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Metamorphoses of representative government

It is sometimes claimed that, in Western countries, political representation is experiencing a crisis. For many years, representation appeared to be founded on a powerful and stable relationship of trust between voters and political parties, with the vast majority of voters identifying themselves with, and remaining loyal to, a particular party. Today, however, more and more people change the way they vote from one election to the next, and opinion surveys show an increasing number of those who refuse to identify with any existing party. Differences between the parties once appeared to be a reflection of social cleavages. In our day, by contrast, one gets the impression that it is the parties imposing cleavages on society, cleavages that observers deplore as "artificial." Each party used to propose to the electorate a detailed program of measures which it promised to implement if returned to power. Today, the electoral strategies of candidates and parties are based instead on the construction of vague images, prominently featuring the personality of the leaders. Finally, those moving in political circles today are distinguished from the rest of the population by their occupation, culture, and way of life. The public scene is increasingly dominated by media specialists, polling experts, and journalists, in which it is hard to see a typical reflection of society. Politicians generally attain power because of their media talents, not because they resemble their constituents socially or are close to them. The gap between government and society, between representatives and represented, appears to be widening.

Over the last two centuries, representative government has under-

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gone significant changes, notably during the second half of the nineteenth century. The most obvious of these, the one on which most histories of representative government concentrate, concerns voting rights: property and culture have ceased to be represented and suffrage has been extended. This change took place along with another: the rise of mass-based parties. Modern representative government was established without organized political parties. Most of the founders of representative government even regarded division into parties or "factions" as a threat to the system they were establishing.[1] From the second half of the nineteenth century, however, political parties organizing the expression of the electorate came to be viewed as a constitutive element of representative government. Moreover, as we have seen, the founding fathers had banned imperative mandates and the practice of "instructing" representatives, and they clearly had a deep distrust of electoral pledges, even of a non-binding nature. Mass parties, by contrast, made the political platform one of the main instruments of electoral competition.

The rise of mass parties and political programs seemed to transform *representation* itself understood as a link between two terms – that is to say, both the qualitative relationship between representatives and represented (in the sense defined in chapter 4), and the relationship between the wishes of the governed and the decisions of the governors. First, rather than being drawn from the elites of talent and wealth, as the founding fathers had wished, representative personnel seemed to consist principally of ordinary citizens who had reached the top of their parties by dint of militant activity and devotion to a cause. Moreover, since representatives, once elected, remained under the control of party managers and activists, as a result of the party's internal discipline, the autonomy pre-

[1] It is sometimes thought that, whereas the English and the Americans were always more favorably disposed to political parties, hostility toward "factions" was more prevalent in the French political culture of the late eighteenth century. This claim is inaccurate. Virtually all of the Anglo-American political thinkers of the same period were opposed to party system. (See Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System. The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States 1780–1840* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), esp. ch. 1. Edmund Burke's praise for parties was an exception; moreover, Burke did not have in mind parties analogous to those which came to dominate the political scene from the second half of the nineteenth century.

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viously enjoyed by representatives during their term appeared to be violated. And political platforms seemed to further restrict the freedom of action of representatives.

This is why a number of late nineteenth-century observers interpreted the new role played by parties and platforms as evidence of a crisis of representation.[2] The model of representative government was then identified as "parliamentarianism" or "liberal parliamentarianism." The English system as it had functioned prior to 1870, was regarded as the most perfected form of representative government.[3] At the beginning of the twentieth century reflections on a "crisis of parliamentarianism" multiplied.[4] It gradually became apparent, however, that if mass parties had indeed brought about the demise of "parliamentarianism," representative government had not been destroyed in the process; its constitutive principles, including the partial autonomy of representatives, were still in effect.

Observers then came to realize that a new and viable form of representation had emerged. This was not conceptualized as unequivocally as parliamentarianism had been, but its identification as an internally consistent and relatively stable phenomenon was signaled by the coining of new terms: "party government" among Anglo-American theorists, "*Parteiendemokratie*" among German authors. Each of these terms aimed at gathering under a single heading the characteristics which distinguished the new form of representative government from parliamentarianism.

Even though some writers initially deplored the demise of parliamentarianism, the new form of representation was eventually hailed as progress. It was definitely accepted as an advance toward democracy, not only because of the expanded electorate but also because of the new ways in which representatives were linked to the electorate. Parties brought representatives closer to the grassroots,

[2] See Moisey Ostrogorsky, *La Démocratie et l'organisation des partis politiques*, 2 vols. (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1903), *passim*, esp. Vol. I, p. 568.

[3] Both the Birmingham Caucus and the National Liberal Federation, generally regarded as the first mass based political organizations, were founded around 1870.

[4] To mention only examples among the most significant and influential, see Carl Schmitt, *Die geistesgeschichtliche Lage des heutigen Parlamentarismus* [1923], English translation: *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), and Gerhard Leibholz, *Das Wesen der Repräsentation* [1929] (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1966).

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making possible the nomination of candidates whose social position, way of life, and concerns were close to those of the rank and file. These changes were interpreted as progress towards greater democratic identity and resemblance between governors and governed.[5] Moreover, since election platforms enabled voters to choose the direction of the government, and since, furthermore, party organizations exercised continuous control over their members in Parliament, it was felt that "party democracy" enhanced the role of the popular will in the conduct of public affairs.[6] When it became clear that mass parties had not undermined representative institutions, the changes that at first had seemed to threaten representation were reinterpreted as rendering it more democratic. Representative government seemed to be moving toward an identity of representatives and the represented, and toward popular rule. Ceasing to dwell on how far the system had traveled, commentators looked rather towards the future. Representative government may not have been democratic from the beginning, but now it seemed that it would increasingly become so. Democracy was on the horizon. This progress towards democracy was interpreted as an extension of Whig history, or in a Tocquevillian mode, as a step in the irresistible advance of equality and popular government only imperfectly implemented by liberal parliamentarianism.

A curious symmetry thus emerges between the present situation and that of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Now, as then, the idea is gaining currency that representation is in a state of crisis. This parallel prompts the hypothesis that we are witnessing today perhaps less a crisis of political representation than a crisis of a particular form of representation, namely the one established in the wake of mass parties. Is it possible that the various developments affecting representation today signal the emergence of a third form of representative government, one that possesses as much internal coherence as parliamentarianism and party democracy?

It is even more curious that today's alleged crisis of representation is commonly ascribed to the erosion of the very features that

[5] See chapters 3 and 4 on the significance of these notions of democratic identity and resemblance.

[6] The term "party democracy" is mine; it is coined as a combination of the English "party government" and the German "*Parteiendemokratie*."

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differentiated party democracy from parliamentarianism. These were the features that seemed to bring representative government closer to popular rule, namely the identification of voters with particular parties and their representatives in Parliament, and the choice of representatives on the basis of platforms. It was believed that the type of representation constitutive of representative government at its origins had been forever superseded. The role of mass parties and platforms seemed to be the consequence of extended rights of suffrage, and since it did not appear likely that universal suffrage would be challenged in the future, it was felt that the nature of representation had been irreversibly altered. Current developments suggest that such a prognosis may have been incorrect. The changes wrought by party democracy were perhaps less fundamental than was supposed. We must, then, take a closer look at the turn associated with party democracy and compare it with the changes occurring today. The history of representative government presents perhaps a sequence of three forms separated by two breaks.

In this chapter, we shall examine the metamorphoses of representative government in the light of the four principles identified in previous chapters: election of representatives at regular intervals, the partial independence of representatives, freedom of public opinion, and the making of decisions after trial by discussion. At no time have those principles ceased to apply. So let us analyse and compare the successive ways in which they were implemented.

One thing needs to be made clear, however, with regard to the fourth principle (trial by discussion). Studying the successive forms of public discussion throughout the history of representative government does pose a problem not encountered in the case of the first three principles. The election of representatives at regular intervals, the relative freedom of action that they enjoy, or the free expression of political opinions are easily identified and defined. The notion of discussion is more elusive, the phenomena it denotes harder to pin down. The problem is further complicated by the fact (already noted) that the earliest advocates of representative government did little to develop the notion, even if they did make use of it. In their reflections on debate within the assembly, they did not appear to speak of just any type of verbal exchange. Siéyès and Burke, for example, expected discussion to facilitate agreement and produce

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"insights" through the exchange of "arguments" and "reasons." But that merely shifts the problem to the notions of insights, arguments, and reasons, which lend themselves to a variety of interpretations. So if we want to study the changes public discussion has gone through, we cannot avoid providing a definition.

In the following pages, then, "discussion" will be understood as meaning a type of communication in which at least one of the parties (a) seeks to bring about a change in the other party's position, and (b) does so using propositions that are impersonal or relate to the long-term future.

The first characteristic denotes the element of persuasion that political discussion must include if it is to perform its essential function of generating consent, particularly the consent of a majority. Only persuasive discourse seeking to change the opinion of others is in fact capable of eliciting the consent of a majority where, at the outset, there is nothing but a large number of divergent opinions. This first characteristic distinguishes discussion from types of verbal communication in which interlocutors do not seek to persuade each other – for example, when individuals exchange information or, as lawyers in a courtroom, appear to reply to each other, while in fact attempting to persuade a third party.

