



Representation in Education and Politics

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ABSTRACT

This paper will mainly deal on the concept of representation and how in education and politics it plays pivotal role. The concept will be explained with the help of some theorists and thinkers and different theories while deconstructing the idea of representation in different contexts. The concept of multiculturalism will also be dealt with while discussing the broader theme of this paper.

Keywords: Representation, Power, Knowledge, Education, Politics, Multiculturalism.

Discussion

Scholars in the humanities may have gotten tired of hearing about a "representational crisis." The term "representation" has been the topic of extensive theoretical study since at least the mid-1960s. Psychoanalysts, structuralists, poststructuralists, feminists, reader-response critics, and minority and postcolonial thinkers have all added to deconstructing the idea that representation operates in a transparent or harmless way. Expanding on semiotics' philosophical heritage, modern interpreters of society and culture now frequently dispute over how things of the world are represented instead of what they truly are. McLuhan believed that the medium is often the message and as Jean Baudrillard is never tired of telling us that It seems like we live in a pure simulation world with no matching structure or reality underneath them—the Reagan presidency best embodied this view. People consume pictures and buy representations. News outlets, institutions, fax machines, and other mechanisms of recreating representations are always the first targets of despotic regimes today. As a result, the existing connection between academic knowledge and

political power might be seen in some important ways as a struggle representation. This conflict is diverse, plural, and complicated, encompassing debates over representation theory as well as representation's real political and cultural distribution. Some critics have contended that the liberal tradition, with its adaptable attitude to growing "recognition" for various groups of people, is a viable way to deal with the problem. In a dense and forceful essay, philosopher Charles Taylor argues that we do need to think more deeply about the "politics of recognition," particularly in light of disputes about pluralism in education and government. Although I don't have enough room to do Taylor's argument justice here, I'd want to give a suggestion that "representation" rather than "recognition" gives a more thorough paradigm to evaluate concerns of knowledge, politics, and cultural identity. The current problem of representation originates from the idea that groups and organizations have a right to representation, while classic liberal thought begins with the individual as its central core unit. Furthermore, the language of "recognition" actually reinforces instead of investigating the position of privilege of those who do the job of recognizing, as well as shifting the focus away from political economics and onto human relationships. (Consult Giroux for criticism of the liberal multiculturalism of Taylor.) "Recognition" is more closely associated with the philosophical discussion of the law as well as rights, whereas "representation" serves to blur the lines between culture and politics.

"Representation" also raises issues concerning the agency-media interaction that are fundamental to comprehending contemporary postmodern challenges. Whereas the first wave of the theory of representation was "textual," looking at representation from philosophical, conceptual, and literary perspectives, the second wave has indeed been materialistically and politically motivated, focusing on what Louis Althusser notably referred to as the "ideological state apparatuses" (that includes schools too). Michel Foucault's study on 'discourse' and 'disciplines' emphasised the importance of not divorcing the examination of representation's concepts from the institutional, material, and corporeal mechanisms by which representations exist and accomplish their results. In the following observations, I'd like to emphasise this modern understanding of "representation" as a complex collection of cultural activities that includes both textual forms of information and economic or material arrangements for the production or reproduction of knowledge. It can be claimed that the representations are powerful in both contexts, getting their power from the theoretical and emotive rhetoric of representations' use of signs, as well as the distribution of significance and power defined by the institutions that house and create them. In both domains, the fight for representation continues, and it is often driven by how we see the link between them.

Many academics' feelings of victimisation in the aftermath of the political correctness discussion, for example, are expressed widely in the language of representation/misrepresentation. To cite one example, Teachers for a Democratic Culture's founding declaration of principles condemns "a campaign of harassment and misrepresentation" directed at adherents of novel modes of knowledge and new educational practices. Of course, some critics were eager to note out the evident irony here, that a profession that had recently been enamoured by the poststructuralist argument that all representation was misrepresentation ought suddenly to insist on the significance of precise accounts of its work. This irony, on the other hand, stemmed from the widespread misconception that deconstruction as well as poststructuralism are theories

that reject the existence of meaning. Whereas these theoretical associations did inquire into how representations were formed and the inherent defects in their reproductions, deconstruction and poststructuralism theories started with the premise that representation is important. Only because language and other sign systems are so strong and have such far-reaching effects that their claims and technologies need to be analysed on a regular basis. Nonetheless, by the early 1990s, the (mis)representation of "theory" as an academic trend that had discarded truth in favour of nihilistic free play had received massive acceptance of the people.

