**Across the Great Divide:
Ankersmit's Aesthetic Gap and
Representative Democracy**

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Abstract

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This thesis is an exploration of an aesthetic approach to political theory. In particular, I examine the concept of representative democracy in terms of philosophical aesthetics. Drawing inspiration from F.R. Ankersmit's *Aesthetic Politics: Political Philosophy Beyond Fact and Value*, I argue that there is a necessary 'distance' between citizens and their government, that, if ignored, can have totalitarian consequences. Understanding this distance, also known as the 'aesthetic gap,' requires an exploration of the notion of perspective. Ultimately, once both citizens and government begin to comprehend their particular perspectives, the question of what it means to be represented in a democratic regime becomes comprehensible. This awareness leads to interesting implications for the role of the political representative, and about the relationship between citizens and their governors.

This thesis is dedicated to Julie Rose Blais
for her ineffable love and support;

and to Dr. Ed King
for his sense of perspective.

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Ever since Burkhardt saw that the meaning of Machiavelli's method was to turn the state into a work of art by the rational manipulation of power, it has been an open possibility to apply the method of art analysis to the critical evaluation of society ... The Western world, dedicated since the sixteenth century to the increase and consolidation of the power of the state, has developed an artistic unity of effect which makes artistic criticism of that effect quite feasible.

~H. Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride*

'Completely true to nature!'—what a lie:
How could nature ever be constrained into a picture?
The smallest bit of nature is infinite!
And so he paints what he likes about it.
And what does he like? He likes what he can paint!

~Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

Chapter 1: Introduction

A relationship between aesthetics and politics has been articulated since the earliest written works of philosophy. Plato's condemnation of the artists in the *Republic* is among the more famous examples. A lesser known, but perhaps more interesting example is Hobbes' ironic denunciation of the role of metaphor and other literary and rhetorical tropes for understanding politics in *Leviathan* (Hobbes 37). There is a nascent but growing literature that seeks to define and invigorate an aesthetic approach to understanding political phenomena. Nonetheless, the relationship between aesthetics, an ambiguous term connoting variously art and sensory experience, and politics, a term of no less varied employment, while interesting, is today rarely seen as intrinsic or necessary. I will argue, however, that an aesthetic approach to understanding political phenomena allows for the resolution of previously intractable dilemmas that have developed due to an over-reliance on fact and value distinctions in contemporary political thought.

The problem of representation in democracies will be explored using an aesthetic approach in an attempt to demonstrate this thesis. I will argue that, more than simply providing an interesting problem on which to employ aesthetic political theory, representation is particularly appropriate to illustrate aesthetic political theory, because the concept of representation is essential to both politics and aesthetics. This kinship is more than semantic. Understanding representation aesthetically will lend intelligibility to political representation. Understanding political representation will help illustrate the

aesthetic approach to politics. The two forms of representation are isomorphic. Representation provides a clear example of how an aesthetic trope can be employed to enhance understanding politics.

Therefore the ultimate goal of this project is to explore the usefulness of an aesthetic approach to political theory. Prior to attempting this, however, certain clarifications need to be made. 'Aesthetics' in particular is a broad and multifaceted term, and care must be taken to examine and articulate those elements of aesthetic theory that are useful for making political phenomena intelligible.

The Aesthetic Framework

From Aristotle's *Poetics* to the political theories of the Frankfurt school, aesthetics is demonstrably an irresistible topic to many philosophers. A thorough survey of the subject would require more space than would be appropriate here, as evidenced by the length of comprehensive studies of the concept (Gilbert and Kuhn 1954). It is safest, therefore, to begin with a basic definition and the essential connotations of the term. I am more than willing to concede that further research into the genealogy of aesthetics would enrich this premise. Nonetheless, one has to start somewhere. I will take as fundamental two aspects of aesthetics: sense perception and appreciation of the beautiful, in particular, art. Of these two, the connection between the first and politics is perhaps clearer. Imagining an understanding of politics based on sense perception, especially as opposed to rational, metaphysical inquiry, is not a particularly difficult leap, one that has nonetheless been

mostly ignored within the study of contemporary political theory, despite the legacy of skeptical philosophers such as Hume. An art of politics or simply a connection between the two, however, may require firmer ground. What I will attempt to show is that there is coherence, if not complete unity, between these two elements of aesthetics, art, or appreciation of the beautiful, and sense perception, and that this more comprehensive view of aesthetics is useful for understanding politics.

To reiterate, the notion of aesthetics has two distinct but interdependent connotations that will be relevant for the development of my thesis: art and sensory experience. An aesthetic approach to political theory is grounded in the primacy of human sensory experience, and simultaneously recognizes that the tools of artistic analysis can provide fruitful insights into political phenomena.

Like any tool, there are situations for which the aesthetic approach will be a suitable heuristic, and there will be times that it is inappropriate. To be clear, what I seek to articulate is ultimately an aesthetic political framework. Ostrom offers a clear definition of what this would constitute within the context of political science:

> Frameworks organize diagnostic and prescriptive enquiry ... Frameworks provide a metatheoretical language that can be used to compare theories. They attempt to identify the universal elements that any theory relevant to the same kind of phenomena would need to include ... the elements contained in a framework help analysts generate the questions that need to be addressed when they first conduct an analysis (Ostrom 2007, 25).

A comprehensive framework would therefore lend coherence to the debates surrounding the use of aesthetics in political investigations, and would be an invaluable asset for aesthetic political theory, in that it would help define the scope of aesthetic enquiry, rather

than simply proposing relationships between concepts. I do not expect to fully realize this goal within the scope of this project. Nonetheless, I hope to begin to contribute to a framework of aesthetic political thought, one which could be expanded through further research and analysis. This exercise, however, is not purely methodological. By carefully articulating my framework, I hope to build a solid foundation on which to reincorporate tools of philosophical aesthetics into political theory.

Prior to exploring the meaning of aesthetics in terms of political philosophy, one should bear in mind Hutter's warning to Von Vacano:

> 'Aesthetics' is one of the most misused terms in the confused discourses of both popular and academic culture. It purveys an almost systematic ambiguity that seems to define the confusion of modern understandings concerning art, morality, politics, ethics, as well as good, bad, and evil (Hutter 2007, 1).

Clearly, 'aesthetics' is a term with a scope so broad that it is as, if not more, likely to obscure than to clarify. I will argue, as Hutter suggests, that, for the sake of political philosophy, the most useful conception of aesthetics entails a return to the "Greek term *aisthesis* that merely designates the human capacity for sense experience" (Hutter 2), without, however, neglecting the useful insights that can be drawn from artistic connotations of the term. Acceptance of the primacy of sense experience roots any understanding of the world in the recognition of the partiality of human life, that every person possesses their own point of view due to their unique set of experiences (Hutter 2, Von Vacano 188). The primacy of individual human perspective is therefore centrally important to aesthetic political philosophy.

The centrality of the individual is not a revolutionary idea in the realm of political theory. Each of the three mainstream contemporary traditions of political theory: liberalism, republicanism, and communitarianism, all locate the human individual as the locus from which the political order emanates. Liberalism is premised on the individual's conception of a universally just social order. Republicanism entails identification with the public interest on the part of the individual. Communitarianism focuses on the realization of the self within the community (Ankersmit 1996, 7). Ultimately, what separates these from the aesthetic tradition is the latter's recognition, not of the *centrality* of the individual's perspective, but of the necessary, sensory *limitations* on the individual's perspective. Aesthetic political theory is therefore perfectly suited to incorporate the concept of human limitation into the study of politics.

Humans are finite beings, with a limited range of potential experiences. This finitude emerges from the material nature of the physical world. *A priori* truths are, if not impossible, irrelevant for the sake of human functioning (Hutter 2). From this emerges a sense of partiality, of the separateness of one individual from the rest. This sense of separateness could be characterized as a kind of disorder that emerges from "unconscious and mutually contradictory passions" (Hutter 3). I can find no better description of the origin of human finitude and partiality than this. Nietzsche and Machiavelli are two thinkers who, each in their own way, consider this human limitation to be of central political importance (Von Vacano 2, Hutter 2). While they share a similar concern, the way in which each would propose to address this concern are profoundly different.

Simply described, Machiavelli's solution is outer and Nietzsche's inner. For Machiavelli, society, and for Nietzsche the individual soul, are the units of analysis.

In fact, a preliminary definition of aesthetic political theory can readily be drawn from the dedicatory letter that opens Machiavelli's *The Prince*, one that entails three essential characteristics. The first is the essential brokenness of the political world; a world divided into that of the prince and that of the people. Politics belongs to the prince, ethics to the people and the two perspectives rarely meet to the advantage of either party. The second characteristic follows on from that in that the brokenness emerges from the different perspectives of the actors, the different points of view of the princes on the mountain and the people on the plain. The final characteristic is that this difference in perspective allows for the kind of distance necessary for observation and understanding (Ankersmit 1996, 18, Von Vacano, 139).

The separateness of prince and people exemplifies the crucial concept of the 'aesthetic gap', the necessary separateness between representative and represented (Ankersmit 1996, 119). As Ankersmit illustrates:

> The prince is always a representation in the minds of the people ... whereas the people can only present themselves to the prince's mind as a representation—and there is no medium, neutral, or common ground where these two representatives meet or could be matched ... alienation is where all politics begin (Ankersmit 1996, 120).

Political problems then emerge from a bifurcated political reality where there is an absence of common ground between people and their governors. The aesthetic gap is thus rooted in the essential brokenness of politics and the necessary separation between citizens and government.

This lack of continuity between citizens and government is a central concern of an aesthetic approach to politics, one especially significant for the study of representative democracy. Part of my goal for this work is to see how an elaboration of the aesthetic gap can enrich a discussion of the nature of political representation within a democracy.

