

# Representation & Misrepresentation in the History of Political Thought

9<sup>th</sup> Annual London Graduate Conference in the History of Political Thought  
28-29 June 2018, London

This year's Annual London Graduate Conference in the History of Political Thought will explore the concept of 'Representation'. The conference keynote address will be delivered by Dr Rachel Hammersley (Newcastle).

Often, 'political representation' has served to substitute direct popular governance. Criticisms of participatory democracy date back to the ancients. Plato warned that democratic states are like the ship likely to be wrecked at sea by a short-sighted, quarrelling crew without a captain. For Hobbes, writing in the seventeenth-century, it was the monarch who best represented the public interest because their interest and that of the state were aligned.

Considering such enduring remarks, is it any wonder that the American Revolutionaries opted to use a representative system when founding their new republic? This trend has been seen throughout modern history, with many postwar states choosing a similar path. However, is it possible that elected representatives can subvert a people's sovereignty? Does, in practice, representative democracy allow a political elite to misrepresent the interest of those they purport to serve? In the final accounting, who is representing whom? For revolutionary avant-gardes, such as Lenin's vanguards, claims of representation were based on ideological justifications. States have also frequently limited themselves to selectively representing only certain types of citizens, based on property qualifications, class or gender.

Questions surrounding representation are central to political debate today. Does, for example, the Spanish government, or even the Catalan government, accurately represent the will of the Catalonian people? Has the Brexit-referendum demonstrated that direct democracy can work, or does it threaten to cause destabilisation and demagoguery? How does one reconcile judicial review or constitutional authority on the one hand and the power of elected representatives on the other? How and why have so many states around the globe incorporated the idea of representation into their political structures?

We welcome proposals for papers and panels from any period and discipline, with the concept of 'Representation', 'Misrepresentation' and 'Democracy' construed as widely as possible. Applicants may wish to consider some of the following themes:

- Theories of political representation, ancient to modern
- Historical and normative accounts of representative democracy
- Legal ideas of representation, authorisation, and personation
- False representations: strategies of deceit, dissimulation, and manipulation

To submit a paper or panel proposal, please email a C.V. and an abstract of no more than 500 words for presentations of 20 minutes per paper to [historyofpoliticalthoughtnet@gmail.com](mailto:historyofpoliticalthoughtnet@gmail.com). The call for papers will close on the **16th of March 2018**, at 23:59 GMT. Panel proposals should include the titles of individual papers, and should not exceed 1,500 words in total. As a graduate conference, please note that we can only consider proposals from applicants who have not been awarded a doctorate. Successful applicants will be notified no later than the 16th of April 2018.