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YVES SINTOMER

The Meanings of Political Representation: Uses and Misuses of a Notion

“It is because the signifier exists, because it represents (through symbolic action), that the group being represented and symbolized exists and that in return, it causes its representative to exist as representative of a group.”

Pierre Bourdieu, “La délégation et le fétichisme politique”¹

HOW SHOULD WE UNDERSTAND “political representation”?² Is it a generic term, one of those “essentially contested”³ notions from the political vocabulary, or is it a concept that could have an encompassing and rigorous definition? This paper seeks to contribute a response to this question. The initial hypothesis is that “representation”

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1. Pierre Bourdieu, 2001, “La délégation et le fétichisme politique,” in *Langage et pouvoir symbolique* (Paris: Fayard, 2001), 260.
 2. This viewpoint was put forward at various symposia, retreats, and conferences. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to lessen its imperfections with their critiques and suggestions and who provided additional arguments. I am particularly indebted to Samuel Hayat for his comments on a first draft of the paper.
 3. Walter Gallie, “Art as an Essentially Contested Concept,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 6, no. 23 (April 1956): 97-114.

designates a semantic domain that is historically constructed and strongly dependent upon the specific linguistic resources of Latin languages or of languages influenced by Latin. With Western Europe having won global hegemony through the gradual colonization and economic domination of the planet, its vocabulary of representation was exported to the rest of the world and today seems universal, at least apparently. Yet substantial differences continue to exist at the semantic level. Going beyond words, there are highly contrasting notions at work in the history of political ideas in context. Moreover, the relativization of Europe's position in the world order is likely to have repercussions for the hegemony of a particular vocabulary of representation.

A transnational project covering the conceptual history and sociology of representation is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, the following pages, envisioned as the first phase of a more global research project, will focus on Western Europe. The objective is to propose a differentiation of ideal types in the semantic field of representation. Drawing heavily from Weberian methodology, the construction of these ideal types goes through a process of abstraction beginning with uses of the term as identified by historians and sociologists. This construction is therefore established at an intermediary level between a purely philosophical construction of the concept and an empirical presentation of the nearly infinite multiplicity of uses.

In the first section, I will begin by rejecting any attempts to define the essence of political representation. In the subsequent sections, I will address two sets of meanings linked to representation as an activity, one concerning symbolic representation, the other concerning juridical-political representation. Each set is held internally by a conceptual dichotomy involving the making an absent present again as opposed to the exhibition of a presence in the first case and mandate representation as opposed to embodiment representation in the second. The fourth section will analyze three metamorphoses in embodiment representation within modern democracies. The fifth section will address another dichotomy that cuts across the first three, namely distinction representation as opposed to descriptive representation. To conclude, we will propose some hypotheses on the heuristic interest of these different notions for understanding political transformations in the twenty-first century.

On the “Deceptive Familiarity” of Words

When we approach the current transformations of political representation, it is particularly important to follow the strategy proposed by Carlo Ginzburg: “Destroy our deceptive familiarity with words such as ‘representation’ that form part of our everyday language.”⁴ One of the major risks of facts that seem obvious to us in the present is that they hinder an open analysis of transformations in progress. Yet political theory was constructed largely on the basis of this “deceptive familiarity” mentioned by Carlo Ginzburg. From this starting point in particular, Hanna Pitkin, in a seminal book that marked a divide in contemporary Anglo-Saxon theoretical formulations, states that “representation” has an identifiable meaning and that it is not a “vague and shifting” notion but a “single, highly complex concept that has not changed much in its basic meaning since the seventeenth century,” that the etymology of re-presentation is “to make present or manifest or to present again,” and that it is therefore possible to give it a definition that is both precise and sufficiently complex to show in an encompassing way the multiple meanings theoreticians have given the word.⁵ Hasso Hofmann, the great German historian of the concept of representation, had already protested against such reductionism by partitioning it off as a common meaning from contemporary North American political theory.⁶ Against any attempts to propose the essence of the term “representation” and to suggest a definition for it, the strategy of pluralizing the meanings of “representation” can draw on the German conceptual history that, in the tradition of Reinhart Koselleck, contributed key writings on the term and its associated concepts,⁷ and on the highly valuable contributions of numerous

4. Carlo Ginzburg, “Représentation: le mot, l’idée, la chose,” *Annales ESC* 6 (November-December 1991): 1219. Reprinted in *À distance: Neuf essais sur le point de vue en histoire*. (Paris: Gallimard, 2001).

5. Hanna F. Pitkin. *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967/1972), 8-10.

6. Hasso Hofmann, “Le concept de représentation: Un problème allemand?” *Raisons Politiques* 50, no. 2 (2013): 79-96.

7. Hofmann, “Le concept.” Hasso Hofmann, *Repräsentation: Studien zur Wort – und Begriffsgeschichte von der Antike bis ins 19. Jahrhundert*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1974/2003. See also Adalbert Podlech, “Repräsentation,” in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. 5, edited by Reinhart Koselleck, Werner Conze, and Otto Brunner, 509-47. Stuttgart:

French, Anglo-Saxon, German, and Italian historians, even if these were less systematic and focused on shorter periods of time.

In this perspective, at least three obstacles must be overcome. The first involves accepting without reflection the semantic content associated with the word “representation” in French (and more generally in Latin languages and languages influenced by Latin, such as English). In German or Chinese, for example, there are several non-substitutable terms to translate what we mean in everyday language by “representation.” Although the multivocalic nature of French certainly makes possible associations that can be rich in meaning, relying on them carelessly can easily lead to conceptual short circuits. Thus when Marcel Gauchet, one of the principal historians of French political ideas, writes that

democracy, being essentially representative and far from reducing itself to the people’s exercise of sovereignty, inseparably requires the institutional production of this sovereignty in its true nature. It seeks a collective disposition of its own, but a disposition that only exists if self-signified and for which it is not less indispensable to be imagined than to be executed,⁸

he correctly emphasizes crucial symbolic dimensions of political representation as we mean it in French, but he does not explain why these would be intrinsically related nor why the figuration of the collective would necessarily or exclusively go through representatives elected within the framework of representative government. The second obstacle is the identification of political representation with elections, as is the case for most actors in political life as well as many theoreticians of Western democracies. However, the field of political representation is much wider, and it is undoubtedly only with the failure of the worker’s revolution in 1848 that this assimilation became the rule in France, to the point of bringing about the loss of other possible meanings.⁹ Today, we

Ernst Klett, 2004, (Fr. tr. in Paula Diehl, Yves Sintomer and Samuel Hayat, eds., *La représentation politique/Die politische Repräsentation. Trivium Revue Franco-Allemande de Sciences Humaines et Sociales*, May 2014).