An aesthetic approach to politics, one rooted in brokenness, can be seen as counterintuitive. "We are naturally inclined to value concord, union, and consensus in politics: for does not all politics aim at the reconciliation of conflict and at the replacement of disorder and disunion with order and union?" (Ankersmit 2002, 189). However, one must question whether or not union and consensus *are* realistic political goals if the origin of political life is disorder. This disorder, this gap between people and their governors means that representation will always be an essential part of political life. For what is political representation but an attempt to bridge this gap? In any form of government beyond the crudest despotism, there is a relationship between people and their government. The task of representation, and of the political representative in representative democracy, is to understand what that relationship is.

Political and Aesthetic Representation

Prior to entering into a discussion of the aesthetic nature of political representation, it is necessary to justify the compatibility of the terms. For who is to say that representation in the political sense and representation in the aesthetic or artistic sense are anything more than homonyms? While I am initially inclined to simply try to apply the tools of artistic

aesthetic representation to political representation and see where it leads, I feel it safer to justify the use of these tools for this particular exercise. What similarities exist between politics and aesthetics that might justify the use of aesthetic tools for political understanding?

Representation is a point of commonality for politics and aesthetics, and thus a reasonable point of departure for this project. Representation is both political: "all politics presupposes the self-awareness of the political collectivity that is paradigmatically exemplified by (political) representation" (Ankersmit 1996, 23), and aesthetic: "the three traditional categories of aesthetic theory, *representation*, expression/emotion and form, can be translated into political language" (Von Vacano 145) (Emphasis mine).

Ultimately, an aesthetic approach can help make representative politics intelligible to both theorists and citizens. Theorists benefit from new tools with which to understand political questions, those of art and literary criticism. Citizens have an opportunity to educate their sensibilities to meet the challenges of contemporary politics, and engage in constructive dialogue with their representatives. This can only happen if citizens begin to clarify the nature of their relationship with their representatives. An articulation of an aesthetic approach to politics encompasses the goal of lending coherence to the debates surrounding the use of aesthetics in political investigations. By carefully articulating the aesthetic framework, a solid foundation can be built on which to incorporate tools of aesthetic analysis into political theory.

Pitkin's study of the concept of representation still ranks among the most comprehensive, as a guide to the concept, it is essential. While tightly argued, Pitkin's

work rarely engages the concept of representation in a critical manner, being content with an exegesis of different conceptions of representation (Fain 110), Furthermore, Pitkin comments that, while a basic definition of political representation is elusive (Pitkin 5-6), artistic conceptions of representation can lend clarity (Pitkin 7).

What I hope to add to Pitkin's study is the aesthetic perspective. Pitkin presents two opposing understandings of representation, both of which are necessary to understand the concept as a whole. These understandings of representation can each be characterized by the relationship between representative and represented. Is the representative free to act as a trustee, to do what he or she feels is best for the community, or does the representative act as a delegate of the community, one who would do what the members of that community would do, if they could be there? This dichotomy, she argues (Pitkin 148) is the most fundamental in the study of political representation. Recall Burke's famous letter to the electors of Bristol, in which he offers a clear defense of the trusteeship model of representation (Pitkin 169-170). On the other hand, proponents of direct democracy clarify the delegate model. This debate, Pitkin argues, is intractable. Both sides make compelling arguments about the nature of representation. Political representatives, however, continue their work, blissfully unaware of the theoretical contradictions that define what they do. An aesthetic approach will help illuminate that practice of political representation.

Ankersmit's Aesthetic Political Representation

My main source for understanding this approach to political questions is drawn from the work of F.R. Ankersmit. Unfortunately, scholarship on Ankersmit's work on aesthetic political theory and political representation is underdeveloped. This is not entirely surprising. Most of Ankersmit's work is as a philosopher of history. When his insights from the study of history were transferred to the field of political theory, they proved antithetical to prevailing traditions. His form of political theory had little point of contact with rival frameworks. A lack of engagement by the scholarly community of political theorists is therefore not surprising. This is not to say that his work is not explored within the context of the study of history. Two of his more recent books focusing on politics, however, (1996, 2002) have largely been ignored.

Perhaps due to the interdisciplinary nature of his work, his theories have yet to find purchase within the community of political theorists. Ankersmit's work on the subject began with an investigation of historical representation, which he enriched through notions from aesthetics. This, in turn led him to an investigation of political representation. I wish to explore Ankersmit's notion of political representation and employ it to help explicate the debate that Pitkin identifies as lying unresolved between delegatory and trusteeship representation.

Von Vacano's understanding of aesthetic political theory is very similar to that of Ankersmit, the essence of the aesthetic perspective is rooted in "the way politics *is*, rather than how it *ought* to be" (Von Vacano 1-2). His understanding emerges, not from a study

of history, as does Ankersmit's, but rather from an attempt to demonstrate the basic compatibility of the ideas of Machiavelli and Nietzsche (Von Vacano 1). And while his explicit goals primarily relate to exploring these two thinkers, he reserves a place in his project for an attempt at the development of aesthetic political theory. Interestingly, he says he will literally "construct a model of an 'aesthetic political theory'" (Von Vacano 8). While he acknowledges that Ankersmit's work is an early part of the tradition of aesthetic political theory, curiously he does not engage the substance of Ankersmit's contributions directly.

While Von Vacano's understanding of aesthetic political theory emerges from the thought of Machiavelli and Nietzsche, like that of Ankersmit, he presents aesthetics theory as an attempt to supplant the dominant ethical paradigm of political thought (Von Vacano 9 141). There are arguably enough similarities between their arguments that I feel justified in using the work of Von Vacano to strengthen that of Ankersmit. Although Von Vacano's work was published over a decade after Ankersmit's first excursion into aesthetic political theory, there is almost no recognition beyond a single footnote and one mention by name (Von Vacano 9 n6, 149). Nonetheless, I am comfortable attributing the similarities between the two theories to a situation like the Newton/Leibniz co-discovery of calculus. An aesthetic approach to political theory is clearly an idea for which the time has come.

Chapter 2: Aesthetic Representation

What an aesthetic approach to representation offers the study of politics is the recognition that the relationship between representative and represented, government and citizen is mediated by various factors unintelligible to one who presumes an identity between the two. The aesthetic gap provides a framework in which questions of mediation can be made visible. By exploring the aesthetic framework in which meaningful political questions can be asked, this project will assist in developing tools for useful theoretical inquiry.

A clear origin for the aesthetic approach is grounded in the partiality of human sensory life. If, however, we rely exclusively on this perspectival view of the notion of aesthetics, as would be tempting to do, we lose much of the richness that the artistic connotations of aesthetics imply. For example the notion of representation, an artistic concept, is of central importance to understanding the aesthetic gap, and, therefore more broadly, politics as a whole. Representation, notes Pitkin in her classic study, is inarguably a significant component of contemporary politics (Pitkin 2). She also comments that political representation has often been understood metaphorically in a variety of ways, some of which clarify, while others obscure. The notion of artistic or aesthetic representation in particular has the potential to enrich our understanding of political representation, if one is willing to face the dangers of obscuring the topic that could arise through an unclear understanding of the term 'representation' (Pitkin 7).

Ankersmit clearly welcomes the aesthetic connotations of the term representation (Ankersmit 1996, xiii). In fact, he finds that an axiom of political representation emerges from the world of art: "the interest of art lies in the fact that there are no fixed and generally accepted rules to link the represented and its artistic representation ... there is no continuity between the ruler (or representative) and the ruled (or represented)" (Ankersmit 1996, xiv). An aesthetic approach is therefore one that can help transcend monological understandings of political phenomena. This is because the very nature of aesthetics rests on the importance of perspective, which necessitates the possibility of multiple points of view. Inherent in an aesthetic approach, then, is the necessary view that there is more than one way of understanding political phenomena.

Also tacit in an aesthetic understanding of representation is that no image can exactly recreate what it portrays. There is always a choice on the part of the representer to include or omit certain elements of what is represented, for not everything can or should be included. It is the perspective of the artist that frames the picture, their choice of what to portray based on individual experience. What is interesting about art is rarely the accuracy with which a piece portrays some element of the world, but rather how it can deepen our understanding of the world and ourselves. Completely and accurately constraining some element of an infinite world into a limited space is impossible (Nietzsche 65). Any form of representation that seeks this goal is therefore doomed to failure. One should question, then, the purpose of representation. The key, I believe, is to be found in a recognition and even a celebration of the limits of representation, in understanding that any representation inherently assumes a certain point of view or

perspective that, while limiting in terms of breadth, simultaneously allows for a deeper understanding of that which is represented.

Art requires distance. If one wishes to view a painting, to appreciate and potentially interpret it, then pressing one's nose up against it will be of little help. The painting will only mean something when viewed from a sufficient enough distance to take it in as a whole. If one considers every word of a poem in particular, or every note of a symphony individually, then any sense of unity or coherence of the work will be lost. Does one have a right to do this? Of course. There are no rules as to how the average person must engage a work of art. If, however, the role of the viewer is to make some sense of the artistic whole, such as that of a critic who is to interpret the work, or that of a political theorist then that individual would find little professional success by speaking only of the parts. If it is one's profession to interpret, then professional distance in required.

Furthermore, the notion of distance is crucial to the idea of representation, as there can be no representation if represented and representative are identical. A bowl of fruit can be represented in a still life, but the painting does not become the fruit. A democratically elected counselor supposedly represents her constituents, but in what sense does she become them? Debates exist in both political and artistic representation as to whether representation is simply mimetic, that is, an attempt at direct replication, or if something is revealed in the representation and regarding the role of the counselor in relation to her constituents. Overlaying artistic metaphors of art and artist onto political situations is not a straightforward task. Detailing which elements of aesthetic

representation are analogous to those of political representation will be explored throughout this discussion.

