interest *alone* as a psychological quality, what we get is an indefinite, untrustworthy will-o’-the-wisp, which may trick us into any false step whatsoever” (Bentley 1908, 213),<sup>7</sup> we must note that Bentley wishes us to see *more than* and *beyond* the psychological in the language of interest. He holds open the possibility that psychological interest is relevant to politics when seen in proper context, while he avers that it is utterly distorting when taken alone. I will return below to what use the student of politics may make of psychological interest when viewed in a proper linguistic context, but first we must examine Bentley’s call for acknowledging and giving full due to the other side of “interest,” its group-activating side, as a critical for a full description of the political life.

Bentley’s attack on psychological interest is less an effort to supplant natural understanding than it is to

bring out a side of the language of interest that is obscured by social science. Natural language also knows “interests” as “groups.” Bentley leans fully to this other side of the natural language of interest in politics—just as one might lean far off the side of a boat to keep sailing across the wind in a moderate gale—holding that only the group, and never the individual, is worthy as a political phenomenon. “Human society is always a mass of men,” he writes, “and nothing else. Political phenomena are all phenomena of these masses. One never needs to go outside of them” (Bentley 1908, 197). These phenomena are given shape and meaning when this human society is rendered into groups, at which point interest becomes relevant. Bentley sees interests and groups as coterminous: so while we may not be surprised to learn that “there is no group without its interest,” Bentley pushes further against the prevailing winds with the nearly hyperbolic assertion that “as the term will be used in this work . . . [interest] is the equivalent of the group” (p. 211). Bentley’s assertions to this effect are legion and culminate in the claim that the “question as to whether the interest is responsible for the existence of the group, or the group responsible for the existence of the interest” is “beyond scientific” (pp. 211–2). Instead, science inheres in seeing these terms as inseparable: “When the groups are adequately stated,” he says, “everything is stated. When I say everything I mean everything. The complete description will mean the complete science, in the study of social phenomena, as in any other field” (pp. 208–9). The pure description of groups will allow the political scientist “to take the emphasis off the disreputable grammatical subject which makes all the trouble by its pretense of independence” (p. 190)—a patently Nietzschean observation that, for all its currency in present-day political theorizing, has nonetheless eluded theoretical reflection on interests. As Bentley banishes the psychology of the individual and the idealism of the whole, he banishes the equation of interest and sovereignty by diverting attention from the bodies whose sovereignty it is too easy to presume.<sup>8</sup>

Based on these declarations, Bentley builds a series of polemically too-neat, but nonetheless powerfully suggestive equivalences. Each of these seems to push Bentley decisively beyond natural understandings in his quest for a scientific language, yet these equivalences do not amount to logic. Having already equated interest and groups, he brings activity on board: “Group and group activity,” he declares, “are equivalent terms” (Bentley 1908, 217). Lest this pronouncement seem to render activity altogether superfluous,



he insists that “if we have said activity, then we have said it all” (p. 211). Since groups are known by their activity, not by ascription, interest is group activity. Lastly, interest is contestation: Bentley declares that interest becomes effective and visible “in its activity in the face of opposition from other groups” (p. 216). Interest groups are oppositional doings and active contestations; interest is contested group action.

Bentley’s decisiveness on each of these points, delivered as a rapid series of bottom-line pronouncements, has left him open to criticism by readers for whom scientific language is marked by its sober logic; several have complained that little or nothing is left if Bentley’s sweeping rhetoric is cleared away (Crick 1959; Weinstein 1962). But, aside from inviting and animating denunciatory and vitriolic criticism, the rhetorical work of Bentley’s writing is to shake students free from fast-held and presumed-scientific assumptions about interests that derive from an overly selective reliance on natural understandings. Why else would Bentley invoke “interest” at all, when “contested group activity” might have sufficed as well and precluded the individual and its psychology to boot?

Bentley’s equivalencies—even, and especially, the equation of interest and action—are not logical but rather grammatical relations extracted from, and revealing of, the natural language of interest in politics. As I will examine at the end of this essay, Bentley’s refusal to specify “interest” as psychological or rooted in any agent, let alone a sovereign agent, that transcends the political situation in question is congruent with many of the uses of “interest” that are both crucial to politics and overlooked or even suppressed by students of politics. This side of interest emphasizes politics as an activity of constitution rather than representation; it reveals interest as the manifestation of politics, not its foundation. While active, contested groups and interests are two sides of the same coin for Bentley, examining the “interest” side has the advantage of bringing attention back to how Bentley wished political inquiry to remain connected to the natural understandings of politics that circulate in political language (i.e., citizens’ and others’ talk of public matters in terms of “interests”), even if his own descriptive theory is meant to circumvent the tendency of natural understanding to obscure political inquiry in a fog of psychological and ideal causes.