8. Marcel Gauchet. *La révolution des pouvoirs: La souveraineté, le peuple, et la représentation, 1789-1799*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), 48.
9. Samuel Hayat, *L’invention de la République: Participation et représentation autour de la révolution de 1848*. (Paris: Seuil, 2014).

are witnessing a pluralization of political representative claims,¹⁰ and it is important to give this pluralization serious attention. The third obstacle is to reduce the legitimacy of elective representation to the mandate given by the electors to the elected. Although this dimension may be central in modern democracies, it is not exclusive of other, considerably better integrated dimensions that must be explained specifically.

Symbolic Representation: Making the Absent Present again vs. Exhibition of a Presence

What are the major conceptual matrices in this perspective on what the French call “representation?” Chronologically, the first refers to what Marcel Gauchet calls “figuration,” what Hasso Hofmann calls the dialectic of the model and image (*Urbild/Abbild*),¹¹ and what, following Bourdieu, we might call “symbolic representation”,¹² but intending the very generic meaning of the word “symbolic” (having to do with symbols as well as with images from the social world, signs, rituals, etc.). The word *repraesentatio* appeared at the time of the Roman Empire and to date has been discussed in theology, philosophy, and aesthetics. One widely accepted idea is that the notion of figuration representation in its most generic sense refers to the act of rendering present again a reality or person who is absent. However, this first meaning is not exclusive of another, nearly opposite meaning, in which “representation” can also refer to the exhibition of a presence. Roger Chartier demonstrated with particular emphasis how seventeenth-century dictionaries already differentiated these two meanings. Thus, the famous *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française* published by Furetière in 1690 notes: (1) “Representation: image that reminds us of objects that are absent and that paints them for us as they are,” but also (2) “Representation, is said (...) of the exhibition of something (...) Sometimes said of living people. About a serious and majestic appearance, we say: Here is a person of lovely

10. Michael Saward, *The Representative Claim*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

11. Gauchet, *La révolution*; Hofmann, *Repräsentation*.

12. Pierre Bourdieu, “La représentation politique.” In *Langage et pouvoir*, 213-58.

representation.”¹³ Following the art historian Louis Marin,¹⁴ Roger Chartier labels the first relationship “transitive” (we represent something or someone), and the second as “intransitive” or “reflexive” (we show ourselves in the act of representing). Incidentally, these two meanings seem to have been present since the inception of the word, with the “intransitive” representation found in Tertullian (150-220) and in the constitutions of Emperor Justinian in 530-531.¹⁵

This dichotomy is far from purely semantic and was first expressed in the domain of theology and liturgy. The Christian religion was innovative in distinguishing between images and idols, the first referring to an absent reality whereas the second was banned because those who believed in idols claimed that they were inhabited by divine beings.¹⁶ This was not an issue for the Jewish and Muslim religions, which prohibited images of the divine.¹⁷ Neither did it exist for the Greeks since when constituting religious signs, their statues sought to establish contact between humans and the divine while revealing the latter as “otherworldly, belonging to an inaccessible elsewhere.”¹⁸ The distinction between images and idols opened a major field of tension

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13. Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (1690), cited in Roger Chartier, “Le sens de la représentation,” in *La vie des idées*, 2, (2013). Accessed from: <http://www.laviedesidees.fr/Le-sens-de-la-representation.html>. See also the Spanish dictionary cited by Roger Chartier in the same paper, *Diccionario de Autoridades* (early eighteenth century). See also Roger Chartier, “Le monde comme représentation,” *Annales ESC* 6 (November-December 1989): 1505-20; “Pouvoirs et limites de la représentation: Marin, le discours, et l’image,” *Annales HSS* (March-April 1994): 407-18. Both papers were reprinted in the collection *Au bord de la falaise*. (Paris: Albin Michel, 2009), 75-98, and 203-24.
 14. Louis Marin, *Le portrait du roi*. (Paris: Minuit, 1981); *Opacité de la peinture: Essais sur la représentation au quattrocento* (Paris: Usher, 1989); *Les pouvoirs de l’image*. (Paris: Seuil, 1993).
 15. Hofmann, *Repräsentation*, 46.
 16. Carlo Ginzburg, “Idoles et images.” In *À distance: Neuf essais*. The same thing occurred in popular culture with the relics of saints (Carlo Ginzburg, “Représentation,” 1226-8). Many centuries later, in its early days, photography provoked fear that the nearly perfect image might take with it something of the person represented (Muriel Pic, “Le devenir image de la relique à l’époque de sa reproductibilité technique: Photographie, copie, et métaphore,” In *Reliques modernes: Cultes et usages chrétiens des corps saints des Réformes aux Révolutions*, vol. 2. ed. Philippe Boutry, Pierre-Antoine Fabre, and Dominique Julia, (Paris: EHESS, 2009), 845-61.
 17. The second commandment says, “Ye shall not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth” (Exodus 20:4).
 18. Jean-Pierre Vernant, “Figuration de invisible et catégorie psychologique du double: le colossus,” vol. 2, in *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs: Études de psychologie historique* (Paris: Maspero, 1965), 70.

that was manifested virulently in the debates about Byzantine iconoclasm between 730 and 787 and then between 813 and 843¹⁹ and that also concerned the Western Church. When Christ states in the Last Supper that, “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. / For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. / He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him”²⁰ were these words meant to be understood figuratively, with the presence of Christ in the sacraments being purely symbolic, or in the literal sense, with Christ actually present? This tension, which surfaced in the twelfth century,²¹ increased after the adoption of the dogma of transubstantiation in 1215, with which “it is not possible to speak simply of ‘contact’ but of presence, in the strong sense (the strongest possible sense) of the word. The presence of Christ is an omnipresence.”²² In fact, this tension grew and played a role in the split between Protestants and Catholics, the former interpreting the Eucharist symbolically,²³ whereas the latter imagined the real presence of Christ in his representation. Today something of these two meanings of “representation” continue to be partly expressed in German: *Vorstellung*, signifies an interior “representation,” and *Darstellung* the (re)presentation of something before an audience²⁴, and Freud played with the semantic pair in opposing *Vorstellung* as a conscious representation of an object of thought and *Darstellung*, where unconscious affects bypass the inhibited person to manifest themselves without distance in dreams, slips of the tongue, unnoticed errors, or symptoms.²⁵

19. On the link between representation and icon in the Church, see Oleg Kharkhordin, “... et unus non solus, sed in pluribus: A Citizen as Eikon,” in *Politics of the One: Concepts of the One and the Many in Contemporary Thought*, ed. Artemy Magun. (London: Continuum Press, 2012), 203-20.

