

A. Representation denotes an aspect of the relationship between political personages and those whom they lead within a political system: the leaders are said to "represent" those who are led insofar as they are nominated, appointed or elected by them; are responsible to them, and can be recalled or removed by them; and in addition, insofar as they are empowered to make (on behalf of their constituents) arrangements whose force is binding.

B. Like most political relationships, that of representation is a matter of degree and range. Representation of the membership of a political system can be full or partial: the devices chosen to effect the relationship are not uniform — nor are they uniformly successful. The binding quality of decisions reached by representatives is also variable and, at times, controversial.

(1) The practice of representation is an old one. But its most fruitful political origins were in the constitutional developments in England from the thirteenth century onwards. From 1264 "the knights of the shire and the burgeses of the boroughs received a summons at the same time" to meet with the King (S.B.Chrimes, Constitutional History of England, London: Oxford University Press, 1948, p.107). From the late thirteenth century onwards the writ of summons declared that the representatives "should have full and sufficient power to do and consent to those things which then and there by the common counsel of our realm . . . shall happen to be ordained" (quoted in ibid., p.109). Thus the English Parliament uniquely developed into "a representative assembly in a political sense during the course of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries" (ibid., p.109). The origins of this development in the judicial arrangements and fiscal requirements of medieval England have been much discussed (a classic account is to be found in C. Stephenson, Medieval Institutions, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954, p.126 et seq.). Stephenson insists "we must keep our eye on actual representation, that is, the practice of electing and commissioning deputies" (ibid., p.128), and he concludes that the

growth of representative institutions was "a matter of political necessity, occasioned on the one hand by the king's lack of money and on the other by the growing strength of social groups who could supply it " (ibid., p.138).

Other aspects have been commented upon elsewhere. Thus O.von Guericke (Political Theories of the Middle Ages, Cambridge: University Press, 1900, Chap. VII) insists upon the medieval corporate concept: "Representatives, who in the first instance are charged with the representation of the several particular communities which compose a people, must, if they are to represent the People as a Whole, act as one single Assembly which resolves and decides in a corporate fashion." Recent scholarship gives major credit to the church organizations of the late Middle Ages, particularly the Dominican Order, for originating the kinds of political practices (elections, delegations, corporate theory, constituencies, majority rule) that freed the concept for its modern career (M.V.Clarke, Medieval Representation and Consent, London: Longmans Green, 1936).

(2) The actual word representation came into prominence during the long-drawn struggles over the distribution of powers in the English Parliament (16th to 20th centuries), and in other nations of the Western world, particularly the United States and France. In 1583, Sir Thomas Smith (De Republica Anglorum) wrote that Parliament ". . . representeth and hath the power of the whole realme both the head and the bodie." Here are the notions of some entity imitating, expressing, and making manifest a quality otherwise diffused. Hobbes (Leviathan, 1651, I, Chapter 16) declares: ". . . to Personate is to Act, or Represent himself, or an other; and he that acteth another is said to beare his Person, or act in his name; . . . and is called in diverse occasions, diversly; as a Representer, or Representative, a Lieutenant, a Vicar, an Attorney, a Deputy, a Procurator, an Actor, and the like. . . A Multitude of men, are made One Person, when they are by one man, or one Person, Represented." The absolutist tendency of the definition should be noted.

(3) Political theorists have not been unanimous in evaluating representation. T.Paine

made the important distinction between "simple" and "representative" democracy. "Simple democracy was society governing itself without the use of secondary means. By ingrafting representation upon democracy, we arrive at a system of government capable of embracing and confederating all the various interests and every extent of territory and population. . . . Athens by representation would have surpassed her own democracy" (T. Paine, "The Rights of Man," in Part Second [1792] The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine, ed. by P.S. Foner, New York: The Citadel Press, 1945, Vol. 1, pp371-372). And for J.S. Mill "the meaning of representative government is that whole peoples or some numerous portion of them exercise through deputies periodically elected by themselves the ultimate controlling power" (J.S. Mill, "Representative Government," in Utilitarianism, Liberty, and Representative Government, London: J.M. Dent, 1910, p. 228).

