REPRESENTATION

Representation (from repraesentare [Lat.]: to represent, bring before the mind, show. Also, to imitate, express. Also, to perform immediately.) The Romans did not use the term in its modern sense, whence partly comes the widespread belief that the ancients did not understand the representative principle. In fact, the concept of representation is as old as the idea of a sacrifice "in the name of" a group. The Greeks had proxies and ambassadors. The Romans established or fostered representative assemblies in Macedonia. They further conceived of the corporate personality in law. Elections connote representation, and of these ancient history afforded many examples. Von Gierke (Political Theories of the Middle Ages, 1938, 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 for originating the kinds of political practices (elections, delegations, corporate theory, constituencies, majority rule) that led to isolating the concept of representation and freeing it for its important political career in modern times to the church organizations of the late Middle Ages, particularly the Dominican Order. (Cf. Maude V. Clarke, Medieval Representation and Consent, 1936.)

The word "representation" itself succeeded the concept after many centuries, coming 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 himselfe, 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.

Edmund Burke is renowned for his speeches and writings in defense of the independent representative. "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." (1757) Burke thus divorces elections from representation.

A sharp populist or pro-constituency motive is noticed in the definition by William Paterson, 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 Thomas 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., 1865, p. xxxv.)

Charles E. Merriam (Systematic Politics, 1945, p. 140) in an idealist vein, influenced perhaps by Gierke, writes: "The common good, to be sure,

is made up through persons and groups, but the overruling basis of representation is that of the state or society as a whole and its general interests taken together."

In a more legal-descriptive vein, Carl Friedrich, following Robert 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." (Constitutional Government and Politics, 1st ed., 1941, p. 253.) E. M. Salt, a realistic political scientist, says simply that representation "occurs whenever one person is authorized to act in place of others." (Political Institutions, 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, 1950, p. 165.)

Insofar as the term is used in political discourse, it will obviously be differently defined, according to the preferences of the communicator and the exigencies of the tactical situation.

Political science, however, endeavors to abstract the universal quality inherent in historical usage and give it concrete, objective form. 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, 1951.) 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, 1948, Chapter VIII), the meaningful, imagined 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.