

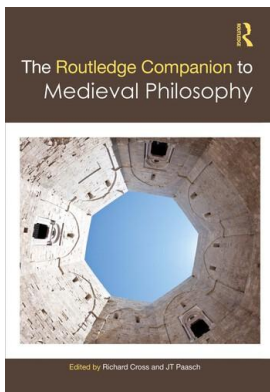
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DEMOCRACY AND REPRESENTATION

Takashi Shogimen

In the third quarter of the twentieth century, Walter Ullmann, one of the leading authorities in medieval political thought, argued that the history of political thought in medieval Europe could be characterized as “a history of the conflicts between [the] two theories of government”: the descending and ascending theses of government. The descending thesis is the view that the source of power consists in a supreme being, namely God. God appointed his “vicar” on earth, who embodied the power of the divine origin. The ultimate foundation of power in this world is divine, and human beings have no power unless it is given “from above.” The ascending thesis, by contrast, is the view that the source of power consists in the people or the community. Ullmann observed that the idea which attributed the foundation of this worldly power to the people derived from the Germanic tradition, described by Tacitus. According to this thesis, no public power exists unless the people—or their popular assembly—elects a leader. Thus the ruler who is conferred power by the people is considered a representative of the community (Ullmann 1970: 12–13).

As the public landscape of Western Europe was increasingly dominated by the Roman Church, according to Ullmann, the descending thesis penetrated the theory and practice of government. However, “populism” or the idea of popular sovereignty was rooted in the Roman republic and Germanic customs. He also observed the germination of the descending thesis in the feudal practice that the king was legally bound to seek the counsel and aid of his nobles in all matters touching upon the common needs of the realm. The ascending thesis gained momentum with the reception of Aristotle’s *Politics*. The new Aristotelian political science, which became available in Latin translations in the mid-thirteenth century, displaced the hierarchical model of government by underlining the ascending thesis with philosophical force. Ullmann argued that Aristotle introduced the new idea of the citizen as an active participant in politics thus undermining the holistic idea of humans as Christian believers under the universal rule of the Roman Church. This is known as Ullmann’s “Aristotelian revolution” thesis: Ullmann suggested that the origin of the idea of popular sovereignty that underpins modern democracy and representation can be traced back to the late thirteenth century.

Since Francis Oakley’s critique (Oakley 1970), Ullmann’s descending and ascending thesis has been subject to criticisms. Today few experts of medieval political thought deploy Ullmann’s thesis as an analytical framework because they find it too “simplistic” (Black 1992: 12). Indeed, Ullmann tried to discern the origin of modern democracy in late medieval political thought, but was the history of late medieval and early modern political thought continuous? The purpose of the present chapter is to explore this question by focusing on late medieval political ideas, which have often been associated with modern democratic thinking, in particular the ideas of

representation and consent. Recent scholarship suggests that medieval ideas of representation and consent are qualitatively different from modern ones.

Three Ideas of Representation: Personification, Mimesis, and Delegation

The medieval theory and practice of representation was diverse; medieval Europe knew a variety of representative bodies including parliaments and church councils. The primary role of parliaments was to grant the ruler the power to tax for specific purposes, typically war. Ecclesiastical councils resolved doctrinal and disciplinary issues in the church.

While representation was ubiquitous in the sphere of secular politics, it was hardly translated by political thinkers into a sophisticated theory. It was in the context of ecclesiology (the theory of church organization and government) that the idea of representation was theoretically refined (Oakley 2003). One can find a coherent and comprehensive theory of representation in the ecclesiology of the German cardinal, canonist, and mystical thinker Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464). In the medieval theory of representative government, there were three ideas of representation: representation by personification, mimesis, or delegation (Tierney 1983). All three ideas find their place in Cusa's cosmological vision of the church.

According to the idea of representation by personification, a whole community is taken to be present symbolically in the person of its head. In the context of medieval ecclesiology, the pope may be seen to represent the church figuratively as he personifies the church. An important implication of representation by personification is that such representation does not necessarily entail any democratic connotations (Tierney 1983: 26). While the whole authority may be vested with the community, the community is embodied by the representing head. Theologians of the Augustinian Order such as Giles of Rome (c. 1243–1316) and Augustinus Triumphus (1243–1328) argue that the pope can be called the church, thus presenting an extreme monarchical view of papal absolutism. Likewise, in *The Catholic Concordance* (1433) (Nicholas of Cusa 1959, 1991), Cusa envisages organic harmony within the Christian society embracing both the Roman Church and the Holy Roman Empire and discusses the ways in which the pope and the general council represent the universal church. In the Book 1, which discusses Christian society, Cusa argues that the faithful are united to the bishop because, as St. Cyprian maintained, “the church is in the bishop.” In this context, Cusa writes that the bishop represents and symbolizes (*figuratur*) the church as a public person (Nicholas of Cusa 1959: 58; *ibid.*: 1991: 25; Sigmund 1963: 165).

