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Introduction

Being concerned with representation, this book is about an idea, a concept, a word. It is primarily a conceptual analysis, not a historical study of the way in which representative government has evolved, nor yet an empirical investigation of the behavior of contemporary representatives or the expectations voters have about them. Yet, although the book is about a word, it is not about mere words, not merely about words. For the social philosopher, for the social scientist, words are not "mere"; they are the tools of his trade and a vital part of his subject matter. Since human beings are not merely political animals but also language-using animals, their behavior is shaped by their ideas. What they do and how they do it depends upon how they see themselves and their world, and this in turn depends upon the concepts through which they see. Learning what "representation" means and learning how to represent are intimately connected. But even beyond this, the social theorist sees the world through a network of concepts. Our words define and delimit our world in important ways, and this is particularly true of the world of human and social things. For a zoölogist may capture a rare specimen and simply observe it; but who can capture an instance of representation (or of power, or of interest)? Such things, too, can be observed, but the observation always presupposes at least a rudimentary conception of what

representation (or power, or interest) *is*, what *counts as* representation, where it leaves off and some other phenomenon begins. Questions about what representation is, or is like, are not fully separable from the question of what "representation" means. This book approaches the former questions by way of the latter.

But one would hardly recommend that all social or political concepts be treated to a book-length analysis. The singling out of representation for such treatment must rest on the concept's importance and ubiquity, on the one hand, and on its complexity and its consequent role in long-standing theoretical confusions and controversies, on the other. The confusions invite clarification; the importance of the concept seems to make clarification worth while.

That representation is today a significant and widely used concept need hardly be argued. In modern times almost everyone wants to be governed by representatives (although not necessarily by a conventional representative government); every political group or cause wants representation; every government claims to represent. At the same time we are troubled by the difference between sham and real representative institutions, and by the many competing ways in which representation can be institutionalized. The whole issue of representation has recently been reopened in the United States by the Supreme Court's action in *Baker vs. Carr*, and the resulting concern with legislative apportionment.[1]

No doubt the contemporary popularity of the concept depends much upon its having become linked with the idea of democracy, as well as with ideas of liberty and justice. Yet through much of their history both the concept and the practice of representation have had little to do with democracy or liberty. Representation need not mean representative government. A king can represent a nation, as can an ambassador. Any public official can sometimes represent the state. Thus institutions and practices which embody some kind of representation are necessary in any large and articulated society, and need have nothing to do with popular self-government.

The concept of representation, particularly of human beings representing other human beings, is essentially a modern one. The ancient Greeks had no corresponding word, although they

elected some officials and sometimes sent ambassadors—activities which *we* might say involve representation.[2] The Romans had the word *repraesentare*, from which our own "representation" derives by way of Old French; but they used it to mean the literal bringing into presence of something previously absent, or the embodiment of an abstraction in an object (say, the embodiment of courage in a human face or in a piece of sculpture). They did not apply it to human beings acting for others, or to their political institutions. Such uses began to emerge in Latin in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in English even later, as persons sent to participate in church councils or in the English Parliament came gradually to be thought of as representatives.[3] Initially, neither the concept nor the institutions to which it was applied were linked with elections or democracy, nor was representation considered a matter of right.

In England, to take the classical example, the calling of knights and burgesses to meet with the king's council seems to have begun as a matter of royal convenience and need.[4] Far from being a privilege or right, attendance at Parliament was a chore and a duty, reluctantly performed.[5] Only with the passage of time did parliamentary representation begin to be used as a device for furthering local interests, as a control over the power of the king. By the seventeenth century, the right to elect a member of Parliament could be claimed for even "the poorest hee that is in England," although many still disputed the claim.[6] From this tradition, in turn, came the rallying cry of the American Revolution, that "taxation without representation is tyranny."[7] Representation had become one of the sacred and traditional "rights of Englishmen," worth fighting for; with the American and French revolutions it was transformed into one of the "rights of Man."[8] Thus representation came to mean popular representation, and to be linked with the idea of self-government, of every man's right to have a say in what happens to him. And that is how it became embodied in our institutions.