However, the controversy over multiculturalism, political correctness, feminism, and deconstruction shows that numerous journalists and people at large think academics have been overly powerful in representing their views and seizing command of the institutions of representation. Obviously, the reaction against academia derives from the perception that academics are developing a body of new facts that endanger certain established value systems and institutions, rather than from a belief that academics are playing a game of petty pursuit.

The political correctness debate and relevant phenomena symptomatize the link between representation in the area of knowledge and representation in the areas of social and political life, even though academics have indeed been utterly incompetent at representing the character as well as the value of their work to the public at large up until now. The charge that academics have discarded reality, norms, and quality obscures the truth: American culture is undergoing a major discussion about these words as part of a revaluation. This argument is sparked not only by alterations in how we teach history and literature, but also by the tremendous shift in the student community. Women, people of colour, and those from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds are increasingly making up that body. Many of our fields' conventional notions and practices have been called into question as a result of their representation in the student community. Gerald Graff states, "The academic curriculum has become a prominent arena of cultural conflict because it is a microcosm, as it should be of the clash of cultures and values in America as a whole. As the democratization of culture has brought heretofore excluded groups into the education citadel, with them have come the social conflicts that their exclusion once kept safely distant" (8). In this light, the fight over representation becomes both a historical incident and a chance for the creation of more equitable representation in politics, culture, and knowledge. But, as W. J. T. Mitchell contends, we must not reduce the current battle to a "paradigm shift" that simply permits business normally to continue under a different garb by converting representation politics into yet another academic specialized subject. Whereas the academy's history ought not to be conflated with the world's history, struggles for representation on school grounds can still be linked to a wider cultural map in which borders between countries, territories, identities, cultures, organisations, and perspectives are being disputed or overtaken everywhere. These clashes and trespasses might be viewed as what Mitchell refers to as "instances of reconfiguration and relocation of cultural and critical energy, reversals of center and margin, production and consumption, dominant and emergent forces" (Mitchell 13). The postcolonial era's new interactions between the First, Second, and Third Worlds are marked by patterns of displacement and inversion, by hierarchical structures overthrown and

boundaries crossed—indeed, they reveal how outdated such designation by numbering could be. Local discussions over multiculturalism, the canon, equal opportunities, monetary assistance, admissions, and cultural studies emerge to be transnational examples of transformation. Or, as Michael Geyer contends, they date from the beginning of the age of "relentless globalisation." From inside, in the US, globalisation causes the structure of higher education to disintegrate as it does lose its monopoly on information production, socialisation, and ideology formation. Academic institutions would have to compete with private firms and organizations, the press, and a variety of publicly organised activist organizations for representation in all these areas. The Heritage Foundation engages in "scholarship"; Advertisements, MTV, chat programs, and Hollywood movies provide "education"; and social, revolutionary movements develop "ideology" and "subject positions" through their publications, TV programs, and other social gatherings.

The economy of our educational, economic, political, and media institutions struggle in the international marketplaces established by postcolonialism and modern capitalism. Geyer says, "While a grid of global transactions has relentlessly synthesized global time, it has not homogenized societies as the turn-of-the-century theorists had expected: we experience the world whole before we know how to think it-or narrate and, in all its meanings, represent it" (528). As a result, the world conflict over representation emerges out of a worldwide fight over owning property and the creation of new subjects like consumers, voters, workers, bureaucrats, stockholders, etc. Instead of the creation of a global public domain, the history of 20th century globalisation is the history of massive privatisation of the global commons by incorporated, legal persons (530). The "newly globalised consumer economy," according to David Rieff, is "multiculturalism's silent partner": "capitalism is the bull in the china shop of human history," destroying hierarchical structures, breaching boundaries, reversing binary oppositions, and transvaluing values quicker than any feminist, deconstructionist, poststructuralist or Afro-centrist can visualise. Business executives, according to Rieff, are far ahead of academics once it pertains to cultural diversity: they have already transferred production of both knowledge and commodities outside American as well as Eurocentric borders. Academics should not regard cultural diversity as a subversive philosophy that could be employed to undermine The System, he observes: cultural diversity is just the shadow projected by global capitalism in its never-ending hunt for cheap resources as well as lucrative markets. Even when we watch the rushing of erstwhile communist regimes towards the market economy, Rieff never does question the association of consumer capitalism with inauthenticity, dispossession, and repression. Are the people of these areas just featherheads of capitalism, like critical theorists sometimes said that people were the featherheads of religion, or of the entertainment business? Or do humans need a more intricate understanding of the link between freedom and liberty and property ownership, information flow control, and media access? It is far from apparent that consumer economics' globalisation has resulted in a decline in happiness or freedom: criticism is a luxury reserved for those who already own Credit and debit cards and faxes. If consumer capitalism's globalisation has given formerly oppressed masses more opportunities for representation, it does not imply we should cease questioning the type, quality, and fairness of the world's new structure of representations.