The Paradox of Representation

Representation, like *aesthetics*, is a term fraught with ambiguity. Unclear definitions are more likely to obscure than to clarify. In her classic discussion of representation, Pitkin is well aware of this potential pitfall: "indeed, the literature might almost suggest that indiscriminate use of improper analogies has been the cause of all the confusion" (Pitkin 7). Her approach to the study of representation is in the tradition of the 'ordinary language philosophy' of Austin, which indicates that the object of her study should include the way in which the term 'representation' is used in popular discourse. Furthermore, it involves words related to 'representation' such as 'representative', 'misrepresentation', etc. And while an essential definition of 'political representation' may grow muddled by exploring the term in this way, the richness of understanding that may also emerge from such a study is worth the risk. This is especially true when her "assumption has been that analogies and nonpolitical uses of the word are misleading only where they are misused, especially where one analogy is taken as definitive, to the exclusion of all others" (Pitkin 1967, 7).

Without excursing too far afield, I would like to note the affinity for aesthetics indicated by such an approach. Pitkin's study is not a metaphysics of representation based

on a priori principles. Instead, she roots her discussion based on *observation* of how the

term is used in practice. As a reviewer notes:

> "rather than attempting to advance and defend a persuasive definition of
> the meaning of representative government, she tries to show that much of
> the controversy among political theorists over what makes a government
> representative is fueled by the failure to notice than any particular
> persuasive definition misleadingly presents part of the meaning of
> representation as if it were the only meaning" (Fain 110).

Without overly emphasizing this, I wish simply to point out the basic compatibility

between the works of Pitkin and Ankersmit before using both in the same project. In a

way, Pitkin's use of ordinary language philosophy can be seen as a kind of Ankersmittian

aesthetics *avant la lettre.*

The basic definition that Pitkin gives to the term 'representation', that can apply to

both its political and aesthetic forms, is "the making present *in some sense* of something

which is nevertheless *not* present literally or in fact" (Pitkin 8-9) (emphasis author's).

There is something paradoxical about this definition, because, as soon as something

becomes present, it, by definition is no longer absent, and therefore would no longer be in

need of representation. Pitkin is sensitive to the paradox of something both being and not

being present simultaneously, and attempts to resolve it: "something *not literally* present

is considered as present in a *nonliteral* sense" (Pitkin 9) (emphasis mine). Ultimately, I

find this resolution unsatisfying. All representation is somewhat metaphorical and thus

not literal. It is no escape from the earlier paradox to argue as such. Conversely, I will

argue that this paradox, ultimately the essential paradox of representation, when

unpacked, can lead to a fruitful understanding of the nature of representation. Rather than

simply brushing aside this paradox, then, I hope to demonstrate that the impossibility of something both being and not-being present, this tension between represented and representative is at the heart of why the aesthetic conception of representation is useful to politics. Ultimately, I suspect that this paradox is a practical instantiation of Ankersmit's aesthetic gap.

To reiterate, the essential paradox of representation is the simultaneous and necessary presence and non-presence of that which is represented. For if representation actually brought the represented into being, made it present, then the act of representation would involve producing identically that which was not present. But if an object identical to that which is being represented becomes present, there is no need for representation, and, indeed, representation becomes impossible, because, as per Pitkin's essential definition, representation is 'the making present' of something 'not present'.

An example might help clarify this knot of logic. Let's say that I am a sculptor with magic clay. The clay is magic because, once I shape it into something, it actually transforms into that thing. So if I were to form the clay into an apple, the sculpture of the apple would actually transform into an apple, not just in shape, but also in texture, smell, and taste. Can this apple be said to represent an apple, or would it actually be an apple? Clearly there is no longer any representation at hand. What this paradox of representation demonstrates is that, should the representation become identical to that which is represented, then representation ceases to occur. One might rightly ask whether this is not simply a word game, with no actual relevance to either the artistic or political realm. While the consequences of this are not likely readily apparent, they will be significant

when applied to debates over political representation. In an act of political representation, what is the apple, who is the sculptor, and what is the clay? What is represented, by whom, and in what medium or forum?

On the other hand, the representation cannot be wholly disconnected from that which is represented. While the representation inherently cannot be identical with that which it represents, there must be some connection, or, to embrace an aesthetic connotation, there must be some inspiration from the represented. For if this inspiration is lacking, then there is also no representation, for what was called representation is actually just its own independent object. Put in terms of politics, we would not say that a member of government who pursues policy unrelated to the interests of a majority of his or her constituents in any way represents them (Pitkin 148). This person would be a representative in name only, and in no way could be said to represent his or her constituents. Like in the example of the apple, there is no representation.

If there is to be representation, then, a balance must be struck between these two extremes, and potentially erroneous conceptions of representation. This balance becomes all the more essential once we realize that these views are extreme of the two sides in much contemporary debate over the nature of representation. Of these debates, "the dichotomy between acting as a delegate and acting as a trustee is most fundamental" (Pennock 14).

The former case, where the representation attempts to become identical to that which is represented, exemplifies delegatory or mimetic representation, a situation where the representative must act as much as possible how a majority of his or her constituents

would act. The latter case, where the link between representative and represented appears much weaker, exemplifies trusteeship representation, a type of representation with an affinity for the aesthetic, wherein the representative possesses a certain degree of independence from his or her constituents. The examples I have given exemplify an extreme view of each, often proposed by proponents of the other side. What I hope to show is that while critiques of mimetic representation remain effective, adopting an aesthetic approach can circumvent the problems associated with trusteeship representation.

Chapter 3: Debating Representation

Before proceeding further into the realm of aesthetics, it is appropriate to here give an

overview of the differences between delegate and trusteeship representation. Pitkin

ultimately classifies this debate as irresolvable (Pitkin 145-146). Especially relevant for

discussions of democratic representation, this discussion centres on the degree of freedom

representatives should have regarding the wishes of their constituents. To what degree,

the question goes, should a representative be bound to the wishes of their constituents, as

opposed to possessing the independence to pursue ends they believe best for the

community (Pitkin 41). Addressing this question entails going to the heart of what

representation is in politics.

> The problem of representation has, broadly speaking [since the beginning
> of the Eighteenth Century], been concerned with the question of when and
> under what circumstances governments, as far as composition and
> decision-making go, are a *reflection* of the mind of the people.
> (Ankersmit 1996, 25) (emphasis mine)

This time frame could be expanded by half a century to the 1651 publication of Hobbes'

Leviathan, arguably one of the first sustained arguments on the nature of political

representation (Pitkin 14). Before proceeding to a discussion of Hobbes' conception of

representation, there is one crucial element of Ankersmit's definition that should be

identified, for it will be crucial in the discussion of political representation to follow.

By drawing attention to the reflective nature of representation, Ankersmit sows

the seeds of the constituent nature of aesthetics to representation (Ankersmit 1996, 38-9).

Reflecting or representing 'the mind of the people' requires a perspective that is both

external to and separate from that mind, further reinforcing the gap between representative and represented. This perspective is not part of the representation, in that it is not itself the mind of the people, but rather the perspective from which this mind is observed. Perspective, or point of view, is thus an essential component of representation. "As landscape cannot determine from what perspective it is seen, so the representation always contains an element that is essential to its representationability and that can never be reduced to the world *itself* and to what is true and false" (Ankersmit 1996, 39). The representation thus cannot be identical with that which it represents. If it were, it would cease to be useful in any meaningful way (Ankersmit 1996, 40). As was demonstrated, this idea is part of the essence of the paradox of representation: representation requires difference, else there is no representation. While this appears tautological, it leads to the useful principle that forms of representation that presuppose identity between representative and represented are, in fact, not representations, but something else.

This line of reasoning is useful in that it allows us to demonstrate that while many authors claim to discuss representation, and that while many politicians claim to be acting as representatives, they are not. The former group would include theorists, such as James Madison for whom government, if it is to possess any legitimacy, must seek to recreate or mimic the mind of the people in its decisions (Pitkin 146). Regarding the politicians, the nature of government by plebiscite becomes a questionable affair, in that no longer simply the mind of the people is being reflected, but also their decisions as to how they would act. This, which ultimately amounts to a type of non-representation, is referred to as a 'mimetic theory of representation' (Ankersmit 1996, 28), which is to be contrasted

with an 'aesthetic theory of representation' (Ankersmit 1996, 45), one which satisfies the condition of a necessary separateness between representative and represented.

Something to bear in mind as the different forms of representation are discussed regards the constitution of the representative. Are representatives simply substitutes for the fact that large populations make it impossible for every individual citizen to be assembled or to be consulted? For as communications technology becomes more efficient, polling more sophisticated, the idea of assembling all citizens, or at least their opinions becomes less problematic. Representation is often seen as necessary if and only if the political community cannot be assembled any other way (Plotke 19-20). If a mimetic view of representation is problematic, however, then the direction in which democracy is moving should prove troubling.

Any type of regime throughout history can be said to 'represent' the citizens of that regime (Ankersmit 1996, 24). Whether or not citizens 'feel' represented is another matter that shall be investigated. Whether a regime is effective or ineffective at representing its citizens, although initially bearing the appearance of a normative question, is, in fact, a question of 'feeling' on the part of those citizens, and is thus an aesthetic question. On this point, Ankersmit and Pitkin are in agreement: "Whether a state represents its people is a question of taste, of a feeling of the part of those represented" (Ankersmit 1996, 23). "...whether its representative institutions are 'meaningful'" (Pitkin 45). The aesthetic approach thus situates normative questions regarding a particular regime within a broader question of the effectiveness of the

representation of citizens within the regime. As we will see, democratic regimes have the potential to facilitate this sense of feeling represented.

Aesthetic political theory thus opposes the mimetic and delegatory conception of representation, one that presumes an identity between the government and the citizen. An aesthetic approach is thus sympathetic to models of democracy where the representative acts as agent of the represented without attempting to embody the will of the represented. Aesthetic representation, in contrast to mimetic representation, does not try to simply ape voter preferences, but create something new that refers to those preferences, while remaining distinct from them (Ankersmit 1996, 45). What aesthetic representation offers to politics is the recognition that the relationship between representative and represented, government and citizen is mediated by various factors that are invisible to someone who presumes an identity between these two. In enumerating and exploring these factors, this mediation, we will not fall victim to a false sense of the political will of the electorate, but will begin to understand the best possible picture of what the electorate might wish to do. This is the closest approximation we have to political reality, and therefore, for all intents and purposes, this representation *is* political reality; it is created in its representation (Ankersmit 1996, 46-7).