20. Gospel of John 6:54-56.

21. Hofmann, *Repräsentation*, 68.

22. Ginzburg, “Représentation,” 1230. Incidentally, “intransitive” representation is strongly presented in Aquinas (1224-1274) (Hofmann, *Repräsentation*, 77-8).

23. The first manifestation of Protestantism saw the rise of a specific iconoclastic movement between 1523 and 1566. See Olivier Christin, “Le roi idole? Iconoclisme protestant et pensée monarchomane,” in *Comportements, croyances, et mémoires: Europe méridionale 19^e-20^e siècles – Études offertes à Régis Bertrand*, ed. Gilbert Buti and Anne Carol. (Aix: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2007), 171-82.

24. Reversals in meaning can come about, with the term *Vorstellung* being used, for example, to refer to a theatrical representation and the presentation of someone being called *jemanden vorstellen*.

25. Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke, II/III*, Frankfurt-am-Main: Fischer, 150.

It is interesting that Latin and Latin-derived languages ended up subsuming under the single word *repraesentatio* the symbolic representation involving the dialectic of the model and the image and juridical-political representation. This pairing, which Louis Marin dealt with explicitly, is rich in significations that go beyond the historical and linguistic context of Latin and post-Latin Europe. Indeed, any juridical-political representation involves the production of images of the community being represented at the same time as a performance of the people in power before those whom they are supposed to represent. There is no political representation without the constitution of “imagined communities”²⁶ but also without the staging of this community and further of political representatives.²⁷ Although it is interesting that the Baroque age saw the theory of the sign and a conscious increase in political staging of absolute monarchy coincide,²⁸ anthropological work tends to present this symbolic production and this staging as structural facts of political power and thus to explain the persistent importance of political rituals.²⁹ This thesis takes on great importance in a constructivist perspective that conceives of social groups and political communities not as natural facts but as socially constructed entities.³⁰ Political representatives’ action can in fact be conceptualized as strongly contributing to the shaping of the social and therefore to the construction of the groups these are supposed to represent. Therefore, the meaning of political representation cannot

26. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London/New York: Verso, 1998).

27. Doris Kolesch, “Politik als Theater,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 42 (October 13, 2008): 35-40; Ronald Hitzler, “Inszenierung und Repräsentation. Bemerkungen zur Politikdarstellung in der Gegenwart,” in *Figurative Politik. Zur Performanz der Macht in der modernen Gesellschaft*, ed. Hans-Georg Soeffner and Dirk Tänzler. (Opladen: V.S., 2002), 35-49 (Fr. tr. in Diehl et al., *La représentation politique; Inszenierungen der Politik: Der Körper als Medium*, eds. Diehl and Gertrud Koch (München: Fink, 2007); Paula Cossart and Emmanuel Taïeb, “Spectacle politique et participation: Entre médiatisation nécessaire et idéal de la citoyenneté,” *Sociétés & Représentations* 31 (April 2011): 137-56.

28. Louis Marin, *Le portrait*; Doris Kolesch, *Theater der Emotionen: Ästhetik und Politik zur Zeit Ludwigs XIV.* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Campus, 2006).

29. Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays In Interpretive Anthropology* (Basic Books, 1983).

30. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Anchor, 1967).

be understood solely in the liberal sense of the mandate given by a group set up expressly for political purposes to people charged with defending their interests or speaking on their behalf, and even less so when societies stratified by statutory groups (such as castes, guilds, orders, or the “states” of the French *Ancien Régime*) give way to “democratic” societies marked by the formal equality of statutory conditions.³¹ In these societies, the constitution of social groups takes a more dynamic form.³²

However, it must be emphasized that just like political performance, the production of images of social groups and political communities is not the prerogative of elected representatives or official spokespeople. In daily exchanges, for example in the public sphere, they are implemented by a multiplicity of actors, from artists to the media to the organizers of social movements and to ordinary citizens. These actors construct reality by drawing on “mediating systems” involving human networks, figurations, and material tools.³³ Even the subaltern can speak.³⁴ Languages that, like German, use different words to address symbolic representation and juridical-political representation make it easier to avoid semantic and analytic confusion.

In any event, the interplay between the symbolic representation and juridical-political representation pairs on the one hand and the making present of someone absent and the exhibition of a presence on the other cannot be fully grasped unless complemented by a third dichotomy internal to juridical-political representation and that differentiates mandate representation from embodiment representation.

31. Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, 2 vol. (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1981); Max Weber, *Sociologie de la domination*. (Paris: La Découverte, 2013).

32. Bourdieu, *Langage et pouvoir*.

33. Brice Laurent, “Du laboratoire scientifique à l’ordre constitutionnel: Analyser la représentation à la suite des études sociales des sciences,” *Raisons Politiques* 50, no. 2 (2013): 137-55; Bruno Latour, “Si l’on parlait un peu politique?” *Politix* 15, no. 58 (2002): 143-65; Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

34. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the subaltern speak?”, in C. Nelson, N. Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Basingstoke, MacMillan (1988): 271-313.

Juridical-Political Representation: Mandate Representation and Embodiment Representation

It seems self-evident today that political representation in the sense of a juridical-political linkage rests on the idea of the mandate, and particularly the electoral mandate. Yet neither the ancient Greeks nor the Romans had a word that would allow them to designate in a unified way all of the activities related to juridical-political representation that we spontaneously associate to each other today, for example, in labeling ambassadors, elected officials, leaders of a political tendency, and spokespeople of a social group as “representatives.” In fact, the notion of mandate representation is relatively recent and dates back to the Middle Ages, particularly to the writings of Bartolus de Saxoferrato (1313-1356). With the Latin expression *persona alicuius repraesentare*, the idea that it was possible – and necessary – to represent someone else by establishing fictitious juridical unity between the representative and the represented was developed in several domains, ranging from private law (especially inheritance law) to diplomacy to politics.³⁵ Representation in this sense was not necessarily related to consent given by the represented (the absence of consent continues to characterize the status of an adult acting as the legal representative of a minor). Nonetheless, the idea of the explicit mandate of the represented soon became central to this juridical-political notion of representation, whether to represent an entity to the outside world or to designate one or more representatives with authority over all of the affected people³⁶ in a given territory. In this view, representation makes it possible to fictitiously render present a physically absent person or group and thus to address a whole host of juridical situations in a regulated manner. Mandate representation then became politically hegemonic in the seventeenth and even more in the eighteenth century with the rise of theories of natural law and of republican ideas, involving as it did the idea of consent as a corollary. After the modern revolutions, the representation of the various status groups before the king that was typical of the *Ancien*

35. Hofmann, *Repräsentation*.

36. On the medieval reinterpretation of the *quod omnes tangit* of the Justinian code, see Miruna Tătaru-Cazaban, “*Quod omnes tangit*: Le problème du consentement politique de Thomas d’Aquin jusqu’à Nicolas de Cues.” PhD dissertation, Università di Bologna, 2007.

