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HOW DID THEY BECOME VOTERS?

*The History of Franchise in Modern
European Representation*

Edited by

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ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES. A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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Representation as a Social Process

This book aims to investigate the basic mechanisms that regulate the electoral process in many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European countries. It is focused upon the institutional framework in which the act of voting takes place, mainly that of electoral laws. This would seem preliminary to any understanding of the interactions between representative processes and social structures, which is my real concern here.

There are good reasons for considering laws as a starting point for this investigation. Whether or not they are included in the constitutional text, whenever they are enacted as reforms of the existent system or as the foundations of an entirely new one, the acts of parliament and laws that regulate the franchise are pillars of any constitutional regime and of any modern political system. Indeed, the existence of elected representative bodies is essential in whatever definition can be given not only of a constitutional system, but of the modern national state itself, however defined. Moreover, not only the notion of democracy, but also that of modern politics is connected with and dependent upon the act of voting, the former being probably self-evident, the latter less so. One of the first steps in the foundation of new independent states — in Europe as well as in Latin America and Africa after the decline of the great empires, in the nineteenth as well as in the twentieth centuries — was and is to call national elections, and in modern times even authoritarian regimes ask to be legitimated through popular support, expressed through some kind of voting.

Still, despite the critical role played by the franchise in shaping political modernity, as well as the nation and the state, the history of the franchise is usually restricted within a narrow chronological, geographical, and conceptual space. These treatments mainly follow the path of an as-

cending democracy as this was first foreseen by political thinkers between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries and enacted circa one hundred years later, when the individualist, equal and universal franchise triumphed almost everywhere following patterns which were similar across Europe. It is as if a reliance on twentieth-century democracy as a standard paradigm has enabled many historians not only to concentrate only upon the European experience, but also to approach the European past in a retrospective perspective: the history of the franchise has been forced into an "ideal-type" of gradual evolution towards its final outcome, where the entire process can be sketched in a number of "stages of growth", which include the enlargement of the franchise, the gradual standardisation of franchise rules, the maximisation of universal and equal citizenship rights, the extension of the suffrage to the entire population, and, finally, the equalisation of voter-representative ratios through proportional representation.¹

Paradoxically, it was the fundamental importance of elections for the very foundations of modern politics which allowed historians to restrict their field, to isolate political elections from their context, and to submit them to a history of their own. It should be pointed out that when speaking of political elections, historians are in fact specifically concerned with the nomination of the elected chambers of national parliaments. Hence they incline to disregard the relationship between this kind of election and other types of representation which occur before, around and "underneath" it. In the perspective presented here, we should rather keep in mind that a vast configuration of different collective political and non-political bodies, which have non-elective, or non-national forms of representation, not only pre-exists, but also co-exists with national parliaments and influences voting procedures: high chambers in parliaments and municipal governments, consultative-administrative bodies and unions, associations and economic enterprises. Even churches have provided modern politics with the basic patterns for electoral procedures.

Hence numerous precedents, long-standing usages, customs and models influence the voting norms and practices for the election of the lower chambers or assemblies of national parliaments. Thus, the novelty of

¹ I am borrowing this model from the eminent political scientist, S. ROKKAN, *Citizens, Elections, Parties*, Oslo, 1970, p. 148-9. It is my conviction that historians are rarely aware of the models they adopt in their narrative, and often depend on social scientists. The idea of stages of growth is not restricted to political history; rather, it connotes a "stage" in the history of historical culture, which concerns economic, as well as social and political modernisation. Of the many works which belong to this stage, cf. W. W. ROSTOW, *The Stages of Economic Growth*, Cambridge, 1960; A. F. K. ORGANSKI, *The Stages of Political Development*, New York, 1965; C. BLACK, *The Dynamics of Modernization*, New York, 1966.

political elections within this broader institutional context should first be considered. Moreover, historians of electoral systems should take their inspiration from an even wider definition of institutional life, which is not restricted to normative frameworks as such, and consider them through their interaction with social structures and values, with practices and collective behaviours which shape specific collective political identities.

It is my conviction that it is only in this wider perspective that the distinction — which might even be called a separation — between political and non-political institutions, and politics and social life, can be fully appreciated. The abstraction of political life from social contexts, which I have just denounced as a methodological limit in political historiography, also appears to be the inner rationale of what can be called "the autonomy of the political body", and which therefore also concerns political elections. Indeed, political representation, as it was shaped, theorised, and finally implemented between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, differentiates itself from any other kind of representation. It should therefore be taken into account that despite their actual embedding in social relations, all modern representative systems work on the basis of a set of assumptions that openly contradict the logics of existing social structures. These are the following:

- 1 representative systems are national;
- 2 they take priority over, and exclude, any other kind of parallel non-political representation (whether territorial, municipal, corporate, or economic, etc; all of which must be subordinated to the former);
- 3 in order to ensure this goal, the principle is established that only individuals (meaning, by individual, an adult male), and not intermediate bodies, such as corporate groups, the family, associations, institutions, or whatever, are to be the active subjects of electoral representation, and hence entitled to enfranchisement.

The rationale of this convention needs to be considered as one of the basic tenets of political representation, which can be primarily defined as a means of giving unitary expression to interests which would otherwise be divided within a nation. As Alessandro Pizzorno has pointed out: "representation is a mode of government which applies to societies that are characterised by some form of fundamental cleavage, or division. Representative mechanisms are adopted to heal such a cleavage".²

² A. PIZZORNO, *Notes on representative regimes, their crises and corruptions*, European University Institute unpublished paper, p. 7. "... representation is a mode of government which applies to societies that are characterised by some form of fundamental cleavage, or division." "Pizzorno uses the term 'cleavage' in the sense in which the German theories of representation use the term 'Entzweiung'; 'the term applies not only to separation between groups, or components of a population, but also to an ana-

In broad terms, it can be said that the first aim in introducing of a national representative system was to organise the country peacefully as a whole under the same set of rules, with political power subject to the control of public opinion and political struggles regulated by a set of universal norms. Although connected with long-standing electoral practices in history, on the one hand this new kind of representation arose from and appeared to facilitate the emergence of a market society and public opinion — as in the case of the changes that took place in the English political and economic body during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries — and, on the other, it was associated with the development of the modern state, from absolutism up to the French Revolution. The basic principles of the nationalistic, individualistic, and anti-corporatist convention that have ever since defined the nature of political elections (representative systems are national; they exclude any other kind of non-political representation; only individuals are enfranchised) are to be seen in this perspective. They appear to promote the country's nationalisation, its unification and socialisation (which includes, in J. S. Mill's terms, the education of its citizens), all of which are aspects of what historians today analyse as the building of the national state, and in which the electorate also appears as one of many "imagined communities".³

Recent developments in social history seem to be particularly fruitful for this approach. The construction of an electorate can be considered as a step in the construction of the modern individual within the new modern nation. Both the individual and the nation are today considered by historians to be the product of institutional or social engineering. Historians are fully aware that in nineteenth-century societies uniformity within the nation rarely existed; that social identities were constructed around a multiplicity of "corporate" social subjects, ranging from the family, to the community, to the class; while the concept of the voter — an individual (equal in power and education to all other citizens) who deals directly with the great political national issues of his time — is nothing more than an abstraction.

Hence, historians should also be reminded that electoral laws have a normative aim. Far from being a way of representing society (i.e. by re-

lytical distinction traversing the subjects of action themselves. Thus, what Mill sees healed by participation in representative procedures is the inner separation between the private person and the public citizen". A revised version of this paper was published in Italian as A. PIZZORNO, *I sistemi rappresentativi: crisi e corruzioni*, "Parolechiave", 5, 1994.

3 I refer to the studies by E. HOBBSAWM, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality*, Cambridge, 1990; E. GELLNER, *Nations and nationalism*, Oxford, 1983; B. ANDERSON, *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*, London, 1983.

flecting its inner structures and social cleavages) for the specific doctrinal and constitutional premises of political representation itself, they are aimed at overcoming and concealing such cleavages. They embody a desired model of social structure which does not coincide at all — and is not intended to coincide — with the existing one.

Before going any further in this direction, I would like to point out some of the methodological implications of this view which, in my opinion, undermine the validity of many studies in electoral and political history and suggest different paths of investigation.

To start with, given that the franchise concerns individuals rather than groups, it is clear that both votes and voters can be counted. Following the democratic principle, "le vote est devenu ce principe arbitral par lequel les différentes mobilisations s'évaluent selon des critères de mesure".⁴ As a consequence, for a "democratic history of democracy" counting appears to have been meaningful in itself. The progressive enlargement of the franchise on a statistical basis has thus become a common guideline for historical interpretation and comparison. The percentages of the population enfranchised at different stages — and hence the inclusion of women in the electorate — were the first variables to be taken into account in this sort of "path of stages of numerical growth". It is a measure which is difficult to reject as far as the decades that ran between the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth are concerned, given that almost all nations engaged in a sort of a competition to institute universal suffrage. In this paradigmatic and deterministic path, all constitutional regimes appear by definition to have originally been "restricted", and to have gradually included new emerging sectors of the modernising societies, so as to reach universal suffrage. Historians often cite, as signs of progress, the growth in numbers of the 1832 English reform, or of the 1830 and 1848 Revolutions in France, disregarding the fact that "pre-democratic" types of franchise often included a large portion of the population, and — needless to say — responded to different patterns of political relations.

True, the nineteenth century does open the age of statistics. Starting with population, and following with production, health, crime, etc., the new "bourgeois" society aimed to quantify any kind of social phenomenon to investigate and understand its nature (and as a consequence to intervene). When possible, electoral statistics were also produced in this context. However, in the case of enfranchised individuals, of voters, and, moreover, of their political choices, counting can take on a different mean-

4 A. GARRIGOU, *Le vote et la vertu. Comment le Français sont devenus électeurs*, Paris, 1992, p. 16.

ing, which calls into question the precise nature of representation. Counting the size of the electorate in relation to the total amount of the population, and providing an arithmetical means for distributing the votes, implies a fixed definition of political representation, which was only one among others and which was by no means dominant throughout the nineteenth century.