Mimetic Representation

A mimetic or delegatory conception of representation is characterized explicitly by the responsibility and accountability of the representative to the represented. Pitkin

comments that the typical attitude of such a representative is to "act as if your constituents were acting themselves" (Pitkin 144).

In what could be called the accountability view, the representative has a new obligation or responsibility to the represented, a responsibility that did not previously exist "Where authorization theorists see the representative as free, the represented as bound, accountability theorists see precisely the converse" (Pitkin 55). Pitkin characterizes the accountability view as a negative reaction to preexisting authorization views of representation, an attempt at correcting what is seen as not actually representative (Pitkin 57). The accountability view, however, is incomplete, as it, on its own, provides no account of what the representative will do, just what the representative will be responsible *for* (Pitkin 58).

This view has, historically, had some influential proponents among political architects: "[a representative legislature] should be an exact portrait, in miniature, of the people at large, as it should think, feel, reason and act like them" (John Adams, quoted in Pitkin, 60). "The metaphors of portrait, map, and mirror have this in common: all are renderings of an 'original' in a medium different from it" (Pitkin 72-3) They involve a representing very different from that defined by the formalistic theorists, primarily a 'standing for' something or someone absent some correspondence of features (Pitkin 80). Pitkin notes that this form of representation does not require activity, that is, specific action on the part of the representative, only some sense of likeness, or similarity between representative and represented. Thus the actions of representatives are not what is

important, but what they are like (Pitkin 80-1). Notably, since this definition is based on

'being', not 'doing', it can apply equally to art as to people (Pitkin 81).

"Whatever the legislature does will be what the whole nation would have done in

its place; so no one will have right or reason to complain. A copy sufficiently like an

original can be substituted for the original without making any difference" (Pitkin 84). A

small community is more conducive to the individual expression of opinion. As

communities grow, however, some method of 'proxy' voting is required. Effectively, the

representative becomes the proxy for all constituents (Pitkin 85). Rousseau, however,

provides one of the earliest accounts of the logical rejection of the possibility of mimetic

representation in this spirit (Ankersmit 1996, 28-29). For Rousseau, only an identity

between the will of the citizens and their representative constitutes representation. It is

either their will, or something else, and if something else, then not their will. Since this

recreation of will is impossible, so too is representation.

If one calls to mind Hobbes' artificial person, who is authorized by the natural

persons that are the constituency (Hobbes 120), one can even begin to question how this

sort of representative is a person at all, because no human judgment, beyond the ability to

accurately portray the will of the constituency is required in the representative. This sort

of representative is nothing more than an intermediary, effectively a technological

instrument for compiling and conveying constituent information. Media commentator

Tony Schwartz points to the logical extension of this view:

> The basic reason for having representative government is that all the
> people cannot themselves be at the seat of government. Therefore we call
> on others to speak for us. But with the new technologies, for all practical

purposes we *can* be there, and we may not need representatives, because we now represent ourselves (Schwartz 160-1).

If all representatives do is reflect the mind of the people, advancing communications technology should be able to fulfill this role more efficiently and inexpensively. "For if the representation has to be the represented's indiscernible twin, we could just as well do with represented reality alone and abandon representation as a dangerous and useless detour" (Ankersmit 1996, 44). One can begin to see how mimetic views of representation are actually anti-representational in that, when takes to the logical extreme, representation is completely unnecessary.

The counterpoint to this view being "on the many issues on which people have no will, or do not know what they want, 'there is nothing for the representatives to represent'" (Pitkin 83). So long as those opinions that are possessed by constituents are represented, successful representation is at hand. The representative is more like an artist or mapmaker than a portrait or map (Pitkin 84). There is an active quality to the representative that, leaving aside debates over artificial intelligence, cannot be recreated technologically, as the Schwartzes of the world would have. Here we find the clear link between an aesthetic approach to representation that sees the representative as an artist, applying their perspective and making choices, and the trustee model of representation. One can begin to see the dangers of mimetic representation if one considers the role of polling data in representative government. To presume a mimetic view of representation would be to argue that selection of representative by lot or random sampling is as effective a way of recreating an image of the population as any form of election.

Therefore, politicians need only to pay attention to polls, rather than election results

(Pitkin 73-4). Clearly, this method would only be representative, not to say democratic, if

recreating public opinion exactly were a property of representation. But, as was

demonstrated, this view is paradoxical, and thus governing by poll is a contradiction in

terms.

Mimetic representation necessarily leads to either illegitimate authority, due to the

impossibility of accurately mimicking the electorate, or to no authority at all, as was

articulated by Rousseau. Someone claiming legitimate authority based on the accuracy of

their representation would thus find it impossible to do so. Mimetic representation leads

to either dictatorship or anarchy, not democratic representation. "Political power has its

origin neither in the people represented nor in the representative, but in the representation

process itself" (Ankersmit 1996, 53). "Political reality is not first given to us and

subsequently represented; political reality only comes into being after and due to

representation" (Ankersmit 1996, 47).

Regardless of any logical incoherence in the character of mimetic representation,

many allowances can be made for its acceptability as a political system if it works. If

mimetic representation is able to create some form of effective representation, then it may

possess some historical value. Judging this would require examining mimetic

representation on its own merits, in order to discover whether or not it fulfills what it, as a

system, sets out to do.

"Behind all the applications of the descriptive view to political life hovers the

recurrent ideal of the perfect replica, the flawless image, the map which contains

everything" (Pitkin 86). As Pitkin notes, even an exact replica, were such a thing politically possible, must be 'read' or interpreted, and furthermore, only that which is portrayed can be interpreted. The question arises as to what elements of the political constituency should be represented, portrayed by the representative, which elements of the mind of the people should be politicized. What Pitkin is attempting to demonstrate is that this descriptive view of representation is impossible, or at least unlikely, at any practical level. At the theoretical level, if the correspondence between representative and represented cannot be guaranteed, then any representative edifice built on mimesis begins to crumble (Pitkin 88).

When examined, the criteria of likeness for representation, in that the representative is 'like' the represented, becomes problematic. Is a lunatic the best representative of other lunatics (Pitkin 89)? More complicated, however, is the issue of identity politics, one that merits closer scrutiny. In a case such as gender or ethnicity, it is not mere outward appearance that qualifies the appropriate representative, but an outward appearance indicative of certain inner qualities or experiences. For our purposes, two elements emerge from a discussion of identity in representation, one relating to the formation of interests, and the other to the legitimacy of representation.

Representation based on interest contains the tacit assumption that those interests can be articulated on the part of the constituents and communicated to the representative. Articulating those interests in an organized manner does not necessarily mean, however, that those interests are any less valid than ones that have historically been successfully articulated (Mansbridge 643-4). Furthermore, when issues arise that involve the interests

of a particular community, there is an argument to be made that a descriptive representative will engage the issue more vigorously than would another. This becomes particularly relevant in an environment of trusteeship representation, where the representatives are acting as they think best for their constituents (Mansbridge 646). The second relevant element to be drawn from identity politics regards the question of legitimacy. Within an aesthetic context, seeing someone like oneself, particularly if one has been historically underrepresented, acting as representative can make one feel represented (Mansbridge 650), a crucial element of aesthetic representation.

It is within the scope of identity politics that one can begin to see an interesting link between mimetic representation and aesthetic representation, for if a person can be said to represent others, not through their actions, but due to who they are, then that person represents insofar as she or he symbolizes her or his constituency, is like them, understands them. The key to symbolism is the sharing of certain characteristics that allow the observer to make certain inferences about the meaning of the symbol (Pitkin 94). Also key to the notion of symbolism is the notion of qualities that are shared between the symbol and symbolized, rather that visible characteristics (Pitkin 95). "To say that something symbolizes something else is to say that it calls to mind, and even beyond that evokes emotions or attitudes appropriate to the absent thing" (Pitkin 96).

The qualities Pitkin attributes to symbolism, however, are aesthetic: "We can never exhaust, never quite capture in words, the totality of what a symbol symbolizes: suggests, evokes, implies" (Pitkin 97). Recall Nietzsche's comment about the infinitude of nature. A symbol thus shares characteristics with a work of art, in that a particular

verbal explanation will be insufficient to offer a comparison between symbol and symbolized. Northrop Frye comments that one of the most ridiculous questions a composer can be asked is what a certain melody 'means' (Frye 70). "A symbol cannot simply be 'exchanged with what it symbolizes'" (Tindall, quoted in Pitkin 98). They are not translatable via a certain algorithm, a key characteristic of aesthetic representation.

"Rather than a source of information, the symbol seems to be the recipient or object of feelings, expressions of feeling, or actions intended for what it represents (Pitkin 99). Pitkin cautions against prioritizing a symbolic understanding of representation above others because "representing people will seem no different from symbolizing an abstraction like a nation" (Pitkin 102). She warns of the dangers of symbolic representation, arguing that rather than actually representing, the representative will be the one who attempts to symbolize the represented, one in whom the constituency believes (Pitkin 102). A certain element of pageantry and ritual is visible in most political environments (Pitkin 103).

Furthermore, a purely symbolic conception of representation is incomplete. If it were complete, then representation would be identical to satisfying the constituents (Pitkin 109). As we will see, a 'feeling' on the part of constituents as to whether or not they are represented is an important, underdeveloped element of political representation, especially among mimetic theorists. As Pitkin argues, however, feeling is far from a sufficient explanation for effective representation (Pitkin 111). I will argue, however, that a 'feeling' of being represented is strongly connected to whether or not a representative can be considered legitimate.

