

Parliamentarism: A Politics of Temporal and Rhetorical Distances

This paper is a thought experiment, a by-product of my ongoing research on the temporal and rhetorical dimensions of democratised politics.¹ I am strongly indebted to the rethinking of representative democracy that both Pierre Rosanvallon and Frank Ankersmit have recently conducted in a remarkable series of books.² My focus in this paper, however, concerns an aspect to which neither of them has directed special attention, namely parliamentarism, or more generally, the parliamentary style of politics.

My point is to extend the concept of parliamentarism in two respects seldom dealt with by constitutional lawyers, historians and political scientists. First of all, parliamentarism also refers to »government by speaking«³ or »government by discussion«,⁴ that is to a rhetorical political culture which is constituted by speaking for and against, or, in classical terms arguing *in utramque partem*.⁵ In other words, parliamentarism refers to a style of politics for which deeds consist primarily of words. Moreover, parliamentary politics by speaking differs from other styles insofar as it is conducted with the adversaries in the same audience and with the intention to alter or at least shake up their views by means of persuasive speeches. This is the main rhetorical difference between parliamentary politics by speaking and the rhetorical situation of parties, associations or movements, as well as the politics of governments and bureaucracies. A common thread running through all of the opposing styles is the absence of the adversaries and their consequent lack of opportunity to reply immediately.

In my performative usage parliamentarism also does not refer to a politics conducted at the site of the parliament itself, but to a regime that is constituted by politically playing with times. The very matter of parliamentary activity is constituted by the use of time, both the time of electing the parliament and the internal time of a procedure to divide the parliamentary activities into distinct temporal items. In parliamentary politics all questions of what and how must be translated into questions of when in order to be considered as items on the parliamentary agenda.

The link between time and rhetoric lies in the situation in which time in the parliamentary style of politics is not only linked to the consumed quantitative time, but this time is interrupted by the very acts of speaking for and against. The act of dealing with time politically is present at every stage of the parliamentary process, both as a condition and as a medium of politics. The internal division of parliamentary times is the relation of the political calendar of debates and decision to daily, weekly and annual time, which is interrupted by the electoral terms.

Aesthetic, temporal and rhetorical distances

With his theory of history as his conceptual background⁶, Frank Ankersmit has revised our understanding of political representation in terms of an aesthetic distance between the represented and representatives. »We can only talk about representation where there is difference – and *not* an identity between the representative and the person represented.«⁷ One of his most explicit formulations is the following passage from *Aesthetic Politics*.

In the case of the electorate or the persons to be represented in political representation, reality is (...) not a reality that is objectively given to us in one way or another. But we may argue that precisely this is what representation is for: because there is no objectively given proposal for political action on the part of the people represented, and because it would be a category mistake to expect the existence of such an objectively given proposal, we need representation in order to be able to define such proposals at all. Representation finds its purpose and meaning in the indeterminate and interpretable character of the ›reality‹ that it is to be represented.⁸

By distinguishing the aesthetic from a mimetic concept of representation Ankersmit dissociates representative democracy from the Rousseauvian assumptions of identity between the represented and the representatives. With his theory of an aesthetic gap or distance between them, Ankersmit has attributed different political roles to the citizen voters and the members of parliament (henceforth: MPs). He has both left the represented the chance of exercising political control over the representatives and created a legitimation for the practice by which the representatives act as politicians with an initiative and a judgment of their own. In short, Frank Ankersmit's work has encouraged us to view parliamentary democracy as superior to the direct democracy as opposed to being a mere surrogate of it.⁹ In accordance with my vision of parliamentarism, I shall speculate here on two further dimensions in the aesthetic gap,

namely the temporal and rhetorical distances between the representatives and the represented in parliamentary democracies.

In line with Pierre Rosanvallon's recent work, I regard parliamentary democracy as a time-regime. To illustrate the role of time in politics, Rosanvallon quotes Condorcet's view that we have to distinguish between different temporal layers of politics: »temps court du référendum ou de la sensure; rythme institutionnel des élections; temps long de la constitution.«¹⁰ Like Rosanvallon I also want to discuss time both as a constraint and as a resource,¹¹ although here also accentuating the latter and usually neglected aspect.