A second consequence of the individualistic-statistical premise would be that only those who are enfranchised exist in the political arena. All the others are "excluded", and the image of exclusion suggests that unenfranchised masses are ready to enter the game, press for inclusion, and are finally rewarded. Again, this is in fact true as a democratic conceptual abstraction (and in historical reality for small groups of liberal, of democratic, socialist or feminist militants) but it seems misleading for the study of political representation, and even for the history of politics, where individuals have to be constructed as citizen-voters. Moreover, in the field of political history, if it is assumed that the major issue of the nineteenth century was everywhere the battle for electoral democracy, it follows that, sometimes despite their own feelings and intentions, all those who fought for the maximum enlargement of the franchise can invariably be labelled as progressist, and those who opposed as conservative. Again, this is an easy but misleading instrument for any ready-made comparatist political history, where debates upon electoral reform appear as an arena in which opposed ideologies are shaped and come into existence.

This kind of truism, according to which progressives fight for the enlargement of the franchise and conservatives resist it, is not completely erroneous. Nevertheless, many exceptions to it can be found in modern political history, where conservatives supported mass suffrage against a restricted and socially qualified electorate. What is more questionable is the correspondence, which often implicitly follows, between political groups and given sectors of society, classes, or social groups.

It is true that in the late nineteenth century, reforms which enlarged the electorate included new sectors of the middle and lower-middle classes, who fought for their own inclusion and who, once successful, also injected a new political strength into progressive political groups. However, it does not follow that the features and dimensions of the electorate or the electoral results directly reveal the composition and orientation of the social groups, classes or organised interests. Such an assumption, which is implicit in many politico-historical studies — where, for example, the electoral strength of the conservatives reflects the persistence of traditional, perhaps agrarian sectors, and that of the progressive groups the emergence of industrial, urban sectors, and so on — descends from a naive sociological definition of representation which prevails within the democratic school of thought; this implies that representative bodies are called on to "impersonate", or reflect, the main features of society, or at

least that they should do it (a "good" electoral system is that which is capable of providing a mirror-image of the nation).

This sort of naive sociological definition of representation, which is highly influential in the restricted field of electoral history, also shows its weaknesses when used to interpret the political expressions of social groups outside the field of parliamentary representation. This is case of labour history, where — again in a progressive-evolutionist perspective — either the Chartist or the socialist working class movement were called on to "represent" the working classes. Research upon this issue has shown that new starting points are needed which reconsider the nature and the actual working of representation as a social process where the shaping of individual and collective interests and values, religious beliefs, cultures and political languages come into play.⁵

In this perspective, the history of electoral laws and the franchise appear as a series of processes of social, cultural and institution-building which also include the construction of the doctrine of political representation and the social principles embedded in the framework of the constitution. Sociological concepts of representation — which I have rejected as an analytical tool — would appear to play an important role in legitimising this process of political construction. Together with the shaping of electoral rules in different countries and during different historical phases, the entire process by which a model of political representation is constructed and enforced through a series of acts should be considered. These include the formation of electoral rolls, which define the number of individuals who are entitled to vote, their cultural definition as "citizen-voters", the presentation of candidatures, campaigning, going to the polls, the act of voting, the social control of the results, and so on and so forth, thus revealing the nature of the ties which have to be established within the community, between the representatives and the represented, and between the locality and the nation.

It is with this process that I am concerned here. While many political studies consider electoral results as a departure, and sometimes disregard the preliminary process of the "construction of politics", it is upon this background that I concentrate rather than dealing with the final stage of the electoral results. "How did they become voters?" is thus my question, and not "how did they vote?". This is not because I do not consider the results of political action as the essential point to be investigated, but rather

5 Developments of this kind concerned various countries and various historical schools. The vast debate which occurred around the "making of the English working class" is probably the most influential. For a critical reassessment of this case, see D. MAYFIELD and S. THORNE, *Social History and Its Discontents: Gareth Stedman Jones and the Politics of Language*, in "Social History", 17, 1992, p. 165-88.

because I believe that the understanding of these results in European political history cannot be interpreted as separate from the entire process of political activity.

Recent trends in historical research have helped to give new insights into this process. As a unique laboratory for the study of the "creation of the electorate", I would mention the long electoral apprenticeship which followed the "coup de main" of the sudden adoption of universal suffrage in 1848 France, and its re-establishment in 1875, both of which have been the object of a wave of new studies in recent years.⁶ Many approaches incline today towards a re-examination of the history and the various configurations of electoral systems and practices in different countries, within and outside Europe, questioning their institutional rationale and their social background, and providing detailed field research. I would like to stress that this new attitude concerns both countries that were birthplaces of electoral democracy, such as Great Britain, France and the United States, and others which are more peripheral, in Europe and in Latin America.⁷ Such comparative parallelism in research — which has also led me to believe that some American cases should be included in this volume — is, in my view, extremely revealing, since it allows us to reconsider the distinction between the so-called "first comers" and "late comers" and illuminates the various cases to their mutual advantage.

I should finally like to add that the inspiration for this truly comparative attitude, which challenges traditional hierarchies, comes in my opinion not only from the normal advancement of historical research at a world-wide level, but also from the ongoing evolution of electoral democ-

6 Recent works on the history of universal suffrage which have highlighted this process include: R. HUARD, *Le suffrage universel en France, 1848-1946*, Aubier, 1991; A. GAR- RIGOU, *supra*, note 4; P. ROSANVALLON, *Le sacre du citoyen. Histoire du suffrage universel en France*, Paris, 1993; D. GAXIE (ed.), *Explication du vote: un bilan des études électorales en France*, Paris: PUF, 1985 signalled a new interest in voting practices. Recent textbooks also reflect this tendency. See M. OFFERLÉ, *Un Homme, une voix? Histoire du suffrage universel*, Gallimard, 1993.

7 Studies which have highlighted elements of "modern" political mobilisation in the reformist "corrupted" system also contributed to weaken the 1832 reform as a turning point on the road to democracy. Cf. F. O'GORMAN, *Voters, Patrons, and Parties. The Unreformed Electoral System of Hanoverian England 1734-1832*, Oxford 1989; Id., *Campaign, Rituals, and Ceremonies: The Social Meaning of Elections in England 1780-1860*, "Past and Present", no. 135, May 1992, p. 79-115. A seminal work on early electoral practices in France is P. GUENIFFEY, *Le nombre et la raison. La Révolution française et les élections*, Paris, 1993. For a similar approach for Latin America, see A. ANNINO (ed.), *Historia de las elecciones en Iberoamérica, siglo XIX*, Buenos Aires, 1995. E. POSADA-CARBÓ (ed.), *Elections before Democracy: The History of Elections in Europe and Latin America*, London: Macmillan P, 1996. A comparative view of electoral practices also inspired the studies collected in A. ANNINO and R. ROMANELLI (eds.), *Notabili elettorali elezioni*, "Quaderni storici", no. 69, December 1988.

ocracy in its European birthplace, which reveals the conceptual fragility of the "democratic" model. The crisis of the party system in the western world, the declining fortunes of proportionalism in post-war Europe, the emerging of a new model of "audience democracy"⁸ all show that the road to electoral democracy is not one single path which has developed through stages, but rather resembles a branching tree, to mention just one of the many metaphors which depict the "world of many worlds" which constitute the historical agenda nowadays.⁹ Seen in its context, the history of the franchise thus turns out to be yet another example of the *histoire globalisante* which also inspires my approach but which lies beyond the aims of this book. Consequently, I will limit any further considerations to the analysis of the models of social relations embedded in the electoral rules, which will be viewed as the input proposed by the ruling elites of the time.

Patterns of Social Structures

It is common knowledge that the French and English cases together constituted the first fundamental representational paradigm of their age, which would have lasting effects in the diffusion of constitutional systems, as well as in the subsequent doctrinal interpretation of liberalism and democracy. On this view, the French model gave rise to the declaration of

8 "Audience democracy" is the English translation of "démocratie du public", as conceptualised by Bernard MANIN in *Principles of government representation*, Paris 1995, English translation *The Principles of Representative Government*, Cambridge: UP, 1997. A shorter version appeared earlier in Italian as *La democrazia dei moderni*, Milano, 1992. It is the author's opinion that what is often conceived as a crisis in representation is just a new stage, which also depicts in new terms a return to some basic features of parliamentarism, such as the personalisation of power. In a sense, the media weakens the role of the parties and "resurrects the face-to-face character of the representative link that mark the first form of representative government" (Engl. ed., p. 220). In the new system, it also happens that "the initiative of the terms of electoral choice belongs to the politician and not to the electorate (...) voting decisions appear primarily today as reactive (...); voters seem to respond (to particular terms offered at each election), rather than just express (their social or cultural identities)", p. 222-3. These historical changes also influence interpretative historiographical approaches; Manin observes that "Before the 1970s, most electoral studies came to conclusion that political preference 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", p. 218.

9 The metaphor of the branching tree, or the zigzag path, is adapted from evolutionary biology to economic history by Ch. SABEL and J. ZEITLIN, *Historical Alternatives to Mass Production: Politics, Markets, and Technology in Nineteenth Century Industrialization*, "Past and Present" no. 108, August 1988, p. 133-76. I borrow it as a pattern that can be opposed to the evolutionist one of the "stages of growth".

universal suffrage as a principle, with equal and direct voting by individuals, the rational construction of constituencies on the basis of population distribution, with little or no regard for existing communities, the refusal to allow representation to intermediate bodies, and the idea that each deputy should represent the entire nation and not the constituency, as was openly declared in the constitution of 1791.

This paradigm — which we can call a product of intellectual utopianism — spread widely throughout Europe, in a process of diffusion the details of which still need to be defined by means of the phases of French “expansion” which followed the Revolutions, from 1791 to 1830 and 1848.¹⁰ A different pattern was instead derived from the English case, where given communities (counties or boroughs) were enfranchised, with no equality among the individual voters as such at a national level, no uniform rules, and the persistence of many forms of the old form of “corporate” representation.¹¹ Broadly speaking, it can also be said that national unification — which in the French model directly concerned the social structures and was enforced by the administrative state — occurred at different levels in the case of England, which experienced an earlier process of unification; indeed, it is likely that the Crown in Parliament acted as an “imagined community”, and not the society of voters. Hence the importance of the repeated whig statement according to which the Parliament *is not a congress of ambassadors from different hostile interests; which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate; but Parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole.*¹²

¹⁰ Many of the direct systems based upon property qualifications were influenced by the French law of 1830. This was the case of the 1831 Belgian and the 1848 Italian laws, despite the fact that the latter was enacted immediately after the end of the Orlean Monarchy. An indirect influence can also be seen in the Spanish and the Greek laws. The principle of universal suffrage with direct, equal and secret vote, was adopted in many systems after 1848, for example, the Dutch one, or those adopted in the German states after the national assembly of Paulskirche in 1849.