The second idea of representation by mimesis is that a group is seen to represent a whole community because the former “mirrors in its composition all the varied elements that make up” the community (Tierney 1983: 25). The Franciscan theologian William of Ockham's (c. 1285–1347) encyclopedic work, *The Dialogue* (Ockham 2013), presents the view that the council mimetically represents individuals of diverse social roles including not only churchmen but also the laity. However, the *Dialogue* is a work in which Ockham illustrates a wide range of political and ecclesiological views without disclosing his personal opinion clearly. The consensus among experts is that Ockham's ultimate position on any representative government by mimesis (or indeed in any other forms) was negative. Cusa presented the idea of representation by mimesis when he maintained that the pope is only representative of the whole community of the faithful “in a very general way (*confusissime*),” while the council is a “more certain (*certius*) representation” of the whole church. The reason is that the council includes more “public persons” such as patriarchs, cardinals, archbishops, and bishops. In arguing so Cusa had in mind the immediacy of the group to the representative who represented them and concluded that “it is . . . clear that the more specific the rulership, the more certain and less vague the representation by the ruler” (Nicholas of Cusa 1991: 124). The council that contains more “rulership” than the pope alone would represent more groups, thus representing the whole church more exactly.

Finally, the third idea, representation by delegation, means the delegation of authority to the representatives by those whom they are to represent. An important ramification is that the representative only possesses the derivative and limited authority conferred by those whom they represent; therefore, should the representative be judged by those whom they represent to be abusive, such authority can be removed from them (Tierney 1998: 4). If the pope is the representative of the church in this sense, his power is, unlike the case of representation by personification, conferred and limited by the church.

It has long been suggested that the Italian political philosopher Marsilius of Padua (c. 1275–1342) is a pivotal figure in developing the medieval discussion of representation by delegation (Quillet 1988). In his controversial *Defender of the Peace* (1324), Marsilius argues that the general council consisted of priests and experts in divine law who are elected by all the communities in the church, thus “representing the universal body of the faithful through the . . . authority granted them by those other universal bodies” (Marsilius of Padua 2005: 368; *ibid.*: 1928: 320). His argument for conciliar supremacy is anchored not only in his radical ecclesiology that rejects papal primacy but also in his generic theory of the political community. Marsilius famously maintains that in both the civil and ecclesiastical community the authority to make law and institute rulers derives from the consent of the whole community or its “weightier part (*valentior pars*).” To some, Marsilius’s language resonates even the modern “democratic” concept of representation (Morrall 1958: 117).

Marsilius is certainly not an isolated instance of propounding the idea of representation by delegation. *The Catholic Concordance* serves as a case in point once again. Cusa writes that the council consists of “presiding officers (*presidentes*)” and “representatives (*legati*),” a type of elected representative of various communities in the church, who give the consent of all the faithful (Sigmund 1963: 167). The term *legati* also refers to the college of cardinals, who “take the place of others in electing the pope.” This idea of representation by delegation is united with the idea of representation by personification. Christ established the office of bishop and each bishop symbolically represents the church; however, it was also election and consent that established a bishop as a representative of the church. Cusa summarizes this succinctly: “all legitimate authority arises from elective concordance and free submission. There is in the people a divine seed by virtue of their common equal birth and the equal natural rights of all men so that all authority—which comes from God as does man himself—is recognized as divine when it arises from the common consent of the subjects” (Nicholas of Cusa 1959: 348; *ibid.*: 1991: 230). Both representation by delegation and that by personification are anchored in a theological foundation. E. F. Jacob’s view that the concept of the church advanced by leading conciliarists had “a theological, rather than a political or constitutional, basis” (Jacob 1943: 3) hits the mark on Cusa’s understanding of representation.