A few other criticisms of Bentley’s enterprise touch on his theory of interests. I have already mentioned Bentley’s apparent, though not thoroughgoing, exclusion of psychological interests, and suggested that Bentley sees a proper compass for these interests once “interest” is rightly understood. Similarly, Bentley

excludes “common” and “national” and other transcendent interests as worthy of scientific treatment. This second exclusion also appears to jettison natural understanding in favor of a technical or scientific idiom, and so Bentley’s attack on these interests would seem to contradict my argument that Bentley is actually keen to preserve the natural language of interest. Also apparently problematic for Bentley is the role of the observer in scientific description.<sup>9</sup>

To draw out the insights from Bentley’s work that can speak to these concerns, we need a clearer view of the language of interest, particularly regarding how contestation is central to it, and how speakers of that language partake in its power to actively group, and thereby constitute, its subjects. This side of the language of interest is thrown into greater relief when we examine how social scientists who are committed to positivism and sovereign agency, like David Truman, have struggled with the language of interest. Returning to *The Process of Government* as an antidote to these attachments, I will also explore Bentley’s acknowledgment that the researcher’s description of group activities as “interests” is of the same order as the phenomena it describes, suggesting a role for political inquiry in provoking identity and action.

## Psychology and the Representation of Interests

The appeal of “interest group” quickly drifted from redundancy in the service of pure description to a more traditionally scientific pair: one cause and one effect. In *The Governmental Process*, David Truman (Truman 1953) follows Bentley in positing “interest groups” as the special object of social scientific analysis.<sup>10</sup> But Truman’s inversions of Bentley’s study go far beyond his reworking the title of Bentley’s book. Bentley’s disavowal of psychological motivations, individualism, and the representative quality of interest is decisively abandoned as Truman adapts mid-century findings and techniques in sociology and social psychology into a quite different theory of interest.<sup>11</sup> These findings and techniques, while amenable to behavioralism, obscure Bentley’s signature insight, promoting instead the search for psychological foundations that result in groups. Truman turns interest into a thing, not an activity, rendering it an attribute of being to be observed rather than a moment of becoming to be described. He thereby abandons and obscures the most intriguing and illuminating elements of Bentley’s theory of interest.

Truman's individualism is covert; he opens *The Governmental Process* with a discussion of the relation between individual and society that appears to honor Bentley's disavowal of the distinction between individual and society. Truman deems the distinction "misleading" and "a fiction," particularly when one of its sides is taken as prior to the other (Truman 1953, 29, 49, 140). He insists that "'the individual' and 'the group' are at most merely convenient ways of classifying behavior, two ways of approaching the same phenomena, not different things" (p. 48). Apparently echoing Bentley, Truman writes:

A group is "real" in the sense that the interactions that are the group can be observed, and these terms [group, institution, nation, etc.] are convenient ways of describing interactions. . . . Men exist only in society; society is the interaction of men. (Truman 1953, 29)

But this passage also hints at a difference between Truman and Bentley that will decisively separate their treatments of interests. Recall that for Bentley, activity consonant with the group was the sign of membership in the group. Bentley focused on group activity; Truman focuses instead, as the passage above shows, on *interaction among* members of a group. "A minimum frequency of interaction is necessary," he writes, "before a group . . . can be said to exist. It is the interaction [among group members] that is crucial, not [their] shared characteristic" (Truman 1953, 24). While Truman thus evades the dangers of ascription and dodges, for now, the question of the observer's role in scientific knowledge, this view contrasts sharply with Bentley's focus on external and especially conflicting relations, where group identities are formed in the context of differences and contestation. The change from Bentley may be slight, but it is greatly amplified when Truman's analysis turns from groups in general to *interest* groups. Then, even interaction falls away as Truman prioritizes the individual psychology of "attitude" over group activity, foreclosing the most useful theoretical insights of Bentley's position.

Whereas Truman defines groups generally in terms of their members' interaction, interest groups are defined instead by shared attitudes. Now practically refuting his earlier insistence that interaction and not shared characteristics make up the group, Truman insists that "interest" stands for the desires and wants that motivate group activity. In Truman's formulation, an "interest group" is constituted by the

"shared attitudes" of its members, where "shared" derives from "group" and "attitudes" corresponds with "interest" (Truman 1953, 33–4). Truman's disavowal of the distinction between individual and society notwithstanding, attitudes are fundamentally individualistic. He describes their differences as coming down to variations in embodiment, mentality, and experience (p. 22)—a trinity that secures individualism, and the individualism of differences, in Truman's account of politics. This trio, which Truman calls the "hard facts of personality differences" (p. 49), are all-important; even interaction disappears.