¹¹ For a synthesis of the English system see Ch. SEYMOUR, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, 1915, David and Charles reprints, 1970; H. J. HANHAM, *Government, Parties and the Electorate in England. A commentary to 1900*, and V. BOGDANOR, *Literature, Sources and Methodology for the Study of Electoral Reform in the United Kingdom*, both in S. NOIRET (ed.), *Political strategies and Electoral Reforms: Origins of the Voting Systems in Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1990.

¹² These are the famous words pronounced by Edmund Burke in his appeal to the electors of Bristol in 1774. Among others, already in 1698 Algernon Sidney had declared that “it is not therefore for Kent or Sussex, Lewes or Maidstone, but for the whole nation, that the members chosen to serve in these places are sent to serve in Parliament”. Quoted in A. H. BIRCH, *Representation*, London, 1971, p. 38-9. In defending the unreformed system, Sir Robert Inglis again declared that “This House is not a collection of Deputies (...) We are not sent here day by day to represent the opinions of our

(note continues on the next page)

However, if it is true that the French and the English can be seen as two radically opposed systems, the first being based upon intellectual innovation and the latter upon historical tradition, it is also true that the political discourse of the time helped to merge these national experiences, thus shaping a doctrine. The fact is that doctrinal thought, far from being a fixed set of rules spelt out in books, is a lively actor in the construction of political identity and electoral behaviour, and was itself the result of gradual developments and adjustments, as well as combined references to important national experiences. For example, the declarations of the English whig leaders are usually quoted as the first definition of the concept of the negation of an imperative mandate, which is one corollary of the modern idea of the national dimension of representation and is laid down in the French constitution. Adopted by public opinion, it became a commonplace in the shaping of the self-image of political leaders throughout the following century, since both the candidates and their electors conformed to this type when participating in electoral competitions or voting, thus taking on their political roles of citizens and national representatives.

Clearly, all this cannot be referred to a single statute or to a “reform”. Doctrines, discourses, norms, and practices combine gradually to shape accepted paradigms whose features differ in time and in different contexts. As just stated, the combined experiences of English parliamentary tradition and the various French experiments on electoral laws during the period that included the Revolution, the Empire and the Orleanist monarchy, provided other countries with the first modern concept of representation, in which the principles of individualism, equality and the national dimension of politics were differently reconciled with a set of values, interests, and concrete relations existing among powers which were neither individualistic nor egalitarian, and which were deeply rooted in the exercise of local, rather than national, authority.

In this kind of system, the founding principle of individualism in political citizenship expresses itself through a set of different cultural values and legal norms which stress, above all, the importance of granting “independence” to both the elector and the elected. Like freedom, independence can be expressed in a negative way (freedom from constraints) and in a positive way (freedom to act). Examples of the former dimension were the norms that negated the franchise to individuals who were in a situation of

constituents. Their local rights, their municipal privileges, we are bound to protect; their general interests we are bound to consult at all times; but not their will, unless it shall coincide with our own deliberate sense of right (...). We are sent here to legislate, not for the wishes of any set of men, but for the wants and the rights of all”. Quoted in H. J. HANHAM, *The Nineteenth century Constitution. Documents and Commentary*, Cambridge: UP, 1969, p. 140-1.

dependence, such as poor relief recipients, servants, or soldiers in service. Clearly, the conflict which arose between a discrimination of this type in suffrage and any idea of equality and universal citizenship is worth analysing closely. Of the cases mentioned, the last two — servants and soldiers — were key figures of nineteenth-century bourgeois societies, in the private and the public sphere respectively, given the importance of personal service within households for the middle classes, and given the role played by enrolment in national armies for the national state and citizenship.¹³

When seen in positive terms, norms of exclusion such as these help us to draw a social profile of the voter, whose "independence" was viewed as meaning that he carried social responsibilities (as the head of the family in contrast to his dependants, and the officer in contrast to his soldiers). Independence, then, can be defined as individual competence (the French "capacité"), both cultural and economic, whereby electoral laws are largely concerned with the definition of these. In relation to cultural competence, intellectual categories are explicitly listed in some cases, and they appear as a sociological definition of what is called in German a "Bildungsbürgertum", or in Italian a "ceto umanistico" composed of academics, civil servants, graduates, and so on. Expressed in such a way, this "presumption of competence" recalls the notion of a corporate representation.¹⁴ However, it is more often the case that (only) literacy is requested for enfranchisement. So, what is literacy? When interpreted as the ability to read, hence of an individual's ability to make up his own mind about programmes, declarations, or newspapers, literacy indicates a resource to be spent in the market of culture, which then shapes the electorate as "public opinion". However, literacy also means the ability to write, in this case to write a list of names on the paper ballot, and this gives rise to a set of questions concerning the voting procedures and rituals.

Clearly, we are dealing here with norms of inclusion, not of exclusion. Needless to say, in those societies where the percentage of illiteracy was high, the precondition of literacy worked as a elitarian rule, and the strength and the inner structure of a "civil society" was revealed through the literacy test. This was the case of the Italian electoral norms of 1848 and 1882, when reformers maintained that, despite the limited numbers of the electorate which resulted from such a condition, not only was this not

¹³ In fact, under many circumstances the exclusion of soldiers from the vote was conceived as contradictory, and participation in national wars was considered to be the highest demonstration of citizenship, and hence entitling to the vote also those sectors which would have been excluded. This already happened in Italy after the patriotic wars, and was a major argument for accepting universal suffrage after World War I.

¹⁴ Categories included under competence requirements in census-based systems are in fact similar to those listed when proposals were made for the creation of elective second chambers of a "corporate" nature at the end of the century. See below, p. 30.

an excluding norm, but it was even a democratic one, since it left the franchise open to a growing number of voters and it encouraged both political participation and school attendance.¹⁵ Political citizenship and schooling are strictly connected, given the fact that electoral rights provided the first solid argument for setting up schooling programmes, since it was not really clear whether the market and the expansion of the economy really needed literacy, or whether the secularisation of society, which presumably followed literacy, was desirable in catholic countries.

Any definition of competence, it can be concluded, should define independence not in terms of social individualism, but rather in terms of the social ties that relate the individual to the community, and to the state. This is even more evident when speaking of economic means, upon which rested the main condition of competence. The two principal ways of defining economic independence were through salary, in quasi-universal systems, and tax assessment, in census-based systems. In both cases, a stable connection with the community was required. Not by chance, in many electoral laws the condition of a given salary was also connected with a minimum period of stay in the municipality, a principle which excluded migrants and unstable citizens. Thus, the variable length of residence required by different laws clearly underpinned social strategies which should be compared with the structure of the labour force and trends in economic growth. The same can be said for higher property qualifications, which should be compared with the structure of the economy, the distribution of wealth in different areas, with different systems of fiscal imposition, and so on. By and large, we could state that, as a result, given both the distribution of wealth which prevailed in the nineteenth-century economy and the systems of imposition, tax requirements identified stable property, and landed estate above all, especially when the conditions were more restricted or when a higher level of taxable wealth was required to be eligible. Only a combined analysis of wealth distribution, electoral laws and fiscal systems would allow a closer description of this strata of property owners in the various European countries. It can already be said, however, that property was everywhere a paradigm of social responsibility and attachment to the homeland.

Political citizenship, in other words, is a shifting principle which depicts patterns of social relations more than a fixed condition of the indi-

¹⁵ The supporters of the 1882 reform, which took the electorate from 2% to 8% of the population, called it a "potential universal suffrage", and it was calculated that a normal evolution of the system, with no other reform, would have led to a universal suffrage around 80-100 years later. For these debates, see R. ROMANELLI, *Il comando impossibile*, Bologna, 1995.

vidual. A demonstration of its relational nature is revealed by gender distinction.

It is well known that all the definitions of the individuals entitled to vote limited the electorate to adult males only, the exclusion of women from political rights being a common feature of every electoral system, all the more powerful since it was not explicitly stated. The history of women's suffrage has been widely studied, above all as a history of exclusion, and as a struggle for inclusion which was finally achieved under the pressure of women's movements and of modernisation. This path is today familiar to all.¹⁶ However, it is precisely the case of women which shows us that the concept of exclusion tells us only very little about the political role played by non-enfranchised sectors of the population. Once again, the history of the franchise would profit from the evolution of historical research; mainly, in this case, from the result of those gender studies which focus upon structures of relations more than upon those of gender opposition.

What were the grounds for the exclusion of women? Can they be equated with other individuals, or social groups, which were excluded? We have seen that in the case of males, non-voters were simply seen as potential voters, excluded from the game because of their temporary condition of dependency, illiteracy, or lack of employment, all conditions that in the view of liberalism could be overcome by personal initiative. This was not the case with women. In only a few cases was it possible for spinsters or widows, having property qualifications, to be accepted among the administrative voters for boards set up for specific social tasks, such as charity or schooling, or for some municipal governing bodies, as was the case in the Austrian Empire here illustrated by Birgitta Bader-Zaar.¹⁷ But this inclusion never concerned the national political arena.

Female non-voters, in other words, were not potential individual voters, but rather citizens who — despite their legal competence — were somehow encapsulated inside another social subject, the male voter. As can be shown through many property or family laws, women with all the formal requirements as citizens, but who were not accepted at the polls, were implicitly considered to be represented by their husbands or fathers (and, in some cases, by their sons).¹⁸ Hence the family as a social body,

¹⁶ Among others, see S. C. HAUSE and A. R. KENNEDY, *Women's Suffrage and Social Politics in the French Third Republic*, Princeton, 1984; L. KLEJMAN and F. ROCHEFORT, *L'Égalité en marche, le féminisme sous la Troisième République*, Paris, 1989. (cit. Huard 440); R. FULFORD, *Votes for Women. The Story of a Struggle*, London: 1957.