The second characteristic (the use of impersonal or long-term propositions) corresponds to the rational, argumentative dimension of discussion. This distinguishes discussion from what one might call haggling, in which the participants seek to change each other's positions through rewards or threats affecting each other's immediate personal interests.[7] For example, we call it haggling, not discussion, when one party seeks to change the other's mind by offering money, goods, or services in exchange.

The distinction between haggling and discussion enables us to clarify the rational nature of discussion without recourse to the exacting category of "disinterested discussion."[8] To capture the

[7] I use the term "haggling," despite its shortcomings, to distinguish what is meant here from the notion of "bargaining," as it has been elaborated in "bargaining theory." The standard concept of bargaining implies the use of threats and rewards, but it does not make reference either to their individual nature or to their immediacy. On the distinction between discussion and bargaining, see, for example, J. Elster, "Argumenter et négocier dans deux assemblées constituantes," in *Revue Française de Science Politique*, Vol. 44, No. 2, April 1994, pp. 187–256.

[8] In a sense, any kind of sensible, comprehensible communication necessarily

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argumentative dimension of discussion deemed integral to representative government, one might be tempted to reserve the term "discussion" for wholly disinterested exchanges in which interlocutors seek to persuade each other to adopt a position purely on the grounds that it is true or conforms to moral norms. "Disinterested discussion" is doubtless an apt and fruitful concept from a general philosophic point of view, but in politics it constitutes only an extreme situation. To seek to make it a central category in an analysis of representative government would be an *angélisme*.

The notion of haggling is more useful for purposes of political analysis because it distinguishes among forms of interested communication, which provide the staple of politics. There is a difference between haggling, in which one party promises another that, should he adopt a certain position, a reward or penalty will incur, and discussion in which one party also appeals to the other's self-interest, but in this case, by showing him that, should he adopt a position, some advantage or harm will result for the group to which he belongs, or to himself personally but over the long run.

Haggling uses propositions addressing the other party as an individual, and as he is at the moment he is addressed. Discussion, on the other hand, uses impersonal and general propositions concerning classes of individuals, or propositions bearing on the long term.[9] In order to formulate such propositions, the speaker

involves reason. But when the founders of representative government thought about the type of exchange to which that system should assign a crucial role, they obviously had in mind a kind of communication that appealed to reason in a preeminent way. It is the nature of this preeminent use of reason that needs to be defined and made operative in order to study the successive forms of discussion in representative government.

9 The characteristics of generality and long-term relevance may of course be combined. Political actors often seek to persuade by highlighting the benefits that classes or groups will enjoy in the long term. In the description of discussion given here (the use of impersonal propositions *or* ones that relate to the long term), the "or" is not exclusive; it merely reflects the fact that it is possible to use propositions that relate to classes but not in the long term. For instance, it might be argued that, if a certain decision is made a class will obtain an immediate benefit. In haggling, on the other hand, the characteristics of individuality and immediacy seem more rarely separated. When someone is personally offered a reward to make a political decision, the offer nearly always relates to the present or near future. This is because it is only with great difficulty that long-term rewards can be made the object of offers in the strict sense of the term (see below). This accounts for the lack of symmetry between the definition of haggling (using propositions that are personal *and* bear on the short term) and that of discussion (using general *or* long-term propositions).

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must engage in classification and abstraction. He must associate people according to traits he deems relevant, instead of viewing them as concrete individuals. Or he must form an idea of their lasting identity, beyond their immediate transient characteristics. Symmetrically, the person to whom the speech is addressed has to make a mental detour in order to conceive what he stands to gain; he needs to see himself not as a concrete, named individual (which is his immediate perception of himself) but as a member of a class. Or, he must detach himself from his present identity to form an idea of his future identity. It follows that this type of communication requires both parties to detach themselves from the singular and the immediate in order to attain the general and durable. This calls for reason.

Moreover, in haggling, the proposition that indicates to the other party that he will obtain some benefit has the specific linguistic status of an offer, or a threat. The actualization of its content (benefit or loss) is certain, as soon as the proposition has been uttered, or at least this actualization depends solely on the will of whoever formulated the proposition. The same cannot be true (barring exceptional circumstances) when the propositions announcing a gain or loss for the other party are general and impersonal, or bear on the long term. Usually a person cannot offer a reward (or make a threat) to whole classes, since to do so, he would have to have at his disposal an inordinate amount of resources – the more substantial, indeed, the larger the class he makes the offer or the threat to. In this case, then, the proposition announcing the gain or loss at least partially assumes the character of a prediction, the realization of which does not depend solely on the will of the person uttering the proposition but also on external factors, such as the cooperation of a large number of other people or, more generally, social and economic forces. The same reasoning applies to propositions announcing a long-term benefit for the other party: the more distant the point in time to which such propositions refer, the more they constitute predictions, since the passage of time increases the probability of intervening events. And clearly, this predictive quality is even stronger if the propositions concern both classes and the longer term.

But to make predictions without exposing oneself to being refuted

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by the facts, one has a strong incentive to analyse the world and understand the way it works. One is pushed to know, for one cannot merely will. In this sense too, then, communication that uses general or long-term propositions calls for the use of reason. Reason being this time distinguished from volition, rather than from immediate perception. The predictive dimension inherent in the communication that announces general or long-term benefits gives rise to its persistent character. The speaker multiplies arguments to show that the benefit will materialize, because he cannot simply *offer* that benefit. When a person is offered a good in exchange for something, either that person accepts the offer and the communication ends, or that person rejects it and a different offer has to be made. One does not pile up arguments to get the other's agreement. The two sides haggle until they agree on a price; they do not "argue."

The personal offering of money, goods, or services in exchange for political action is widespread, as the familiar phenomena of corruption and patronage attest. So, the concept of haggling introduced here is not simply an intellectual construct designed to contrast the notion of discussion. The definition of discussion as communication aimed at bringing about a change of mind through the use of impersonal or long-term propositions is only of an ideal-type. It can sometimes be difficult to determine whether a situation falls on one side or the other of the definitional boundary. For example, information is occasionally provided with the intention of changing the other party's opinion, and it will then be hard to tell whether the situation is one of persuasive communication or not. Similarly, it may sometimes be difficult to decide whether a proposition is impersonal or not. On which side of the line between haggling and discussion are we to place the situation where one person seeks to persuade another by offering rewards for the other's relatives or friends? Applying the distinction between short term and long term can also, on occasion, give rise to similar problems. Nevertheless, the concept of discussion retains a certain utility, making it possible to classify concrete situations according to how closely they approximate it.

The definition set out here does purport to capture an eternal and universal essence of discussion. The claim is not even that it is

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always appropriate to use the word "discussion" as defined here. The definition that has been proposed is largely stipulative (in particular, it would be possible to draw the boundaries differently). But this is not an obstacle, given the objective here, which is to study the transformation of the phenomena covered by our definition.

In the following pages, three ideal-types of representative government will be constructed and compared: parliamentarianism, party democracy, and a third type that, for reasons that analysis will bring out, I shall call "audience" democracy.[10] These ideal-types are deliberately schematic; they are not meant to provide an exhaustive description of every form of representative government but to allow comparison between the forms assumed by the four key principles of representation in each case. The three ideal-types do not cover all the possible forms of political representation or even all the forms it has actually taken. These ideal-types will be examined only in the light of the kind of *representation* – that is to say, the kind of relationship between representatives and represented – they contain. The extent of the franchise and the size of the population represented will deliberately be left out. At a given point in time and in a given country, the various forms of political representation that are analysed here may coexist and fuse into one another, but, depending on the time and place, one form or another predominates.

PARLIAMENTARIANISM

Election of representatives

Election was devised as a means of placing in government persons who enjoyed the confidence of their fellow citizens. At the origins of representative government this confidence derived from particular circumstances: the successful candidates were individuals who inspired the trust of their constituents as a result of their network of local connections, their social prominence, or by the deference they provoked.

In parliamentarianism, the relation of trust has an essentially

[10] See the figure on p. 235 below.

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personal character. It is through individuality that the candidate inspires confidence, and not through his connections with other representatives or with political organizations. The representative has a direct relationship with constituents; he is elected by people with whom he comes into frequent contact. Besides, election appears to be the reflection and expression of non-political interaction. This trust stems from the fact that representatives belong to the same social community as their electors, whether that community is defined geographically (constituency, town or city, county) or in terms of more general "interests" (what Burke called the "great interests of the realm": landed, commercial, manufacturing etc.). Relations of local proximity or membership in one of these great interests are the spontaneous result of social ties and interactions. They are not generated by political competition. Rather they constitute preexisting resources that politicians mobilize in their struggle for political power. At the same time, representatives have achieved prominence in the community by virtue of their character, wealth, or occupation. Election selects a particular type of elite: the *notables*. Representative government began as the rule of the notable.

Partial autonomy of representatives

Each elected representative is free to vote according to his conscience and personal judgment. It is not part of his role to transmit a political will already formed outside the walls of Parliament. He is not the spokesman of his electors, but their "trustee." This is the concept of the representative formulated by Burke in his famous "Speech to the Electors of Bristol." On this point his speech reflects the most widely accepted view of his time.[11] And the idea continued to prevail throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. The period from the First Reform Bill (1832) to the Second (1867) has

[11] See Edmund Burke, "Speech to the Electors of Bristol" [1774], in R. J. S. Hoffmann and P. Lavack (eds.), *Burke's Politics, Selected Writings and Speeches*, (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1949), pp. 114–16. On the fact that Burke's formulations reflected the generally accepted view of the role of the representative, see J. R. Pole, *Political Representation in England and the Origins of the American Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 441 but also pp. 412, 419, 432. Blackstone supports a similar point of view in *Commentaries on the Laws of England* [1765–9], Bk. I, ch. 2, (facsimile of the 1st edn, 4 vols., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), Vol. I, p. 155.