Political Representation

Jacob’s observation provides another perspective on the historical understanding of the idea of representation: was the medieval notion of representation political? What the twentieth-century political philosopher Hannah Pitkin (1967) calls “political” representation is predicated on the idea that representatives need to act at the behest of the body they are representing in the context of negotiating the conflicting interests and desires of various groups that constitute the entire community. Drawing on Pitkin’s idea, Cary J. Nederman (2009: 99–121) argues convincingly that the theoretical concept of political representation is absent from medieval political thought. One heuristic feature of the concept of political representation is that representatives must concern themselves simultaneously “with the interests of constituents (regardless of their wishes) and the wishes of constituents (regardless of their interests)” (Nederman 2009: 102). “Political” representatives, therefore, who act at the behest of the constituents, have discretionary power in order to

act for the interest of the constituents, which may be against their wishes. Thus consent is not *the* defining characteristic but only a significant feature of political representation.

Nederman argues that Marsilius's idea of representation in his discussion of conciliar supremacy clearly differs from political representation (Nederman 1995: 85). The business of the general council is not to engage in such negotiations of conflicting interests and desires but to determine the meaning of Scripture. "Representatives" at the general council are not required to canvas and reflect the wishes of individual believers. Furthermore, the definition of the correct meaning of Scriptural text is not the work of human deliberation but is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the "representatives" only serve one genuine interest, that of the church and its members: the preservation of orthodox faith. In defending orthodoxy, the members of the church see no conflict between their interests and their wishes. Even though Marsilius writes that the general council "truly represents, through succession, the gathering of the apostles and other elders of the faithful at that time" (Marsilius of Padua 2005: 361), his idea of representation is far removed from the concept of "political" representation; rather it is more aptly labeled as "spiritual representation" (Nederman 1995: 84–85). On this point, late medieval conciliarists are not very dissimilar to Marsilius.

The absence of "political" representation is not limited to Marsilius's discourse on conciliar supremacy but may be observed in his generic discussion of the legislative process in the political community in the first discourse of the *Defender of the Peace*. Marsilius claims famously that the weightier part (*valentior pars*) "represents the whole" of the community (*totam universitatem repraesentat*)" (Marsilius of Padua 2005: 68). The rationale for singling out "the weightier part" as representatives is that they should collectively reach a common decision on "common advantage" because individuals of "a stunted nature" due to their malice or ignorance disturb the common view (Marsilius of Padua 2005: 68). The weightier part represents the voice of rational individuals, which is supposed to be revealed simply by eliminating the noise of irrational voices. This form of "representing the whole community" differs significantly from "representing" diverse and conflicting wishes and interests of individuals in the community (Nederman 2009: 108–111).

Closely associated with the medieval idea of representation by delegation is the Roman Law concept of *plena potestas* (full power) or *plena auctoritas* (full authority), which was assimilated into medieval canon law. Gaines Post (1964: 91–162) asserts that *plena potestas* is one of the key concepts that define the procedural relationship between the communities and the central authority from the middle of the thirteenth century. A representative with *plena potestas* conferred by a community, ecclesiastical or secular, typically had only a limited mandate which obliged them to withhold consent to any demands of the ruler beyond the mandate given by the constituents. Referring back to the constituents for further instruction, however, is obstructive to efficient decision-making; hence, a powerful ruler demanded that communities equip their representatives with *plena et sufficiens potestas* (full and sufficient power) to consent to the ruler's proposals.

Plena (et sufficiens) potestas implies that what needs to be consented is determined in terms of mandates *before* negotiations between the ruler and the representatives (Monahan 1987: 125). This means that the "representative" with *plena (et sufficiens) potestas* is no more than an instrument of the constituents, for whom it is procedurally compulsory to adhere to whatever the constituents determined prior to the negotiation with the ruler. Thus the delegated authority in terms of *plena (et sufficiens) potestas* is far from the idea of popular sovereignty, which limits the ruler's power; on the contrary, it obliges the representative to consent to whatever proposal was presented to them by the ruler. Thus the medieval idea of representation by delegation underpinned by the notion of *plena potestas* entails no discretionary power, which enables the representative to negotiate a balance between the interests and the wishes of the constituents.

Democracy

Democracy is not an idea cherished by medieval political thinkers. The term democracy was certainly known to political writers through the Aristotelian taxonomy of political constitutions. As Aristotle lays out in Book 5 of his *Politics*, there are three legitimate constitutions that serve the common good: monarchy, aristocracy, and polity. Accordingly, there are three illegitimate constitutions that do not serve the common good, namely: tyrannical monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy. Democracy is not even among legitimate political constitutions. Moreover, medieval political thinkers often discussed tyranny, while they wrote much less on oligarchy and democracy as “diseased” regimes.