Considering the importance of the concept, and the frequency with which it is used by writers on politics, there has been surprisingly little discussion or analysis of its meaning. Perhaps it is one of those fundamental ideas so much taken for granted that they themselves escape close scrutiny; or perhaps its com-

plexity has discouraged analysis. Hobbes is the only major political theorist who gives a fully developed, systematic account of its meaning; other theorists' views must be garnered from casual remarks or read between the lines. Even John Stuart Mill, who devotes an entire book to representative government, does not consider it necessary to explain what representation is or means.[9]

Yet the literature is full of obvious disagreements over its meaning. Some theorists offer definitions which directly contradict those offered by others or (even worse) bear no relationship to them. There are few attempts to account for these confusing discrepancies, and, as a result, discussions of representation are marked by long-standing, persistent controversies which seem to defy solution. Hobbes, for example, holds that every government is a representative government in that it represents its subjects; and many more recent writers share his view. On the other hand, the tendency in this century has been to disparage the representativeness of so-called indirect democracies as mythical or illusory. Writers point out that all governments use propaganda to manipulate their subjects; that, conversely, even totalitarian dictators have (and must have) popular support. They argue that no government really represents, that a truly representative government does not exist. Yet political scientists and laymen alike talk about representative government as distinct from other forms. Are all governments representative, or none, or some? Surely there is need for clarification here.

Another vexing and seemingly endless controversy concerns the proper relation between representative and constituents. Hobbes suggests that the representative is free to do whatever he pleases (at least so far as his constituents are concerned). The majority of theorists argue that the representative must do what is best for those in his charge, but that he must do what he thinks best, using his own judgment and wisdom, since he is chosen to make decisions for (that is, instead of) his constituents. But a vocal minority maintain that the representative's duty is to reflect accurately the wishes and opinions of those he represents. Anything else they consider a mockery of true representation. The truth may lie somewhere in between, but if so, where does it lie, and how is one to decide?

Faced with such disagreements, one could perhaps select a particular position and defend it as correct, dismissing the rest; or one could dismiss them all and propose a new and still better position. But that will not help to explain how so many intelligent, profound thinkers could have been so completely wrong. Even more, it will not explain the plausibility of their views to us, the fact that we are able to follow their arguments and are tempted by their definitions. Reading any one of them in isolation, we are inclined to accept his view; the difficulties become apparent only when we go on to other, equally plausible but incompatible arguments. Finally, claiming to single out the one right definition will not explain the timeless quality of the theorists' disputes, the way they persist and recur without resolution.

Alternatively, then, we might conclude that representation has no fixed meaning, that the various theorists disagree because they are in fact talking about different things. Perhaps the concept has evolved, and that is why earlier writers disagree with later ones. Or perhaps, if the meaning is not fixed, each writer is free to use the concept as he pleases, assigning whatever meaning he chooses. Now, of course this is true in a sense; every writer is free to use and define his terms as he wishes. But he cannot use words as he wishes and still communicate with others, still speak of precisely that state of affairs he has in mind.[10] Nor does the political philosopher usually think of himself as redefining words or giving them new meanings, but rather as explaining the meanings they already have. Even redefinition has its difficulties. Both writer and reader are likely to forget that the word has been redefined, and to start thinking of it in its old meaning. And even a redefinition, to be intelligible, must be expressed in words with familiar meanings. A writer may, indeed, redefine a term; he must do so if he does not want it to mean what it usually means. But that is not what most writers on representation have done.

Still another possibility might be to conclude that the difficulty comes from the word itself. Some recent commentators have maintained that "representation" is vague or "ambiguous," that it "may sometimes be one thing, sometimes the other," that it is "used in various senses in different connections."[11] And with such judgments they abandon further effort, or resign themselves

to compiling a list of the definitions offered by others.[12] H. B. Mayo, having noted that "theories of representation are something of a morass," even recommends that we simply abandon the word and stop using it because of its complexity.[13] But he has continued to use it just the same, as if he knew perfectly well what it meant. Apparently it is not easy simply to abandon a part of our conceptual framework.

Recent work in philosophy suggests that, even if we know perfectly well how to use a word, use it unhesitatingly and correctly, and understand others who use it, we may yet be unable to define it completely and explicitly, to *say* what we know. But if that is true of representation, we may not be quite so hopelessly trapped in the verbal morass. For philosophy has produced tools and techniques to deal with such cases—ways of making explicit the inarticulate working knowledge of our language that we all have.

For this purpose I have used some of the methods of that school in contemporary philosophy known variously as "ordinary language philosophy," "Oxford philosophy," or "linguistic analysis," and particularly the work of the late J. L. Austin.[14] That means, first, that I have attended carefully to the way in which we ordinarily use words when we are not philosophizing or wondering about their meanings. It means, further, attending not merely to "representation" itself, but to the entire family of words on the root "represent-," including "representative" (both noun and adjective), "represent," "misrepresent," "misrepresentation," and "representational." And it means attending to fine distinctions between such words and their close synonyms: the difference between representing and symbolizing, or between a representative and an agent. For the borderlines of what "representation" means are set, at least at crucial points, by what we might have said instead but did not—by the available alternatives.