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even been called "the golden age of the private MP (Member of Parliament)," in other words the representative whose vote is dictated by his private convictions, and not by any commitments made outside Parliament.[12] One may view the House of Commons from the end of the Napoleonic Wars to the Second Reform Bill as the archetype of parliamentarianism. The political independence of the individual representative is due in part to his owing his seat to non-political factors such as his local standing.

Freedom of public opinion

The first half of the nineteenth century saw a proliferation of extra-parliamentary movements (e.g. Chartism, Catholic rights, Parliamentary reform, Corn Law repeal), which organized demonstrations, petitions, and press campaigns.[13] However, the cleavages reflected by these movements cut across party lines. The expression of public opinion differed from the election of representatives not only in its constitutional status – only the latter had legally binding consequences – but also in its aims. Some issues, such as freedom of religion, the reform of Parliament, and free trade, were neither raised during election campaigns nor settled by election results. They were brought to the fore rather by *ad hoc* organizations and settled through external pressure on Parliament. Differences might exist between representative and representative, but the splits that divided Parliament did not coincide with those dividing the country on these issues.

The difference in aims which separates the election of representatives from the expression of public opinion was due not only to the restricted franchise, but also to the character of parliamentarianism. For if elections select individuals on the basis of the personal confidence they inspire, the opinions of the citizenry on political issues and policies must find another outlet. The electorate do not always have such opinions; this may occur only in situations of crisis. Such a possibility is nonetheless implied by the principle of freedom of public opinion. And the structure of parliamentarianism

[12] See S. Beer, *British Modern Politics: Parties and Pressure Groups in the Collectivist Age* [1965] (London: Faber & Faber, 1982), pp. 37–40.
[13] See Beer, *British Modern Politics*, pp. 43–8.

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entails that if the people do hold such opinions, they must be expressed outside elections.

Thus, in this form of representative government, freedom of public opinion gives rise to the possibility of a gap opening up between public opinion and Parliament. One could say, to use a spatial metaphor, that the possibility exists of a horizontal split between the higher will (that of Parliament as a whole) and the lower will (that which is expressed in the streets, in petitions, and in the columns of the press). The underlying structure of this configuration is revealed most dramatically when the voice of the crowd outside the Parliament expresses concerns shared by no one inside it. The most perceptive observers have noted that the possibility of such a confrontation between Parliament and the voice of the people, however threatening it may be to public order, is essential to parliamentarianism. In analysing the functioning of English parliamentarianism before the formation of mass-based parties Ostrogorsky wrote:

> Outside elections, where it formally holds court, public opinion is supposed to provide members of parliament and their leaders with a steady source of inspiration and at the same time to exercise continuous control over them. By manifesting itself independently of any constitutional avenue, this dual power imposes itself and carries the day ... However, for this power of opinion (which is of an eminently elusive and fluctuating nature) to make itself felt, it must be completely free to emerge *in its various irregular forms and go straight to the doors of parliament.*[14]

But when the crowd is physically present in the streets, confronting Parliament, the risk of disorder and violence increases. This form of representative government is characterized by the fact that freedom of public opinion appears inseparable from a certain risk to public order.

Trial by discussion

Since representatives are not bound by the wishes of those who elect them, Parliament can be a deliberating body in the fullest sense – that is to say, a place where individuals *form* their wills through

[14] Ostrogorsky, *La Démocratie*, Vol. I, p. 573 (my emphasis).

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discussion and where the consent of a majority is reached through the exchange of arguments. A discussion can produce agreement among participants with divergent opinions at the outset only if they are in a position to change their minds during the course of exchange. In circumstances where such a change is not possible, discussion cannot serve to build the consent of a majority. And it makes no difference whether participants exchange verbal remarks or not: there is no genuine discussion taking place. The possibility of participants changing their minds is a necessary (even if not sufficient) condition of persuasive discussion. It is precisely in order to enable meaningful deliberation within Parliament that, in parliamentarianism, representatives are not bound by the wishes of their constituents. In England during the first half of the nineteenth century, the dominant belief was that MPs ought to vote according the conclusions they arrived at through parliamentary debate, not according to decisions made beforehand outside Parliament. Even if practice did not always conform to this model, such at least was the principle subscribed to by most candidates and members of Parliament. In any case, the freedom of the elected representative can be seen in the continually changing cleavages and groupings among representatives.[15]

PARTY DEMOCRACY

Election of representatives

The enlarged electorate resulting from the extension of the suffrage is precluded from a personal relationship with its representatives. Citizens no longer vote for someone they know personally, but for someone who bears the colors of a party. Political parties, with their bureaucracies and networks of party workers, were established in order to mobilize the enlarged electorate.

When mass parties were formed, it was believed that they would bring the "common man" into office. The rise of such parties, it seemed, signaled not only the "demise of the notable," but also the end of the elitism that had characterized parliamentarianism. In

[15] This feature of parliamentarianism still survives today in the United States Congress.

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countries where mass parties reflected class divisions, it was expected that through the socialist or social democratic party the working class would henceforth be represented in Parliament by its own members, ordinary workers. Robert Michels's analysis of the German Social Democratic Party, however, soon belied these expectations.[16]

Michels exposed (and bitterly denounced) the gap between leaders and rank and file in a paradigmatic mass and class party. He demonstrated that, while the leaders and deputies of the party may have a working-class background, they lead in effect a petty bourgeois rather than a proletarian life. Michels argued not only that the leaders and deputies of the working-class party *became* different once they had reached their positions of power, but also that they originally *were* different. The party, according to Michels, furnishes an opportunity "to the most intelligent members [of the working class] to secure a rise in the social scale," and elevates "some of the most capable and best informed" proletarians.[17] At the dawn of the capitalist era, these "more intelligent and more ambitious" workers would have become small entrepreneurs, whereas now they become party bureaucrats.[18] The party is thus dominated by "de-proletarianized" elites, markedly distinct from the working class. These elites, however, rise to power on the basis of specific qualities and talents, namely activism and organizational skill.

Michels's analysis deserves particular attention on two counts. First, the vehemence with which he denounces as undemocratic, "aristocratic," or "oligarchic" the difference in status and living conditions between the party's grassroots and its leaders testifies to the enduring attractiveness of the ideal of resemblance and closeness between rulers and ruled, more than a century after the argument between the American Federalists and Anti-Federalists. In the early years of the twentieth century, democracy was still being identified with a form of power in which leaders should resemble those they lead in their circumstances and characteristics, even though collective action requires functional differentiation between

[16] Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* [1911], trans. E. & C. Paul (New York: Free Press, 1962); see esp. part IV, "Social analysis of leadership."

[17] Michels, *Political Parties*, pp. 263–4.

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 258–9.

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them. Furthermore, Michels's attachment to the ideal of resemblance was not an isolated case. The attractiveness of that ideal may also be seen in a document that, half a century earlier, had played a crucial role in French politics. The "Manifesto of the Sixty" (*Manifeste des Soixante*), published by a group of Parisian workers in 1864, criticized the view of representation then prevalent in Republican circles. The "Sixty" complained that there were no working-class candidates. The Republicans had assured workers of their sympathy and promised to defend their interests, but the Sixty replied that they wanted to be represented in Parliament "by workers like themselves." [19]

Second (returning to Michels), his study demonstrates that, when representative government comes to be dominated by mass parties, its elitist character does not disappear; rather a new type of elite arises. The distinctive qualities of the representatives are no longer local standing and social prominence, but activism and organizational skill. Admittedly, voters do not elect their representatives directly on this basis, these qualities get selected by the party machine. But in voting for candidates put forth by the party, electors consent to, and ratify the use of such criteria. Party democracy is the rule of the *activist* and the *party bureaucrat*.

In party democracy, the people vote for a party rather than for a person. This is evidenced by the notable phenomenon of electoral stability. Out of a long succession of party candidates, voters continue to choose those of the same party. Not only do individuals tend to vote constantly for the same party, but party preferences are handed down from generation to generation: children vote as their parents did, and the inhabitants of a geographic area vote for the same party over decades. André Siegfried, one of the first to document electoral stability, spoke of "climates of opinion" peculiar to certain places. Electoral stability, a major discovery of political science at the turn of the century, has been corroborated by count-

[19] P. Rosanvallon, *La question syndicale* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1988), p. 204. Proudhon published a lengthy commentary on the manifesto in a work entitled *De la capacité politique des classes ouvrières* [1873] (Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1942). The text of the manifesto is given as an appendix to that edition of Proudhon's book. According to Rosanvallon, the manifesto "marked a turning-point in French political and social culture, and must be considered one of the most important political texts in nineteenth-century France" (*La question syndicale*, p. 204).

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less studies up to the 1970s.[20] However, electoral stability removes one of the bases of parliamentarianism: an election is no longer the choice of a person whom the voters personally know and trust. In some quarters the disintegration of this personal link was interpreted as a sign of a crisis in political representation.