The advantage of parliamentary politics lies in the chance to engage in a reflected use of this rhetorical and temporal distance as opposed to attempting to eliminate it by adapting parliamentary time and rhetoric to that of the citizen voters. My point is to assess the different aspects of temporal and rhetorical distances as political instruments. How does this distance serve the citizens and the parliamentarians? How could the acknowledgement of both temporal and rhetorical distance be used as a medium of invigorating politics?

In this paper I limit my discussion to the simple ideal types of an individual citizen voter and an individual MP, without considering intermediate cases, such as the candidate, the party official or the government minister in parliament. Furthermore, I will deal mainly with regular parliamentary elections and the alternation in government as a process of such election, excluding revolutions and other types of radical constitutional or regime changes.

Temporal distances

My point of departure is a perspective on the temporal scarcity of political agents. Two crucial twentieth-century thinkers dealing with temporalisation, Jean-Paul Sartre and Reinhart Koselleck, have inspired my approach. Koselleck, however, was not particularly interested in the kind of short-term yet non-momentary dimension of time that is constitutive of the temporal horizon of the agents in democratised and parliamentary politics.¹² Sartre's discussion on scarcity as the »passive motor of history« concentrates mainly on the limit-situations of human life,¹³ whereas he is not interested in using scarcity as a condition and tool of the parliamentary style of politics.

According to my thesis, we can distinguish four different aspects of temporality in this type of politics, which I shall refer to as timeliness, momentum, time-span and calendar.¹⁴ Timeliness refers to the time-bound, »worldly« character of the human existence, which also serves as both a limitation as well as a chance for the individual to do things in her own life-time.¹⁵

This also means that the human political existence is contingent both in its fragility and in its openness to change. The democratisation and parliamentarisation of politics increases the sense of timeliness by the insight into a polity, of which a regular condition is the possibility of alternation in government. The momentum in parliamentary democracies, in the sense of a turning point and the horizon opened by this turning point, is not restricted solely to the *kairos* of revolutions, wars or other extraordinary events. It is rather the regular and recurrent events of elections and alternation in government that are the crux of the matter. The momentum is not restricted to the election, but an MP can apply her electoral success as a power share in her parliamentary politics. The time-span of politics is oriented toward a future event, above all to the next elections. Correspondingly, the time-span is restricted to the electoral term and oriented both toward the maintenance vs. overthrow of the present government and the re-election of an MP. The momentum and time-span also serve as a point of departure for the formation of a political calendar that divides political activities in time and requires the translation of political questions into temporal items. Additions to and revisions of the calendar can themselves serve as modes of temporal politicking.

Considering the political situation of both the citizen voter and a member of parliament (living at least partly off politics¹⁶) we can detect a temporal distance with regard to each of the aspects I just discussed. As a rule, this refers to a greater temporal intensity in the life of the parliamentarians than of the citizen voters, although each of these dimensions deserves to be the topic of separate discussion here.

The political timeliness of the MP differs from that of the citizen voter in the very basis of their political existence. The experience of being ›elected‹ to the parliament is more an indicator of the political competence provided by the election than the inclusion into a social elite. Perhaps we might view this idea in Arendtian terms and say that if a person has been elected into the parliament, we must consider her as a political ›somebody‹ whose views must be counted in politics.¹⁷ This is independent of the question as to whether or not her election was based on her own political merits. The reverse side of this timeliness is its fragility: there is no guarantee than an MP will be re-elected at the next elections, and the attempts to secure re-election form a constitutive part of the condition of an MP as a political being.

Neither dimension of this special timeliness is present in the experience of the citizen voter. We could say that the MP's intensified experience of the political timeliness of her very situation alludes to an existential distance from the temporal horizon of the citizen voter. The political condition of the existence of the latter is not the pure status of human beings but the historically formed electoral rights and voting systems practised in their own specific context.

As a source of momentum, the election is, of course, also decisive for the MP. Despite all the lamentations of the decline of parliamentary powers, it provides her

with an extraordinary chance to act politically. The fact that she is ›elected‹ indicates the presence of a chance that can be utilised in different modes and to different degrees. Although all the MPs are required to possess at least some level of political competence, it is in their politicking within the parliament, or more generally speaking inside and outside the parliament during the electoral term, that distinguishes the back-benchers from the ›ministrables‹ and so on. Regarding the political reputation of an MP and her chances for re-election, almost everything depends on her performance as an MP. Whether an MP can continue to maintain the momentum created by her election depends mainly on her competence as a politician.