Truman neither acknowledges nor explains this shift; perhaps it is meant to preempt a serious criticism, namely, that pluralists' focus on politically active groups blinds them to how institutionalized politics systematically prevent some groups from engaging in institutional politics, or from forming (and therefore interacting) at all (Nicholls 1974, 26, 32).<sup>12</sup> Such a conclusion would be consistent with Truman's sensitivity to the challenges that inequality posed for the survival of democracy (Katznelson 2003, 113). Having turned to attitudes, Truman amends his predecessors' views of interest groups by establishing that interest groups "make certain claims upon other groups in society for the establishment, maintenance, or enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied by the shared attitudes"—whether or not all the members of the group work in concert at all (Truman 1953, 33). Therefore the differences in question are prior to politics; a group's claims over others' on the basis of attitudes mark the groups as "interests"; when the groups turn to public institutions to make these claims, they become political (p. 37). Pluralism is now apt to identify the not-yet political groups, if it can find a means to by which interests, defined as shared pre-political psychological attitudes, can be represented in political analysis even when they are not yet represented in political institutions.

Insofar as the shift from interactivity to shared attitudes was an attempt to mitigate the quietism and status-quo bias of group theory, it simultaneously empowers pollsters and psychometricians to "discover" latent groups in attitudes that are shared but not (yet) the basis for collective action. It also locates agency squarely where Bentley most hesitated to confine it: within the psychological dot of the grammatical subject's "I." Truman notes that attempts "to examine interests that are not at a particular point in time the basis of interactions among individuals, but may become such . . . would indeed be risky . . . without

the modern techniques for the measurement of attitude and opinion” (Truman 1953, 34). Thus subjected to the techniques of psychology, the individual who “has interests” becomes the proper object of a social science.

Jettisoning Bentley’s insistence that a categorically unique framework be elaborated to study politics, and his proposal of “interest” as this category, Truman refigures interest as phenomena that are represented to political inquiry by means that are not themselves proper to politics, but rather are scientific on extra-political terms. Thus removed from the political process and figured as foundational to it, interests are objectified and reified. Therefore the incongruence of Truman’s group interpretation of politics with Bentley’s descriptive theory of politics does not stem, as Weinstein has it (Weinstein 1962, 179), from Truman’s good-faith attempt to use *The Process of Government* as a tool for political science. Instead, it reflects Truman’s abandonment of Bentley’s insights regarding what in the natural language of interest is most compellingly political in favor of behaviorist psychometric techniques and a commitment to sovereign agency—atomizing and individualizing persons in the name of enabling researchers to recognize them in groups. Individuals *have* interests, but are not seen as *interested* by means of politics and action, as Bentley’s perspective insists.

Truman’s influential usage fortified a discipline, and the discipline fortified a discourse: Even Truman’s fiercest critics followed him in focusing on “interest” as individual, to the exclusion of its other uses.<sup>13</sup> On this basis, the split between natural and scientific languages of interest grew more acute. Throughout political science, the psychological basis of interest, and therefore its attachment to the individual “level” of analysis, continues to be invoked to denounce any articulation of common or general interests as an ideological sham.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, the effective power of common or general interest claims in political discourse has not yielded to the positivist, individualist doctrine: politicians and activists still find it productive to invoke “the national interest” or more parochial (but no more reliably attitudinal) interests like “a black interest” or “women’s interest.” In light of the evident power of these uses of “interest,” Bentley’s suspicion that interest cannot be equated with attitude or desire, his finding “interest” in the formation and activity of groups, and his desire to keep the scientific and natural languages of interest in dialogue, have much to tell us about the politics of interest.

## The Objectivity and Contestability of Interests

Truman’s turn to psychology and psychometrics as a means of observing interests responds not only to concerns that group theory is quietist, but also to an epistemological and ontological problem that the grammar of “interest” poses for positivist inquiry. Since it is critical for the idea of a positivist science of politics that political phenomena be things available for study, positivist studies of politics want to focus on what interests “really are” (Wootton 1970, 6). This approach has a counterpart in other philosophies of social science; adherents of pragmatic scientific realism and critical theory alike, for example, argue that theories give meaning to the patterns people see in facts (Rush 2004; White 2004; Topper 2005). In other words, the interest that some body is said to have must be a fact of some kind.<sup>15</sup> This would seem to be a straightforward move: after all, we often say that one “has an interest” just as we say that one “has furniture.” By grammatical analogy, the objective and factual quality of interest seems as self-evident as that of furniture, or any other property that some body is said to have. All of these approaches set the terms for studies of political interest that preclude the identity-provoking power of interests to which Bentley was attuned; they take interest to be a fact about persons to be represented in political practices or institutions, even if the institutional logic of representation affects the calculus of interests.

But answering the question of how to know what interests some body “has” is no simple matter. Indeed the commonplace notion of a person “having conflicting interests” itself contradicts at least one notion of what an interest *is*—what is good for some body—and is therefore a problem for the factuality of interests. Take, for example, the statement “Marcia is not interested in her health, even though being healthy is in her interest.” The sentence is not contradictory, but it nonetheless presents a difficulty for theorists or scientists who want to know her interest the way they know a thing. They are apt to get around this problem by noting that Marcia’s lack of interest in health refers to her attitudes or her ideas, and so it is neatly distinct from questions of her bodily health. Now Marcia’s love for French fries on the one hand, and her benefit from low LDL-cholesterol levels and complex carbohydrates on the other, are equally “real” and are equally interests that Marcia “has,” but they are compartmentalized, as though corresponding to two different entries in a dictionary, “referring” to two different “things.”