Electoral stability results to a large extent from the determination of political preferences by socio-economic factors. In party democracy electoral cleavages reflect *class divisions*. Although the influence of socio-economic factors can be found in all democratic countries during the first half of the twentieth century, it is especially noticeable in countries where one of the major parties was formed as and regarded to be the political expression of the working class. Socialist or social democratic parties are generally considered the archetype of the mass-based party that has become a linchpin of representative democracy since the late nineteenth century.[21] Thus, it is in countries where social democratic parties are strong that one finds, in its purest form, the type of representation that is generated by stable party loyalties reflecting class divisions.[22]

For decades in Germany, England, Austria, and Sweden, voting was a means of expressing a class identity. For most socialist or social democratic voters, the vote they cast was not a matter of choice, but of social identity and destiny.[23] Voters placed their trust in the candidates presented by "the party" because they saw them as members of the community to which they felt they belonged themselves. Society seemed to be divided by fundamental cultural and economic differences into a small number of camps, usually into just two: a conservative camp, which was generally united by

[20] To mention only a few prominent works in that area, see: A. Siegfried, *Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest sous la III République* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1913); B. Berelson, P. Lazarsfeld, and W. McPhee, *Voting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954); A. Campbell, P. E. Converse, W. E. Miller, and D. E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: Wiley, 1964).

[21] This is particularly true since Michels's study of the German Social Democratic Party.

[22] The Communist parties in certain democratic countries (France and Italy, for instance) in a sense fall into the same model. However, their place in the operation of representative democracy being more complex and problematic, the form of representation induced appears less clearly in their case.

[23] The analyses of Alessandro Pizzorno on voting as an expression of identity are particularly relevant to party democracy. See A. Pizzorno, "On the rationality of democratic choice," *Telos*, Vol. 63, Spring 1985, pp. 41–69.

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religion and traditional values, and a socialist camp, defined by the socio-economic position of its members.[24] A voter would find himself bound by all his interests and all his beliefs to the same camp. Each camp was a community, united from top to bottom by powerful links of identification.

In such a situation, representation becomes primarily a reflection of the social structure. Originally only one component of representation, reflection of social diversity, comes to predominate in this form of representative government. However, the social forces that express themselves through elections are in *conflict* with one another. As in parliamentarianism, elections reflect a social reality that is prior to politics. But whereas the local communities or the "great interests" which expressed themselves in the case of parliamentarianism were not necessarily in conflict, here social conflict assumes critical importance. While the inventors of representation had considered the plural character of representative bodies as one of their virtues, they had never imagined that this pluralism might become the reflection of a fundamental and lasting social conflict. This metamorphosis of representation resulted from industrialization and the conflict it engendered.

In this form of representation, a sense of membership and social identity determines electoral attitudes much more than adherence to party platforms. The mass parties formed at the end of the nineteenth century certainly proposed detailed platforms and campaigned on them. In this regard, they were markedly different from the parties that existed before. However, the greater part of the electorate had no detailed idea of the measures proposed. Even when voters knew of the existence of such platforms, what they retained was primarily vague and attention-grabbing slogans emphasized in the electoral campaign. Albeit for quite different reasons, the supporters of mass parties did not know much more about the precise policies advocated by those for whom they voted than did electors in parliamentarianism, when they chose a person in whom they placed their trust. Knowledge of the policies to be pursued was no doubt greater than under parliamentarianism; the existence of platforms certainly made this possible. Nevertheless, in

[24] In Austria, the term "camp mentality" (*Lagermentalität*) was used to characterize the political culture of the country between the two world wars.

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party democracy the confidence of voters is not awarded principally because of the measures proposed, but flows instead from a feeling of belonging and a sense of identification. Platforms have another effect and serve another purpose: they help mobilize the enthusiasm and energy of activists and party bureaucrats who do know about them. In party democracy, as in parliamentarianism, election remains an expression of trust rather than a choice of specific political measures. It is only the object of that trust that is different: it is no longer a person, but an organization – the party.

Partial autonomy of representatives

The representative, deputy, or Member of Parliament is no longer free to vote according to his own conscience and judgment: he is bound by the party to which he owes his election. As Karl Kautsky, for example, one of the German Social Democratic Party's most prestigious leaders, wrote: "The Social Democrat deputy as such is not a free individual – however harsh this may sound – but simply the delegate (*Beauftragte*) of his party."[25] The member of the working class sitting in Parliament is a mere spokesman for his party. This view translates into effective practices employed in all countries where social democracy is strong: strict voting discipline within Parliament, and control by the party apparatus over the deputies. Hans Kelsen, whose political writings express in exemplary fashion the principles of party democracy, proposed various measures aimed at giving parties effective control over their elected representatives: that representatives be forced to resign should they leave the party, and that parties be able to dismiss representatives.[26]

[25] Karl Kautsky, *Der Parlamentarismus, die Volksgesetzgebung und die Sozialdemokratie* (Stuttgart: Dietz Verlag, 1893), p. 111. On the subject of the Marxist critique of representation and its acceptance in a reoriented form by the leaders of the social democratic parties, see A. Bergounioux and B. Manin, *La social-démocratie ou le compromis* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979), chs. I and III.

[26] H. Kelsen, *Vom Wesen und Wert der Demokratie* [1929] (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1981), pp. 42–3. According to Kelsen, "it is illusion or hypocrisy to maintain that democracy is possible without political parties," and "democracy is necessarily and inevitably party government [*Parteienstaat*]" (*ibid.*, p. 20). Kelsen was considered to be close to the Austrian Socialist Party. He played an important part in drafting the Constitution of the First Republic, particularly with regard to the creation of the constitutional court. He was appointed a life member of that court but had to leave Austria following anti-Semitic campaigns. His political and legal

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Parliament then becomes an instrument that measures and registers the relative forces of clashing social interests. It is worth noting, moreover, that, with the exception of Britain, the countries where social democracy is powerful (Germany, Austria, Sweden) usually practice proportional representation, that is, an electoral system which has the effect of reflecting the precise state of the balance of forces within the electorate. Kelsen considers proportional representation to be necessary "in order for the effective situation of interests to be reflected" in the composition of Parliament.[27] However, in a society in which the central political authority reflects, with minimal distortion, the balance of forces between opposing interests, each of which is solidly unified, there is a risk of violent confrontation.[28] Since individual voters are attached to a particular camp by all their interests and beliefs, if one camp carries the day, the opposing camp are subject to total defeat extending into every area of their existence: they may, therefore, prefer to resort to arms. Electoral stability even increases this risk; the minority has little hope of seeing the situation reversed in the near future. In one sense, party democracy thus maximizes the risk of open confrontation. But the very raising of the stakes also creates an incentive for the parties to avoid that outcome. Furthermore, since the balance of social forces is directly reflected in election results, neither protagonist can be under any illusion as to the enemy's strength. In general, the more political actors are unaware of the resistance they will meet (they usually tend to underestimate it), the more inclined they will be to make risky moves. Party democracy brings political forces face to face, both with each other and with the prospect of civil war.

In order to avoid the risk of violent confrontation, the majority camp has only one solution: to strike a compromise with the minority, that is, to refrain from subjecting it unreservedly to its will. Party democracy is a viable form of government only if the

thought exercised a wide influence over social democratic leaders, both in Austria and Germany. Kautsky frequently refers to him.

[27] Kelsen, *Vom Wesen und Wert*, p. 61.

[28] Note that, for Kelsen, polarization into two "camps" is a necessary condition if democracy is to function. The central opposition dissolves the oppositions within each camp and is thus an integrating factor (*Vom Wesen und Wert*, p. 56). However, Kelsen sees polarization as characteristic of politics; for him, it results from the principle of majority rule.

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opposing interests deliberately accept the principle of political compromise, since there is nothing to temper their opposition in the social sphere. Kelsen makes the principle of compromise the keystone of his theory of democracy, though he fails to explain what motivates protagonists to reach compromises.[29] Historically, social democratic parties came to power and managed to remain in power only after they had accepted the principle of compromise. They generally signaled such acceptance in symbolic fashion by adopting a strategy of coalition when they first acceded to government. By forming a coalition, a party puts itself deliberately in a position of not being able to carry out all its plans. It chooses from the outset to leave room for a will other than its own.[30] Moreover, proportional representation encourages strategies of coalition by rarely producing an overall majority in Parliament.

But if party democracy is based on compromise, parties have to be at liberty not to implement all their plans once in office. In order to be able to reach compromises or form coalitions, parties must reserve room to maneuver after the election. Such freedom of action is facilitated by the fact that, when voting, people express their trust in a party and leave things to it. To be sure, a party is to some extent bound by its platform, since it had publicly committed itself to a certain policy. Moreover, party activists have been mobilized around it. Thus, the party leadership has some incentive to act in accordance with the general orientation of the platform. Nonetheless if the party is to arrive at a compromise with the opposition or with its allies (likewise publicly committed to platforms), the party leadership must remain the sole judge of the *extent* to which the program will be implemented. It must retain the freedom not to carry out *all* the measures promised in the manifesto.

This explains why, despite the importance that programs assume in this context, party democracy does not *de facto* (let alone *de jure*) abolish the partial independence of those in power from voters'

[29] See Kelsen, *Vom Wesen und Wert*, pp. 53–68. Kelsen's texts on the subject often give the impression that compromise results from the goodwill of the protagonists.