Aesthetic Trusteeship

How can a representative access and interpret the 'feelings' of the constituency? As

Burke notes:

> We are the expert artists; we are the skillful workmen, to shape their
> desires into perfect form, and to fit the utensil to the use ... They are the
> sufferers, to tell the symptoms of the complaint; but we know the exact
> seat of the disease, and how to apply the remedy (Burke, quoted in Pitkin,
> 184).

Out of a discussion of Burke's understanding of representation, as exemplified by his

Letter to the Electors of Bristol, Pitkin begins to explore the most reliable access

representatives have to the 'mind of the people', not opinion, but feeling (Pitkin 183).

"Unlike opinions, feelings are reliable; and people are seldom mistaken when they

perceive a pain or symptom, be it physical or political. It is only when they attempt to

speculate abstractly on the basis of what they feel that they go astray into opinion" (Pitkin

183). In the aesthetic realm, the realm of feeling, we thus have the most unmediated,

direct access to what is of concern to the constituency, what they feel strongly about.

"The virtue, spirit and essence of a House of Commons consists in its being the express

image of the feelings of the nation" (Burke, quoted in Pitkin 183). In this view,

"representing is trusteeship, an elite caring for others" (Pitkin 172).

Trusteeship representation is rooted in what Pitkin calls the 'authorization view',

one that grows out of Hobbes' understanding of representation (Pitkin 38). The core of

this understanding grows from Hobbes' definition of person, not to be taken as identical

to 'human being' (Pitkin 15). Person implies a certain relationship to either the ownership

of one's own actions, or the representation of actions owned by another (Hobbes 120). Representation, for Hobbes, essentially involves acting on behalf of another, with the responsibility for the action lying with the owner of the actions, and the freedom to act being owned by the representative (Hobbes 120). This comes about by an act of authorization by the represented.

Authority is given at the outset of the representative relationship, with the limits and character of how the representative will represent the represented being defined at that point. "Representation implies standards for, or limits on, the conduct of the representative" (Pitkin 33). Pitkin further notes that within this view, representation cannot possess good or bad qualities, it simply is or is not. If the representative follows the predetermined nature of the authorization, representation is occurring, else not (Pitkin 39). How this act of authorization occurs is relevant, if one wishes to consider the character of a particular regime.

"For the theorist of representative democracy working from an authorization definition, the crucial criterion becomes elections, and these are seen as a grant of authority by the voters to the elected officials" (Pitkin 43). Effectively, elections are the renewal of the authorization of the representatives. Elections are acts of "vesting authority" (Pinney, quoted in Pitkin 43). Just because this authority is not permanent does not make it any less authoritative. Simply because the results of an election will endure for a limited time in no way limits the essential character of the representation. While representatives may act in ways to attempt to influence the results of the succeeding election, this is an accident of the constitution of the particular regime, and not of

representation as a whole (Tussman, quoted in Pitkin 43). Pitkin points out, however, that while elections are accidental, they are also necessary. For authorization to take place, there must be the act of 'vesting authority', which, in representative democracies, occur with elections. Thus there can be no democratic representation without elections (Pitkin 43). Ultimately, however, authorization views of representation are of limited use for understanding the rich variety of connotations that representation implies (Pitkin 48-9). Pitkin continues by pointing out that, contrary to any elitist notions about what is 'best' for the community, that the individual is the best judge of their own feelings, that they are "the only reliable authority" (Pitkin 184). The job of the representative is thus to understand these feelings, and be considerate of them in the act of representation. The heart, and not the mind, of the people become paramount. However "this accurate reflection of popular feelings does not constitute representation for Burke so much as it is a prerequisite for representation" (Pitkin 184).

There is a danger where this freedom (from the representative's constituents) might go too far, that the representative has no relationship with their constituents. Even more dangerously, if we come to understand the representative as an artist, questions as to the raw material on which the artist works will surely arise. If the goal of the representative becomes to shape the represented, the relationship that is traditionally assumed to exist between them will have been reversed in a particularly perverse manner. While I wish to maintain the role of representative as political artist, I believe a much more fruitful understanding than raw material can be found for the public. I will argue that their role has become threefold. One of these, that of subject, is passive, but the other

two, critic and patron, posses a mutually constitutive relationship with their government,

thus reclaiming political power.

Chapter 4: Distance, Indifference, and the Aesthetic Gap

The clearest link between aesthetics and politics, and therefore the most succinct point of

origin of the aesthetic political framework, can be found in the work of Machiavelli. As

such, the relevant passage is worth reproducing in its entirety:

> For just as those who sketch landscapes place themselves down in the
> plain to consider the nature of mountains and high places and to consider
> the nature of low places place themselves high atop mountains, similarly,
> to know well the nature of peoples one needs to be prince, and to know
> well the nature of princes one needs to be of the people (Machiavelli, 4).

I would like to make two comments about the form of this citation that I find noteworthy.

The first is the metaphorical comparison between politics and art. I find it appropriate

that the origin of the aesthetic political theory emerges from an artistic metaphor. The

second is that Machiavelli employs a metaphor (technically a simile) to describe the role

of the theorist. To understand the other, he writes, one must act *like* a painter. Metaphor

clearly has a specific role to play in aesthetic political theory and in politics itself.

On the subject of employing metaphor in a political context, Ankersmit suggests

the work of Donald Schön: "My point here is not that we *ought* to think metaphorically

about social policy problems but that we already *do* think about them in terms of certain

pervasive generative metaphors ... [which] generate new perceptions and inventions"

(Ankersmit 1996, 261). Understanding a political problem in terms of a particular

metaphor will generate and imply certain solutions. "Metaphors, as conceived by Schön,

are the missing link between the 'is' and the 'ought'" (Ankersmit 1996, 261). Metaphor is

neither description nor action. The metaphors that describe a political problem arise from the story, the narrative, that is told about the problem (Ankersmit 1996, 262).

Metaphor is a linguistic trope that creates meaning through the tension between the literal meaning of a phrase and its actual meaning. Metaphor allows the individuation of a point of view. This reinforces the individuality of a particular narrative, which is descriptive of, but simultaneously different from, the actual event recounted (Ankersmit 1996, 262-263). Rhetoric enters the picture in relation to narrative, in that rhetoric employs metaphors (Ankersmit 1996, 265).

Rhetoric necessitates an understanding of the self and the other and which associations are appropriate. Metaphor could be a necessary precondition to political participation. Metaphors organize knowledge, unity arises from the pattern of organization (Ankersmit 1996, 266). "A good metaphor may be so successful at organizing knowledge that it even suggests a certain course of action" (Ankersmit 1996, 320). What course of action, then, is suggested by Machiavelli's metaphor?

Before addressing this question and proceeding with the analysis, I believe it is worth repeating Ankersmit's definition of the character of aesthetic political theory:

> In contrast to the appetite for systematic exposition that we always find in political theory and in political science, aesthetic political theory ordinarily has the character of a series of aphoristic observations concerned with the practice of politics, which cannot be systematized ... It can perhaps best be put on a par with the great art of fictional writing, with its independent insights into the contingencies of human existence (Ankersmit 1996, 121).

Whether this definition can be applied directly to Machiavelli's metaphor remains to be seen. Nonetheless, I believe it important to bear in mind as we proceed.

Machiavelli's passage reveals the two primary characteristics of aesthetic political theory. The first is that politics brings into being a necessary division between people and prince. The meek and the mighty are the two essential humors of politics (Mansfield 34, Von Vacano 139). Mansfield notes that while these humors are opposed to each other, with a desire to dominate defining the prince, and a desire to avoid domination defining the people, they do not contradict each other (Mansfield 34). What separates an aesthetic approach to political theory from other contemporary approaches, such as liberalism, is that the political order does not emerge simply from the will of individual citizens, nor from the impositions of the government (Ankersmit 1996, 7), but emerges from the space between these two, from their mutual constitution. They thus have a mutually constitutive relationship.

Once this necessary division is understood, one can proceed to the second characteristic of aesthetic political theory, and that is these two humors imply a necessary limited perspective. Each can see the other, but neither can see itself. Regardless of one's station, one is limited by one's point of view. From this, we can understand that the two fundamental elements to be drawn from aesthetics are that politics is both partial and perspectival. Ankersmit further divides this second characteristic into two. Perspectives are in general limited, and are specifically limited from observing themselves (Ankersmit 1996, 18). Nonetheless, I believe that the aesthetic approach can most straightforwardly be understood by realizing that the perspective of all actors is limited, limited in such a way as to exclude self understanding, and that this limited perspective leads to a gap between governed and government. "Neither side understands, or can be brought to

understand, the other" (Mansfield 34). Taking these premises as the fundamental characteristics of the aesthetic framework, one can begin a move to examine what politics means in such a framework.

Perspective, limitation, and finitude are thus all characteristics of the citizen, aesthetically conceived. Once these characteristics are recognized in the political regime, the dangers of totalitarianism melt away. Conversely, should they be ignored, those dangers are all the more present. Much has been made of the political nature of man. Aristotle gave the study of politics the highest place in his studies, encompassing, to a degree, all other aspects of human life (Aristotle, Book 1). For Ankersmit, any political theory rooted solely in the preferences of the individual is vulnerable to a totalitarian impulse (Ankersmit 1996, 7-8). For if individual will is the only measure of what is defined as a political question, then all human volition potentially falls within the realm of politics. The essence of totalitarianism, according to Lefort, is the identity between the citizens and the state (Lefort 73). Proof against totalitarianism requires a view of politics, arguably an aesthetic one, that is sensitive to what elements of life should be politicized, and which should not. "The only solid foundation of the individual's freedom must, by contrast, be situated in the recognition that there is a sphere that will forever and inexorably remain beyond the reach of even our collective will" (Ankersmit 1996, 8). We must find the line where the forest becomes the trees, and vice versa.