Alexander Passarin d’Entrèves (1967: 197) writes:

it was only when the idea of consent finally came to be associated with that of an equal right in each individual to share in the establishment and exercise of power, that the distinctive features of modern democratic theory began to emerge into full daylight.

Such an association did not occur in the Middle Ages; however, the two ideas—consent and the equality of individuals—found their own place in medieval Europe. The notion of human equality was obviously not part of the legacy of Aristotle’s political philosophy, which deemed slavery to be natural. The moral equality of humanity was claimed—a few centuries after Aristotle—by Cicero and Seneca as well as the Christian fathers despite the hierarchically organized structure of medieval society; for example, the notion of equality crystalized as the idea of equality before the law and the recognition of natural rights in individuals. Indeed, the doctrine of the natural equality of humans is as old as the Stoics, constituting the natural law tradition, which continued to thrive in the Middle Ages.

Medieval political thinkers did not discuss the establishment and exercise of power in terms of the contractual association of equal individuals but in terms of the whole people as a corporation (*populus*). The idea that the people as a whole is the source of legitimate power derives from the twelfth-century Roman lawyer Azo. According to his legal theory, the people as a whole institute imperial power by ceding, not transferring, power. Thus the people retain the power to legislate and abrogate law after the institution of an emperor. Azo maintains that individual members of the people are less than the emperor but the emperor is less than the people as a whole. This argument was transferred to the conciliar framework in the late Middle Ages in order to argue that individual Christians cannot judge the pope but the pope can be judged by the corporate body of the church or the general council as its representative (Tierney 1983: 56–60).

The idea of the corporate body of the people as the source of legitimate power has typically been labeled as “popular sovereignty” (or “populism”) (Ullmann 1970; Tierney 1982) but may be categorized better as a weak type of “popular sovereignty,” in the sense that it de-emphasizes the role of individuals thus making the corporate authority of the people formal and symbolic. A strong type of “popular sovereignty” on the other hand is underscored by the active participation of individuals in the collective decision-making process (Nederman 1995: 74–75). Given the ambivalence of the concept of “popular sovereignty” which entails modern connotations, one needs caution in framing medieval discussions of the authority of the people when using that term. Perhaps a careful examination of the idea of consent is a surer path to pursue.

Consent

Medieval society was indeed full of consensual practices. Feudal vassalage is based on mutual consent between lord and vassal. Parliaments were summoned by the king to gain consent for

taxation. Collective decision-making in medieval guilds and communes rested on consent (Black 1984, 2009). Medieval intellectuals were also aware of the Ciceronian notion that a political community was a multitude associated by consent (Tierney 1982: 40). The notion of consent did not only find wide application but was also translated into theories. The idea of consent is indeed one of the most significant features in the medieval theories of the origin and legitimacy of government.

Perhaps one of the most important contributors to the medieval development of the idea of consent is the Dominican John of Paris (c. 1255–1306). John's *On Royal and Papal Power* (John of Paris 1969, 1971) represents the first systematic and critical response to papal absolutism propounded by Giles of Rome and James of Viterbo, although it remains subject to scholarly debate whether John wrote the treatise in defense of the cause of the French crown, which was locked into a conflict with the papacy. The main thread of his argument is the rejection of the papal absolutist view that the pope is the singular fount of all powers, spiritual and temporal. For John, jurisdictional power is the power of a human ruling or a judgment over other humans; thus, it is not supernatural but merely human. The jurisdictional power of both kings and popes falls within the realm of natural causality, and the source of human—not supernatural—power is the consent of the human community (Canning 2011: 52–53; Oakley 2012: 222). Thus the deposition of a tyrannical ruler, ecclesiastical or secular, is possible with the consent of the people.

Marsilius considers consent to be the cornerstone of the legislative procedure. He insists that the community of citizens is the final determinant of law as the expression of their common welfare, and the consent of the citizen body is “the key to the procedural legitimation of law” (Nederman 1995: 77). What is noteworthy about that procedure is that the *discovery* of law is attributed to those who have legal expertise and prudence, while the *authorization* of law is subject to the consent of the whole citizen body. Likewise, consent is at the heart of Cusa's ecclesiological system. Consent of the faithful constitutes the basis of both ecclesiastical authority and the making of law (Sigmund 1963: 137–157). Indeed, the primacy of Peter is not solely dependent on Christ's commission but also on the consent of the apostles (Nicholas of Cusa 1991: 112).