[30] On social democracy, the principle of deliberate compromise, and coalition strategy, see B. Manin, "Démocratie, pluralisme, libéralisme," in A. Bergounioux and B. Manin, *Le régime social-démocrate* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989), pp. 23–55.

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wishes.[31] It is not, in this sense, the indirect form of popular government. In the original form of parliamentarianism, it is the individual representative who enjoys freedom of judgment and decision-making. Here, although this freedom of the individual representative no longer exists, the partial independence of those who govern has undergone a shift within the institutional structure of representative government, becoming the prerogative of the group formed by the representatives (i.e. the parliamentary party) and the party leadership. It also takes a different form: it no longer signifies freedom pure and simple for representatives to act as they see fit, but the freedom to decide how far to go in putting into practice a prearranged plan, to choose, within the parameters of that plan, what can and should be achieved.

This room for maneuver within set limits also appears in the relationship between the party itself and its parliamentary expression. It is worth noting, for example, that, to regulate the relationship between the annual party conference and the parliamentary party, in 1907 the British Labour Party adopted the following motion: "That resolutions instructing the Parliamentary Party as to their actions in the House of Commons be taken as the opinions of the Conference, on the understanding that the time and method of giving effect to these instructions be left to the party in the House, in conjunction with the National Executive." In the words of Keir Hardie, a member of the party leadership, the resolution amounted to giving the parliamentary party and the party leadership the power to decide "which questions should have *priority*."[32] In light of the fact that the party would not remain in office for ever, this power of setting priorities within a predetermined framework conferred a far from negligible autonomy on the party leadership.

[31] In spite of his emphasis on the principle of compromise, Kelsen does not mention that political parties who campaigned on different platforms must necessarily retain some discretion if a compromise is to be reached between majority and opposition or among the members of a coalition. This is because his concept of compromise is insufficiently precise. Kelsen fails to see that compromise implies a gap between the originally formulated intention and the action eventually undertaken.

[32] These two quotations are reproduced from Beer, *British Modern Politics*, p. 118 (my emphasis).

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Freedom of public opinion

In party democracy, parties organize both the electoral competition and the expression of public opinion (demonstrations, petitions, press campaigns). All expressions of public opinion are structured along partisan cleavages. The various associations and the press are associated with one of the parties. The existence of a partisan press is particularly important. Well-informed citizens, those most interested in politics and opinion leaders, get their information from a politically oriented press; they are little exposed to opposing views, which reinforces the stability of political opinions. Since the parties dominate both the electoral scene and the articulation of political opinions outside the vote, cleavages of public opinion coincide with electoral cleavages. The election of representatives and the expression of public opinion no longer differ in their aims, as they did in parliamentarianism, but only in their constitutional status. Ostrogorsky characterized mass parties as "integral associations": a person who supports a party "completely gives himself over to it" – that is to say, he adopts all the party's positions, whatever the subject.[33] In his analysis of the Weimar Republic, Schmitt described the consequences of this tendency towards integrality. He noted that:

> The extension [of politics] to every sphere of human life, removal of the separations and neutralizations of different domains such as religion, economics, and culture, in a word ... the tendency towards "totalization" is to a large extent realized for a segment of the citizenry by networks of social organizations. The result is that, while we certainly do not have a total state, we do have partisan social institutions that tend toward totalization and organize their troops from the youngest age, each of them ... offering a "complete cultural program."[34]

Since, within each camp, all means of expression are directly or indirectly controlled by the party leadership, ordinary citizens cannot speak for themselves. They have no voice other than that of the party and its affiliated organizations, which also finds expression in Parliament. Such a situation would seem to violate the

[33] See Ostrogorsky, *La Démocratie*, Vol. II, p. 621.
[34] Carl Schmitt, *Der Hüter der Verfassung* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1931), pp. 83–4.

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principle of representative government that public opinion can express itself outside the control of those who govern.

Schmitt's formulations, however, help clarify why this is not the case. Each camp certainly speaks with a single voice; its parliamentary and extra-parliamentary voices exactly coincide, but there is more than one camp, and they do not all participate in government. The governing authority is no longer, as in parliamentarianism, the entire Parliament; it is the majority party or a coalition. Party democracy is the age of *party* government. This means, however, that there is something that the party in power does not control, namely the opposition party and its voice. Thus, an opinion different from that of the governors can freely express itself, even though, in opposition and majority alike, ordinary citizens cannot articulate opinions outside the control of the leaders. In party democracy, the freedom of public opinion takes the form of the freedom of opposition. In contrast with parliamentarianism, the freedom of opinion is thus displaced. One could say, to return to the spatial metaphor used earlier, that the vertical gap between the majority and the opposition takes the place of the horizontal gap between the Parliament and those outside it.

One may observe, of course, that the Weimar Republic is not a model of viable government. But the regime fell because the parties upholding the constitution failed to agree on a compromise. If compromises can be reached, a political order based on solidly unified camps may be viable. Post-Second World War Austria provides the purest example of such a representative government.

Trial by discussion

Plenary sessions of Parliament are no longer a forum of deliberative discussion. Strict voting discipline reigns within each camp. Moreover, representatives cannot change their minds as a result of the exchange of parliamentary debate, once the position of the party has been decided. Finally, voting alignments within parliament are virtually identical on all questions. This suggests that, on each occasion, representatives do not vote in light of the arguments exchanged in Parliament, but as a result of decisions formed else-

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where. As a rule, each parliamentary group votes according to its attitude towards the government: the majority camp systematically supports the initiatives of the government and the minority opposes them.

This break from parliamentarianism was the subject of numerous studies around the turn of the twentieth century. It has generally been interpreted as signifying the end of government by discussion. In reality, discussion was shifting towards other forums. It is true that, once the party's position has been fixed, the representatives can no longer change their minds. It is also true that party decisions are made before parliamentary debates. But in the intra-party exchanges that precede parliamentary debates, participants truly deliberate. The party leadership and Members in Parliament debate among themselves what collective position should be adopted. And in that debate, the participants are able to change their minds as a result of the exchange of arguments. True deliberative discussion can thus take place within each camp. Indeed, the history of social democratic parties shows that intense discussion within the party leadership and Members in Parliament does precede debates in Parliament, and that positions change during the course of such discussion. To be sure, this kind of discussion does not involve the views of other parties, but party democracy also encourages discussion between the leaders of the various parties. Party democracy, it was noted earlier, rests on the principle of compromise both between the majority and the minority and between the members of a coalition. Elections do not determine what policy is to be pursued; they determine the relative forces of the various parties, each with its own platform. The relation of forces between the parties does not indicate the particular questions on which a compromise can be achieved, nor does it mark with precision how the difference is to be split. The precise content of the compromise, therefore, is a matter of negotiation between the parties and their leaders. Prior to such negotiations, positions are not fixed; the participants may change their minds as a result of their exchanges. Finally, social democratic parties have often institutionalized a process of consultation and negotiation between organized interests, such as labor unions and employers' associations. This phenomenon, termed "neo-corporatism" has received much attention in political science

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recently.[35] Neo-corporatist institutions, whose objective is to facilitate compromise between opposing social interests, also provide forums for discussion. The terms of the compromise are not fixed prior to the confrontation; they emerge as its result.

The importance of discussion in party democracy has often been underestimated, because the critical place of compromise in this form of government has not been adequately recognized. It was believed that the representatives of the different camps were strictly bound by detailed, established programs – in which case, indeed, no change in position and therefore no deliberative discussion could have taken place. In reality, however, when party democracy is a stable form of government, it does not function through the rigid implementation of political programs.

"AUDIENCE" DEMOCRACY

Election of representatives

In recent years, a notable shift has occurred in the analysis of election results. Before the 1970s, most electoral studies came to the conclusion that political preferences could be explained by the social, economic, and cultural characteristics of the voters. A number of recent works on the subject demonstrate that this is no longer the case. Election results vary significantly from one election to the next even when the socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of the voters remain unchanged.[36]

[35] This term can be misleading if one does not realize that "neo-corporatism" is based on the recognition of a fundamental conflict between organized interests, whereas traditional corporatism assumed a functional complementarity – and therefore harmony – between the social forces. The difference is not merely abstract or ideological: in neo-corporatist arrangements, one of the principal instruments of social conflict, the right to strike, remains untouched, whereas traditional corporatism prohibits strikes. See Manin, "Démocratie, pluralisme, libéralisme," pp. 51–5.

[36] One of the first writers to stress that political preferences were largely a response to the electoral choice offered to voters, quite independently from the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the electorate, was V. O. Key; see esp. his *Public Opinion and American Democracy* (New York: Knopf, 1963), and *The Responsible Electorate* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966). In the 1970s this idea was taken up and developed in a number of studies. See, for example (to mention only two of the more influential works), G. Pomper, *Voters' Choice* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1975), or N. H. Nie, S. Verba, and J. R.

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The personalization of electoral choice

The individuality of candidates appears to be one of the essential factors in these variations: people vote differently from one election to another, depending on the particular persons competing for their vote. Voters tend increasingly to vote for a person and no longer for a party or a platform. This phenomenon marks a departure from what was considered normal voting behavior under representative democracy, creating the impression of a crisis in representation. As we have seen, however, the predominant role of party labels in elections is characteristic only of a particular type of representation, namely party democracy. It is equally possible to regard the current transformation as a return to a feature of parliamentarianism: the personal nature of the representative relationship.