¹⁷ For the growth in numbers of women's participation in English governing bodies see P. HOLLIS, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government 1865-1914*, N.Y.: Clarendon, 1987.

¹⁸ For its symbolic value, I would also mention the proposal, put forward by Barrès in 1916 France, on the eve of the battle of Verdun, to allow to the vote for the widows of

(note continues on the next page)

and not the women, was the real issue, as is clearly revealed by the recurrent tendency to endow electoral rights, more than on capable male individuals, on "heads of the family".¹⁹ A similar conclusion can be reached for the exclusion of servants (who were at the time members of the household, more so than wage labourers), and even more clearly for minors, who were — and still are — excluded from political rights although not from civil ones, since they were viewed as part of the family, and hence as coming under the rule of the male "head of the family".

Rules that regulated the franchise, in other words, shaped a model of social relations for which the individual — as might be expected — was embedded in a structure of hierarchical social relations. It can thus be concluded that, despite any individualistic convention, representation reflected the organic and corporate structure of society, in which representatives were the "natural" leaders. I have said that some electoral laws differentiated the requirements for enfranchisement and for eligibility, the former being more restricted, but that these norms were rarely followed by others regulating the candidatures. Nineteenth-century laws did not normally establish who was formally admitted to stand as a candidate nor how the process through which candidatures were decided should be regulated. This omission could be interpreted as further evidence of the "natural" character of the political leadership, which did not require specific universal rules and was often left to local administrative regulations, but which should not divert historians from an awareness that candidatures determined the nomination, the election itself often being a ritual of confirmation, especially in uncontested elections, which seemed to be very common at an early stage.

Uncontested elections in small constituencies might suggest the image of a collective vote of a plebiscitarian kind, similar to that of acclamation. Mere acclamation, as a rite of the recognition of superiority, can be opposed to democracy, when this is conceived as a decision technique which implies (free and fair) competition.²⁰ Thus competitive elections could be conceptually opposed to non-competitive ones. In practice, how-

the fallen soldiers, or when unmarried, their fathers. See R. HUARD, *supra*, note 6, p. 222. It should also be stressed that enfranchised women were never admitted personally to the polls, and had to delegate the act of voting to a male relative.

¹⁹ Among the many norms that reflect this tendency, quite exceptional and particularly significant is article 79/7 of the French electoral law of 1849, which declared to be ineligible those found guilty of adultery. Quot. *ibid.*, p. 43.

²⁰ For such a classic definition of democracy, see J. SCHUMPETER, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, London, 1943, p. 269 ff. An historical profile of unanimity in nominating procedures is offered by E. RUFFINI, *Il principio maggioritario. Profilo storico* [1927], Milano, 1976, and *La ragione dei più. Ricerche sulla storia del principio maggioritario*, Bologna, 1977.

ever, competition and acclamation coexist to regulate electoral choices as practices and customs, laws and regulations all show. Multi-stage indirect voting was one of these, as it was practised for the election of the General Estates in France. It was retained under the Revolution and the Empire, and is to be found in many other systems. While ensuring the franchise to a large portion of the population, it channelled the large numbers of electors into a paternalistic and hierarchical social structure which linked the local community to the national assembly. Indirect voting systems, in other words, suggest that the lower ranks are more concerned with local matters and capable of nominating their direct superiors, who are better equipped for wider, political issues at a national level and who are able to take political decisions when supported by a large consensus. Such would be the common opinion among the conservative liberals of the nineteenth century, but this does not allow us to define indirect voting as more conservative in itself: even modern parliaments could be considered as intermediate bodies for the election of a government.²¹

It might also be said, then, that the more regulated and complex is the electoral procedure, the wider is the electorate and viceversa. A good case in point for the working of a system of indirect voting is the Spanish constitution of Cadiz (1812) which has 70 articles concerning electoral procedures. The result of the post-revolutionary wave which abolished the old estates, the impact of the Cadiz constitution on Spanish society was both brief and fairly weak (only two elections were held between 1820 and 1823, about which we know very little); however, together with the French revolutionary texts it provided a model for many liberal-democratic movements of the time. It foresaw a very broad franchise which, in principle, included all the citizens who gathered in parish vestries (*juntas de parroquia*) to nominate the delegates whose task it then was to nominate the parish elector. All the parish electors gathered with religious and civic solemnity and baroque ceremonial in order to nominate — this time with a secret written ballot, which is not mentioned for the earlier stages — the electors for the district, who finally met at a provincial level and moved to the capital to elect the deputy for the Cortes. This example shows that indirect voting systems allow for a large suffrage which few would label today as “universal suffrage”, not in terms of numbers, but because this definition is commonly connected with equality among the voters.

21 As in Schumpeter's theory of democracy, “the role of the people is to produce a government, or else an intermediate body which in turn will produce a national executive or government”, *supra*, note 20, p. 269. Needless to say, when speaking of electoral procedures a parallel can be made between the political elections for the nomination of MPs with which we are concerned here and parliamentary voting, which could be described as a second stage act of voting in an indirect system.

Quite distinct from the system of indirect voting is the direct system, which was largely adopted in Europe during the decades of liberalism, when earlier quasi-universal suffrage systems were substituted by a narrower franchise based on property qualifications. It is tempting to construct a model of evolution moving from a quasi-universal multi-stage type to one which was restricted and direct (and finally to a direct-universal). However, the chronology of a movement of this kind would not be uniform across Europe: while England never experienced the indirect system, Norway retained it up to 1905, after having introduced universal suffrage, as did Prussia up to World War I, while the pyramid-shaped system of the Russian constitution of 1918 for the nomination of the All-Russian Soviet Congress of the Soviet Union was nothing other than a multi-stage indirect voting system.²² Moreover, the two systems, the indirect and the direct, can co-exist. The first Chamber only was elected with an indirect system in Denmark; the same happened only in the third curia in Austria, while the systems adopted for the election of the Prussian Landtag and the German Reichstag after unification combined direct and indirect suffrage, equal and unequal voting, and secret universal suffrage of a restricted open type.²³

The fact that England never experienced a system of indirect voting suggests a basic distinction between the regulative pattern on the continent of paternalistic practices and those which were instead traditional in England, and which followed customary norms. Electoral procedures and rituals, which in some cases depend upon detailed and formal regulations, were left to unregulated practices in other cases. This is probably one of the reasons why continental liberal opinion was extremely sympathetic to the English model, since this apparently managed to provide an example of the natural exercise of social leadership, based upon personal charisma and deference — the same that was achieved on the continent with restricted suffrage based upon census requirements.

Thus, property qualifications of a restricted nature, together with other minor norms, shaped the paradigm of “independence” within a well-regulated system of deference and paternalism. The system of small numbers did not entirely exclude non-voters from the process, but fuelled one in which social protection and benevolence, together with charismatic power, included canvassing, the distribution of gifts, money and any sort of perks or entertainment to the rank-and-file, or banquets to the middle

22 See R. K. FURTAK (ed.), *Elections in Socialist States*, London: 1990.

23 Detailed information is provided in this book by Birgitta BADER-ZAAR and Caterina PAOLUCCI. On Prussia see also Th. KÜHNE, *Dreiklassenwahlrecht und Wahlkultur in Preussen, 1867-1914. Landtagswahlen zwischen korporativer Tradition und politischen Massenmarkt*, Düsseldorf, 1993.

classes, as is known to be typical of the unreformed English system. High expectations and collective support came from below, with electors (often with non-enfranchised supporters as well) acting as a collective body rather than as a number of individuals, exchanging collective resources on the political market.

It is common knowledge that this sort of exchange can be labelled as "corrupt", thus suggesting that a cash nexus between electors and candidates excludes, or contradicts, a real political exchange. This is in fact true for a doctrinal conceptualisation, where politics is the realm of pure individual values and beliefs as this has been put forward by radical reformers and democrats. If we shift from moral-ideological statements to historical analysis, however, it appears that such a system of deferential politics is far from absent from the "reformed" systems, while it also fuelled political demands and support of the unreformed England as scholars, have been able to show.²⁴

Attention should also be paid to other procedures, such as those which regulated the campaign and the process of voting, the polling station, or the techniques of choice. As for the last, it is important to distinguish an open from a secret ballot. The open ballot, as traditionally practised in Great Britain can be found (although information on the issue is far from complete) in many early stages of indirect voting systems (this was also the case of Cadiz). Particularly appropriate for this kind of election is the idea that any kind of election — being "the choice of the best" — could be considered in itself as "aristocratic". In order to emphasise this aristocratic element, Bernard Marin contrasts it with a system of random choice, or of nomination by lot, and suggests that the latter is more truly democratic in principle. As Patrice Gueniffey has been able to show, in the first French elections of 1791, in order to avoid any "aristocratic" ennobling of emerging personalities, candidatures were forbidden and nominations were widely distributed among neighbours and common people. Nomination by lot, on the other hand — a system which can be labelled as "democratic" only if it is borne in mind that it was adopted only within small groups of "equals" where the members were equally privileged — was not only used in Ancient Greece and medieval Italian towns, but can be found in the nomination procedures of some non-political bodies, such as the municipal boards in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany up to 1848,²⁵ and

²⁴ See F. O'GORMAN, *supra*, note 7.

²⁵ In this case, and in all the other Italian kingdoms before unification except the Sardinian one, it is worth mentioning that none was ruled by a constitution or a parliamentary system. This gave emphasis to the importance of the elitarian local self-government, which was conceived by many as the basis for a future constitutional representation. When a Tuscan constitution was proposed in 1848, it explicitly rejected the principle of the negation of the imperative mandate.

even appeared in some texts of the time, such as the first Napoleonic Spanish constitution of Bayonne.