Clearly the idea of consent was enshrined in medieval political theory and practice. Some modern commentators, who underline the historical significance of the medieval development of the idea of consent, go so far as to downplay the differences between medieval and early modern views of consent (Tierney 1982: 29–52). However, if we examine some principal ideas that define the process by which consent is secured, it becomes apparent that the medieval concept of consent is not identical to its modern counterpart.

What Touches All Must Be Approved by All

One of the well-known principles in the medieval doctrine of consent is “*Quod omnes tangit ab omnibus approbari debet*” (What touches all must be approved by all). Ostensibly this principle originating from Roman Law might plausibly be interpreted as the basis of “popular sovereignty,” meaning that the right to make the final decisions in the political community pertains to the people. This argument has been formulated by Ullmann (1970) and Antonio Marongiu (1968a, 1968b). The maxim was adopted widely by both Roman and canon lawyers, popes, emperors, and kings as a normative constitutional principle in and beyond the Middle Ages.

Isolating the maxim from contexts in which it was used, however, entails a serious risk of misinterpreting it. In the original Roman Law context, the text was not a constitutional principle at all; it was typically mentioned as a mere technical principle in private law concerning the administration of a tutelage held by a group of tutors. Constantin Fasolt (1991: 26) characterizes

the consent expressed in the maxim in the context of Roman Law as procedural since it is only a procedural principle that when the rights of a group of individuals are questioned, a judge must make a decision in the presence of all who are touched by it.

In the Middle Ages, the maxim was adapted to the sphere of public law, a significant departure from the ancient Roman tradition. However, what the maxim meant in the medieval context was not that the people were entitled to determine the fate of the community in which they lived; the consent that the people could give to the decision was deemed to be compulsory. “The authorities merely came to be obliged to convoke the people when decisions affecting the common good had to be taken, but they were not . . . subjected to the popular will” (Fasolt 1991: 29). Discussing the adaptation of the maxim to medieval canon law, Kenneth Pennington (2006: 30) explains that when the maxim was referred to in the context of the rules regulating the summoning of a council, what it meant was that “any council should invite persons who were not normally present in the deliberations of the council when it dealt with matters touching their interests.” Since it was compulsory for those invited to give consent, the maxim “What touches all etc” in the medieval context did not lose the ancient Roman procedural meaning. In entailing the procedural sense, the maxim resembles the aforementioned idea of *plena potestas* (Post 1964: 91–162).

Majoritarian Principle

If the maxim “What touches all etc” embodies the procedural principle that everyone concerned must be summoned and consulted, what is the criteria by which to decide whether the consent of everyone—individually or collectively—is given? Medieval political thinkers generally preferred unanimity. Marsilius proposed “virtual public consensus regarding matters of common concern” (Nederman 1995: 75), and Cusa assumed tacit consent of the multitude to the electoral or legislative decision of the wise (Sigmund 1963: 153). But what if a collective decision-making process fails to reach a unanimous decision?

The majoritarian principle is taken for granted as a decision-making procedure in modern democratic societies; however, the history of the majoritarian principle, which remains under-researched, is difficult to penetrate (Burns 2003). In practice, the majoritarian principle was adopted in ecclesiastical elections and decision-making processes in urban communities (Moulin 1953; Black 1984: 61). In theory, there were two seminal concepts of majoritarianism in the Middle Ages: one is *maior et sanior pars* and the other is *valentior pars*. The former—*maior et sanior pars*—may be translated “a greater and wiser part,” which consists of two elements: “greater” and “wiser.” The “greater” could be either a quantitative or a qualitative concept: on the one hand, it might be possible to interpret *maior pars* as a numerical majority whose decision carries weight either because of the voluntary acquiescence of the minority or because of the recognition of the need to submit to the ultimately irresistible force of numbers. Indeed, the electoral process within the medieval church often adopted the principle that two-thirds of the entire number of votes determined the outcome of the election. On the other hand, the medieval concept of *majoritas* is conceptually associated with authority no less than with numbers. The qualitative interpretation of *maior* is consistent with the addition of *et sanior*. Attributing decision-making authority to the “wiser part” underscores the quality of the decision, not the numerical extent of support given for the decision. The idea that the prudence of a decision is inherent in the majority view did not gain support—and indeed found resistance—in the Middle Ages (Burns 2003). The ambivalence of the idea of *maior et sanior pars* is clearly seen in how medieval canonists theorized the principle of ecclesiastical election. The early thirteenth-century decretist Johannes Teutonicus advocated a clear numerical majority, while the contemporary decretalist Bernardus Parmensis and Pope Gregory IX rejected the majoritarian interpretation of *maior et sanior pars* (Pennington 2006: 26).