Although the growing importance of personal factors can also be seen in the relationship between each representative and his constituency, it is most perceptible at the national level, in the relationship between the executive and the electorate.[37] Analysts have long observed that there is a tendency towards the personalization of power in democratic countries. In countries with direct election of the chief executive, presidential elections tend to become the main elections, shaping the whole of political life. In countries where the chief executive is also the leader of the majority in Parliament, legislative campaigns and elections center on the person of the leader. Parties still play a central role. They provide critical resources such as networks of contacts and influences, fundraising capacities, and the volunteer work of activists. But they tend to become instruments in the service of a leader. In opposition to parliamentarianism, the head of the government rather than the Member of Parliament is seen as the representative *par excellence*. As in parliamentarianism, however, the link between the represen-

Petrocik, *The Changing American Voter* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976). Recent French studies also stress the determining role of the terms of choice offered to the electorate. See in particular, A. Lancelot, "L'orientation du comportement politique," in J. Leca and M. Grawitz (eds.), *Traité de science politique*, Vol. III (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985); D. Gaxie (ed.), *Explication du vote* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1985).

37 On the role of personality in congressional elections, see B. Cain, J. Ferejohn, and M. Fiorina, *The Personal Vote, Constituency Service and Electoral Independence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

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tative thus defined and his electors has an essentially personal character.

The present situation seems to have two causes. First, the channels of political communication affect the nature of the representative relationship: through radio and television, candidates can, once again, communicate directly with their constituents without the mediation of a party network. The age of political activists and party men is over. Moreover, television confers particular salience and vividness to the individuality of the candidates. In a sense, it resurrects the face-to-face character of the representative link that marked the first form of representative government. Mass media, however, favor certain personal qualities: successful candidates are not local notables, but what we call "media figures," persons who have a better command of the techniques of media communication than others. What we are witnessing today is not a departure from the principles of representative government, but a change in the type of elites that are selected. Elections continue to elevate to office individuals who possess distinctive features; they retain the elitist character they have always had. However, a new elite of experts in communication has replaced the political activist and the party bureaucrat. Audience democracy is the rule of the *media expert*.

Secondly, the growing role of personalities at the expense of platforms is a response to the new conditions under which elected officials exercise their power. The scope of governmental activity has increased substantially over the last hundred years. No longer does government simply regulate the general framework of social existence; today, it intervenes in a whole series of areas (particularly in the economic sphere), making concrete decisions. It is more difficult for candidates to make detailed promises: such platforms would become unwieldy and unreadable. More importantly, since the Second World War the environment in which governments operate has become much more complex. As a consequence of the growing economic interdependence, the environment that each government confronts is the result of decisions made by an ever-increasing number of actors. This means, in turn, that the problems which politicians have to confront once in office become less and less predictable. When standing for office, politicians know they will

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have to face the unforeseen; so they are not inclined to tie their hands by committing themselves to a detailed platform.

The nature and environment of modern governmental activity thus increasingly call for discretionary power, whose formal structure may be compared to the old notion of "prerogative" power. Locke defined prerogative as the power to take decisions in the absence of preexisting laws. The necessity for such a power is justified in the *Second Treatise* by the fact that the government may have to confront the unforeseen, whereas laws are fixed rules promulgated in advance.[38] By analogy, one may say that contemporary governments need discretionary power in relation to political platforms, for it is increasingly difficult to foresee all the events to which governments have to respond. If a certain form of discretionary power is required by present circumstances, it is rational for candidates to put forth their personal qualities and aptitude for making good decisions rather than to tie their hands by specific promises. Voters too know that the government must deal with unpredictable events. From their point of view, then, the personal *trust* that the candidate inspires is a more adequate basis of selection than the evaluation of plans for future actions. Trust, so important in the origins of representative government, again takes a central role.[39]

Thus contemporary voters must grant their representatives a measure of discretion in relation to platforms. This has actually always been the case, once the decision had been made to prohibit imperative mandates. The present situation only makes more visible a permanent feature of political representation. But discretionary power does not mean irresponsible power. Contemporary voters continue to retain the ultimate power they have always had in representative governments, namely, the power to dismiss the representatives whose record they find unsatisfactory. The age of voting on the candidates' platforms is probably over, but the age of voting on the incumbents' record may be beginning.

38 "Many things there are, which the law can by no means provide for, and those must necessarily be left to the discretion of him, that has the executive power in his hands, to be ordered by him, as the public good and advantage shall require" (Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ch. XIV, § 159; see also the whole of ch. XIV).

39 On the notion of trust and its continued relevance as regards political action from Locke to the present day, see John Dunn, *Interpreting Political Responsibility* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991), esp. the essay "Trust and political agency."

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The role of electoral choice in general

Aside from the individuality of the candidates, present-day electoral studies emphasize that voting behavior varies according to the terms of the electoral choice. For example, citizens vote for different parties in presidential, legislative, and local elections. This suggests that voting decisions are made on the basis of perceptions of what is at stake in a particular election, rather than as a result of socio-economic and cultural characteristics. Similarly, voters' decisions seem to be sensitive to issues raised in electoral campaigns. Election results vary significantly, even over short periods of time, depending on which issues figure most prominently in the campaigns.[40] Voters seem to *respond* (to particular terms offered at each election), rather than just *express* (their social or cultural identities). In this regard, the present situation marks a departure from the formation of political preferences in party democracy. Today, the reactive dimension of voting predominates.

An election always involves an element of division and differentiation among voters. On the one hand, an election necessarily aims at separating those who support a candidate from those who do not. Moreover, individuals mobilize and unite more effectively when they have adversaries and perceive differences between themselves and others. A candidate, then, must not only define himself, but also his adversaries. He not only presents himself, he presents a difference. In all forms of representative government politicians need differences that they can draw upon to mobilize supporters. The social cleavages, which outside the elections divide the mass of the citizens, are an essential resource.

In societies where one division is both lasting and especially salient, politicians know prior to the election which cleavage to exploit. They can frame differentiating principles on the basis of that knowledge. In such situations, then, the terms of choice offered by politicians appear as a transposition of a preexisting cleavage. This

[40] See, for example, Nie, Verba, and Petrocik, *The Changing American Voter*, pp. 319, 349: "A simple but important theme runs through much of this book: the public *responds to the political stimuli offered it*. The political behavior of the electorate is not determined solely by psychological and social forces, but also by the issues of the day and by the way in which candidates present those issues" (p. 319, emphasis mine).

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is the essential dynamic of party democracy. But in a number of Western societies the situation today is different. No socio-economic or cultural cleavage is evidently more important and stable than others. To be sure, citizens do not constitute a homogeneous mass that can be divided in any manner by the choices they are offered, but the social and cultural lines of cleavage are numerous, cross-cutting, and rapidly changing. Such an electorate is *capable* of a number of splits. Politicians have to decide which of these potential splits will be more effective and advantageous to them. They may activate one or another. Thus, those who articulate the terms of choice have a degree of autonomy in the selection of the cleavage they want to exploit.

In such a situation, the *initiative* of the terms of electoral choice belongs to the politician and not to the electorate, which explains why voting decisions appear primarily today as reactive. In fact, in all forms of representative government the vote constitutes, in part, a reaction of the electorate faced with the terms proposed. However, when these terms themselves are a reflection of a social reality independent of the politicians' actions, the electorate appears as the origin of the terms to which it responds in elections. The reactive character of voting is eclipsed by its expressive dimension. When, on the contrary, the terms of choice result in large part from the relatively independent actions of politicians, the vote is still an expression of the electorate, but its reactive dimension becomes more important and more visible. Thus, the electorate appears, above all, as an *audience* which responds to the terms that have been presented on the political stage. Hence, this form of representative government is called here "audience democracy."

Politicians, however, have only a measure of autonomy in their selection of dividing issues: they cannot invent in total freedom lines of cleavage. Not any division is possible because social, economic, and cultural differences within the electorate exist prior to the candidates' decisions. Furthermore, politicians cannot even choose among existing divisions as they please. They know that each possible division is not equally useful: if a candidate promotes a cleavage line that does not effectively mobilize the voters, or one that eventually works against him, he will lose the election. Politicians may take the initiative in proposing one principle of division

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rather than another, but the election brings its own sanction to their autonomous initiatives. Candidates do not know in advance which principle of cleavage would be most effective, but it is in their interest to seek it. In comparison to party democracy, the autonomy of the politicians increases, but at the same time they have constantly to identify the appropriate divisions to exploit. Since, however, the politically most effective cleavages are those which correspond to the preoccupations of the electorate, the process tends to bring about a *convergence* between the terms of electoral choice and divisions in the public. In party democracy, by contrast, there can be an immediate correspondence between the two sets, because politicians know in advance, and with reasonable certainty, what is the fundamental cleavage of the electorate. In audience democracy, convergence establishes itself over time through a process of trial and error: the candidate takes the initiative of proposing a line of division either during an election campaign, or – with less risk – on the basis of opinion polls. The audience then responds to the proposed line of division, and finally the politician corrects or maintains the initial proposition, depending on the public's response.