Following this pattern in resolving incongruities in how the word “interest” is used, social scientists and political theorists routinely invoke a distinction between subjective interests on the one hand and objective interests on the other (Flathman 1966, 14–31; Balbus 1971, 152; Wendt 1999, 224–33; Geuss 1981, 45–54). With such a dichotomy in hand, philosophers, politicians, pundits, and activists everywhere can be found advancing the view that persons do not always well or rightly represent their own interests—and therefore begin to speak of persons’ best interests, real interests, or objective interests to get a foothold against this view that individuals know their interests in fact (Geuss 1981). But referring conflicting statements regarding a person’s interest to a dichotomy of objective and subjective preserves rather than ameliorates the presumption that interests are individual and psychological. Political scientists like Truman can reassure themselves that proper research techniques render even the most apparently subjective interests into objective material for political analysis, thereby respecting the real interest of the subject in the autonomy of her attitudes, reasons, and desires. Liberal social scientists and theorists can seek the coincidence between objective and subjective interests by holding that once the objective interests of autonomy, dignity, or ideal speech situations are met, subjectively felt interests are to be privileged as determining substantive objective interests (Geuss 2002). The trajectory of critical theory over the past forty years illustrates to what extent it has converged with liberalism on a notion of autonomy and communicative competence as the standpoint from which to judge the justice of contemporary political conditions (White 2004).

Marxist resisters to the assimilation of critical theory to liberalism have leaned more heavily on the distinction between subjective and objective interests, to preserve the space for radical critique of prevailing social conditions (Geuss 1981; Eagleton 1991; Hoy 2004). But the presumption of interest as psychological lives on. “An objective interest means,” one such theorist explains, “a course of action which is in fact my interests but which I do not currently recognize as such. If this notion is unintelligible, then it would seem to follow that I am always in perfect and absolute possession of my interests, which is clearly nonsense” (Eagleton 1991, 217). Even here, interest remains a matter of individual consciousness; objective interest is what a person could recognize as her interests but for the injustices of the prevailing social order. Where contestation and plurality are recognized at all, they are a matter not among persons, let alone groups, but between present self-consciousness

and a single superior alternative of which the individual is presumed, at present, to be unaware. The possibility that this conflict and contestation is intrinsic to the language of interest—as reflected both in its grammar and its deployment in political argument—rather than being a matter to be overcome by techniques of attitude measurement or an ideal social order is suspended in all of these attempts to secure the objectivity of interests and the sovereign agency of the person said to “have” these interests.

Conflicting and contradictory uses of terms like “interest” are the beginning point for William Connolly’s analyses of political concepts in an early, important and influential work *The Terms of Political Discourse* (Connolly 1993).<sup>16</sup> Connolly seeks to “render political discourse more self-reflective by bringing out contestable moral and political perspectives lodged in the language of politics,” thereby “dissolv[ing] the appearance of neutrality in conceptual analysis” as practiced by many political scientists (p. 213). The student of politics must see the contested quality of political concepts and the commitments that underwrite her definition of concepts (pp. 20–1).<sup>17</sup> Connolly furthermore renders explicit the losses that result from political scientists’ recruitment and hardening words from natural languages of politics into technical terms with stipulated, univocal meanings (pp. 48–62). Connolly’s emphasis on contestation therefore resuscitates Bentley’s insight that “interest” plays roles in the natural languages of political discourse that are inseparable from the work of “interest” in political inquiry.

But Connolly’s embrace of contestation goes only so far. Following Truman in at least one respect, the psychological view of interest is Connolly’s point of departure and individual autonomy is the point to which he returns. “The sorts of wants that enter into the meaning of interests,” he writes, “are exactly those deemed somehow important, persistent, basic, or fundamental in politics” (Connolly 1993, 46). Within the confines of interest as a fundamental desire, Connolly sees the contests over their uses in political discourse as an opportunity, if not an imperative, to be clear about the political stakes of defining “interest” for political inquiry, and then to choose a side. Connolly argues that what’s at stake in defining “interest” for political inquiry is the preservation of autonomy, agency, and responsibility—congruent with a liberal conviction that each sane adult individual is the best judge of her own best interests.<sup>18</sup> Even so, Connolly rejects the power of psychometrics to know individuals’ interests by measuring their attitudes, offering instead a politically

correct definition of “real interests,” justified by a “democratic ethos,” namely:

Policy *x* is more in *A*’s 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. (p. 64)<sup>19</sup>

Conflict or contestation around interest has now been reduced from even the competing claims of groups to an individual’s consideration of two policies. Moreover, the subjunctive in Connolly’s definition points to an ideal situation for the articulation of interest that is always-already hypothetical. Knowing what some body would choose if he *were* to experience the results of *x* and *y*, when he has not experienced *x* and *y*, is impossible—not even the “he” who would choose can know it. While the hypothetical has the advantage of stemming the hubris of social science, it tellingly reveals that real interest, and the sovereign agency Connolly means it to serve, is impossible.