The idea of *valentior pars*, typically translated as the “weightier part,” is often seen as the root of the medieval origin of majoritarian rule. Marsilius of Padua maintains famously in the *Defender of the Peace* that the legislative power consists in the entire body of the citizens (*universitas civium*) or in its *valentior pars*. Marsilius, however, notes explicitly that in referring to *valentior pars* he has in mind “both the quantity and the quality of persons in the community upon which the law is passed” (Marsilius of Padua 2005: 67). Prudence and expert knowledge, not merely the number of votes, carry weight in his conception of *valentior pars*.

Cusa inherits the Marsilian concept without clarifying whether it is a numerical or qualitative concept; however, in the section of *The Catholic Concordance* where the influence of Marsilius is manifest, Cusa insists that “certain wise men act as guides for the unthinking people” (Nicholas of Cusa 1991: 207). Likewise, when Cusa discusses the question who should be allowed to sign and consent to a doctrinal definition made by the council, he presents a case that not only bishops but also abbots and monks should be included; however, Cusa does not fail to add that

where a decision is made not by unanimity but by majority vote, discretion and prudence and authority ought rightly to lead us to consider whether the judgment of fools whose outnumber is infinite might not outweigh the votes of the wise.

(Nicholas of Cusa 1991: 106)

Individual Autonomy

The history of the majoritarian principle in the Middle Ages suggests that while the principle found application in the public decision-making process, its theoretical justification met persistent resistance. Indeed, Ockham (1997: 281–282, 1998: 71–72), Marsilius’s contemporary, writes:

I consider that what the many allege, that one should not go against the multitude, smacks clearly of heresy; since it is more commonly the multitude that was in error, and we read in holy scripture that not seldom it was one man alone who escaped all the rest.

But majoritarianism is not democracy. Indeed, R.H. Tawney (1962: 271) maintains: “the foundation of democracy is the sense of spiritual independence which nerves the individual to stand alone against the powers of this world.” If so, a “democratic” aspiration is to be found in Ockham.

Ockham’s polemical writings, which attacked the heresy of contemporary popes, are permeated with the powerful sense of individual autonomy. Before the final quarter of the twentieth century, his emphasis on the individual was typically seen as a derivative of his nominalism (de Lagarde 1932–1946; *ibid.*: 1956–1970; Wilks 1963). More recent scholarship examines Ockham’s political works in their own right to reveal that his vindication of dissent from a heretical pope is predicated on the superiority of the cognitive authority of an individual’s correct knowledge of the Christian faith against the institutional authority of ecclesiastical office holders whose doctrinal knowledge is erroneous (Shogimen 2007: 118–123).

Ockham’s micro-theory of individual political action is also underpinned by the idea of the individual as an agent of “rights and liberties granted by God and nature.” The violation of individual rights and liberties negates the legitimacy of the power that was exercised, thus legitimating dissent on the part of violated individuals. The morality of dissenting individuals is also anchored in the negative authority of individual conscience: acting against the dictates of conscience is always wrong (Shogimen 2007: 131–135). Ockham’s individualist program of ecclesiastical dissent is markedly different from other “democratic” political ideas in the Middle Ages, which typically pointed to collective decision-making process.

Conclusion

Taking a cue from Umberto Eco, Francis Oakley argues that it was “the Latin Middle Ages” that “turned us into western *political animals*” (Oakley 2012: 149). Nowhere else but in the West did government practices and constitutional arrangements of representation emerge, and it was representative mechanisms, Oakley maintains, that laid the foundation for liberal democratic and constitutional systems of government, which flourished in western Europe from the late eighteenth century and in the rest of the world from the second half of the twentieth century. The idea of representation, along with that of consent, emerged in the Latin Middle Ages and evolved ceaselessly through the centuries in the western tradition of political thought. However, as Oakley (2012: 157) also notes, the medieval ideas of consent and representation are conceptually not identical to their modern counterparts. While terms such as “representation” and “consent” were in continuous use by political thinkers of different generations, their meanings changed over time. The exploration of the medieval theories of representation and consent reminds us that one of the challenges for the historians of political thought is to uncover *conceptual* changes beneath the ostensible *linguistic* stability in the continuous use of the same vocabulary.

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