As for the two different types of ballot — the open ballot and the secret ballot — while the former system was close to acclamation, and stressed the collective dimension of the vote, the latter, on the contrary, was intended to protect the intimate and individual nature of political decisions, leading to the "independence" of the voter. However, even this kind of secrecy had some flexibility, and varied not only in degree, but also in nature. In the early systems, the individual nature of the vote was expressed more by its being written down than by its secrecy. Other kinds of privacy in non-written forms also existed. One of these was the practice of voting by balls, which was common in many collective decisions of "private" bodies, such as clubs and circles, and which was also adopted in Greek political elections, thus allowing universal suffrage to be matched with a system of voting for multi-member constituencies which was similar to the written one. However, the main pattern of European voting remains the written one. We have already pointed out the relevance of literacy for the definition of the elector. How far this type of expression is also individualistic and "secret" needs to be ascertained. A better definition of early nineteenth-century practices is perhaps "secret in public,"²⁶ which means that voters were originally asked to write a list of names on a personal paper ballot and to hand it to the chairman of the polling station. This practice clearly maintained a ceremonial aspect which was far from "secret". As the chapter by Caterina Paolucci shows us, in some German cases, a second step was added, since the elector put his ballot into an envelope, which he signed with a motto, or a number, so that whilst the content of the vote remained anonymous, the fact that he voted could be certified.

Secrecy, indeed, concerns the choice which is made, not the act of voting itself. In modern procedures voters are admitted to the polling station individually, when they wish within a given span of time, and this is consistent with the radical democratic individualistic model. However, at the very beginning of electoral history it proved impossible to regularly implement an individualistic vote of this kind, and organised electoral behaviour under a "party system" soon developed. Even the full adoption of the individualistic voting procedure, when it came around the end of the nineteenth-century, still retained many features of the "collective" type of voting. At the beginning of this procedure, electors were formally called, following an alphabetical order in the official lists, as if they were all present — as in fact they often were — only having the choice of a second call if they were physically incapable of reaching the polling station in time. It

²⁶ See A. GARRIGOU, *supra*, note 4, p. 199.

should be added that the norms regulating the composition of the polling station — usually chaired by local notables, magistrates, or public servants, but also including representatives of the community, and political parties at a later stage — also helped in shaping this image of the community of electors, which, not by chance, is called an “electoral body”, the electorate being a collective body, and not a list of individuals. In addition, the activities surrounding the formal regulations of the voting practices frequently conformed to this image: going to the polls was a social event, and occurred collectively, sometimes in processions (which emphasises once more the similarity of voting with religious practices). Needless to say, social hierarchies and deference were reinforced by collective voting. In the German Dreiklassenwahlrecht, which distributed the voters of each small district among three groups according to the total amount of taxes they paid, the lower classes voted first, in the presence of the others, and then left the polling station.²⁷ What better theatrical representation of social stratification and control?

Coming back to written voting procedures, new stages in the process of standardisation gradually led to the modern type, familiar to the elector of our times and which shows the voter on a Sunday (another symbolic similarity with religious practices) going to the polling station, where he stands alone, anonymously secluded in a small cabin, far from any eyes, with a pencil in one hand and a state-printed ballot in the other. The box, the pencil, and the paper are materials typical of a given epoch, that of an early twentieth-century universal suffrage. The loneliness of a computer, and a key to digit, as experimented in some American elections, and which is more common in modern parliaments, is perhaps a more proper image for modernity.²⁸

Also significant were the uncertainties and conflicting opinions which ran parallel to the evolution of the technicalities leading to the polling booth and the standard ballot. As for this latter, the difficulties arising from writing a (sometimes long) list of names in the polling station (where problems of rapidity, and not only of literacy, were involved) led to the use of pre-written ballots, which in turn provided insufficient protection from influence, control and illicit bargaining. As a result, either a standard envelope in which to insert the ballot, or the legally printed ballot was introduced. In regard to the polling booth, significantly called the “iso-

27 Thomas KÜHNE's research on the working of the Dreiklassenwahlrecht in Prussia, *supra*, note 23, has shown some of the surprising features of ceremonial deference in collective behaviour at the polls which lasted up to the First World War and recalls what was formally stated in the ceremonial of Cadix.

28 The first machinery for the electronic vote was invented in 1922. A picture is published by P. ROSANVALLON, *supra*, note 6.

loir” in French — the instrument for isolation, it was seen as a metaphor for atomistic individualism and seclusion — which is sometimes felt to be so unnatural as to lead to unhealthy behaviour — and was sometimes rejected in practice. In different social contexts, e.g. in republican France and in Soviet Russia, it happened that the electors preferred, or felt obliged, not only to go to the polls in procession, but also to openly declare their political allegiance, either to the notable, or to the party.²⁹

In conclusion, the path towards individualism is neither straightforward nor uniform. When we focus upon the entire electoral process — from the presentation of the candidates to the going to the polls — we can find many signals of “collectivism” under the rule of “individualism”.

Defining the Voter and Mapping the Nation

Given that it was only individuals who could be enfranchised, these had first to be defined. There is no doubt that individual stands here for “human person”, and while some doubts were raised during the nineteenth century in regard to the age and sex of such persons, it was universally agreed that person stood for adult male, the concept of adult being flexible according to both civil and electoral laws.³⁰

Whether or not officially mentioned as such in electoral laws, individuals entitled to vote can also be defined as “citizens”. Citizenship, however, is a flexible concept, changing according to time and place, and it reflects the prevalent nature of societies and states. As for electoral sys-

29 The polling booth was first introduced in Australia in 1857, then in Great Britain in 1832, in Belgium in 1876, in France in 1914, and, since then, its use has been standard practice. For the French case, see Y. DÉLOYE and O. IHL, “Des voix pas comme les autres. Votes blancs et votes nuls aux élections législative de 1881”, *Revue Française de Science Politique*, vol. 41, no. 2, Avril 1991; O. IHL, “L'urne électorale. Forme et usages d'une technique de vote”, *Ibid.*, vol. 43, no. 1, Février 1993. In the Soviet Union “a voter who makes use of the polling-booth is suspected of wanting to cast a negative vote”. R. K. FURTA, *supra*, note 22, p. 9.

30 The issue of gender was frequently raised during the nineteenth century. The English 1832 Reform Bill for the first time explicitly excluded women, substituting the term “man” of earlier statutes with “male person”. The new Reform Bill of 1867 returned to “man”, and an amendment proposed by J. S. Mill for the usage of the term “person” was rejected. The following year a number of women appealed against the refusal of registration, the Court of Common Pleas decided that the term “man” also concerned women, but only when taxes were concerned, not voting rights. Similar legal strategies, based upon the appeal for registration of women were followed in other European countries by the feminist movements. For the Italian case, see R. ROMANELLI, *Circa l'ammissibilità delle donne al suffragio politico nell'Italia liberale. Le sentenze pronunciate dalla magistratura nel 1905-1907*, in *Laboratorio di storia. Studi in onore di Claudio Pavone*, a c. di P. PEZZINO e G. RANZATO, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1994, p. 127-44.

tems, political citizenship appears as the sum of different requirements of different types, all of them — and this is my point — resulting from the development of administrative authorities that we label as “the state”, and which only allow the enrolment of electors in special lists, the electoral rolls.

It can also be asserted that the very construction of political citizenship is the gradual outcome of a process of legalisation. French scholars above all, dealing with a country which provides the paradigm for administrative absolutism, on the one hand, and for universal suffrage of the democratic type, on the other, are particularly concerned with this argument. However, while focussing on the role of legalisation, they also stress its incompleteness and its progressivity. As Michel Offerlé states in this book,

la reconnaissance de la citoyenneté civique est le résultat du triomphé progressif de la juridiction. (jamais totalement atteinte) et donc de la croissance de l'efficacité d'un "État" neutre, producteur de technologies rationnelles d'identification et d'identités sociales et standardisées.

Nationality is even the first requirement of voting, although it has not always been stated explicitly. While non-nationals can be municipal voters, by definition this is not the case for national political electors. Needless to say, the definition of such national citizenship relied on the development of an administrative state which was far from complete and also relied on a variety of different authorities. When a process of legalisation is less developed, only local customs, parish registers, the tentative local lists of taxpayers, traditional statutes, and even mere opinion,³¹ can say who is entitled to vote because he is a “citizen”. Thus, as Caterina Paolucci shows in her chapter, the definition of the “Bürger”, as a citizen in the many German systems, depended by definition on lists of urban groups, and hence on the basis of local statutes, whilst Antonio Annino stresses the significance of the Spanish Cadiz system for the constitutional history of Latin American countries, which made reference to the ancient Spanish texts where citizens (*ciudadanos*), residents in the parish (or in the district) and “vecinos” — an ancient term once indicating property-owners — were mentioned altogether.

Not only the concept of “citizenship” but also that of age requirements are connected with the establishment of some kind of “modern state”. These demanded a system of uniform census or “état civil”, and of

³¹ This is the case of unreformed England, where no form of registration was in existence before 1832: “Few of the borough constituencies were large, and most were extremely small; the electors and the value of their qualifications were well known”, Ch. SEYMOUR, *supra*, note 11, p. 105.

official registration which only gaudily developed in nineteenth-century Europe, following the pattern of parish registers. The same was true for literacy, when required, which resulted either in school attendance or in some kind of legal test,³² and above all for tax payment, which required the existence of official lists of ratepayers. Quite significantly, when registration was introduced in England in 1832, it was decided that the system should depend upon the overseers of the poor, and this because from 1601 they were the only local officials of townships and parishes who were already obliged on account of their status to record the lists of taxpayers around the nation. In England too, in other words, electoral legislation rested upon the existence of some kind of early national administrative uniformisation, where, contrary to the French model, unification did not mean centralisation.

Given that these processes of national unification were far from complete in the nineteenth century, it is understandable that norms defining the electorate, rather than providing a clear set of rules, opened up spaces for negotiation between national and local powers, between “state” and “society”, where intermediate bodies, which were rejected in principle, were called on to play the main role in bridging the gap between the two. This was true for every step of the electoral process, starting with that of registration itself. Given that this was a novelty, registration was one of the main concerns in the longstanding debates and parliamentary legislation which followed the 1832 reform in England, and it concerned the role of the overseers of the poor in counties and of town clerks in boroughs in registration proceedings, of the barristers who held courts for the revision of the lists, and of the judges who nominated them. In England, not only did the setting of permanent lists become a critical and formal encounter between local and central administrative and judiciary authorities and the community, but it also occurred on a voluntary basis, through individual registration or appeal. This required a political initiative on the part of the electors (hence their organisation, leading, indeed, to the birth of modern party organisations), and it was a reason for mobilisation, as well as an opportunity for conflicts and negotiation.