While Connolly insists that we see how the terms employed by social science reflect and replay broader political contests, and argues that scientific language must remain in contact with the natural languages of politics, his own definition of “interest” stops short of reconnecting it with the ways “interest” is used in natural language. Connolly’s insistence that “interest” be grounded in an individual agent of action and responsibility reproduces social scientists’ attachment to interest as a vehicle for sovereignty and misses how everyday uses of “interest” differently and contestably figure the identification of interested bodies that are a focus of political inquiry. His approach exemplifies this power of invoking “interest” insofar as he himself proposes that the term be used to restrict political identity to an individual notion of sovereign agency. To that end, Connolly notes, “to be clear about interests we must specify the kinds of persons we are talking about” (Connolly 1993, 45). Connolly senses that opening “interest” as a conduit for its political effects may have proliferate sites of agency and complicate his ambition to secure individual sovereignty. If we hesitate to exclude invocations of interest that do not reflect atomism or individuality, do we open the door to “kinds of persons” who are not sovereign agents? Or even that are not natural persons?

Contemporary usage of the term “interest” shows no particular tendency toward atomism, nor does it privilege the individual as a site of agency and responsibility. Talk of groups as “having an interest,” of a group of

people as “an interest,” or of the “community interest” or the “national interest” or the “public interest,” all connote interests which may incorporate or transcend the benefit of individuals or their needs, wants, preferences and desires. Indeed, people speak of interest in ways that have little or nothing to do with people at all, whether individually or in groups. For example, we may hear a lawmaker justifying her vote “in the interest of patriotism” or a law serving “a compelling state interest.” Connolly avoids both the insights into the unsettled identities of interested bodies that an engagement with these non-individual invocations of “interest” provides, and the role of contest in these invocations. He writes as though a person cannot be said to truly have more than one conflicting interest of her own, as though she will never find herself aligned with and avowing interests that extend nontransitively beyond or against her sovereign agency—as though there are no suicide bombers, as though such people do not act on bases that are, in some sense, their interests. In short, Connolly restricts consideration of “interest” to individual persons, thereby precluding the flexibility of the grammar of “interest” even as he decries the atomism he says is endemic in social scientists’ discussions of interest. Bentley’s theory of interest suggests a way to tap into the broader, unsettled, and unsettling language of interest in politics as a means of theorizing non-individual notions of interest and diagnosing this language’s troubled relationship to sovereign agency.

## Interest as Constitution

Setting aside the individual as a privileged site for the location of interest, and entertaining the possibility that collectivities can truly be said to “have interests” beyond the aggregation of the attitudes or choices of the persons they comprise, raises uneasy questions: What if there no limits to what counts as an “interest”? Is “interest” just anything we say it is? If so, has it lost its meaning? These questions arise as long as we cling to the view that “interest” is a thing, forgetting that invoking “interest” is something that users of language—including political actors and students of politics—*do*. Let’s examine a use of “interest” that is not about agents or even about people, to see what such a use achieves; the environment will work as an example. Speaking of an “environmental interest” suggests a group advocating some environmental policy or another, but it can also mean the environment more generally. The phrase “in the interest of the environment” (as we might describe a law or using a canvas grocery sack)

excludes the former possibility and hence draws us closer to our target. Under what circumstances would there be a point to using such a phrase? In the first instance, the phrase justifies or explains an action (Ball 1979), like enacting or enforcing the law, or reusing the sack. But that the action in question needs justification or explanation suggests that its point is not self-evident or incontrovertible. Rather, there is some contest regarding the action's meaning or effects. Supposing, as a matter of controversy, we are faced with two different policies, each of which can be plausibly argued to be "in the interest of the environment." Why, given the powers of science, are such policies still controvertible? (Let's assume, for a moment, that enforced ignorance and grand deception are not to blame.) Such contestation is possible because the advocates differently view what *counts as* "the environment." Like any abstraction encompassing complex and multifarious phenomena, "the environment" itself has no set boundaries. Moreover, it changes over time, and in ways that are not preordained. If this were not the case, then an argument explaining or justifying action on its behalf, in terms of "interest," would be pointless, like speaking of the interest of a rock. To return to our controversy, each advocate includes some features and relationships among environmental phenomena and downplays, discounts, or excludes others. For some, the environment is a primordial configuration of ecosystems; for others, it is their current stability. For still others, it may be a resource for economic expansion; others still may understand it to be a nice spot for a picnic. Each of these perspectives yields distinctive criteria for what counts as the interest of the environment, and each exhorts or explains a different kind of action.