Totalitarianism

Ironically, an aesthetic conception of politics has traditionally born a strong association

with totalitarian regimes, although Ankersmit notes that his conception of aesthetics

differs diametrically from previous accounts. Most 19th and 20th century thinkers who

have employed the notion of aesthetics assume that political unity is what is beautiful,

and therefore what is to be strived for (Ankersmit 1996, 17-18). This aesthetic criterion

can thus all too easily justify a totalitarian state, one in which the citizenry is united with

the state.

Lefort's work on totalitarianism emerges from a discussion of the properties of

Soviet Russia, which he describes as: "a universe governed by a necessity in which every

action was mechanically linked to every other" (Lefort 57). He continues: "Civil society

cannot be absorbed into the state ... in the context of a bureaucratic [totalitarian] regime,

[however] such a separation is abolished" (Lefort 73). In other words, there is no

aesthetic gap in a totalitarian state. Totalitarianism requires a mechanical, metaphysical

environment in which to flourish.

For an aesthetic conception of representative democracy, then, brokenness and not

unity becomes the aesthetic criterion of value (Ankersmit 1996, 17-18). There is a space,

the aesthetic gap, between citizen and government, people and prince, without which

representation becomes impossible (Ankersmit 1996, 18). Therefore if representation is

necessarily constitutive of democracy, so to is the aesthetic gap. By the same token, any

understandings of politics that seek to close or eliminate this gap are actually anti-democratic in orientation or intent.

As we move towards an aesthetic conception of representation, a sense that totalitarianism has the potential to emerge is revealed. While a thorough comparative exercise between democratic and totalitarian or fascistic representation is beyond the scope of this exercise, a nod toward that discussion may be appropriate to avoid overly derailing this argument. Von Vacano points out, "to aestheticize politics is not the same thing as finding that politics as such *is* aesthetic in nature" (Von Vacano 186) (Emphasis author's). Fascists would be guilty of the former, aesthetic political theorists of the latter. Ultimately, fascism is a form of totalitarianism, grounded in the unification of points of view (Von Vacano 188). Ankersmit's aesthetic view of politics, by contrast, is one that recognizes the 'necessary brokenness' of the political domain, (Ankersmit 1996, 119) not its unity. An aesthetic view is thus inherently anti-totalitarian. Whether or not that can be said of a mimetic understanding of politics remains to be seen.

This unification of people and politics leads to two possibilities, neither of which is particularly palatable. The first is that politics ceases to be a meaningful unit of analysis. As Ankersmit observes: "that which is everywhere is nowhere" (Ankersmit 1996, 65). There would be no point in privileging the theoretical study of politics as an independent discipline, and a metaphysical study of ethics, which might take its place, would likely have little to say about the actual practice of politics.

The second is, of course, a totalitarian state. Von Vacano offers an excellent description of the aesthetic qualities of such an environment:

> When the statesman thinks of the masses as inert matter to be molded once they have been 'an-aesthecized' by being treated merely as objects and not as persons, then the tyrannical urge that Ankersmit fears is bound to rear its ugly head. Fascism indeed had an aesthetic dimension to it, yet this was of a kind different from the aesthetics (sic?) politics that can still be found in other forms of politics (Von Vacano 168).

He continues, however: "To be a political leader that thinks of himself as an artist who shapes the world in the manner of Mussolini is not the same as discovering that aesthetic categories such as representation, expression, and form are applicable to all sorts of political endeavors" (Von Vacano 186).

Von Vacano's point is that an aesthetic approach to politics is not inherently totalitarian. In fact, only an aesthetic approach is equipped to identify and then grapple with all of the artistic qualities of totalitarianism. One cannot hope to address "the terrible possibilities of propaganda and the manifold problems of lying that they involve" (Hutter 7) without first adopting an aesthetic framework. This is not to say that propaganda is, in and of itself, a purely totalitarian tool. As Ellul reveals, the actual regime type is incidental to its use of propaganda (Ellul ix). An aesthetic study of the role of propaganda in various regime types is beyond the scope of this exercise, but would likely prove fascinating. To be clear, just because an aesthetic approach allows for the consideration of the use of propaganda and misrepresentation by a regime does not mean that this approach inherently endorses a totalitarian view. The use of propaganda and public spectacle exists in all regime types. While the content of these events may differ, an aesthetic approach allows for an attempt at understanding.

Ethics and Morality

An aesthetic approach to political theory can therefore be seen as differing from other approaches to politics in its relationship to ethics or morality. Others may see ethics as a hard limit to what sort of questions can be engaged with, namely those of right and wrong. These are questions that can only be asked and answered normatively, in terms of ought or should. Ankersmit gives the work of Hobbes and Bodin on absolute sovereignty as an example of why political theory must transcend the moral in order to effectively address the political problems of the day. Many involved in fighting the religious civil wars of the 16th and 17th centuries would have believed that what they were doing was morally right, especially given the religious, and therefore moral character of the conflicts. Only by reframing the nature of moral political association were Hobbes and Bodin able to suggest reasonable political alternatives to the slaughter. Until the idea of an undivided leviathan to which one's loyalty was solely pledged, it was considered perfectly ethical to eliminate Catholics or Protestants in order to achieve harmony by homogenizing the body politic. By suggesting that loyalty to a sovereign was not a matter of ethical choice, but a logical necessity according to natural law, these theorists were able to address the collective suicide in which Europe was engaged (Ankersmit 1996, 11). These two theorists were not engaged in idle metaphysical speculation, but were instead addressing a concrete political problem. "The political theorist" charges Ankersmit "has to be a mechanic rather than a designer of political machines, and ... the universalism of the designer of completely new political machines will inevitably doom the political

theorist to academic irrelevance" (Ankersmit 1996, 5). A political theorist, then, cannot derive the problems that he or she might address from a priori principles without risking irrelevance in the practical world. An aesthetic approach is premised on the idea that the origins of political arrangements are understood to be limited by human sensory experience, that is, by perspective.

Aesthetic theory attempts to transcend the normative prescriptions and 'oughts' that so often exemplify the objects of concern for political theory. An ethical approach almost necessarily entails acting as a 'designer', according to Ankersmit's metaphor. It becomes therefore irrelevant, if not outright dangerous, when the subject of the theory fails to meet the required design standards for the imagined political machine. An element of aesthetic political theory therefore involves identifying situations where moral political theory is either misleading, dangerous, or both, and reframing the question to work toward a solution. "Ethics [morals], by its very nature, is not interested in unintended consequences ... and is therefore a powerful generator of unintended consequences if applied to politics" (Ankersmit 1996, 219-220). An aesthetic approach, by contrast, is sensitive to unintended consequences through its recognition of notions such as political irony, and other aesthetic tropes co-opted for the use of political theorists.

The aesthetic approach, in the form I am discussing, is a relatively new addition to contemporary political theory. As such, I believe it would be productive to situate aesthetics in relation to preexisting traditions. The aesthetic approach is very much the antithesis of the metaphysical, ethical approach that dominates much of Western political discourse. That being said, the goal of this project is not to coherently define and then

attempt to overthrow the existing paradigm. Pre-established theories will only be

discussed to the degree that it can help with an elucidation of the aesthetic framework. In

this, I follow Ankersmit and Von Vacano, who each attempt to define their vision of

aesthetic political theory in contrast to Rawlsian liberalism. My overall project is not an

all-encompassing critique of liberalism, but rather entails a positive definition of the

aesthetic political framework. Nonetheless, a point of departure is required, and this one

seems as appropriate as any.

The inherent disorder in politics revealed by aesthetic political theory is only

problematic if one chooses to ignore it. Just because a theoretical approach cannot be

used to understand the conflictual nature of politics does not mean that that conflict does

not exist. Political conflict itself is not necessarily problematic, so long as it does not lead

to the breakdown of the regime. Unfortunately, this is precisely what alternative

approaches miss. This ignorance, Ankersmit argues, lies at the root of much confusion

within contemporary political theory. He awards the introduction of his work *Aesthetic*

Politics the provocative title 'Against Ethics,' and sets up the aesthetic approach with a

blistering attack on the liberal approach of Rawls. An attack on the approach advocated

in *A Theory of Justice* is essential, because the premises of that work have essentially

defined the type of questions addressed by political theorists in the late twentieth century

and those premises neglect the inherent disorder of political life, and attempt to establish

a paradigm wherein consensus is considered the ultimate political good (Ankersmit 1996,

3). While this reading of Rawls is "uncharitable (to say the least)" (Ivison 803), it may

prove necessary due to the latter's predominance in the contemporary study of political theory.

Simply put, the problem with Rawls's approach is that he supplants descriptive questions of politics with normative questions of ethics. Rawls's main question is regarding "how welfare and income *ought* to be distributed in the just society" (Ankersmit 1996, 3 emphasis author's). The study of politics becomes a question of analyzing what *should* be done, ignoring the "nasty and refractory problems that politics and the politician come across daily and must try to solve as well as they can" (Ankersmit 1996, 4). Furthermore, as Von Vacano reveals, by employing the concept of "the 'reasonable' as a baseline criteria for judging political action, normative theorists, such as Rawls unwittingly root their framework for judgment within a particular cultural tradition, for there is no guarantee that what appears 'reasonable' in one culture will in another (Von Vacano 155).

By universalizing seemingly political questions, Rawls's approach severs those questions from the actual political and historical circumstances in which they arise. Hobbes and Bodin both offered detailed descriptions of the logical necessity of a unified sovereign in the language of natural law. While one could take their works as nothing more than metaphysical treaties on the subject, by taking into account the historical backdrop of the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it becomes apparent that a pressing political need informs their approach (Ankersmit 1996, 4). "Grounded on the notion that the traditional (deontological) ethical basis of political theory can become too removed from reality and the possible, this new [aesthetic]

approach urges for a creative way of thinking about how to analyze politics" (Von Vacano 141).

We can easily see that a Rawlsian understanding of politics must blind itself to certain elements of politics. By grounding politics in the honest discussions between rational actors, such an approach has no use for deception. Misrepresentation or propaganda would then not be considered as part of the political process, but rather an aberration, effectively saying that those events are not political, but a perversion of or deviation from the political. The Rawlsian approach thus limits those who employ it from engaging political objects that have influence over actual political situations. Rawlsian liberalism is thus not aesthetic, but anesthetic.