The poststructuralist theoretical remark that all representations have certain systematic defects that ultimately bring up the question of who gains or loses in such structures. When one considers that representational errors are driven in some way, either individually or structurally, to act on behalf of specific groups, people, views, or institutions, the relationship between representation and political power gets critical. This has meant, in the academic domain, applying representational critique to academic study itself, analysing anything from literature collections to science experiments to anthropological writings and medical institute curriculums. In each case, issues regarding the politics of what, or who is represented, by what tools, to what consequences, at what prices, and to whose profit or detriment are posed.

I will come to discuss the struggle for representation's academic aspect later, but first, let me emphasise its importance in the greater social as well as political argument over representational fairness. Because "representation" is a vital expression in democratic politics. The United States' documents, institutions, theory, and practise of govt. all rely on the pretty efficient representation. Just as conventional claims for representation in the realms of art and academia have been questioned by the theorists of humanities, current political analysts have questioned assertions for democratic representation. They highlight the government's inability to "represent the people" and the specific ways in which some classes are deprived of socio-political representation. A politics of representation is replacing conventional politics of organizations or even groups, in which everyone participates, belongs to, or is designated as a member of a unique interest organization. "Identity politics," a symptom of these trends, purports to correct misrepresentation's injustices by highlighting the systematic manners in which persons are (mis)treated as members of organizations rather than as independent humans. Consequently, groups embrace their identities proudly, rejecting the dominant group's negative perceptions and asserting the right to accurately portray their reality, whether be it through art and education, the courtroom, or the governmental hall. As such, we need to evaluate, as Je Escoffier says in 'The Limits of Multiculturalism':

Representation in two senses of the word: the obvious one of political representation, referring to the role of a delegate or spokesperson for a particular community, and the second one of cultural representation, connoting the symbolic content of various cultural forms and the ways that particular social groups are portrayed in fiction, movies, or television (61).

"The classical schemas of political representation in the United States have collapsed," according to Escoffier, because supposedly 'universal' concepts or representations in the sphere of culture have rendered some groups privileged while marginalising others, just as they have in the world of politics, where political representatives fall short of representing many of their constituents. Following in the footsteps of the classical schemas, multiculturalism is a vague ideological framework that proposes a novel method of representation based on cultural groupings and traditional practises instead of an individual's rights (62). However, how definite are these groups' definitions, and when can you claim someone is from one? A politics centered on identity confronts not only the challenge of the weakness of particular categories of identity but also the truth that everybody possesses multiple classifications at the same time, Barbara Epstein observes. Primarily everybody is exposed to some allegation of privilege, whether they are female yet white

or black but male (153). Escoffier argues, "It is not clear how to represent complex identities politically" (66). Similarly, I believe, the same case is true pertaining to the education: it is unclear how the extensively contested traditional models of representation could be superseded by an alternative proportional representation system if there is no consensus on the basic constituent (unit) on which the claim to representation is based. In theory, the Enlightenment individual was that unit in the classical schema. Edward Said, who is also concerned about the boundaries of identity politics, warns against "the supremely stubborn thesis that everyone is principally and irreducibly a member of some race or category" that can never be integrated or embraced by others (178). This argument, according to Said, is an acceptable reaction to imperialism, but it risks reproducing the poisonous nationalism that fuelled imperialism. According to him, sadly victimhood does not ensure or certainly allow an improved sense of humanity, using Israel's mistreatment of Palestinians as an example (187). Edward Said proposes a "worldliness" that connects previously marginalised viewpoints and othered knowledges to their parallels and enemies in literary and scholarly work: "Otherwise they will be regarded only as informative ethnographic specimens, suitable for the limited attention of experts and area specialists" (185). Said's idealistic worldliness is wonderful. However, he glosses over the nuanced ways in which "who wrote" a work influences 'how it is written and interpreted' (188).

We are still in the middle of a fight for representation in which the abolition of previous inequities and injustices takes primacy. The rationale against class schemas is compelling, and the question of how to best eliminate them really ought not to deter the endeavour. The faults in traditional schemas ought not to lead to simplistic attempts to call to throw away Western Civilization or to completely disregard the dialectical qualities of the Enlightenment legacy, which comprised much of the sloganeering of freedom, equality, pursuit of happiness, and justice now enlisted in the cause of the marginalised.

Alan Kors argues that critics of the contemporary politicisation of colleges make a grave error in their romanticization of the pre-Sixties era of American undergrad life, remembering the 10% who retained some spark ablaze while ignoring the boarding-school viciousness of the remaining (62-63).