The specific power shares available to an MP are by definition not available to the citizen voter. Nonetheless, for the citizen voter, too, it is the elections that serve the most crucial events in the construction of her own political biography. Elections offer the citizen voter an extraordinary chance to both redefine her own ›political identity‹ by means of her voting performance and to mark a point of momentum in her political biography that cannot be forgotten in future elections. We can identify recent examples of voting that altered the political identity of the voters when, for example, Finnish bourgeois women voted *en masse* for the Social Democrat Tarja Halonen in the second round of the 2000 presidential elections, or, even more extremely, when even a number of Trotskyites voted for Jacques Chirac in the second round of the 2002 elections in order to limit LePen's share of votes. Another dimension of this momentum lies in the process of following the performance of ›their‹ candidate in the parliament, not just in the sense of ›keeping promises‹ but also in the more general terms of political competence. The temporal distance between the citizen voter and the MP refers to the possession of a level of control in the context of the next elections. If ›your‹ MP has acted in a manner you previously judged inappropriate, the citizen voter has the opportunity to change either her candidate or her own political views.

It seems that the time-span of the MPs differs from that of the citizen voters even more radically than the momentum. In this dimension the electoral term is viewed from the opposite direction, namely from the approaching elections. The time-span of an MP, the political performance during the electoral term, is defined in terms of urgency: How much can I achieve as an MP during this parliamentary term? All of the measures supported and activities carried out by the MP both inside and outside the parliament are, from this point of view, temporal translations into items to be dealt with during the current parliamentary term. This allows the MP to concentrate on essential tasks and issues at hand and to shift other questions beyond the relevant time-span. The political competence of an MP is to a considerable degree assessed in terms of the efficiency with which she temporalises her performance during the incumbent parliament, although her success in this sense is never guaranteed. Another aspect in the time-span lies in the preparation for the next elections in order

to secure both the candidature and re-election. The insight into the inherent urgency of the parliamentary performance lies partly in, although is not limited solely to, the move toward the next election campaign. The MP is obliged to weigh the advantages of increasing political competence against the chances of becoming re-elected. The decisive point is that success cannot be secured in advance, but both the performance and the electoral result is essentially dependent on the judgment of a great number of anonymous others.

The political time-span of the citizen voter is different. She does not have to think in terms of electoral terms or to prepare for the next elections. Still, as a rule it is only the next elections that oblige her to rethink her political identity, and her political self-identity is, nonetheless, even more punctual and election-oriented than that of an MP. With regard to the political identity of the latter it is not only the performance in the campaign that matters, but one's performance as an MP. Every vote and every speech may also be turned into a potential source of revision of votes in the next elections.

Perhaps even more distant from the everyday political life of the citizen voters is the political calendar of the MPs. The intensive and extensive temporality of parliamentary politics is highlighted through its distinct procedures and practices. Constitutive of parliamentary politics, as an expression of a rhetorical culture of arguing *in utramque partem*, is its procedural character. The parliamentary events are categorised into different types of questions, such as government proposals and interpellations of the opposition, different kinds of issues, such as legislation, the budget and the confidence of the government, as well as different *loci* of discussion, such as the plenary and committee sessions.

The point of parliamentary politics is to divide time between these different types of items, and the parliamentary procedure concerns, above all, this temporal division by transforming the questions to be discussed into the form of temporal items in the parliamentary calendar.¹⁸ The priority of procedure over substance in the parliamentary style of politics means, strictly speaking, that nothing is so important that it should supersede the distinct style of politics contained in the parliamentary procedure. Even in the case of urgent situations there are procedures as to how they should be dealt with in a parliamentary manner. The parliamentary procedure is by implication the first thing to be learnt by an MP – otherwise all her activities would be out of place and time. Superior competence as a parliamentary-style politician can be only achieved through the use of specific temporalised occasions contained in the parliamentary procedure, or perhaps through a distinction in the debates on changing the procedure.