Finally, this method means that, although this is a study in political theory and my interest (like that of most of the theorists discussed) is primarily in political representation, I have looked beyond political contexts to all the areas of human life in which this family of words is used. Behind this approach lies the basic assumption that the various uses of a single family of words are

related. Even a new application of a word must make sense to the speakers who use it: they must have a reason for thinking of *that* as an instance of representation. Thus we learn what representation is, not merely from the history of representative government, but also from knowing about representational art, knowing how to pick out a representative example, knowing how an actor represents a character on the stage, knowing how contract law treats the making of representations.

Attention to such nonpolitical contexts is hardly new in the study of representation. Many theorists invoke and develop one or another analogy; indeed, the literature might almost suggest that indiscriminate use of improper analogies has been the cause of all the confusion. Accordingly, some modern commentators have warned against using nonpolitical examples to explain political representation, since "the similarities are mainly verbal."[15] But my assumption has been that analogies and nonpolitical uses of the word are misleading only where they are misused, especially where one analogy or context is taken as definitive, to the exclusion of all others. In that case, we need systematic study and clarification of all the word's uses and the contexts in which it can be used. Such a systematic study has not, to my knowledge, been undertaken before.

This book, however, is not merely a conceptual analysis, an exercise in language philosophy. It attempts to be also, and at the same time, a study in the history of political thought, tracing the treatment of representation by major political theorists. For, with all due attention to its nonpolitical uses, "representation" remains to some extent a technical, political word; and political theorists are still among the most persistent and important "talkers about" it. To be meaningful for political theory, whatever language philosophy can reveal about the concept must be applied to their views and problems.

In philosophy itself, the function of the linguistic analysis of concepts is often taken to be the clearing up of certain characteristic "muddles" or philosophical pseudo-problems arising out of the misuse of ordinary words. Consequently philosophers have disputed about whether, if all terms were properly and completely analyzed, philosophy would disappear. Whatever the merits of that dispute, the situation in political theory is some-

what different. For political theory is not confined to philosophical puzzles; its problems are only partly or sporadically philosophical or conceptual. It may even be that such problems, rather than being the substance of the political theorist's work, only get in the way of that work and confuse it. Thus the removal of these problems might clear the way for progress on other work. In any case, my application of these techniques has not been confined to the identifying of "misuses" or the removing of needless puzzles. Rather, the language-philosophical approach and assumptions pervade my work in a more general way, and are useful at different points for a variety of purposes.

The confused state of representation theory does not seem to me a cause for despair; nor do I think that we should abandon the concept, that it lacks a fixed meaning, is vague, or differs in this regard from our other concepts. It *is* "used in various sense in different connections," but it does not follow that the word can be (correctly) used in various senses in any given connection; in a particular context, the appropriate use of the word may be obligatory. "A varied usage is not the same thing as a vague usage"; quite the opposite: "the need for making distinctions is exactly contrary to the vagueness which results from failure to distinguish."[16] In that case, however, the problem is not to state the correct meaning of the word, but to specify all the varieties of its application to various contexts.

Thus my first working assumption has been that representation does have an identifiable meaning, applied in different but controlled and discoverable ways in different contexts. It is not vague and shifting, but a single, highly complex concept that has not changed much in its basic meaning since the seventeenth century. There is, indeed, no great difficulty about formulating a one-sentence definition of this basic meaning, broad enough to cover all its applications in various contexts. Several commentators have done so, and in that sense one correct definition can be singled out: representation means, as the word's etymological origins indicate, *re-presentation*, a making present again.[17] Except in its earliest use, however, this has always meant more than a literal bringing into presence, as one might bring a book into the room. Rather, representation, taken generally, means the making present *in some sense* of something which is never-

theless *not* present literally or in fact. Now, to say that something is simultaneously both present and not present is to utter a paradox, and thus a fundamental dualism is built into the meaning of representation. It has led some writers—notably a group of German theorists—to regard the term as shrouded in mystery, a *complexio oppositorum*.[18] But there is no need to make mysteries here; we can simply say that in representation something not literally present is considered as present in a nonliteral sense.

Such a formulation directs us toward two further questions: first, in what sense can something be considered as present although in fact it is not? And, second, who is doing the "considering"? On whose view does the existence of representation depend? Hans Wolff has said:

> the manner and type of representation depend completely on how it is conceived. The making present of A by [B] is merely a formula; what is important is how that is to be understood, what it means, under what circumstances and assumptions it is possible, and how it is justified. For it is a matter . . . of a mere conceptual construct, particularly a construct of group opinion and ideology. If A is absent, he is not present; he is merely thought, conceived, imputed to be present in [B]. Such a conception can force itself upon one, it can be institutionalized or given by an unquestioned tradition or a general conviction. But there is nothing to prevent anyone denying it, rejecting the group opinion, or being unbelieving.[19]