Rather different views were held by Burke and Rousseau. Burke was vigorous in his defense of the independent representative, preferring "virtual" to "actual" representation: "Virtual representation is that in which there is a communion of interests, and a sympathy in feelings and desires, between those who act in the name of any description of people, and the people in whose name they act, though the trustees are not actually chosen by them" (F. Burke, "Letter to Sir Hercules Langriske, Bart., M.P., on the subject of the Roman Catholics of Ireland. . . ." [1792], reprinted in R.J.S. Hoffman and P. Levack, (eds.), Burke's Politics, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949, p.494). Burke thus divorces elections from representation.

Rousseau (1762) argued that "Sovereignty, for the same reason as makes it inalienable, cannot be represented: it lies essentially in the General Will, and will does not admit of representation: it is either the same, or other; there is no intermediate possibility. The deputies of the people therefore are not and cannot be its representatives: they are merely its stewards, and can carry through no definitive act (J.J. Rousseau, "Social Contract" in Social Contract and Discourses, tr. by G.D.H. Cole, London: J.M. Dent, 1913).

A sharp populist or pro-constituency motif is noticed in the definition by W. Peterson, delegate in the Constitutional Convention (Records, I, p.561): "What

is the principle of representation? It is an expedient by which an assembly of certain individuals chosen by the people is substituted in place of the inconvenient meeting of the people themselves." The same type of definition is congenial to T. Hare, the father of proportional representation, who declares: "Representation is the vicarious performance of duties which cannot be personally executed" (A Treatise on the Election of Representatives, 3rd ed., London, 1865, p. xxxv).

More recently in the United States C.J. Friedrich, following R. von Mohl, defines representation as "the process through which the influence which the entire citizenry or a part of them have upon governmental action is exercised on their behalf by a smaller number among them, with binding effect upon those represented" (C.J. Friedrich, Constitutional Government and Democracy, Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1941, p. 260). F.M. Sait says simply that representation "occurs whenever one person is authorized to act in place of others" (Political Institutions, New York: Appleton-Century, 1938, p. 476). Lasswell and Kaplan define representation, in a system of related definitions, as "agency formally exercised in the interest of the principal" (or constituency) (Power and Society, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950, p. 165).

Political scientists have tried to abstract the universal quality inherent in historical usage. In this sense, the important ingredient of representation is a relation, evidenced by behavior or extracted by questioning. "Representation is then a relation (or condition) that exists when the characteristics and acts of one vested with public functions are in accord with the desires of a person(s) to whom the functions have objective or subjective importance" (A. de Grazia, Public and Republic, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951, p. 4). A device of representation is an attempt to enforce or ensure representation between a representative and a constituent. Such would be an election, a lottery, a reduced term of office, a particular formula of apportionment (often representation is tightly defined as a device of representation, especially "elections," but this presumes an effect that often is not present). Representative government would then be a system of rule in which the legitimacy of the government

is grounded upon a numerous and presumably effective set of procedures designed to ensure representation. A typical system of representative government (and of privately organized representative "governments" such as unions, trade associations or universities) will number several dozen devices of representation.

Yet the apparatus thus set up is only predictive of representation. That is, representation must be demonstrated. A despotism can provide much representation, a formal democracy little. A host of problems arise in this connection. Though it is one of the primary situations of political science, the representative condition is most difficult to study and assess. An election itself is one test and definition, though difficult to understand. Another common operational definition occurs in the question addressed to a person (or constituency): "Do you think the President is doing a good job?" However, as has been shown (Gosnell, Democracy: Threshold of Freedom, New York: Ronald Press, 1948, Chap. VIII), the meaningful, imaginable dimensions of the representative relation are far too numerous and inaccessible for the present instruments of inquiry; there are meanings extending into the conscious and unconscious levels of representative and constituents; correlates relating to the traits of leaders and followers; variations insofar as one studies long-run and short-run expectations and demands; considerations having to do with electoral information and ignorance; and questions of whether party or personality is the thing being represented to the constituency

See also: CONSTITUENCY
DEMOCRACY
LEGISLATIVE BODY
OFFICE

Alfred de Grazia