Alan Kors (a conservative historian, representative of the National Association of Scholars, and member of the Nation Council on the Humanities) fiercely refutes the romanticized myths related to the American academy's past while protesting what he regards as an invasive comeback to *in loco parentis* by obtrusive social manipulating liberals in today's colleges and universities:

"I attended, in the early sixties, the Princeton of mandatory chapel, parietal hours and young men sworn never to act in a manner unbecoming to a gentleman... Teaching as a conservative throughout the sixties and early seventies, and living among undergraduates as a resident faculty member in an educational college house, I indeed found my students off-the wall politically and self-indulgent intellectually, although I do believe the extremes often obscured the more representative reality of actual undergraduate lives...The university had abandoned its parental role, but men and women were less manipulative of each other, the races and ethnic groups more tolerant of and more caring

toward each other, and individuals more profoundly likely to treat each other as ends and not means” (62).

In a calculated effort to rebut misrepresentations of today's academy by the critics of political correctness, the statement of principles of the Teachers for a Democratic Culture opens with a counter-representation that, in retrospect, may itself be party to a bit of myth-making (since I helped draft this paragraph I feel more than authorized to criticize.

Even when we have developed mastery on campus in uncovering the defects in classical Enlightenment ideas, we might well have tossed the baby out with the bathwater by misrepresenting the challenges and inappropriate uses of these notions as though they were their essences. Future responsibilities will involve representing and institutionalising truth, justice, liberty, and democracy in new ways that better meet socio-cultural diversity claims. I agree with Christopher Newfield that we should enhance our conceptual and practical engagement to equitable and participatory democracy on as well as off campus, as this is one way to redistribute representational power and change knowledge. During the last two decades, there has been a stuttering, haphazard, occasionally overzealous, always underfunded attempt to pursue and redefine these tasks—imbued with enthusiasm, hampered by scepticism, driven by theory, inept in practise. I'd want to stress that by concentrating on the challenge of representation in general, we can understand how inextricably linked academic knowledge and political power, as well as social privilege and intellectual institutions are.

This refusal of self-empowerment to some people linked to their false representation in the dominant culture's products and structures, allowing people and activities to thrive without regard for the marginalised.

Therefore, a new response as well as a new feeling of responsibility were needed on and off-campus, including the capacity to retaliate with anything other than tolerance, disdain, or fear when groups emerged to ask for their self-representation to be included in the culture's machinations. Part of this led to the emergence of contentious and not always ideal solutions for representation, new methods meant expressly to redress disparities in representation accessibility, as well as to rectify injustices or untruths in representation material.

If Karl Marx informed people that political analysis must take into account who owns the sources of production, late capitalism and late communism both show us that social dominance is mainly determined by the ideological and economic dominance of the tools of representation. The manipulation or confiscation of the public representational device as think tanks, the press, and state agencies- by the reactionary forces contributed to the crisis of representation caused by the P.C. conflict, even as academics were engaged with refashioning regional systems of representation on campus. In other terms, genuine shifts in access to and control of the campus representational machinery elicited a strong response from individuals who felt their interests were being challenged.

In short, a myriad of us has become masters in modes of representation that could be of little immediate utility or usefulness within the boundaries of current public representation practices. Indeed, the majority of us create representational things with a small audience. We seldom create artefacts with a significant market, such as a television show, an interview, a trade-press publication, an editorial piece, or a journalistic study. Indeed, while engaging in these public behaviours, we must translate our skills and knowledge, an activity of translation for which we are not educated, paid, and which may jeopardise our jobs. Harmony, non-discrimination, equality of chance, non-violence, and freedom of expression, accessibility to representation, and acceptance and tolerance are fundamental prerequisites in a democratic state. These values may and ought to be educational objectives. Campuses, in particular, may help individuals learn new skills in “the moral demands of democratic life. While not a substitute for character training, learning how to think carefully and critically about political problems, to articulate one's views and defend them before people with whom one disagrees”. In a democratic society, is a crucial and appropriate aim of higher education, and is fundamental to its purpose (Gutmann 173).

Our current disdain for politics originates partly from the fact that previous conceptions of the public good have often served as a camouflage for a brazen exercise of authority in favour of the interests of the privileged. Most reports condemning the "politicisation of education" are based on this degraded understanding of politics, because these reports implicitly believe that politics is a negative thing while it is not really so. Politics is the natural and necessary system whereby we decide things about our lives in communities, including educational issues. Those who do want to rule that community profit when others abandon the political system. We will be more satisfied with the essential function of politics in education if we see politics as the crucial process through which a community argues and pursues the good. Efforts to remove politics from education are based on erroneous political concepts and distorted educational ideals. The debate on campus over representation's quality, character, and distribution is part of greater domestic and international transformations. The insurgent desire of particular groups for more authority for self-representation has shattered the unity of existing regimes across the nation and beyond the globe. The rise of patriotism in the aftermath of European, Soviet, and American colonialism has reshaped the globe, raising questions about which nations represent which peoples and which peoples want to be represented by which governments.