Régime gave way to the idea of the people delegating power to a representative government. European readers will recognize this notion of mandate representation spontaneously when they think of juridical-political representation, and it is on this notion that the reflections of Anglo-Saxon political theory are focused.³⁷

However, mandate representation does not exhaust the juridical-political dimension of representation as another conceptual matrix had appeared a few decades earlier in the Middle Ages, that of identity representation (*repraesentatio identitatis*), a subject that has been extensively discussed by Hasso Hofmann.³⁸ The concept was developed by Marsilius of Padua (1275-1342), then by John of Segovia (1395-1473). Although it may have been supported by an interpretation of the Eucharist that postulated the actual presence of Christ in the sacraments, its origins were essentially in the law of medieval guilds and communes, considered as guilds of guilds. The issue was of juridically stabilizing groups that needed to act over time and that were susceptible to being represented by someone from among them. In a second period, the notion extended to the Church. In this view, representation signifies less “to act in the name of” than “to act as.” It implies the juridical-political embodiment of a multiplicity within a single body rather than a transfer of juridical authority,³⁹ and this is why in the paragraphs that follow, we will discuss embodiment representation and identity representation synonymously. In identity representation, one party is identified as the whole according to the *pars pro toto* theme we know from art, poetry, and daily language (to own 10 head of cattle means to own 10 whole animals). “In a sense, with regard to specific actions, the council ‘is’ the community and the religious council is the Church, even if this identification is insufficient on its own to determine what the Church or the urban political community are.”⁴⁰

From a modern viewpoint, the political phase that allows the people to transfer power to their representatives seems key, resting

37. Nadia Urbinati and Mark E. Warren, “The Concept of Representation in Contemporary Democracy,” *The Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (2008): 387-412; Jane Mansbridge, “Rethinking Representation,” *American Political Science Review* 97, 4 (2003): 515-28; Nadia Urbinati, *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

38. Hofmann, *Repräsentation*, especially chap. 5.

39. Hofmann, *Repräsentation*, 211.

40. Hofmann, *Repräsentation*, 213.

fundamentally on elections. The methods by which the collective bodies thus constituted designate commissions or derivative organs from within themselves as well as make decisions is a question of secondary importance for the Constitution. At the height of the communal era, the priorities were reversed, with sources providing abundant descriptions of how intermediary bodies designated electoral commissions or appointed magistrates from within and how these made decisions. On the other hand, they are typically silent – or very discreet – about defining the limits of the entire *popolo* as well as its transfer to the intermediary bodies given that the latter embodied the *popolo* in large part. If the general assembly of citizens was undoubtedly behind the creation of the medieval communes, the development of the communes was simultaneous with its gradual extinction in favor of a series of councils and organs that represented the people by embodying them. Nonetheless, there were debates about determining who could adequately “be” the whole.

Within the Church, the controversy was especially concerned with the *maior* and *sanior pars*: in the event of a disagreement, should the decision revert to the most numerous or the most wise?⁴¹ Again, it must be understood that in the context of identity representation, the potential for resorting to an election was of secondary importance, especially as the technique of rank-and-file voting was often combined with others such as co-option or sortition and was not necessarily related to the idea of consent. Although the development and refinement of electoral techniques and decision-making procedures made it possible to affirm a more dynamic version of the *pars pro toto*,⁴² they did not change its structure. Rather, they produced mediations that made it easier to reach consensus, and the struggle between the factions was long considered a primary evil that had to be dealt with.⁴³ At least in principle, the main thing was to represent

41. Léo Moulin, “Une source méconnue de la philosophie politique marsilienne: L’organisation constitutionnelle des ordres religieux,” *Revue Française de Science Politique* 33, no. 1 (1983): 5-13; “Les origines religieuses des techniques électorales et délibératives modernes,” *Politix* 43 (1998): 117-62; Werner Maleczek, “Abstimmungsarten: Wie kommt man zu einem vernünftigen Entscheidung?” in *Wahlen und wählen im Mittelalter*, ed. Reinhard Schneider and Harald Zimmermann. (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1990), 79-134.

42. Hofmann, *Repräsentation*, 221-4.

43. Hagen Keller, “Wahlformen und Gemeinschaftsverständnis in den italienischen Stadtkommunen (12/14. Jahrhundert),” in Schneider and Zimmerman, *Wahlen und wählen ...*, 345-74; “‘Kommune’: Städtische Selbstregierung und mittelalterliche

both the group as a whole and the group's own interests, and unanimity remained at the heart of the principle of legitimacy of the medieval community.

The difference between the identity representation that prevailed in the Middle Ages and the mandate representation typical of modernity is noteworthy. The assimilation of the parts to the whole is quite different from the idea of a mandate given by the whole to those who depend on it to the point of owing it their existence, who do not enjoy the same legal prerogatives as the whole, and who are likely to see these turn against them and then withdraw their mandate. German has kept a linguistic vestige of the mandate representation/identity representation pair. The first notion is generally rendered in everyday language as *Vertretung* (or *Stellvertretung*). If we neglect the increasingly evident influence of English, the noun *Repräsentation* tends, especially in the theoretical tradition illustrated by Carl Schmitt, to refer to embodiment representation. For several centuries, it was embodiment representation that seemed decisive in the juridical-political sphere and mandate representation secondary. This was evident during several crucial controversies of the Middle Ages and the modern era. From the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, when quarreling between Holy Roman emperors and popes was at its height, the emperors did not aspire to primacy by drawing on a transfer of authority conceded to them by the people but in claiming that they were the embodiment of the political community and as such represented it.⁴⁴ Moreover, the embodiment of a community in the person of the sovereign could rest on the idea of representation as display of an actual presence. Without this pairing, it would not be possible to understand the production of royal effigies in England (beginning in 1327) and France (beginning in 1422) that “represented” the King during the interregnum, nor that they were surrounded by a degree of ritual comparable to what a member of royalty required.⁴⁵ The progressive slippage of the notion of *corpus mysticum* from the Eucharist to the Church then to the political

‘Volksherrschaft’ im Spiegel italienischer Wahlverfahren des 12.14. Jahrhunderts,” in *Person und Gemeinschaft im Mittelalter*, eds. Gerd Althoff et al. (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1988), 573-616.