Rawlsian liberalism, like most contemporary political theory, situates the individual as the origin of the political order, and therefore all properties of the political order can be reduced to the individual (Ankersmit 1996, 7). This premise, however, betrays a simple logical fallacy that the whole is not the sum of its parts. The mistaken presumption of this theoretical approach is that there is an intrinsic 'translatability' between the individual and the political, in contrast to the broken world of aesthetic political theory. This notion of translatability is one of the most relevant points of departure of aesthetic political theory from competing traditions, in that if this infinite translatability is allowed, in contrast to aesthetic theory, a totalitarian impulse emerges.

Ankersmit's aesthetic approach resists this infinite translatability. Returning to the central premise of the aesthetic gap, if one takes Machiavellian perspectivism seriously, any sort of unity between people and prince becomes impossible. This unity, in addition

to being a criterion of Rawlsian liberalism, is arguably also the central goal of totalitarian regimes. This is not to suggest that Rawlsian liberalism is necessarily totalitarian, but rather the need to reject, as part of its essence, this necessary element of totalitarianism.

A charge that the underpinnings of a certain direction in the study of politics might not matter to the world beyond the academy is not, in and of itself, sufficient to dismiss that direction. If practical relevance were the sole criteria of value for a theory, much excellent work would be ignored. A much more successful line of criticism would be one that could reveal that, Rawls's theoretical direction, rather than explaining political phenomena, only adds to the confusion surrounding politics, and obscures what is the ultimate object of political study. Because of confusion over the nature of representation, coupled with the widespread and uncritical acceptance of Rawls' point of view, citizens are becoming confused about the purpose of their state (Ankersmit 1996, 67-68). For ultimately, a political regime is structured in the way that it is in order to solve certain parochial problems brought about by social living.

Chapter 5: An Aesthetic Compromise

Bearing in mind the necessity of perspective for representation, and also being aware of

difficulties that arise from an overly moralistic approach to politics, we can now move to

a positive definition of how the aesthetic approach can enliven our understanding of

politics, in particular, representative democracy. It is reasonable to ask what we are

looking at when we attempt to define representative democracy. Ultimately, it is a

political system, or form of regime. What can this tell us? "Each political system is,

above all, a system for conflict control, and that the nature of a political system is

therefore determined to a large degree by the kind of social and political conflicts for

which it pretends to offer a successful solution" (Ankersmit 1996, 123). We can therefore

observe in a political system the problems that it attempts to solve. If, and only if, we are

also able to observe problems that the system is not addressing, are we justified in

arguing that the system is insufficient or flawed. What problems, then, is representative

democracy attempting to address?

We have previously established the necessity of recognizing perspectivism and

human partiality, which leads to two interesting and related political implications. They

are a lack of, for all practical purposes, overarching moral structures that govern political

action, and the role of passion and emotion in human decision-making. Given this,

political problems should most productively be boiled down to conflicts between people

(as the possessors of political opinions) and not between political ideals. For if two sets of

political ideals, residing within the realm of logic and possessing the same logical

coherence, are incommensurable, then reconciling those ideals within the realm of practical democratic politics becomes impossible. There is no theoretically compelling reason for accepting one over the other, as each simply depends on a different point of view. Any reason for accepting one set of principles would be contingent on practical political factors, be they a democratic majority or force of arms. In this case, we have returned to the realm of political opinions, because the conflict is no longer between the principles themselves, but between the people who possess them as opinion. And while differences between incommensurable political positions are, tautologically, irreconcilable, differences between two people are not necessarily (Ankersmit 2002, 175).

Citizenship does not define the entirety of people within a political regime, merely the political aspect. "[W]riters sometimes sound as though everyone has opinions ready on every possible question, and hence the only political problem is to get accurate information about a national opinion that already exists" (Pitkin 82). Ankersmit notes that "[e]very ripple on the surface of society is now required to have its counterpart in the decision-making process of the state. What follows is that most peculiar mixture of absolutism and conservatism typical of the modern democratic state" (Ankersmit 1996, 54). On any political issue, there are two possibilities for any individual citizen: concern and apathy. An individual either cares about a particular issue, or she or he does not. Many factors work towards obscuring this simple dichotomy, in both theoretical and descriptive approaches to politics, seeking to overly complicate political questions. A

well-functioning regime will be sufficiently 'distant' from its citizens that those citizens can 'observe' with which issues they are concerned and which they are apathetic.

Ultimately, a useful aesthetic approach to representative democracy is one that takes seriously questions of how individuals find politics, not beautiful, as the term aesthetic might imply, but meaningful or interesting. *Interesting* and its root *interest* are terms with a variety of connotations, economic, political and personal. One must remember, however useful, the concept of *homo economicus*, that is, the entirely self-interested individual, is nothing more than an abstraction, a convenient fiction for exploring certain, but not all, questions of interest. The concept of interest implies more than simple welfare, or what one has at stake. Interest also entails that which an individual finds *interesting,* that is, an object of concern.

"We can see the [aesthetic] gap as embodying the void that is created by indifference" (Ankersmit 1996, 103). The notion of indifference, in many ways antinomous with the notion of interest, can only be useful in a political theory that embraces the notion of individual perspective. For what would the interest or concern of the individual matter unless so to did their perspective. Ultimately, a regime that believes all citizens have informed opinions on every issue of policy will be paralyzed. "Indifference and stupidity are not necessarily the sand in the political machine but rather the indispensable oil for making it function" (Ankersmit 1996, 102-3). How then can a representative function in such an environment? This, I believe, is one of the first questions an aesthetic approach to politics must be able to confront if it is to be of any use.

The Nature of Compromise

Political compromise is therefore essential to allowing for the representation of diverse interests while still making political decisions. Political consensus will work only up until the point where there is some fundamental disagreement about the purpose of politics: "compromise is an organization of political truths rather than the justification of political truth itself" (Ankersmit 2002, 198).

A notion such as political compromise is perhaps best understood in terms of a contrasting notion: political consensus. For Ankersmit, the most explicit, recent elucidation of consensus is found in the work of Rawls. For Rawls, the ultimate goal of political consensus is to provide a stable and just society, undivided by "incommensurable religious, philosophical and moral doctrines" (Rawls, quoted in Ankersmit 2002, 198-9). Consensus is to be achieved in practice by focusing on those elements that can be agreed upon, that which unites and not divides. These elements will tend to be found in action, not thought or moral conviction, because the latter is where the divisions really exist (Ankersmit 2002, 199). "It is only because we do not personally care about every problem confronting society and are indifferent to a large number of issues that political compromise is possible at all" (Ankersmit 1996, 102-3).

> Political representation only makes sense on the assumption of the presence of a certain amount of political indifference and only political indifference can create the distance from which the voter can get a grasp of the political domain and of the (in)adequacy of how politicians propose to deal with it (Ankersmit 1996, 103).

Successful compromise requires a great deal of self-knowledge on the part of each participant. For if one is not firm in one's convictions, one does not know on what one can actually compromise.

"For, in contrast to compromise, consensus à la Rawls resists the bargaining of political principles in the sense that I might be prepared to grant you your principle $P1$ (though I remain firmly opposed to it) on the condition that you are willing to grant me my principle $P2$, because I prefer a political reality containing both principles to one containing neither" (Ankersmit 2002, 203).

Political compromise requires an environment where representatives recognize the limited and partial nature of the interests of their constituents. If every group were equally concerned about/interested in every possible political issue, then political compromise would be impossible. Political conflict and disagreement, the necessity of which is understood by an aesthetic approach, which recognizes the brokenness of political reality, need only happen on issues when separate groups truly have differing interests. What citizens must ask themselves, and what representatives must demand of their constituents, is whether or not it is worth taking a stand on an issue beyond their particular parochial interest.

In a pragmatic political sense, certain interesting possibilities arise, if we add the notion of political apathy to the simple dichotomy of agree or disagree. Ultimately, a canny political representative might be able to exchange their support on issue A about which their constituents are apathetic, for the support of another representative on issue B, about which their constituents are apathetic. At the same time, either representative

might want to oversell their constituents' opposition, when in fact they are only apathetic, in order to exact greater political gains in the future. The particulars of such equations, however, are beyond this theoretical discussion. Nonetheless, there is one element of the representative democracy system already in effect that, while understudied in the realm of political theory, has the opportunity, if developed, to incorporate the notion of compromise into the political system.

Political Parties

There is one element of representative democracy in particular that helps secure its place as the best regime for aesthetic representation, and that is because it is through political parties that the paradox of representation can be resolved. The paradox, to reiterate, is the simultaneous presence and non-presence of the represented object, in this case, the constituency. The constituency is kept non-present through trusteeship representation, granting the representative the freedom from having to mimetically recreate what the constituency would otherwise do. Representative and represented are safely separated by the aesthetic gap. The danger in a purely trusteeship relationship, however, is the lack of guarantee that the interests of the constituency, is all its diversity, will be taken into account. Political parties might be the medium through which the interests of the constituency can be made clear to the representatives: medium being the crucial word, as parties would have a 'mediating' effect. "The party *is* not the citizen but *represents* the citizen" (Ankersmit 1996, 60).

Clearly, political parties are entities that exist, in some capacity, *between* the state

and the citizens. Bearing in mind the necessary gap between state and citizen, the

question then becomes on which side of the gap are political parties. Are parties

organizations that citizens employ to relate to the state, or are they part of the apparatus

of the state, something by which the state can relate to the citizens? The closer the party

moves to citizens, the further from the apparatus of the state and vice versa (Ankersmit

1996, 57). Are political parties extensions of the citizens or of the state (Ankersmit 1996,

59)? The answer is to be found in the notion of representation. Parties do represent the

citizens, but they do not represent the state. Therefore, due to the necessary distance

between representative and represented, parties actually fall on the side of the state, not

citizens (Ankersmit 1996, 60).