These observations have implications for how present-day students of politics connect interest and identity (Smith 2004). Identity must be understood not merely in its relation to contemporaneous difference—what makes something "the environment" as opposed to something else, say, Las Vegas—but also as tied up with processes and events that unfold over time (Markell 2003, 12–14). The example of the environment illustrates how speakers use "interest" to ascribe a temporal identity, achievable in the future by action, to the environment. And since time does not reach an end, neither can this identity be achieved once and for all.

But an appeal to "interest" in the face of contested possibilities also bears a conceit, namely, that the action serves only to maintain or preserve what's already there, as though what's there isn't complex enough to engender the controversy that conjures up

appeals to "interest" in the first place. "Interest" is an argument regarding what actions are needed in order for something to become what she who appeals to "interest" claims it already is. In this respect, every appeal to "interest" is a claim regarding self-preservation, since it is a claim regarding the identity of the self to be realized under the pretense that *that* self is already essential and must be maintained. But even though appeals to "interest" appear merely to justify or to explain action on such a basis, they always are an activity of conjuring identity from complex and contested phenomena and a field of possibilities—even if these appeals cannot, in themselves, be said to "cause" the identity they promote. These observations are consistent with Bentley's insistence that we see interests as groupings of multifarious phenomenal men on the basis of active contestation. In this light, Bentley's theory of interest explores conspicuous aspects of the language of interest that empirical social science and normative political theory mostly exclude. What can *The Process of Government* suggest about how they might be recovered?

First, contestation. Some readers of Bentley, undeterred (or unconvinced) by his disavowal of causation, seek what motivates or lies behind interest group activity, offering explanations that range from tendencies to intentions (Weinstein 1962, 174–6) to Trumanesque "underlying interests" (LaVaque-Manty 2006, 8). In this matter and others, Bentley's precision may leave something to be desired, but he gives us good reason to accept that what lies behind interest group activity is instead contestation itself. The link he draws between "interest" and contestation reflects the heterogeneity that is intrinsic to the grammar of "interest" and alive in the natural language of interest in politics. Bentley furthermore suggests how this heterogeneity and contestation preclude formalism and positivism. Moreover, Bentley's attention to contest recovers for political inquiry a complexity evident in the Latin origins of the term "interest" that has been overlooked in the most prominent attempts to recover the plurality of interests. Whereas Hannah Arendt (Arendt 1958, 69) sees the Latinate meaning of *interesse* as "to be between or among," Bentley draws our attention to how the language of interest ties political action to "what makes a difference"—another meaning of the ancient Latin term.

With heterogeneity and contest at the fore, Bentley presents a proselytizing picture of politics, wherein "interest" is itself a matter of aggregating particulars and mobilizing activity against a backdrop of myriad possibilities. Bentley describes interests as "settling or

consolidating themselves upon masses of men” (Bentley 1908, 206). The examples that Bentley gives of the dimensions along with men can be “interested” are staid (and at times unfortunate) by present-day standards—he cites ownership and occupation, gender, race, and hair color—but the point of his examples is that the possibilities are ever-changing, layered, and cross-cutting, and that no one dimension is fundamental (p. 208). Given the many possibilities, when Bentley states that “what we actually find in this world, what we can observe and study, is interested men, nothing more and nothing less” (p. 212) we are to read “interested” as a past participle, not an adjective. To speak more broadly, we are to see “interest” as a verb, rather than as a noun. In Bentley’s view, the bodies that matter in politics and to the study of politics—which is to say, the groups and persons who act and are acted on in political life—do not “have” interests that are prior to, and represented in, the political process. Rather their constitution, their being interested, is politics itself. Interest is therefore “government,” in Bentley’s distinctive definition of the term: “the phenomena of groups pressing one another, forming one another, and pushing out new groups” (p. 269). And so while Bentley does address institutions and representation, he reduces neither interest nor government to a matter of institutional representation. Government by whom? and By what means? are the questions that viewing interest as an activity raises, and reconsidering the language of interest in light of Bentley’s view can clarify.

We are now ready to reconsider the place of psychological and transcendent interests in political life. It would be a mistake to read Bentley’s statement that “it is not the set of reasonings put forth by men on either side” of an issue that matters “but the position that they assumed . . . that is the vital political fact” (Bentley 1908, 205), as saying that Bentley takes no heed of the power of speech, of “reasons given,” in political life. Instead Bentley gives language, including the multifarious natural language of interest, its due when set in a proper frame: “the language . . . in which ideas and feelings are presented,” he writes, “is one form of activity” (p. 180). Given the importance of activity to his account, such a remark could not be trivial. He goes on to say that “this language . . . is prominent in government and politics” and that “we must not neglect it” (p. 180). As we have seen, the prominence of this language in government means not merely that it is spoken in institutional settings, but more importantly that it participates in the contests that form groups. It is only when we “follow

every day theories and set the ‘feelings’ and ‘ideas’ off by themselves as the ‘causes’ of activities” that we run into trouble and end up displacing a descriptive science of government with a dubious search for causation (p. 180).<sup>20</sup> So even as Bentley cautions that a reason given by an actor is not the last word, he directs our attention to the activity of giving reasons. When feelings, desires, and other motivations are expressed in appeals to “interest,” we must attend to these appeals as themselves processes of government and therefore as activities—of prompting action, of provoking identity—in their own right.