44. Hofmann, *Repräsentation*, 224-6.

45. Ginzburg, “Représentation,” 1120 and 1230.

realm was key in the creation of the theory of the King's two bodies analyzed by Ernst Kantorowicz.⁴⁶

At the same time, when Conciliarism tried to resolve the Great Western Schism and the squabbles between rival popes in the fifteenth century and the primacy of the council over that of the pope was being bitterly debated, the followers of Conciliarism made their demands not in the name of mandate representation but rather in arguing that the council was the embodiment of the Church. To this extent, Conciliarism conceived the Church by transposing the schemas of the juridical-political thinking of the guilds. The attempt by Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464), which was perhaps the first major attempt to articulate identity representation and mandate representation theoretically, aimed to give primacy to the former, considering the pope to be the authorized representative of the religious council and therefore the Church and placing his attempt at synthesis under the sign of consensus. Conversely, the followers of papal restoration stated that only the pope represented the universal Church because he embodied it as a whole, the religious council only representing the different parts of the Church before it. It was not until the Lutheran notion of *ecclesia repraesentativa* that the idea took hold that the members of the council and other collective decision-making authorities of the Church should be the authorized representatives of various ecclesiastical communities.⁴⁷ Vigorously criticizing the “papists” who advanced the view that the official Church, because it is representative, is the “real” Church, because grammatically speaking, “to be representative” means “to show something as present and real,” Luther replied in 1536 in a dual critique of representation as the exhibition of a presence and embodiment representation. For him, the ecclesiastical authorities could not *be* the Church, or rather, they were not the Church “[except] in the way that a man in a painting is a man.” This “painted Church” being only an “image,” it should not usurp the rights of the “real Church” constituted by the community of believers.⁴⁸

46. Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1957). The *corpus mysticum* was initially supposed to represent the body of Christ in the sacraments.

47. Hofmann, *Repräsentation*, 275 ff., 286 ff.

48. Martin Luther, “Disputatio de potestate concilii,” in *Werke, kritische Gesamtausgabe* 39, part 1. (Weimar, 1926), 181-97, especially theses 18-26 and argument 7. I would like to thank Ariel Suhamy for his translation of the Latin text).

By emphasizing the embodiment the designation of representatives entailed, identity representation fed into a host of structuring metaphors. One of the most common was the body and the head (*corpus-caput*), with the hierarchical dimension often pushed to a paroxysm in which the head absorbed the body.⁴⁹ However, identity representation was not necessarily intended in this way. In fact, its original versions in guild law often placed emphasis on the collegiality of a body of equals. It was the Counter-Reformation and absolutism that theorized “absorptive” representation,⁵⁰ which could be symbolized by the famous phrase attributed to Louis XIV, “I *am* the State.” In a more subtle way, in reconsidering the basic structure of identity representation, Emer de Vattel defended the representative character of the sovereign within a conceptual framework that was already influenced by the Enlightenment:

Such is the origin of the representative character attributed to the Sovereign. He represents his Nation in all the affairs he could have as Sovereign. The dignity of the greatest Monarch is not degraded if he is attributed this representative character; on the contrary, nothing elevates him more. In this way, the Monarch unites in his Person all the Majesty that belongs to the entire Body of the Nation.⁵¹

Hobbesian theory undoubtedly constituted the most developed attempt to construct a theory of representation in the modern era. His defense of absolutism did not derive the legitimacy of the sovereign from the fact that he was a representative mandated by God, as Bossuet did in the same era when he described kings as being crowned by their office because they are “representatives of divine majesty, sent by his salvation for the execution of his designs.”⁵² Firmly grounding sovereignty in the world, Hobbes broke with the

49. For a close analysis of variations on this theme, see in particular Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*.

50. Ernst Fraenkel, “Die repräsentative und die plebisitäre Komponente im demokratischen Verfassungsstaat,” in *Zur Theorie und Geschichte der Repräsentation und Repräsentativverfassung*, ed. Heinz Rausch. (Darmstadt, 1968).

51. Emer de Vattel, *Le droit des gens, ou principes de la loi naturelle appliqués à la conduite et aux affaires des nations et des souverains* vol. 1. (Leiden, 1758), ch. 4 and 40, cited in Carl Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory*. (Duke University Press Books, 1988).

52. Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Politique tirée des propres paroles de l'écriture sainte* (1709), ed. Jacques le Brun (Geneva, 1967), cited by Podlech, “Repräsentation,” 515.

universe of medieval thinking by considering the social atomistically and no longer guild-oriented, and his theory of sovereignty proposed an original synthesis between mandate representation and embodiment representation:

A multitude of men are made ‘one’ person when they are by one man or one person represented, so that it be done with the consent of every one of that multitude in particular. For it is the ‘unity’ of the representer, not the ‘unity’ of the represented, that maketh the person ‘one.’ And it is the representer that beareth the person, and but one person; and ‘unity’ cannot otherwise be understood in multitude.⁵³

Hobbes thus twisted the lesson of guild law – with the body of the sovereign literally absorbing the whole group of individuals and only allowing the unit of the political body, the frontispiece of *Leviathan* being its clearest “representation.”⁵⁴

Three Metamorphoses of Embodiment Representation in Modern Democracies

It would be erroneous to think that embodiment representation was only relevant to the *Ancien Régime* and that it disappeared with the advent of representative government. In modern democracies, the structure of this ideal type is found beyond its numerous metamorphoses in at least three types of discourses and dynamics: when the charismatic representative claims to construct the group he represents, in the republican reversal of the theological-political, and in the radical-democratic reinterpretation of identity representation.

The persistence of elements of embodiment-representation is particularly evident in contemporary France. Given the significance of the figure of the President of the Republic as the embodiment of the Nation, we only need to look at official portraits of Presidents to become convinced. Moreover, it is with the figure of the supreme representative as embodiment of the nation that the “reflexive” dimension of symbolic representation is most evident and that the

53. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* 1, 16.

54. Horst Bredekamp, *Thomas Hobbes - Der Leviathan: Das Urbild des modernen Staates und seine Gegenbilder. 1651-2001* (Oldenbourg Akademieverlag, 2003).

staging of power before the represented is conducted in the most ritualized way. From this point of view, presidents' trips into the regions are in direct continuity with the travels of Napoleon III.⁵⁵

However, beyond this institutional charisma that could too hastily be considered a mere relic, most forms of identification with charismatic leaders borrow the logical structure and often the discourse of embodiment representation. One of the major theories of Weberian political sociology is that this type of domination is played out in a demiurge-like relationship between the representative and the represented. Weber strongly emphasizes that it is not the politically passive 'masses' that produce the leader from among themselves but the political leader who procures a group of partisans and conquers the masses through 'demagogy.'⁵⁶ In the Weberian tradition but from the perspective of critical sociology, Pierre Bourdieu too emphasized the fetishism of delegation that makes it possible for the representatives to bring about the existence of the group: "through speech or any other form of *representation*," they

have available to them an absolute power of creation because in a sense they make the group exist by giving it a body – theirs – a name – the acronym, an almost magical substitute for the group – (...), and words capable of making it manifest. To produce this effect, they must possess power over the group, which they obtained from the group, power to mobilize and power to make the group manifest as visible and efficient, and which they owe to the mobilized group over which they have power. (...) This little-known circular traffic (...) in principle comes from the capital and symbolic power the authorized representative (...) possesses over the group for which he is the substitute, the embodiment.⁵⁷

This sociological perspective constitutes one of the most ambitious attempts to articulate the conceptual logic we have presented as mandate representation and embodiment representation but also of *Vorstellung* and *Darstellung*.