It may be observed, moreover, that the final choice offered to the voters is not the result of a conscious or deliberate plan. Each candidate proposes the issue or term which he thinks will divide the electorate in the most effective and beneficial manner. But the choice that is finally presented and the cleavage it activates are the result of the combination of the terms offered by each candidate. The final configuration of the choice is the product of a plurality of uncoordinated actions.

As the now common use of the expression "the electoral market" demonstrates, the economic metaphor of the market has come to dominate the study of elections. Every metaphor is by definition partly unsuited to the object to which it is applied. The metaphor of the market, however, presents particular difficulties – or rather it gives rise to the possibility of a crucial misunderstanding. It is certainly justifiable to describe politicians as entrepreneurs in competition with one another to win votes and maximize their benefits – the material and symbolic rewards of power. But to characterize voters as consumers is much less appropriate. A consumer who

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enters the economic market knows what he wants: his preferences are independent of the products offered. Economic theory presupposes that consumer preferences are exogenous. In politics, however, such a presupposition is unrealistic and contrary to experience. When a citizen enters what may be called the political market, his preferences are usually not already formed; they develop through listening to public debates. In politics demand is not exogenous; in general, preferences do not exist prior to the action of politicians.[41]

It has not been sufficiently appreciated that the author generally regarded as the founder of economic theories of democracy, Joseph Schumpeter, himself recognizes that in politics, there is no such thing as a demand independent of supply. Schumpeter insists that in the domain of "national and international affairs," it is unjustified to suppose that individuals have well-defined volitions independent of the politicians' proposals. Such volitions exist on subjects of immediate importance to the individual and of which he has direct knowledge: "the things that directly concern himself, his family, his township or ward, his class, his church, trade union or any other group of which he is an active member."[42] Within this "narrower field" the direct experience of reality permits the formation of defined and independent preferences. However, "when we move still farther away from the private concerns of the family and the business into regions of national and international affairs that lack a direct and unmistakable link with those private concerns," the sense of reality weakens.[43] Schumpeter writes as follows:

> This reduced sense of reality accounts not only for a reduced sense of responsibility but also for *the absence of effective volition*. One has one's phrases, of course, and one's wishes and daydreams and grumbles; especially, one has one's likes and dislikes. *But ordinarily they do not amount to what we call a will* – the psychic counterpart of purposeful responsible action.[44]

It is remarkable that in this passage Schumpeter denies not only the

[41] For a more detailed argumentation on this point see B. Manin, "On legitimacy and political deliberation," *Political Theory*, Vol. 15, No. 3, (August 1987), pp. 338–68.
[42] Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* [1942], 3rd edn (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 258.
[43] Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, p. 261.
[44] *Ibid*. Emphasis mine.

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responsible or rational character of individual will beyond the narrow circle of private concerns, but also the very existence of volition. Later Schumpeter observes that voters do not have a political will independent of the influence of the politicians. "What we are confronted with in the analysis of political processes is largely not a genuine but a manufactured will."[45]

If exogenous demand does not really exist in politics, the analogy between electoral choice and the market becomes particularly problematic, obscuring one of the fundamental characteristics of the political sphere. Even the action of those who set the terms of choice cannot be conceptualized as supply, if what it faces is not a demand in the sense used by economic theory. The only valid element in the metaphor of the market is the notion that the initiation of the terms of choice belongs to actors who are distinct and relatively independent of those who finally make the choice. Thus, the metaphor of stage and audience is more adequate, even if imperfect, to represent this reality. It expresses nothing more than the ideas of distinction and independence between those who propose the terms of choice and those who make the choice. Such is, at any rate, the sense it has here.

What we see emerging today is a new form of representation. Representatives are persons who take the initiative in proposing a line of division. They seek to identify cleavages within the electorate, and to bring some of them to the public stage. They bring to public awareness this or that social division, drawing attention to a split in society that was not previously apparent. Representatives are thus no longer spokesmen; the personalization of electoral choice has, to some extent, made them trustees. But they are also *actors* seeking out and exposing cleavages.

Partial autonomy of representatives

It is generally recognized that today's representatives are elected on the basis of "image," both the personal image of the candidate and that of the organization or party to which he belongs. The term "image," however, may give rise to confusion. It is often employed

[45] Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, p. 263.

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in contrast to "substance" to denote vague and superficial perceptions devoid of political content. Voting on the basis of image is contrasted with voting on the basis of detailed political proposals, usually as a prelude to deploring the way in which the former is gaining ground over the latter. Such a conception of political image fosters the sense of a crisis in representation. In fact, opinion surveys show that the images formed by voters are not free of political content. It is true, to take only one example, that in the 1981 French election won by the Socialists, the electorate did not have clear ideas and preferences about the economic policy proposed by the Socialists (nationalizations, pump-priming of internal demand). French voters did not put the Socialists in power on the basis of a specific economic platform. Nonetheless, it has been demonstrated that the Socialist victory was in large part the result of a perception which, however vague, did include a certain content: the idea that the economic crisis was a consequence of the policy pursued by the incumbents, and that it was possible to reestablish economic growth and full employment.[46]

An electoral campaign, it should be noted, is an *adversarial* process; it pits several images against each other. Taken in isolation, each image may indeed mean almost anything. But the error is precisely to consider each of them in isolation. Voters are presented with a variety of competing images. Even though each of them is fairly vague, they are not totally indeterminate or without boundaries, because an electoral campaign creates a *system of differences*: there is at least one thing that the image of a candidate cannot designate, and that is the image of his competitor. An electoral campaign may be compared to a language as characterized by the founder of linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure: the meaning of each term is a result of the coexistence of several terms distinguished from one another.

These images are, in fact, highly simplified and schematic mental representations. The importance of these schematic representations is, of course, due to the fact that large numbers of voters are not sufficiently competent to grasp the technical details of the proposed measures and the reasons that justify them. But the use of simplified

[46] See Elie Cohen, "Les Socialistes et l'économie: de l'âge des mythes au déminage," in Gérard Grunberg and Elisabeth Dupoirier (eds.), *La drôle de défaite de la Gauche* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986), pp. 78–80.

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representations is also a method for solving the problem of information costs. It has long been noted that one of the major problems confronting the citizen of large democracies is the disproportion between the costs of political information and the influence he can hope to exercise on the election outcome. In party democracy, that problem does not really arise because voters' decisions are driven by a sense of class identity. One could argue also that party identification is the solution to the problem of information costs under party democracy. But in any case, when social identity or party identification lose their importance as determinants of the vote, there is a need for alternative shortcuts in the costly search for political information.

Since representatives are elected on the basis of these schematic images, they have some freedom of action once elected. What led to their election is a relatively vague commitment, which necessarily lends itself to several interpretations. In what has been called here "audience democracy," the partial independence of the representatives, which has always characterized representation, is reinforced by the fact that electoral promises take the form of relatively hazy images.

Freedom of public opinion

The crucial fact is that, in audience democracy, the channels of public communication (newspapers, television etc.) are for the most part politically neutral, that is, non-partisan. This does not of course mean that those channels of information give an undistorted reflection of reality. They introduce their own distortions and prejudices. They may even have political preferences, but they are not *structurally* linked to parties that compete for votes. Technological and economic reasons have led to a decline of the partisan press. Today, political parties usually do not own papers with wide circulation. Moreover, radio and television are established on a non-partisan basis. The rise of popular, non-partisan media has an important consequence: whatever their partisan preferences, individuals receive the same information on a given subject as everyone else. Individuals, of course, still form divergent opinions on political subjects, but the perception of the subject itself tends to be indepen-

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dent of individual partisan leanings. This does not mean that the subjects or the facts – as distinct from judgments – are perceived in an objective manner without distortion by the medium, but simply that they are perceived in a relatively uniform manner across the spectrum of political preferences. By contrast, when the press is largely in the hands of political parties (as in party democracy), one's source of information is selected according to one's partisan leanings; the facts or the subjects themselves are seen as they are presented by the party voted for.

A parallel between the Watergate crisis and the Dreyfus affair, two situations where public opinion played a crucial role, may serve to illustrate the point. It has been shown that during the Watergate crisis, Americans on the whole had the same perceptions of the facts, regardless of their partisan preferences and their judgment. In the Dreyfus affair, by contrast, it appears that even the perception of the facts differed according to the sectors of opinion: each segment of the French public perceived the facts through press organs, which reflected its partisan leanings.[47] Similarly, it has been shown that one of the salient features of recent French elections is the homogenization of party images within the electorate. It appears, for example, that in the parliamentary election of 1986, voters had approximately the same perception of party platforms. Of course, they made divergent judgments about the parties and voted accordingly, but the subjects they judged were perceived almost identically by all, whatever party they voted for.[48]

It would appear, then, that today the perception of public issues and subjects (as distinct, to repeat, from judgments made about them) is more homogeneous and less dependent on partisan preferences than was the case under party democracy. Individuals, however, may take divergent positions on a given issue. Public opinion then splits concerning the issue in question. But the resulting division of public opinion does not necessarily reproduce or coincide with electoral cleavages: the public may be divided along some lines in elections and along others on particular issues.

[47] See, G. E. Lang and K. Lang, *The Battle for Public Opinion: The President, the Press and the Polls during Watergate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 289–91.