The same must be said of ideas and ideals invoked in appeals to “interest.” While Bentley’s disavowal of “the common interest” may dismay those who look forward to the resolution of enduring social conflicts, his refusal of transcendent interests is of a piece with his rejection of psychology. It too reflects his concern about the pretense of independence and power of causation that citizens and social scientists are just as apt to afford ideas (like “nations”) and ideals (like “communities”) as they are to afford desires. Therefore Bentley’s reason for disavowing the reality of such interests points beyond the usual cynicism that any invocation of a common interest is a partisan one in a savior’s clothing. Rather, it draws our attention to the point of *invoking* a common interest, namely, its potential to prompt action (for well or ill) that aims to forge unity from any complex heterogeneity—be it a phenomenal person, a nation, or even humanity. And Bentley reminds us that since the point of departure for an appeal to “interest” is its object being a complex amalgam of heterogeneous parts, its “wholeness” (as a nation, as a community) is contested and to be achieved by action, not given in advance. That is, work toward achieving wholeness will be contingent and itself contested with the language of interest. Once appeals to “interest,” including as psychological or as shared, are themselves understood as activities of government, their importance to the student of politics and their relevance to her science is restored in proper balance. The language of interest *is* the group process: “If we try to take the group without the interest,” Bentley writes, “we simply have nothing at all” (Bentley 1908, 213).

Lastly, the role played by students of politics. Bentley’s work points to the possibility of seeing political inquiry as intimate with practices of “government” that can and do activate groups: namely, the identification of groups whose activity is immanent in politics. One of Connolly’s most helpful insights is that a social scientist’s ways of talking about the interests of the



subjects she studies are effective and active, rather than the passive and straightforward observation pretended by Truman and, it would appear, Bentley as well. Although Bentley at times explicitly distinguished the social scientist's own activity of drawing identity out of complex phenomena from the groups' activities, at other points his writing suggests that the social scientist (as a speaker of "interest") plays an active role in the provocation of political identity, despite her work being ostensibly descriptive. And so Bentley (Bentley 1908, 206) writes that "every classification of the elements of a population must involve an analysis of the population *into* groups." He assigns to us classification, not classes; analysis, not analytics; he emphasizes the active and creative side of research. His writing sustains this emphasis throughout: "we hold" groups from one another, "we keep" them distinct; groups must "be separated" in our analysis. In distinguishing among the groups in the social whole, "we pass planes through the sphere" that represents it (p. 207). Each of these "classifications (e.g., by race) answers some purpose" (p. 208)—namely, the purposes of the social scientists to understand and to know politics. None of these classifications are given in advance, and each depends on the engagement of the researcher into activities of oppositional groupings that do not much differ from the proselytizing and mobilizing activities he describes as characteristically political. Intentions and avowals of *The Governmental Process* aside, Bentley's theory of interest shows that political science is itself inevitably a practice of government. The *Federalist Papers* and their place in history are a case in point: Madison's science of politics, after all, constituted a people, even if it did so in ways he could never have imagined, and this constitution remains contested even by means of his writings.

### The Subject of "Interest"

Various questions in Bentley's work still call out for sustained theoretical examination if his writing is to serve as an exclusive model for political inquiry, his exclusion of history perhaps most of all. But such questions bear little on the use I have argued we can profitably make of Bentley for appreciating the peculiarly modern language of interest in politics. His work points to a side of this language that recent developments in our field—rational choice, cognitive psychology, large-*n* empirical studies—have obscured or abandoned, in part owing to the intractable problems that "interest" presents for a political science committed to sovereign agency.

A return to Bentley's action-oriented ontology of "interest" preserves aspects of the word's grammar

that lend it power in politics, namely, the way it figures identity as contested and contestable *and* as a tool for laying claim to their fixity. Rather than seeing political processes as the aggregation of individual interests, Bentley invites us to see politics as the provocation and mobilization of agency and identity. As Bentley showed, the language of "interest" is a practice of government by which political identities are contested and provoked to action. But whereas much critical theory has left individuals intact while they see identity as formed by contingent affinities to contingent collective identities, Bentley presses us to take the critical insights afforded by the language of interest "inward" as well, to the question of subjectivity itself.

Bentley writes that "human individuality" is a "prepossession . . . appear[ing] to have extravagant importance," one which must be "stripped away" for a science of politics to emerge (Bentley 1908, 204). Might stripping away the prepossession of human individuality lead not only upward to the group, but inward as well, to questions of subjectivity? Can Bentley's position on "interest" as a phenomenon of group activity usefully—and grammatically—be extended to persons? Bentley invites us with an affirmative answer. "Interests groups," he writes, "are of no different material than the 'individuals' of society. They are activity, so are the individuals. It is only a question of the standpoint from which we look at the activity to define it" (p. 215). Even the individual is an activity of grouping. While the individual has a share in that activity, it is no greater a share than anyone else who appeals to his or her "interest" in the moment of contest. *Sovereign* agency cannot be an interest of the subject, since appeals to "interest" are the means by which that agency is shaped and contested.