55. Pierre Rosanvallon, *La démocratie inachevée: Histoire de la souveraineté du peuple en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 195 ff.; Nicolas Mariot, *Bains de foule: Les voyages présidentiels en province, 1888-2002*. (Paris: Belin, 2006).

56. Max Weber, *Political Writings*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

57. Pierre Bourdieu, "Le mystère du ministère," *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 140 (December 2001): 10.

The words “embodiment representation” are found explicitly in most of the Caesarian logic, be it populist or neo-populist. As a theoretician of the Second Empire wrote in 1853: “The Emperor is not a man, he is a people,”⁵⁸ which seems to echo that proclamation of former Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez: “I demand absolute loyalty to my leadership because I am not myself (...) I am not an individual, I am the people,”⁵⁹ a proclamation to which his partisans, gathered *en masse* on the occasion of his funeral two years later, responded by taking up a slogan of the regime: “We are all Chávez!”⁶⁰ However, in the case of Latin American neo-populism, identification with a charismatic leader is also a factor in the mobilization of the masses, the leader admittedly keeping them in a subordinate position but calling on them and on their organizations to transform the existing order. In some cases, this identification can even be paired closely with the establishment of new participatory institutions that allow them real autonomy.

Nevertheless, the persistence of embodiment representation is not the prerogative of charismatic representatives, even if it marks the new parliamentary legitimacy. Although the American Revolution led decisively to a representative government where mandate representation was hegemonic, things were more complex in the French Revolution.⁶¹ The famous painting by David of *The Tennis Court Oath* makes it possible to assess the extent to which by this act, the mandate representation of states typical of the *Ancien Régime* changes dramatically into something else. Representative government triumphs with the figure of the monarch having left the scene. With the King gone, it is the representatives’ turn to embody the Nation. Although the parliamentary representatives are in the room

58. Arthur de la Guéronnière, *Napoléon III: Portrait politique* (Paris, 1853), 93, cited by Rosanvallon, *La démocratie*, 193.

59. Speech delivered on January 23, 2010. Accessed from: <http://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/internacionales/66703>. For a generalization of situational analyses of this kind, see Bourdieu, “La délégation,” 265.

60. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “Chávez, el legado y los desafíos.” Accessed from: <http://www.other-news.info/noticias>

61. Keith M. Baker, “Representation,” in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, ed. Keith M. Baker, vol. 1, *The Political Culture of the Old Regime* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1987), 469-92; Gerhard Göhler, “Politische Repräsentation in der Demokratie,” in *Die politische Klasse in Deutschland: Eliten auf dem Prüfstand*, ed. Thomas Leif, Hans-Josef Legrand, and Ansgar Klein (Bonn/Berlin: Bouvier, 1992), 108-25; Diehl et al., *Représentation politique*.

“by the will of the people,” to quote Mirabeau’s phrase, they are also gathered in quasi-unanimity around the *primus inter pares* who is taking the oath. Together, they make up a collective body that is the new France, and all of the theories of parliamentary or national sovereignty are built upon this schema. It is one of the foundations of the triumph of the free mandate versus the imperative mandate, a triumph considered by Bernard Manin, following Schmitt, to be one of the characteristics of representative government and its “aristocratic” dimension.⁶² The idea that parliamentarians should be able to forge their decisions during parliamentary deliberations certainly has technical merits, referring as it does to the ideal of public deliberation typical of the Enlightenment.⁶³ Yet it also rests on Burke’s theory, in which “the Parliament is not a simple congress of ambassadors of different and hostile interests [but] a deliberative assembly of one nation and one interest, that of the whole.”⁶⁴ This whole not being reducible to the empirical sum of the parts that comprise it, it takes the form of embodiment in a body of representatives free of any imperative mandate, they alone being in a position to build a unified representation based on the political community and what is good for it.⁶⁵ As noted by Marcel Gauchet in his analysis of the French Revolution,⁶⁶ in the republican reversal of the political-theological, it is because the elected representatives have a monopoly over the definition of the general interest that they also have the monopoly over decision making, including against the will demonstrated by their electors. The question of the free mandate cannot be explained only within the conceptual framework of mandate representation.

The German theory of the State placed particular emphasis on this question. Thus the great Austrian jurist Friedrich Tezner was able to state in 1912 that:

62. Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

63. Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, “Dire sur la question du veto royal,” in *Écrits politiques*. (Paris: Édition des Archives Contemporaines, 1985), 238.

64. Edmund Burke, “Speech at the Conclusion of the Poll to the Electors in Bristol,” 11/3/1774 *Works* 2, 1889: 36, cited by Podlech, “Repräsentation,” 528.

65. On this point, it is interesting to note that the artistic and literary avant-gardes of the twentieth century rose up against the classic idea of making a unified “sovereign” representation and created a multiplicity of representations that were decades in advance of the political practices still strongly marked by the monism of symbolic representation.

66. Gauchet, *La révolution des pouvoirs*.

Representation (*Repräsentation*) does not signify (...) a delegation (*Stellvertretung*) given in virtue of a revocable mandate but the embodiment in virtue of a historically acquired position of power (...) States do not represent (*vertreten*) the people as the whole of the population, they *are*, and they alone, the people or the Nation in the juridical sense of the term.⁶⁷

It is in this perspective that *Repräsentation*, namely, representation embodying the unity of the political community while referring to a superior existential reality (in particular, the People or the Nation insofar as they differ from the empirical people), was frequently opposed to *Vertretung*, the mandate representation of multiple social interests, which were accused of being incapable of ensuring the constitution of a real political community.⁶⁸ This German tradition paired this particular form of embodiment representation with the two dimensions of symbolic representation: real representation in reference to a theological-political entity such as the Nation, involved in making the absent present, but as it accomplished this operation through embodiment in the representative, also taking the form of public “representation” (*Darstellung*) of the representative before the empirical people. As Carl Schmitt wrote, there is

no state without representation (*Repräsentation*) because there is no state without state form, and the representation (*Darstellung*) of the political unity is an intrinsic part of the form. In any State, there must exist men who can say: “We are the *State*.”⁶⁹

We have already noted that absolutist interpretations did in no way exhaust the potential of embodiment representation that had been forged in the medieval guilds. From this point of view, it is interesting to note that a whole current of contemporary German political thought, fusing symbolic representation and embodiment representation, reinterpreted it in a liberal-democratic sense in advocating it alongside mandate representation, another type of representation (called “symbolic representation” by Gerhard Göhler) and

67. Friedrich Tezner, *Die Volksvertretung*. (Vienna, 1912), 8, cited by Hofmann, *Repräsentation*, 349.

68. Olivier Beaud, “*Repräsentation* et *Stellvertretung*: Sur une discussion de Carl Schmitt,” *Droit* 6 (1987):11-19; Hofmann, “La représentation.”

69. Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory*, 344, translation adapted by the author.

made it possible to embody the unit of the political community around symbols and fundamental democratic values.⁷⁰

Even more interestingly perhaps, the conceptual matrix of identity representation found itself metamorphosed in a radical democratic perspective aiming to legitimize ordinary citizens, an evolution that scarcely seems conceivable within the framework of a critical sociology conferring a kind of monopoly of representation to the elected or other authorized spokespersons. During the Occupy movement, the demonstrators denied that they were acting as representatives and said that they were only speaking for themselves. However, one of their most popular slogans was “We are the 99%.” One has not to necessarily diagnose a performative contradiction. In refusing to be considered as representatives, the demonstrators rejected the logic of mandate representation, which was taken to be of the causes of the contested autonomization of the political class in relationship to the citizens. By claiming to be “the 99%,” indeed by stating, as seen in dozens of images on the Internet, “I am the 99%,” they asserted their ability to speak *like* the people rather than *for* them. Each one of the placard carriers could claim to embody the people. The number mentioned was itself significant; the exclusion of the 1% comprised of elites (elected representatives included) played on the double meaning the term “people” has taken on since its inception, namely the entirety of the citizens but also the common people as opposed to the dominant few.⁷¹ The difficulty these movements experienced in going from a phase of challenging the monopoly of the elected to the representation of the people, to a propositional phase, demonstrated the challenges that this kind of reliance upon identity representation must face within a radical-democratic perspective.

70. Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, “Demokratie und Repräsentation. Zur Kritik der heutigen Demokratiediskussion” in *Staat, Verfassung, Demokratie* (Frankfurt 1991); Gerhard Göhler, “Political Representation Reconsidered” in Paula Diehl, Alexandre Lescudier (eds), *La “représentation” du politique. Histoire, concepts, symboles, Cahiers du Cevipof*, February 2014 (57): 15-26 .

71. The link to what Anglo-Saxon political theory is analyzing with the notion of “advocacy representation” warrants systematic development in the future.

Distinction Representation and Descriptive Representation

Recourse to the logic of embodiment representation in the neo-populism of Hugo Chávez and more so still in its radical democratic turnaround with Occupy could not be fully explained without appealing to a final conceptual dichotomy: distinction representation vs. descriptive representation. This dichotomy has been widely discussed in contemporary political theory and sociology, and there is no need to dwell on it here. Several authors have demonstrated – albeit with regard to different issues – the logic of the distinction the founding fathers of the French and American republics explicitly defended as well as the “hidden poll tax” that spontaneously presides over the electoral mechanism and more generally over the dynamic of delegation.⁷² In the face of this logic, demands for similarities between representatives and the represented were elevated by various subaltern groups, including American anti-federalists’ proposition of small electoral districts at the end of the eighteenth century, the promotion of worker candidates and worker parties in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and widespread contemporary demands for male/female quotas, better representation of ethnic minorities, caste and schedule tribes quotas in India, etc.

The descriptive/distinction pair warrants specific attention for several reasons. Hasso Hofmann only proposes three main sets of semantic concepts of representation: the dialectic of the model and the image, mandate representation, and identity representation. However, his genealogical work was conducted mostly in the contexts of law, theology, and political philosophy. The historical reconstruction is different if real space is made for the visual and performing arts, literary representation, and aesthetics.⁷³ At the foundation of the dialectic between the model and the image, the quite specific program copied from the Greeks in which representation is *mimesis*, or imitation of the real, becomes detached in Western art beginning in the Renaissance.⁷⁴ This program frequently served as inspiration

72. Manin, *Principes*; Bourdieu, *Langage et pouvoir*; Daniel Gaxie, *Le cens caché* (Paris: Seuil, 1978).

73. Gottfried Boehm, ed., *Repräsentation, Präsentation, Präsenz: Auf den Spuren des homo pictor* (Leipzig: KG Saur, 2001).

74. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton University Press, 2013); Ernst Hans Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (Princeton University Press, 2000).

for thinking about political representation within perspectives that were foreign to the guild-like representation of the Middle Ages. A systematic history of the crossings and transfers of the notion of *mimesis* representation between the artistic and literary fields on the one hand and the scientific and political ones on the other remains to be written.⁷⁵ However, it is clear that descriptive representation became a central problem as a result of the revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the gradual hegemony of election-based representative government, and the gradual equalization of juridical statutes occurring throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁷⁶ With the application of probabilistic calculations in statistics and the invention of the representative sample at the end of the nineteenth century, the adjective “representative” was extended in Latin and Latin-influenced languages to take on a quite specific meaning, including in the political realm,⁷⁷ and this was in turn exported throughout the world, leading to the creation of neologisms in numerous languages.

The distinction/descriptive dichotomy plays a role in symbolic representation but also in juridical-political representation through procedures such as quotas or separate representation of minority groups, procedures that are debated well beyond Europe or North America. Through these procedures, descriptive representation involves not only a profound transformation of the concept of mandate representation, understood in the narrow sense of the word. It also relates to embodiment representation in emphasizing the characteristics of the persons who represent and not just the ideas that are being represented. A Venezuelan taxi driver’s remarks about Chávez at the beginning of the 2010s bear witness to this: “It’s possible that this guy is lying; it’s possible that he is not solving the problems of the country; it’s possible that these people are stealing money ... but he’s like me.”⁷⁸ Based on this demand for similarity, Chávez could claim

75. See some relevant intuitions in Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, *Iconoclasm: Beyond the Image-Wars in Science, Religion, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

76. Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le sacre du citoyen: Histoire du suffrage universel en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981); *Le peuple introuvable: Histoire de la représentation démocratique en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998); *La démocratie inachevée*.