For the same reason, it appears as even more evident that property qualifications based on taxes are not only difficult to investigate — both for the keepers of the electoral rolls of the time and for historians of today, but that they produced different social results in different social structures. Socio-economic and regional inequalities were intertwined, taxes being levied at both national and municipal level, allowing for the creation of

³² In the Italian case as well as in the Portuguese one — illustrated in this book by Manuel Loff — a certificate of school attendance could be substituted by a written application made in the presence of a notary.

different electorates and double voting. However, where only national taxation was concerned, changes could have interrelated political, social and geographical effects. Cases are known in which taxes were levied for electoral purposes, i.e. to include or exclude from the franchise given groups or sectors of the population, as happened more than once in Belgium, where the requirement of direct taxation was written in the constitution, so that parties in power "reformed" the electoral laws through changes in taxation, not in legal requirements. While a liberal government abolished the taxes on farm horses in order to exclude Catholic farmers from the franchise, Catholics in their turn imposed special taxes on beverages, so that before 1870 one out of eight voters was an innkeeper.³³ Needless to say, similar strategies could involve changes in residence requirements, both for voters and for candidates, leading to the inclusion, or exclusion, of important sectors of the electorate.

The role played by both municipal and provincial authorities or by political groups in the electoral process in the definition of citizenship, as well as in taxation, literacy requirements and registration in the army reveals in its most acute form the basic conflict between the national definition of political representation and the territorial configuration of social and political structures. A major issue in the history of electoral systems is hence the relationship between the newly introduced representative systems and the structure of local powers, both institutional and socioeconomic.

In many ways, the issue of the national-local distribution of power also raises the question of persistent corporate representation with regard to the new national-political level. Everywhere in Europe legislators were constantly concerned with problems involving the framing of constituencies, the distribution of seats, and the dimensions and location not only of the constituencies but also of the electoral districts and even of the polling stations. At every level, in this endless game of social mapping of the nation, the principle of the rational construction of constituencies on the basis of mere population distribution — which defines the constituency as a fragment of society, and hence not as a community — is opposed to more historical-traditional ones, which refer to the existing communities, to their social structures and hierarchies. Since the former is the radical expression of the national-individualistic convention, which rejects the notion of intermediate bodies, it demonstrates itself as being unrealistic and needs to be constantly adapted to reality, while the latter appears to be too

³³ Cf. A. M. CARSTAIRS, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, London, 1960, p. 51; J. STENGERS, *Histoire de la législation électorale en Belgique*, in S. NOÏRET (ed.), *Political strategies...*, *supra*, note 11, p. 79.

close to reality to be able to support a system of national-political representation, and needs somehow to be controlled and shaped from above.

Not only is it the practices of redistribution of seats and gerrymandering which are concerned here, but also many other technical and even doctrinal devices. Because of the gradual adaptation of the English system to the national-individualistic principle, England was not only deeply concerned with the problem of redistribution of seats, but also provided the doctrinal principles which sustained the compromise between the local and the national, such as the concept of the negation of imperative mandate, which I have already discussed, or the typically English-Whig concept of "virtual representation", where the interests of Manchester or Sheffield could be "virtually" represented by MPs of unreformed boroughs.

Such a contrast between community "horizontal" ties and political "vertical" ones offers a key for understanding and comparing many of the issues that I have mentioned here, from the distribution of seats to the selection of candidates (despite the absence of any legal regulation on the matter, a distinction always occurs between local candidates, usually better accepted, and externals), to electoral practices, and even to folklore (such as that concerning collective action at the polls or the territorial mobilisation of the electorate). In a wider perspective, the problem arises whether socio-territorial dissimilarities also represent ethnic cleavages or whether they maintain something of the traditional corporate forms of representation. As has been shown by Birgitta Bader-Zaar, not only did the old estate system influence to some extent the Austrian electoral system till the fall of the Empire, but ethnic and religious plurality can be a problem for national political representation.

A case apart is that of some Latin American countries. I have mentioned above the constitution of Cadiz because it exerted an extremely strong influence on the former Spanish and Portuguese American empires. In my view, it constitutes an extraordinary example of an early adoption of the revolutionary ideology of political representation, which, combined with social structures which were very different from those of Europe, developed in such peculiar ways that European political thought (sometimes together with the local Euro-philic local interpretations) found it impossible to label it in any way other than as "backward" or "corrupt".

Modern Developments

I have questioned the effectiveness of a model of gradual and universal evolution of the electoral systems towards the final outcome of a twentieth-century democracy mainly based upon a pattern of growing numbers and equality. This is not to deny the existence of any evolution at all. On

the contrary, I believe that the history of the franchise has been created both by radical turning points (1848 above all) and by gradual developments, and that some patterns of change can be identified in the growing of the "branching tree".

I have mentioned the fact that during the decades of Liberalism, earlier quasi-universal systems based upon indirect voting were abandoned in favour of others, giving a narrower electorate direct voting rights. When examined in its proper terms, which includes the description of the entire system of voting, this reshaping of the system could also reveal a changing pattern in relationships between different sectors of society, in which the upper ones were searching for new ways of exerting social control and political guidance. It is worth mentioning here that, especially in many Catholic countries, the so-called restricted suffrage was viewed as more liberal since it prevented the clergy from exerting control over peasant voters, and that a similar argument was proposed at the time for the exclusion of women. This also explains why, in some cases, conservatives were more favourable towards an extended franchise than the progressives.

The problems of mobilisation and participation cut across any narrative about formal inclusion or exclusion. While restricted systems allow non-enfranchised sectors of the population to participate in the process in many ways, in more open systems formal inclusion does not imply actual participation. Cases of the early — or sudden — adoption of universal suffrage show that large sectors of the enfranchised electorate remained excluded *de facto* from elections, or excluded themselves for lack of interest. Abstention from voting has always been an important issue for electoral history. In some cases it has been interpreted as negative political awareness, as in the case of anarchist groups or of the Italian Catholics, who, after unification, had been ordered by the Pope to refuse to support the new liberal regime. However, statistical tests of this highly ideological interpretation have proven impossible, and it is difficult to accept that this degree of political awareness existed among the newly enfranchised electors of traditional agrarian countries. Finally, it should be stressed that political and even legal exclusion can occur within a long-established universal system, as can be seen in the case of the "disappearance of the electorate" in the United States at the turn of the century, analysed in this volume by Arnaldo Testi.³⁴

I have claimed that social mobilisation is one of the primary aims of electoral representation. But mobilisation "from above", under a paternal-

³⁴ The same author also analysed the phenomenon in a detailed case-study concerning St. Louis, Missouri. See A. TESTI, *La politica dell'esclusione. Riforma municipale e declino della partecipazione elettorale negli Stati Uniti del primo Novecento*, Bologna, 1994.

istic control in "one class" societies, while still developing throughout the nineteenth century, was gradually challenged by alternative types of (fear-ed) mobilisation, either "from below", or from conflicting groups outside the system. It is well known how Bismarck distinguished the Reichsfeinde parties from Reichstreue ones, those which were seen as consistent with the system, and those which were not.

When speaking of Reichsfeinde parties, Bismarck was referring to the Catholics and the Socialists, who were also seen as a threat by the ruling classes of the time in other countries besides Germany. I am not concerned here with these changing patterns in political conflict; I would rather emphasise how the new fear of the masses which spread among liberal public opinion after 1848 and even more after 1870 — whether a myth or not — affected the history of the franchise.

After the sudden introduction of universal suffrage in France and the subsequent Napoleonic Caesarism, in which "the excess of equality led to the loss of liberty", new reflections and debates on the true nature of political representation began, openly negating the inner rationale of the democratic, individualistic convention. It is well known how French intellectuals such as Quinet, Flaubert, and Renan all revolted against the glaring injustice of equal voting, and the devils arising from the "rule of numbers" which followed the demand for universal suffrage. However, it was not only conservatives who were concerned with this problem. In commenting on the rise to power of Napoleon the Third, Marx raised the problem of popular support to reactionary regimes, whilst in 1871 the Paris Commune suggested to the radicals new types of representative government which, despite their obscurities, were for a long time considered as a model for alternatives to bourgeois parliamentarism.

Moreover, already in 1864 the "Manifeste des Soixante" drafted by a group of Parisian workers in 1864³⁵ — opened the way to demands for a direct candidature of workers as such, and therefore constituted a rejection of the very notion of political representation. In a private letter sent seven years later to the "Revue de deux Mondes", the historian Foustel de Coulanges suggested that the absurdity of universal suffrage could be overcome by giving representation not to territorial constituencies but to existing interests.

Depuis quatre-vingt ans nous n'avons su partager le corps électoral que suivant les divisions matérielles et très superficielles du territoire; il s'agit de le partager suivant les divers intérêts et les diverses classes qu'il renferme. Il n'y a pas assez d'unité dans la population

³⁵ Pierre ROSANVALLON considered this to be one the most important political texts in nineteenth century France; see *La question syndicale*, Calmann-Lévy, 1988, p. 204.

*française pour qu'on puisse exiger qu'elle ait les mêmes députés et la même opinion. La société moderne est composée d'éléments très complexes. Nous ne sommes pas un peuple; nous sommes dix ou quinze peuples qui vivent sur le même territoire, qui nous mêlons, mais qui différons d'intérêts, d'habitude, de manière de penser, et même de langage.*³⁶

Such examples as these show that from different sides of the spectrum, from the radical left of the worker's movement to the liberal-conservative opinion, a new demand arose for organic and "physiological" forms of representation which did not insist on the cohesion of traditional communities or estates (Stände) within the nation, but pointed to new social cleavages that cut across contemporary national societies, and therefore to new ways of giving them representation. This seems to me a fundamental turning point. Many aspects of traditional anti-revolutionary thought were brought back into play, as well as issues which belonged to the radical tradition — such as direct democracy, an imperative mandate and the rejection of representation. It was not universal suffrage as such which came under pressure, but the principles of equality, citizenship and territorial representation.