Since representation is a human idea, it may be asserted or assumed by some and questioned by others. This has led some theorists to a kind of "reductionist realism," to the assertion that representation exists if and only if people believe in it. That is surely true, in a way, but it must not be permitted to obscure further rational inquiry. If one asks which people must believe in political representation for it to exist, writers slip all too easily into the "democratic" answer: the people who are represented, of course. A man is represented if he feels that he is, and not if he does not. This view leads one to concentrate on questions of social psychology: What makes men feel represented—identification? marching bands? voting? I want to ask, rather: When should men feel that they are represented? When would it be correct to say that they are represented? Or again, What would count as evidence that they are represented? It seems likely that

men who are in fact represented will feel represented; but they need not, and some may have the illusion of being represented when an objective observer would say that they are not. So I will ask not what *causes* people to have a psychological feeling of being represented, but what *reasons* can be given for supposing someone or something is being represented. This is simply the question of what representation means.

But the single, basic meaning of representation will have very different applications depending on what is being made present or considered present, and in what circumstances. Not just anything can be represented anywhere and when, and being made present in a representative sample is very different from being represented by a symbol on a map. That is why, although it is easy to formulate a single, basic definition, a number of astute theorists have formulated incorrect definitions. And that is also why the single, basic definition is not much help. What we need is not just an accurate definition, but a way of doing justice to the various more detailed applications of representation in various contexts—how the absent thing is made present, and who considers it so.

My second working assumption has been that if *that* can be done, it will account for many of the wide disagreements among theorists about the meaning of representation. For even incorrect theories or definitions are seldom invented out of whole cloth; they are built up, like pearls, around a grain of truth. Only, in philosophy, the grain is valuable; the deposit of pearl around it is what gives trouble. If we discover the grains of truth in the conflicting theories of representation, perhaps they will turn out not to be in conflict after all. Perhaps the theories are incorrect extrapolations from correct beginnings, each based on what representation is like in some particular context. That would help to explain how intelligent writers could disagree about them, and why we are still tempted by their arguments.

We may think of the concept as a rather complicated, convoluted, three-dimensional structure in the middle of a dark enclosure. Political theorists give us, as it were, flash-bulb photographs of the structure taken from different angles. But each proceeds to treat his partial view as the complete structure. It is no wonder, then, that various photographs do not coincide, that

the theorists' extrapolations from these pictures are in conflict. Yet there is something there, in the middle in the dark, which all of them are photographing; and the different photographs together can be used to reconstruct it in complete detail. We must determine from which angle each was taken to reconcile the differences among them, and sort out a theorist's extrapolations from his original photograph.[20]

This metaphor suggests why the solution does not lie in presenting one more photograph. Even a correct definition is not much help for what troubles representation theory. What is necessary is to interpret each view by identifying its angle of vision, or (to speak less metaphorically) by identifying the context for which it is correct and exploring the assumptions and implications imposed by that context. This process discloses the meaning of representation as no single definition can, by making explicit the knowledge we already have about how the word is used. And knowing how the word is used is a vital element in knowing what the thing is.

The next five chapters survey some of the main views of the concept that theorists of representation have developed explicitly or used implicitly. A discussion of Thomas Hobbes serves both to introduce his particular view and to demonstrate the difficulties inherent in any such plausible but partial, and hence incorrect, definition. Hobbes' definition is essentially *formalistic*, conceiving of representation in terms of formal arrangements which precede and initiate it: *authorization*, the giving of authority to act. From this view we turn to one which is diametrically opposed, yet equally formalistic, defining representation by certain formal arrangements that follow and terminate it: *accountability*, the holding to account of the representative for his actions. Both these formalistic views take it for granted that representation must be done by human beings; but in chapters 4 and 5 we consider views of representation as a *standing for* rather than an *acting for*, a phenomenon which may be accomplished equally well by inanimate objects. We examine, first, *descriptive* representation, the making present of something absent by resemblance or reflection, as in a mirror or in art; and then *symbolic* representation, in which no resemblance or reflection is required and the connection to what is represented is of a different kind. Each

of these kinds of representing by standing for brings with it a corresponding notion of activity, the *making* of a descriptive representation or the *creation* of a symbol. Chapter 6 deals with a view which again links representation with activity—not a making of representations or symbols, but an *acting for* others, and not just the formalistic trappings that surround action, but the substance of the activity itself. The remainder of the book is concerned with problems connected with this view, particularly the controversy over the proper relation between a representative and those for whom he acts. This controversy is introduced in chapters 6 and 7, and further explored in the ideas of Edmund Burke, in Chapter 8; and of Liberalism, in Chapter 9. A concluding chapter then reviews what has been said about this controversy and about the various views of representation, and assesses their meaning in relation to political life.

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