This discussion presumes certain characteristics on behalf of the political party.

Ankersmit briefly identifies two types of political parties: governmental parties and

ideological parties. The latter, he says, operate with the tacit recognition that it is unlikely

that they will become part of the government, thus remaining closer to the citizens

(Ankersmit 1996, 57). Nonetheless, even the ideological party would fall on the state side

of the aesthetic gap, because they do not represent the government, but the citizens.

Effectively, the likelihood of a party gaining power has no bearing on its place in the

aesthetic structure.

Two problems which may be raised over describing political parties as organs of

the state, as opposed to being organic developments from civil society. The first arises

from the historical notion of faction, a pernicious entity that threatens the unity of the

sovereign, a "conspiracy against the nation or state" (Ankersmit 1996, 60). The second is the totalitarian legacy of 'state parties' from the Jacobins of revolutionary France to the Nazi party and the various Communist parties that ruled throughout the Cold War (Ankersmit 1996, 61). Examining these two sets of examples actually allows one to observe, in an extreme version, the nature of political parties, and the necessity of coming to terms with them. Clearly, factions unchecked are dangerous, especially when one gains control over the entire apparatus of the state, as illustrated by the totalitarian examples.

The crucial realization is that a party is always partisan, and inherently does not represent the point of view of all the citizens of that state. The existence of any party implies, in logic, if not in fact, the existence of another party that represents the contrary points of view. Ultimately, the state becomes strongest when a multiplicity of parties exist, and therefore a multiplicity of points of view are represented, in tension with one another (Ankersmit 1996, 62). This allows for the crucial element of all citizens having the opportunity to feel represented.

In such an ideal situation, where at least two parties contend for power, the question becomes how such a divided parliament will be able to accomplish anything. When there is disagreement, and when a decision is made, someone is bound to be disappointed. There are two possible ways conflicting parties are able to make a decision: compromise and consensus. As we will see, consensus has much in common with discredited notions of mimetic representation, and aesthetic representation requires the development of the notion of compromise. In a sentence, consensus wipes out the difference of opinion implied by a multiplicity of political parties. Compromise, on the other hand, allows for

different parties to maintain the autonomy of their positions, while still allowing the state

to make decisions.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Political science is a promiscuous discipline, one not particularly discriminating in its approaches to political questions. This may be due to the ubiquity of political phenomena, or a lack of coherence as to what constitutes a 'political science' approach to these questions. Just as the tools of economic theory can make intelligible questions of public policy and rational choice, tools of aesthetic analysis can benefit appropriate questions of political theory (Von Vacano 141).

At this point, it is worth reiterating what the notion of aesthetic representation can offer the study of politics. The essential component of an aesthetic approach to politics is the limitation of individual perspective, and the following necessity of representation. Without representation there is no politics. And furthermore, the act of representation is necessarily an act of interpretation. The representative must select, out of the infinite possible interpretations of the mind of the people, the one course of action that best suits the political situation of the time. Like the realistic painter, however, the representative is also constrained by his or her own perspective (Nietzsche 65). The perspective of the representative is just as limited as that of the represented, but the point of view is different. As Machiavelli revealed, representative and represented can each see each other, but neither can see themselves.

Representation requires a kind of interpretation that does not crystallize a certain meaning for all times. Instead it relies on the constant attention of those involved. Representation is thus beyond fact and value: there is no singular particular interpretation

of representation that either 'is' or 'should be'. This neutrality makes it a central point of

departure for political inquiry (Ankersmit 1996, 24). There is no scientific formula for

representation, no way of infallibly translating a thing into its representation that will

apply to all cases of representation. This becomes quite clear when one considers artistic

representation. It is safe to say that representation has often been a goal, or perhaps *telos*,

of the artistic process. It would be difficult to say, however, that a particular style of

artistic representation is better than any other, that cubism, say, is more representative

than impressionism, although one could say that in retrospect a particular style is more

representative of a particular era. Likewise, it is difficult to say whether Van Gogh or

Warhol created more universally representative work, although, either one might

reasonably be acclaimed as more representative of a particular era or of a particular style.

In each of these cases, some sort of representation was happening, but attempting to

create a formula to encompass any one of these examples will be unlikely to succeed. The

style of a particular artist or artistic era may be identifiable in terms of particular

characteristics, and indeed much scholarship on the part of critics and commentators

takes place addressing just such issues. The sheer variety of critically acclaimed artists

who have, to some degree, successfully represented reality can tell us something about

the nature of representation: it is potentially infinite, if we are to believe Nietzsche's

poem (Nietzsche 65).

Just as Ankersmit embraces the artistic connotations of the concept of political

representation, I have embraced the political connotations of the artistic subject. Subjects,

in the political sense, seem to have much in common with the subjects of art. In a

democratic context, however, I believe it to be inappropriate to assume that the subjects

of a regime are passive to the degree that the subjects of art are. I would like to expand

this metaphor into the world of art, not just to the relation between a (political) artist and

his or her subject, but to the place of art in the world at large. While I cast political

representatives as artists and citizens as subjects of the work of art, I will not be leaving

the latter without any influence. I would like to add two other roles to the citizen: that of

art critic and patron. Ultimately, in a representative democracy, citizens have some

degree of power to both criticize and support (or not) the politicians that represent them. I

believe this threefold conception of citizenry presents interesting possibilities for

understanding the proper relationship between citizens and their government.

How could any form of government take these aesthetic ideas into account?

Ankersmit believes that representative democracy, properly considered, is the closest

type of regime to addressing these issues, and I agree. At the risk of imbuing this work

with an explicitly normative, although not monological, perspective, I believe it

appropriate to quote him here in full:

> And we should therefore praise and honor representative democracy, since
> it so obviously is the system of government that is most successful in
> giving actual constitutional form to the requirements of representation.
> And similarly we should be weary [sic] of all attempts to devise general
> rules or some kind of general background that would enable us to move
> quasi-automatically and unproblematically from the represented to its
> representation in the sphere of politics or in that of art (Ankersmit 2002,
> 192).

Aesthetics, then, offers the best chance for the citizens to have perspective on their government. The notion of distance, the aesthetic gap, provides a space in which to discuss these questions of representation.

Understanding, even celebrating the differences between ruler and ruled is essential to clarifying their relationship (Ankersmit 1996, xiv). As Pitkin illustrates:

> Most people see from a single point of view and have no perspective on themselves, no awareness of perspective ... He must become the other yet remain himself ... The theorist, understanding the plurality of human perception and the complex relationship between appearance and reality in political life, may be able to provide perspective, a synthetic overview of the whole (Pitkin 1984, 35-6).

Coda

The ultimate aim of my project has to determine both the centre and periphery of aesthetic political theory. The centre is composed of those political objects and phenomena for which an aesthetic approach is most appropriate, and the periphery of those for which this framework is least, but still somewhat, appropriate. By circumscribing this periphery, we can also come to an understanding of what are inappropriate objects of study. Defining centre, periphery and beyond in a complete and consistent manner will likely prove an impossible task. I cannot imagine exact criteria whereby a certain type of political object is necessarily excluded from an aesthetic approach for all time. By adopting this approach, however, I wish to cement the recognition that aesthetics, like any theoretical approach, is a set of tools for political analysis, ones that will be more or less appropriate depending on the situation. By

attempting to uncover the scope and limits of this framework, I hope to guide future research, to develop not a map that describes an area, but a compass that suggests direction. I will do my best to ensure that the compass is as finely tuned as possible, but only exploration will ultimately determine whether or not the instrument is of any use.

As a work of political theory, and not pure philosophy, the aesthetic framework could be further explored in terms of application. I find it a shame that political theory and empirical political science rarely intersect. Without excursing too far afield into issues surrounding interdisciplinary study, if the aesthetic framework is to have merit as a theoretical grounding for political study, then its conclusions should be born out in the results of empirical study. Much has been made in this work of the nature of political representation, the representative and the represented. How do these theoretical exercises relate to the actual practice of representative politics?

And ultimately, what is at stake for democracy? "In democracy independence will always be a vulnerable 'product of art': it will always tend to destroy itself and to change into either dependence or into a condition of isolated existence that is a sad character of what independence initially was" (Ankersmit 1996, 318). An aesthetic approach to politics thus helps revitalize two elements considered essential to democracy: citizenship and legitimate authority, legitimate, in that it is grounded in aesthetic representation. "In the political representation process, a depiction of a political will that exists in one medium (the people) is made visible and present in another medium (the representative body)" (Ankersmit 1996, 45). "Mimetic political power tends to become invisible, and

therefore uncontrolled, power; aesthetic power, on the other hand, is clearly visible, recognized as such" (Ankersmit 1996, 55).

There is an argument to be made, however, that the balance has tilted at present in favour of the mimetic side, that representatives have become more delegates than trustees. I hope to demonstrate why that is problematic, and, potentially, undemocratic. In the Canadian context, for example, there is an argument to be made that pre-Confederation parliamentary democracy exemplified much more an independence model of representation than the contemporary situation, with its focus on leadership politics (Moore xi-xii). Demonstrating this as conclusive fact would likely require a fair amount of quantitative research. By revealing conceptual problems with the delegate model of representation, however, I hope to have revealed that any time this understanding of representation is in effect, one needs to question whether or not representation is actually happening. The simple presence of this direction should provide a base for a discussion of the rehabilitation of trusteeship representation. I argue that Ankersmit's model of aesthetic representation allows for such rehabilitation by revitalizing the strengths of trusteeship while at the same time offering solutions to the critiques posed by proponents of delegate representation.

I suspect that democratic representation is not the only problem for which an aesthetic approach can prove useful in resolving. Rather than enumerating other possibilities, however, I feel it best to simply suggest adding aesthetic political theory to the toolbox of political science. Perhaps, now that it has been brought to light, other theorists might find it useful.

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