I do not aim to comment any further on this new body of opinion which is familiar to historians of political culture. What I am concerned with now are the resulting devices with which, in different countries, the ruling classes faced the process of social change which was undermining the functioning of the "paternalistic model" in the age of "the end of the notables".

Very few of them thought it viable simply to extend the old franchise to the masses, as had happened when universal suffrage was abruptly adopted in 1848 France and existing voting regulations were applied to large numbers. Rather, a new phase of electoral engineering was opened up. The traditional indirect vote, which still existed in many systems, was proposed once more in a new balance of different systems.³⁷ It should also be recalled that one of the most typically modern systems, which was widely discussed at the beginning of the sixties and finally adopted in many nations, i.e. arithmetic methods for counting votes in plural constituencies and obtaining a "proportional representation", while proposed by radical groups as a means of protecting marginal political groups, was

36 Quot. in F. HARTOG, *Le XIX^e siècle et l'histoire. Le cas Fustel de Coulanges*, P. U. F., 1988, p. 276.

37 Together with plural voting for heads of the family, double-stage voting was demanded by the Legitimists in France. It was also supported by Taine and by Renan in 1871. It should be recalled that under the Third Republic the elected section of the French Senate was elected with a double-stage system.

also for this very reason supported by traditional elites with a view to preserving quotas of their power within the larger context of mass suffrage.³⁸

Many other devices such as plural or multiple voting, which were proposed or adopted at the time, offer an alternative to the idea of individual representation. The idea of enfranchising the "head of the family", and hence of granting him extra votes gained a new consensus. Extra votes were, in reality, common in many traditional systems; exceptional cases of additional qualifications for the franchise lasted until the middle of the twentieth century in England and Scotland. However, multiple voting was retained in Sweden until 1918, and was also adopted in Belgium when universal suffrage was introduced in 1893. The case is significant, since Belgium is one of the nations which apparently "passed through these five stages in anything like a regular sequence".³⁹ The issue had long been debated in Belgium, because the link between franchise and wealth was written into the constitution of 1831 so that the introduction of universal suffrage necessitated a constitutional reform. When this was finally decided in 1893, it was followed by the adoption of extra votes — no more than three in number — for each individual who was the head of his family, or who had higher education, or who paid property taxes on a dwelling. On these grounds, three large groups of voters were constituted: in 1899-1900 901,000 voters had one vote, 313,000 had two votes, and 237,000 had three.⁴⁰ This means that the multiple voters outnumbered the single-voters.

Although, in the Belgian case, this system lasted for only a few years, and finally led to an equal universal suffrage, it nevertheless formed a significant part of the attempt to introduce a distortion of the principle of equal individualist franchise that accompanied universal suffrage at the end of the century in "modern" countries. Reforms of the high chambers were proposed along these lines, suggesting that they should be elected by interest groups.⁴¹

Many of the new systems, while admitting a large electorate to the polls, divided this into "classes" or groups. So did the Belgian, as we have

38 The idea of a proportional representation, which first appeared in Switzerland, was subsequently developed by the English Thomas Hare and supported by J. S. MILL. It was widely debated throughout Europe, and first adopted in Belgium in 1899. See A. M. CAIRSTAIRS, *supra*, note 33. For the French case see F. HUARD, *supra*, note 6; for the Italian, see M. S. PIRETTI, *La giustizia dei numeri. Il proporzionalismo in Italia (1870-1923)*, Bologna, 1990.

39 S. ROKKAN, *supra*, note 2, p. 149.

40 J. STENGERS, *supra*, note 33, p. 95.

41 For these proposals in Italy see E. LANCIOTTI, *La riforma impossibile. Idee, discussioni e progetti sulla modifica del Senato regio e vitalizio (1848-1922)*, Bologna, 1993.

just seen, where the electorate was split into three groups, this was similar to the Prussian system of the three classes, which distributed the voters of each small electoral district among three groups according to the total amount of direct taxes they paid; thus each group, composed of a different number of voters, paid a third of the total and nominated the same number of electors (Wahlmänner).

While these systems distributed the electorate on the basis of income, the Curiae system adopted in Austria was based on different assumptions, resembling a classic estate system, with the electorate divided into status groups representing respectively the great landowners, the cities, the chambers of commerce and industry, and the rural communities. However, in order to ascertain the "corporate" nature of one system or the other, we should investigate the degree of internal cohesion of the social groups which were differently enfranchised, together with their electoral behaviour and political strategies which, as already seen, may in many respects have been collective.

Although rooted in different social structures, all these technical devices shared a common feature: they were conceived to counterbalance the social shortcomings of equal universal representation in the age of the rise of the masses, of industrial development and of the party system. They were not left-overs of "traditional" social structures. Quite the contrary, they revealed an intrinsic clash between the corporate nature of society and the individualistic convention which had dominated the very idea of political representation from the beginning. This conflict acquired new and modern features during the second half of the century.

The nature of the divisions, or cleavages, that political representation was intended to overcome was also undergoing a process of change. Apart from more traditional interests, which retained some features of the old estates, or "Stände", or were the expression of territorial powers, new ones were coming into being, which were organised into more modern social or economic groups. The problem of organised interests and of their political role during this age has been discussed as one emergent issue of contemporary democracy.⁴² Here, however, I would like to focus not so much on the problem of corporatism within or outside parliamentary representation, but rather on the potentially corporative character of those many schemes, or proposals. They were experiments to form alternative

42 Ph. C. SCHMITTER, *Still the century of Corporatism?*, in Ph. C. SCHMITTER and L. LEMBRUCH (eds.), *Trends toward Corporatist Intermediation*, London, 1979; Id., *Democratic theory and neo-corporatist practice*, E.U.I. working papers, Florence, 1983; A. PIZZORNO, *Interests and parties in pluralism*, S. BERGER (ed.), *Organizing interests in Western Europe. Pluralism, Corporatism, and the Transformation of Politics*, Cambridge: UP, 1981.

models of representation, which ran from direct democracy and Soviet schemes, to the so-called "corporatist" ones which enjoyed considerable fortune in half of Europe, from Fascist Italy to Salazar's Portugal, from Franco's Spain to Vichy's France. These flourished after the collapse of Liberalism and during the upsurge of dictatorships — developments which should not be excluded from the story of the triumph of democracy.⁴³

Historians of the franchise have never devoted systematic attention to this issue, which is usually considered as a secondary element in the debates of the time. This is probably due to the fact (in itself another revealing phenomenon) that despite the diffusion of this kind of "corporatist" opinion, and despite the fact that criticism actually pointed to the basic contradiction of political representation, no scheme ever proved to be fully viable, or consistent with its doctrinal premises, or resulted in stable constitutional changes. Still, despite this failure to succeed in introducing new patterns of representation, in the long run this "corporate opinion" proved to be extremely challenging in discussing the actual nature of political representation, and in shaping new opinions and interpretations which finally influenced legislation and constitutional changes.

The role of the enfranchised masses — in many cases newly enfranchised — in bringing to power authoritarian regimes has long occupied scholarly debate. After this discussion, such regimes have been put aside in the history of franchise; when tracing the history of electoral systems, it is rare to read about elections in non-democratic regimes, which, although under different conditions, still take place. True enough, these elections are not "truly representative", in many cases being mere rituals of confirmation, often manipulated and distorted, and can be seen as mere "interruptions", or "parentheses"⁴⁴ in the progressive affirmation of de-

43 It is questionable whether the many authoritarian and/or corporatist systems which spread across Europe during the first half of the century can be labelled as "fascist". Among the many works published on this issue, see R. DE FELICE, *Le interpretazioni del fascismo*, Bari, 1969; Engl. tr. *Interpretations of Fascism*, Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1977; S. G. PAYNE, *Fascism. Comparison and Definition*, Madison: Wisconsin U.P., 1980; P. MILZA, *Les Fascismes*, Paris: PUF, 1985; E. COLLOTTI, *Fascismo fascismi*, Firenze, 1989. No matter how the phenomenon is defined, its diffusion in throughout Europe in the first half of the twentieth century is unquestionable. For "corporatist" schemes in Fascist Italy see A. AQUARONE, *L'organizzazione dello stato totalitario*, Torino, 1965, p. 151-4; F. PERPETTI, *La Camera dei fasci e delle corporazioni*, Roma, Bologna, 1994, p. 173-8. On the French case see M. COJNET, *Le Conseil National de Vichy, 1940-1944*, Paris, 1989.

44 The image of Fascism as a "parenthesis" comes from the observation made by Benedetto Croce on the origins of Italian Fascism. I am not concerned here with the implications of this interpretation, rather, and more empirically, I simply wish to point out that elections under fascist regimes have been put in parentheses by historians of electoral systems.

democracy. However, such a view requires a clearer conceptual distinction between "normal" electoral representation — which also often includes some kind of manipulation and electoral violence, as well as dialogues with corporatist, plebiscitarian or collective representation — and distorted elections.

Indeed, it could be said that the distorted, non-democratic representation of the twentieth century mainly concerns those countries where the basis for liberalism, for democracy, and for individualist political participation were for one reason or the other weaker, and hence more exposed to political reaction. In reality, none of the authoritarian regimes of the twentieth century was established in those countries upon which the road to democracy was originally shaped, i.e. a small group of leading countries which provided the foundations of liberalism and modern democracy, such as France and England.

However, it is also true to say that such an analysis creates, in analytical terms, a hierarchy which has fed on itself and grown, forming a vicious circle: when countries do not follow the main path of democracy they are labelled as imperfect, inefficient, or corrupted, and the hegemony of the core-cases is reinforced. True enough, such a perspective was also shared by political thinkers as well as by the political leaders of the last century, and has formed part of the self-image of many "peripheral" countries, above all the southern-western Latin ones, where political debates and conflicting ideologies upon the general patterns of "European" political and constitutional history have been modelled by reference to the "northern" national cases, mainly those of England and France.⁴⁵ No doubt, there is ground here for the study of circulation of models and patterns of political language. However, my concern here is the relation between political language, institutional patterns, and the shaping process of social interests and political groups.