People live in an ostensibly representative democracy in which who, or what, is represented in government appears to be influenced by money, institutional authority, and access systems — all of which reduce the number of operating agents to a minuscule fraction of the people. The demise of political parties, one of the few useful ways for poor and working-class individuals to engage in and be represented in the political system, has left common citizens confused about how to successfully exercise their representational power.

The difficulty of conceptualising and putting into practice representation apparatuses, that both rectify the injustices of previous misrepresentation and display vistas of consensus that could help to legitimise emerging social formations, exists both inside and beyond the academia. The diverse contingent links of distinct social groupings and people to the network of representation would be taken into account by a

democratic machinery of representation. In the situations of women, people of colour, homosexuals, lesbians, and the impoverished, denial of representation necessitates local and varied solutions, some of which will be in disagreement.

Granting everyone the right to vote does not guarantee political representation, just as hiring females and minority population or teaching diversity does not guarantee that the disadvantaged are no longer culturally disenfranchised. For instance, feminist political thinkers have recommended allocating particular shares of legislative bodies to females. Why might a representation scheme like this be considered more unfair or irrational than the current one, which distributes seats to adjacent geographical regions or property parcels based on longitude lines or 19th-century metropolitan grids?

The presence of the Other disrupts dominant structures and practices of representation, from the Judiciary Committee to the Curriculum Committee. However, C. Thomas was black and affluent in addition to being a male, and Virginia Woolf was white as well as upper-class in addition to being a feminist. Human individuals hold several social or cultural identities, resulting in various forms of Otherness in them. The Otherness inside is not explained by categorical oppositions such as you-versus-me or us-versus-them. That Otherness, as well as the human subject's interior variety, necessitates representation. Keeping in mind that diversity within us may be both an ethical and a political necessity, as it may assist to minimize some of the violence committed for the sake of identity politics. We must acknowledge both the Otherness inside ourselves and the Otherness that may exist between ourselves and other people. This common feeling of Otherness might thus be used to hold our politics accountable to a diverse range of subjectivities, bypassing the restrictive implications of the pluralistic agreement.

Literature, art, philosophy, and theory all contribute to our understanding of Otherness, both inside ourselves and between us. These hypothetical debates and creative activities, on the other hand, should complement, not replace, the crucial task of evaluating the inequalities in socio-cultural opportunity and representation that economic and institutional settings produce. In theory and practice, we may pursue a new kind of representative responsibility, one that all members of the representational gear must accept if the ethical and democratic values that render justice practicable are to be realised.

Getting people, concepts, or cultural artifacts together across the chasm that divides them, getting them into the space, on the curriculum, into an open sphere of accountability, is often the aim of affirmative action. While each demands the ability and authority to represent its own concerns, they must also hold each other's representatives responsible. Each one also must examine how its own self-representation impacts other people, often to the point of twisting or undermining the power of the other to promote its concerns. This introspection of how we depict objects must go beyond examining the impact of repressive language or actions. It ought to also evaluate the consequences of leaping to allegations of bigotry, xenophobia, harassment, homophobia, racism, or any other charge that places all blame on the other, converting complex political and human situations into simplified ethical dramas of right and wrong. Institutionalising our representation difficulties as a permanent aspect of pedagogic or political life

might not appear to be the optimal remedy at first. However, it might be our most practical mechanism for examining the public good in the long term.

Literary and critical theory, pluralism, feminism, deconstruction, and several other developments in the social sciences and humanities have created strong discourses for impacting the organisation, interpretation, and control of social life by altering the representation of social reality. These days students often study important pieces of literature that were previously obscure and unpublished. Paule Marshall says:

What I needed, what all the kids-West Indian and native black American alike-with whom I grew up needed, was an equivalent of the Jewish shul, someplace where we could go after school-the schools that were shortchanging us-and read works by those like ourselves and learn about our history. It was around that time also that I began harboring the dangerous thought of someday trying to write myself... (From the Poets in the Kitchen).

Campuses have faced criticism because they have done so much to disperse accessibility to representation. These achievements may appear pitiful when measured against an absolute ideal, but in the real world of everyday struggle, they merit our respect, recognition, and support.

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