### Notes

1. The exception of international relations to this standard is only apparent. Routine invocations of the "state of nature" as the paradigm of the anarchical relations among states reveals the state as a sovereign individual—in the sense of indivisible—actor.

2. I take formalism to be viewing the world as a collection of uniform components whose arrangements and rearrangement can be mathematically described. I take positivism to be a method of inquiry that admits as data only those objects which are directly perceptible by atheoretical means.

3. Many commentators see Truman as Bentley's natural successor (Weinstein 1962, 158–60; Ward 1984, 78; LaVaque-Manty 2006, 11) on the view that Bentley mainly promotes a "group theory" of politics (see also Schaar and Wolin 1963, 137; Ward 1984). The difference between Truman and Bentley then becomes what LaVaque-Manty calls the difference between the general theorist and the practical—Truman is Lenin to Bentley's Marx (LaVaque-Manty 2006, 11). While there is some merit to LaVaque-Manty's view that Bentley's work fits into a rubric of

pragmatism, the pragmatism of Truman's enterprise is less clear. When it comes to interests, some readers see group activity in Bentley's account as representing "underlying" or "particular" interests (LaVaque-Manty 2006, 8; see also Weinstein 1962, 176). LaVaque-Manty sees this as a fundamental strength of Bentley's approach; Weinstein views it as a telling contradiction. On my view, Truman cannot be said to share Bentley's account of interests at all, and therefore he cannot be said to be a rightful successor to Bentley's theory of politics. Even Kress (1970), who is apt to draw weightier distinctions between Bentley and Truman, missed the degree to which Truman reintroduced the very psychological view of interest that Bentley rejected as a causal force.

4. Connolly's subsequent work has criticized sovereign agency in various ways; in what follows I am concerned less with Connolly as a political thinker than with *The Terms of Political Discourse* (Connolly 1993) as an influential text.

5. I refer to Wittgenstein's uses of "grammar" as read by Hanna Pitkin (Pitkin 1993) and Michael N. Forster (Forster 2004).

6. Bentley (Bentley 1908, 26–37) offers a long critical discussion of the work of Albion Small (Small 1905), whose theory he admired, except for Small's reliance on interest as a psychological cause of social phenomena (Kress 1970, 50). Even recent international relations scholarship has tended to treat state interest in psychological terms (e.g., Wendt 1999, 193–245).

7. Italics added.

8. To suspend the offhand equation of interests to individual persons and their psychology that Bentley's perspective on interest calls into question, I write of "interest" as pertaining to bodies. "Body" is a helpful term because it can refer to physiology (e.g., "a cat's body"), or to a grouping (e.g., "the citizen body"), or to a structured inanimate whole (e.g., "auto body repair"). Moreover, writing of "some body's interest" or an "interest that some body has" usefully foregrounds how, in the speech situations from which students of politics borrow the term, "interest" always has or is a relation to some body (i.e., an object).

9. Weinstein (Weinstein 1962, 178–84, 197–205) develops each of these criticisms (see also Schaar and Wolin 1963, 137–41; Weinstein 1963; Barber 2006).

10. Psychological explanations had been gaining ground in political science as early as the 1920s (Ward 1984, 73).

11. Kress (1970, 81–15) describes the limited extent of Bentley's reception and influence in the years before Truman's *The Governmental Process*.

12. Regarding how Bentley may have fallen into the trap of reproducing, in his analyses, the structural exclusion of groups from political analysis, see Kress (1970, 61).

13. See, for example, Rogin (1987).

14. Friedrich (1962), Schubert (1961), and Held (1970) exemplify this argument.

15. I write "some body" (not "somebody") to preserve the possibility that the body in question is not an individual person. See note 8.

16. The importance of *The Terms of Political Discourse* (Connolly 1993) is indicated by it having gone into three printings and having been awarded the Lippincot Prize in 1999 for its importance to the field more than twenty years after its publication.

17. Connolly sometimes writes as though contestability is a feature of *some* concepts and not others, or that terms become political to the extent that they are contestable. It is likely, of course, that contestability is not a feature of an exclusive set of concepts—the possibility of contestation may lie in all concepts. Whether this is a problem for Connolly's argument is not relevant here since I am concerned with "interest," which is contested.

18. I should note that Connolly's thinking on subjectivity and on the bases for democratic practices have shifted since 1974, taking positions closer to those I advocate here. But regarding the influence this work has had in political science, including as a primer on interests, see note 15 above.

19. Robert Parks (1982) exemplifies choice as a rubric for analyzing interest.

20. Italics added.

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