As far as these matters are concerned, incompleteness, backwardness, and perhaps distortion or "corruption" are no longer useful tools. When applied to the many countries where electoral systems of the Euro-

⁴⁵ This is well known to scholars of Italian or Spanish electoral history. While, for example, a system that allows alternation in power of two opposing parties following an English model is often considered as the ideal type of good political representation, the Italian "transformism" of the eighties on the one hand and the system of the "turno" in Restoration Spain on the other (which in many cases are presented as "distortions", or even as a mere caricature of the original model) could offer good ground for investigation into the nature and workings of representative democracy. The Italian so-called degeneration of parliamentarism originated a tradition of theoretical reflection upon the nature of representation and its actual implementation with the names of Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto, who can be considered among the founders of political science, together with Antonio Gramsci.

pean kind have been adopted, from Latin America to Japan, and more recently in new post-colonial nations, they only conceal real understanding of the workings of the system, and the interaction between electoral norms and existing social structures.

Corruption is difficult to deal with, and brings us back to the basic nature of political representation. Historians rarely provide a definition of what "regular" behaviour is. In their narratives of political conflicts, or electoral behaviour, they rely, first, on the debates of the time concerning the ideal representative system, while, secondly, they implicitly assume as a rule the stereotypes of electoral democracy and the standardised franchise regulations which were constructed as part of the process.

I have already pointed out that, in a system of deference and paternalism, the relation between voters and candidates was based on "influence". But influence is an ambiguous term, with both a positive and a negative meaning: it indicates the network of social ties which constitutes a structured public opinion, hence the positive formation of political choices in a competitive market of ideas, and — on the negative side — the dynamics by which the expression of political opinion is falsified. For a long time no law regulated how such an influence could be exerted, because it was modelled on paternalistic social relations and was accepted as such. As Robert Peel declared in 1833,

*it was surely absurd to say, that a man with ten thousand pounds a year should not have more influence over the legislature of the Country, than a man of ten pounds a year. Yet each was only entitled to a single vote. How could this injustice, this glaring inequality, be practically redressed excepting by the exercise of influence?*⁴⁶

However, where aristocratic influence was accompanied by a distribution of the franchise which seemed to be grossly unfair for the times, as in unreformed England, and where therefore seats could be won by the distribution of money among a very reduced electorate — this was notoriously the case of the "rotten boroughs" — the demand for reform took the shape of denouncing "corruption". It is well known that for English radicals "corruption" was in a sense a synonym of "aristocracy", and that the denouncing of corruption went hand in hand with demands for the reform of the franchise rather than for the introduction of standardised electoral rules.

I would conclude that influence is accepted when it follows the presumed rationale of the system, when it is consistent — I would argue — with the dominant values and with the hegemony of the existing ruling

⁴⁶ Quot. in B. L. KINZER, *The Ballot Question in Nineteenth-century English Politics*, New York, 1982, p. 21

classes. This rationale would concern not only individuals or political groups, but the constitutional system as a whole; judgement upon illicit practices has a different nature when expressed by court jurisdiction than by the political body through the parliamentary vote of confirmation. As one aspect of the shift from the age of influence to the age of opinion, it was only in the second half of the century that electoral and penal laws began to deal with such issues. Anti-bribery acts, the introduction of the secret ballot, rules regulating canvassing and campaigning belonged to the continuous effort to "individualise" the vote. Not by chance keep they were severely critiqued by the partisans of the old system in England, for whom "an atmosphere of suspicion, distrust, and deception would pervade the social and political environment" with the secret ballot.⁴⁷

Rather than measure the relevance of "corruption" in electoral practices, we should therefore first investigate the history of the shaping of special rules that were worked out to define corruption itself. The growing body of norms regulating the entire electoral process should be considered as a significant stage in the construction of the citizen-elect, and therefore of a new model of the relationship between electoral norms and social structure. In this perspective, laws once again reveal themselves as no more than a space for negotiation whose boundaries are continuously redesigned, given the fact that no legal norm can ever say the last word on the difference between legal and illegal influence, between electoral promises and an illegal traffic in votes, between the cases in which market relations work as a model for the political exchange of opinions, and those in which a true market of votes is established. In conclusion, corruption will never be a yardstick by which the degree of representativeness and solidarity of a political system can be measured.

Similar considerations can be made when speaking not of a single candidate's or a party group's political influence, but of the role played by public institutions. The exercise of influence always implies not only social asymmetry, but also a certain degree of institutional power, which can be merely local and traditional (the typical paradigm being the squire within his community) or can be inserted into a wider framework of state and administrative powers. In the cases in which the process of national amalgamation is, to a certain extent, run by central institutions, this involves a degree of command and the exercise of violence, in Weberian terms. The influence of prefects over mayors and public servants for the support of government candidates in the German, French, Italian, and Spanish cases (but probably everywhere except in the United Kingdom, where there was a modern administrative state) is a major issue for historical discourse

47 Henry BROUGHAM, *quot. ibid.*, p. 10.

upon elections, and has been studied in terms of distortion of opinion, if not of corruption. As for private or party pressure, here, too, I would argue that the influence exercised by administrative authorities and state agents over elections tells us very little about the representativeness and solidity of a political system. In societies which are not accustomed to political liberty and electoral practices, pressure from administrative authorities could belong to the very process of legalisation, i.e. to the diffusion, and even imposition, of constitutional norms.⁴⁸

The case of Spain during the Restoration period is revealing. Historians tell us that Spain is one of those cases in which representative mechanisms never played a central role in the balance of political powers, for truly free electoral conflicts rarely took place, and in which "legislation contemplated, and in practice actually warranted, massive government intervention in the elections as from the mid 1840s up to the mid 1920s".⁴⁹ However, after a period of political turmoil and military coups, during the Restoration which followed 1874, a period of balance and alternation in power between the two leading parties was reached through strong intervention by central authorities and negotiation with local leaders (the "caciques"). Elections were manipulated, and the electorate "influenced" and "corrupted".

"Caciquism" can therefore be seen as a borderline case, a kind of baroque parody of representation, and perhaps as a paradigm for fraud and the political control of elections. But it can also be analysed in the wider context of a "southern paradigm" for the role it played in the political integration of traditional countries, in providing legitimisation to the political constitutional system, and in recruiting political elites.⁵⁰ Other similar cases can be mentioned in the working of electoral systems in Latin America, or in Japan, or everywhere it was said that "the ballot is the bullet". Needless to say, historians should stress the peculiarities of such cases, and the great differences between these and other, more "regular" electoral processes. However, mere political condemnation, or the exercise of ranking the most or the least "corrupted" of those systems, is not fruit-

48 I expressed this view for the Italian case in *Il comando impossibile*, *supra*, note 15.

49 J. VARELA ORTEGA and R. A. LOPEZ BLANCO, *Historiography, Sources and Methods for the Study of Electoral Laws in Spain*, in S. NOIRET (ed.), *supra*, nota 11, p. 189. Varela ORTEGA offered one of the first overviews of the caciquil system in *Los amigos políticos. Partidos, elecciones y caciquismo en la Restauración (1875-1900)*, Madrid, 1977. Caciquism under Restoration has become one of the most widely investigated themes in Spanish political history since the end of Francoism. See also A. GARRIDO MARTIN, *Historiografía sobre el caciquismo: balance y perspectivas*, "Historia", vol. L, no. 176, 1990, p. 1349-60.

50 In this perspective, see for the Portuguese case P. TAVARES DE ALMEIDA, *Eleições e caciquismo no Portugal oitocentista (1868-1890)*, Lisboa, 1991.

ful. On the contrary, comparison is necessary for a better comprehension of the real working of electoral systems in different contexts; this can but lead to a better definition of the concept itself of political representation in contemporary Europe.

LA NATIONALISATION DE LA CITOYENNETÉ CIVIQUE EN FRANCE A LA FIN DU XIX^e SIÈCLE

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Nombre d'études qui prennent appui sur ce que l'histoire française des disciplines savantes a dénommé l'histoire des idées politiques, l'histoire politique ou l'histoire intellectuelle du politique¹ peuvent avec des nuances se contenter d'une histoire de la citoyenneté civique qui s'apparente à une vision idéalisée, ou idéale, de ce que l'on préférera appeler ici la construction du corps électoral.

Soit une vision institutionnelle qui, par la succession des étapes légales menant au suffrage universel comme tout le travail social et politique de production de l'institution suffrage universel, soit une vision intellectualisante des processus de «citoyennisation» des individus et donc de

* Cette communication reprend et synthétise un ensemble de recherches que j'ai menées depuis plusieurs années sur l'apprentissage de la citoyenneté civique en France. Elles s'appuient sur les dépouillements effectués tant sur des sources d'archives (nationales et départementales) que sur des documents imprimés et des travaux que j'ai déjà publiés, notamment : «Illégitimité et légitimation du personnel politique ouvrier», *Annales ESC*, 1984, p. 4; «Mobilisations électorales et invention du citoyen» in D. Gaxie (ed), *Explication du vote*, Paris: Presses FNSP, 1985; «Le nombre de voix», *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 1988, p. 71-2; «Descendre dans la rue. De la "journée" à la "manif"» in P. Favre (ed), *La manifestation*, Paris: Presses FNSP, 1990; «L'électeur et ses papiers», *Genèses*, 1993, p. 13; *Un homme une voix?*, Paris: Découvertes Gallimard, 1993; «Eclats de voix. L'élection comme objet de science politique», *Regards sociologiques*, 1994, p. 7.

1 L'histoire du suffrage universel a connu une importante mutation récente en France avec la parution de trois ouvrages: R. HUARD, *Le suffrage universel en France 1848-1946*, Paris: Aubier, 1991; P. ROSANVALLON, *Le sacre du citoyen*, Paris: Gallimard, 1992; A. GARRIGOU, *Le vote et la vertu*, Paris: Presses FNSP, 1992. On consultera également d'A. GARRIGOU, «Le secret de l'isoloir», *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 1988, 71 et 72, et «Invention et usages de la carte électorale», *Politix*, 1990, p. 10-11. Les numéros spéciaux de *Politix*, 1993, p. 22 et de la *Revue Française de Science Politique*, 1993, p. 1, coordonnés par Yves Déloye et Olivier Ihl. Sur ces débats socio-historiographiques on se reportera au point critique que j'ai publié dans *Genèses*, «Le vote comme évidence et comme énigme», 1993, p. 12.