77. Yves Sintomer, *Petite histoire de l’expérimentation démocratique: Tirage au sort et politique d’Athènes à nos jours* (Paris: La Découverte, 2011).

78. Luis Vicente León, “Chávez es como tú.” Accessed from: <http://www.eluniversal.com/nacional-y-politica/chavez-entro-en-la-historia/130305/chavez-es-como-tu>.

with a degree of credibility that he embodied the people, a demand completely foreign to the political epistemology of a Louis XIV claiming to embody the State. In any case, the distinction/descriptive dichotomy helps to explain the strong symbolic effects of embodiment the classic visions of mandate representation struggle to take into account. Based on whether, for example, there is gender parity in parliamentary assemblies, the focus will be on another vision of the political community being represented, and the corporal *hexis* of representatives will also have significant effects on the public engagement of women and beyond that on gendered roles in society.⁷⁹ The notion of the “politics of presence” proposed by Anne Phillips as distinct from the “politics of ideas” aptly expresses this overlap.⁸⁰

Beyond elections, this demand for similarity also underlies radical-democratic aims. If it is often explicitly stated that the words of any of Occupy XWall Street activist count for everyone and that anyone can be the *pars pro toto* because these participants are ordinary citizens and thus resemble all the others. This logic also can hold true in part for contemporary voting systems that use sortition. The participants of these mini-publics regularly reject the fact that they can be considered to be representatives, while just as regularly, others state quite the opposite, that “we are the people.” Here again, it is possible to reconstruct the logic of apparently contradictory reasoning because of the explicit differentiation from mandate representation and the implicit reference to embodiment representation and descriptive representation. Moreover, it is notable that the demand for consensus, strongly present since the inception of identity representation, is usually found being reaffirmed within the Occupy movements and in the majority of mini-publics. This imperative for consensus is only in part diffused when another type of similarity – namely statistical similarity – is highlighted. Within the logic of the representative sample or the trend toward a representativeness that most often supports the randomly drawn mini-publics, the idea is no longer that ordinary citizens all resemble each other and everyone

79. Joan W. Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Harvard University Press, 1997); Paritel: *Sexual Equality and the Crisis of French Universalism* (University Of Chicago Press, 2005); Éléonore Lépinard, *L'égalité introuvable* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2007); Jane Mansbridge, “Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent ‘Yes’”, *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 61, n° 3, August 1999, 628-657.

80. Anne Phillips, *The Politics of Presence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

else but that their differences reflect the diversity of social experiences present in the political community. The mini-public constitutes a microcosm of this. Precisely because it is “representative” in this very particular sense, it can embody and therefore “represent” it. In any case, in its various forms, descriptive representation is far from being reduced to the simple function of “standing for” to which Hanna Pitkin limited it by opposing it to the “acting for” of mandate representation: it implies a logic of “speaking like” and “acting like.” The sociological representativeness of the deliberating mini-publics does not keep the opinions they broadcast from following a counterfactual logic, expressing what the people would do if they were in ideal conditions for discussions about the polity. More broadly, the mini-publics participate in the construction of social groups through their symbolic dimension.⁸¹

Conclusion

The different logics of representation are heterogeneous even if it can occur in many combinations and articulations proposed in theories and practices. The difference between symbolic representation and political-judicial representation is made more complex by dichotomies internal to each of the two terms, the making the absent present again as opposed to the exhibition of a presence, as well as mandate representation vs. embodiment representation, with the dichotomy of distinction representation/descriptive representation cutting across the three preceding ones. These logics can be extricated by starting with the words used by the actors (in the past as well as in the present) and subjecting them to a process of analytic typification. They should not therefore be confused with the explicit normative frameworks to which the actors make reference in their actions, which are always specific and should be interpreted in context, nor with the conceptual formulations particular to each theoretician. In a sense, they provide the cardinal points of the semantic domain of representation in Latin languages. Attempts to increase the level of abstraction with the intention of proposing an all-encompassing concept of representation are doomed either to result in a notion so generic that

81. Sintomer, *Petite histoire*.

it would be “sociologically amorphous,” to use Weber’s expression, or to unilaterally destroy the diversity of the semantic domain.

The illustration of these ideal types, whose purpose is to break free from the “deceptive familiarity” of facts obvious to us, can have several virtues. The first is the relativization of mandate representation as a specific case in the dynamics of representation and a broadening of historical and sociological investigation. The second is the understanding that mandate representation does not generally hold together on its own and that the legitimacy of the elected politicians depends largely on how they embody the group they are supposed to represent, participate in its symbolic construction, and make a performance of their own person, and how they resemble – or are distinguished from – the represented. The third virtue concerns a diagnosis of the future of political representation. Such an approach will make it possible to better test the hypothesis according to which mandate representation related to elections tends to lose part of the centrality it managed to gain over two or three centuries, especially if we adopt the point of view of a transnational approach, while other forms of political representation are in the process of emerging or reemerging. Lastly, this cognitive approach seeks to contribute to the construction of normative perspectives. It makes it easier the highlighting of some dynamics of representation over others, or concrete programs to democratize democracy. It only requires giving up the attempt to reduce the variety of representative claims under one ideal concept of representation that could capture its essence. ♦

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ABSTRACT

The Meanings of Political Representation: Uses and Misuses of a Notion

Resisting the temptation to define the essence of representation, this paper proposes to distinguish several notions of representation, starting with the words used by actors and then putting them through a process of abstraction. Stepping back from the “deceptive familiarity of words” and examining historical works may provide ways of thinking about current transformations beyond mandate representation. Four conceptual pairs are proposed: symbolic representation vs. juridical-political representation; making an absent present again vs. exhibition of a presence; mandate representation vs. embodiment representation; and distinction representation vs. descriptive representation. These ideal types should be distinguished from each other analytically even if they can – and should be – jointly used if we are to understand concrete events or systems.

Les sens de la représentation politique : usages et mésusages d'une notion

Contre la tentation de proposer une définition de l'essence de la représentation, il s'agit de dégager différentes notions en partant des mots utilisés par les acteurs et en les soumettant à un processus d'abstraction. La prise de distance avec la trompeuse familiarité du mot, appuyée sur les travaux historiques, vise en retour à donner des instruments pour penser les transformations du présent au-delà de la représentation-mandat. Quatre couples conceptuels sont ainsi proposés : représentation symbolique vs. représentation juridico-politique, présentification d'un absent vs. exhibition d'une présence, représentation mandat vs. représentation-incarnation, et représentation-distinction vs. représentation descriptive. Ils renvoient à des logiques idéal-typiques qu'il convient de distinguer analytiquement, même si elles peuvent et doivent être articulées pour comprendre les événements ou les dispositifs concrets.