[48] See G. Grunberg, F. Haegel, and B. Roy, "La bataille pour la crédibilité: partis et opinion," in Grunberg and Dupoirier (eds.), *La drôle de défaite de la Gauche*, pp. 125–7.

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Thus, a possibility that had disappeared under party democracy returns: the electoral and non-electoral expressions of the people on the issues of the day may not coincide.

This possible lack of coincidence stems largely from the neutralization of the channels of communication through which public opinion is formed, but it results also from the non-partisan character of the new institutions that play a crucial role in the expression of public opinion, namely polling institutions.

Opinion surveys, it must be noted, operate according to the formal structure that characterizes this new form of representative government: stage and audience, initiative and reaction. Those who draft the interview questionnaires do not know in advance which questions will elicit the most meaningful responses and bring to light the significant cleavages of the public. Thus, they take the initiative in a relatively autonomous manner. As we have seen, opinion polls are certainly not spontaneous expressions of the popular will. Rather they are constructs. But it is in the interest of polling institutions to provide their clients with results that have some predictive value and bring to light significant cleavages. Like politicians, they proceed through trial and error.

The most important factor, though, is that most polling organizations are, like the media, independent of political parties. This does not mean that they do not introduce distortions, nor even that they have no political preferences. But they are not structurally connected with the organizations that compete for votes. And they operate according to commercial, not political, principles. Whereas parties have an interest in bringing out the division that they embody as being the principal line of cleavage in all areas, polling organizations can, without discomfort to themselves, bring to light lines of division other than those exploited by candidates. Thus, opinion surveys contribute to the decoupling of the electoral and non-electoral expressions of the people's will. It must be noted too that, in contrast to party democracy, expressions of public opinion are here solicited by a different set of people. It was activists and party workers who called for citizens to demonstrate or sign petitions. Those who invite expressions of opinions are now people with training in social sciences and employed by commercial firms.

In a sense we find in audience democracy a configuration that is

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similar to parliamentarianism, except that opinion surveys confer a quite specific character to the non-electoral manifestation of the people. First, opinion surveys lower the costs of individual political expression. To participate in a demonstration involves high time and energy costs, and signing a petition sometimes carries risks. By contrast, anonymously answering a questionnaire imposes only a minimal cost. As opposed to parliamentarianism, where the high costs of demonstrations and petitions tend to reserve non-electoral political expression for the highly motivated, opinion surveys give a voice to the "apathetic" and uninterested citizen. Second, opinion polls facilitate the expression of political opinions because they are peaceful, whereas demonstrations often carry the risk of violence, especially when opinions are strongly polarized. As a result, the expression of the people "at the door of parliament" is more regularly present than in parliamentarianism: the people do not only make their presence known in exceptional circumstances. The extra-parliamentary voice of the people is both made more peaceful and rendered commonplace.

Trial by discussion

With the notable exception of the US Congress, Parliament is not the forum of public discussion. Each party is grouped around a leading figure,[49] and each parliamentary party votes in a disciplined manner in support of its leader. Individually, however, representatives meet and consult with interest groups and citizens' associations. In such meetings, positions are not rigidly fixed, and thus some deliberative discussion takes place.

But what is new about the third kind of representation lies elsewhere. Over the last few decades, electoral studies have emphasized the importance of electoral instability. The number of floating voters who do not cast their ballot on the basis of stable party identification is increasing. A growing segment of the electorate tends to vote according to the stakes and issues of each election. In fact, an unstable electorate has always existed, but in the past it was primarily composed of citizens who were poorly informed, had little interest in politics, and a low level of schooling. The novelty of

[49] See the section above titled "The personalization of electoral choice."

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today's floating voter is that he is well-informed, interested in politics, and fairly well-educated. This new phenomenon owes much to the neutralization of the news and opinion media: voters interested in politics and who seek information are exposed to conflicting opinions, whereas in party democracy the most active and interested citizens were constantly reinforced in their opinions by their sources of information. The existence of an informed and interested electorate, that may be swayed one way or the other, creates an incentive for politicians to put policy proposals directly to the public. The consent of a majority on policy measures can be built up within the electorate itself. Discussion of specific issues is no longer confined to Parliament (as in parliamentarianism), or to consultation committees between parties (as in party democracy); it takes place within the public. Thus, the form of representative government that is emerging today is characterized by a new protagonist of public discussion, the floating voter, and a new forum, the communication media.

What is today referred to as a crisis of political representation appears in a different light if we remember that representative government was conceived in explicit opposition to government by the people, and that its central institutions have remained unchanged. It is true that those who dominate the political stage today (or are increasingly doing so) are not faithful reflections of their society. Politicians and media persons constitute an elite endowed with positively valued characteristics that distinguish them from the rest of the population. That positive valuation does not result only from a deliberate judgment by the electorate. But nor did the notables and bureaucrats who dominated parliamentarianism and party democracy respectively owe their preeminence entirely to the deliberate choice of their fellow-citizens. At least partly responsible for their ascendancy were in the one case social status, in the other the constraints of organization. Representative government remains what it has been since its foundation, namely a governance of elites distinguished from the bulk of citizens by social standing, way of life, and education. What we are witnessing today is nothing more than *the rise of a new elite and the decline of another*.

But the impression of malaise in representation owes even more

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to the perception that, with the rise of this new elite, history is taking an unexpected turn. When activists and bureaucrats took the place of notables, history seemed to be shrinking the gap between governing elites and ordinary citizens. Certainly, the analyses of Michels showed that mass parties were dominated by elites distinct from the rank and file, but it was reasonable to think that the distance between party bureaucrats and ordinary citizens was smaller than the one separating notables from the rest of the population. Besides, whatever the actual distance between the ways of life of leaders and ordinary voters, mass parties had succeeded in creating an identification of the latter with the former. The fact is that workers recognized themselves in the leaders of social democratic parties and saw them as "like themselves." The replacement of notables by party officials was indeed a step in the direction of an identity (real or imagined) between governing elites and those they govern. It is impossible to have that impression today. The social and cultural gap between an elite and the mass of people is a difficult thing to gauge, but there is no reason to think that present political and media elites are closer to voters than the party bureaucrats were. Nor is there any sign that those elites are in a position to inspire feelings of identification on the part of voters. More than the substitution of one elite for another, it is the persistence, possibly even the aggravation, of the gap between the governed and the governing elite that has provoked a sense of crisis. Current developments belie the notion that representation was destined to advance ever closer towards an identity of governing and governed.

Similarly, when people voted for a party with a platform, they enjoyed a greater ability to pronounce on future policy than when they elected a notable who personally inspired their trust. The advent of party democracy made it more possible for people to vote prospectively. Here again, the changes occurring in our time confound the expectations that opportunities for future-oriented voting would continue to increase. When a candidate today is elected on the basis of his image, and seeks to persuade voters that he is fitter than others to confront the future, voters have less say about what he will do than when a party presented a list of measures it intended to implement. In this sense too, representative government appears to have ceased its progress towards popular self-government.

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The currently prevailing impression of crisis reflects the disappointment of previous expectations about the direction of history. In that its base has expanded enormously, representative government has, since its establishment, undoubtedly become more democratic. That trend has not been reversed; history has confirmed what had been believed. However, the democratization of representation, the narrowing of the gap between representatives and represented, and the growing influence of the wishes of the governed on the decisions of those in government have turned out to be less durable than expected. While one can certainly say that democracy has broadened, one cannot say with the same certainty that it has deepened.

We need to recall, however, that in the original arrangement, the democratic element in the relationship between the governed and those who govern was neither resemblance between the two, nor the principle that the latter should implement the instructions of the former. Representative institutions aimed to subject those who govern to the verdict of those who are governed. It is the rendering of accounts that has constituted from the beginning the democratic component of representation. And representation today still entails that supreme moment when the electorate passes judgment on the past actions of those in government.

This does not amount, however, to saying that representative government has remained the same throughout its history or that the changes have been merely superficial. Party democracy was indeed profoundly different from parliamentarianism. Representation, a system devised by English aristocrats, American landowners, and French lawyers, was transformed, a hundred years later, into a mechanism that alleviated industrial conflict by integrating the working class. The founding fathers certainly had no such outcome in view. The arrangement that was devised at the end of the eighteenth century proved astonishingly flexible. It displayed a capacity, probably unsuspected at the outset, for assuming different forms to suit different circumstances. Neither the differences in form nor the durability of the structure capture *the* truth of representation. Just as representative government simultaneously presents democratic and non-democratic aspects, the latter being no more true or essential than the former, so it is capable, over time, of assuming different shapes while remaining the same.

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	Parliamentarianism	Party democracy	Audience democracy
Election of representatives	– choice of a person of trust – expression of local links – notable	– loyalty to a single party – expression of membership of a class – activist / party bureaucrat	– choice of a person of trust – response to electoral terms of offer – media expert
Partial autonomy of representatives	– elected member voting as conscience dictates	– party leaders free to determine priorities within the platform	– election on the basis of images
Freedom of public opinion	– public opinion and electoral expression do not coincide – the voice of the people "at the gates of Parliament"	– public opinion and electoral expression coincide – opposition	– public opinion and electoral expression do not coincide – opinion polls
Trial by discussion	– Parliament	– debate within the party – inter-party negotiations – neo-corporatism	– negotiations between government and interest groups – debate in the media / floating voter

Figure 1: Principles and variations in representative government

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