The great advantage of politicking for the citizen voter lies, indeed, in the lack of the calendarisation of her interventions. Even voting itself is not a quasi-obligatory act but rather a situation of control, which should not voluntarily be left unused, at

least when some politically ›literate‹ candidates are available. Speaking in Weberian terms about the citizen voters as occasional politicians¹⁹ by no means requires that a maximum level of political interest and personal intervention would be desirable for all. My point is that it should be left up to the citizen voter to decide in what situations, in what manner and to what extent she acts politically. The figure of the intellectual, in the Sartrean sense as someone who intervenes in questions which do not concern her,²⁰ is a classical mode of acting as an occasional politician when a situation arises in which both the need and the means of intervention are at the disposal of the citizen voter. One important aspect of their control over parliamentarians lies in the disturbance of their calendars, intervening whenever the occasion arises.

For the citizen voters the parliamentary style of politics appears as a spectacle with a few visible events, such as budget debates, interpellations and the question time in parliament, as the main arenas. Judging as spectators of the parliamentary theatre, the citizen voters tend, furthermore, to think in terms of standpoints rather than in terms of issues to be thematised, and they do so at the level of oratorical performances rather than of political constellations in the parliament, demanding either–or decisions as opposed to analysing the ambiguity of the questions at hand. As outsiders they insist on the narrowness of the intra-parliamentary schedules and the urgencies to overcome them in special situations. This is a mark of their narrowly substantialist understanding of politics, from which the distinct temporality of parliamentary politics remains out of sight.

In the political use of time, the distance between the citizen voter and the parliamentary politician is dramatic. A citizen is an occasional politician who is only occasionally required to participate in parliamentary politics and only seldom has occasion to be involved in it at all. An MP is supposed to continuously participate in parliamentary politics in various forms, and she is presented with a number of both regular and irregular occasions to do so.

My point is, nonetheless, that it is the situation in which the citizen voter and the MP experience a different relation to the times of politics that is decisive as opposed to this quantitative difference in participation. For the citizen voter time is mainly a backdrop of politics, which may become part of the activity of politicking itself only in exceptional cases of urgency or timing one's actions. For the MP, all questions have a temporal dimension, and the ability to play with time is an indicator of competence in parliamentary politics. This is a game in which temporal questions, such as when to act and how to order one's actions in time or to treat the existing parliamentary agenda, are crucial aspects of a successful political career.

The political situation is constantly changing, even when, from the point of view of the citizen voter, it might seem as though nothing is happening. The demands included in electoral programmes are either unrealisable or more or less empty in

terms of their content when translated into the level of political items on the parliamentary agenda. The entire notion of the existence of a preconceived policy with regard to an electoral term is intelligible only in terms of using MPs solely as ›button-pushers‹ for a government’s policy if the supporters require an imperative mandate. Such an MP is far from an independent political agent, even if the parliamentary procedure and calendar require her to be just that.

The preconceived policy alludes to a style of politicking that does not correspond to the times of parliamentary politics, for which every item offers an opportunity for change. An alternative view, corresponding to the tight and intense temporality of the parliamentary style, could lie in reflective political competence in terms of the MPs’ abilities to read the political signs of time. A decisive dimension in the political competence and distinction of an MP concerns the act of judging the shifting situations and constellations in their relationship particularly to the momentum, time-span and calendar of the incumbent parliament. For example, an MP of the governmental coalition has to reflect on the situations in which she chooses to demonstrate her opposition to the government’s policy, on which questions it is worth risking sanctions against her party, or on what possible issues a break with the government would be worth considering. In such reflections the political timeliness of the MP’s situation also becomes clearly visible.

A rhetorical conception of parliamentarism

The temporal distance is always a rhetorical distance. A parliamentary move has a different *ethos* to a similar move presented by a citizen voter. A proposal with the same content as one presented by a citizen voter is a different move when presented by an MP, who puts her political weight behind it. It also has a different *pathos* in terms of its presentation to a parliamentary audience. Even a simple parliamentary motion that does not get any public attention is inherently politically different from the presentation of the move with the same content outside the parliament.

A parliamentary proposal is politically a different speech act to a similar proposal made outside the parliament. This holds true in the perlocutionary sense of, at least in theory, its having a better chance of being officially accepted than any similar proposal that is presented in a public debate. It is a performative that is identifiable as a parliamentary proposal, which no similar moves in other contexts can ever be. Furthermore, as an illocutionary act, a parliamentary proposal cannot be restricted to the official aim that it be adopted by the parliament, which is quite illusory in the democratic era. It also has other dimensions of linguistic action, for example marking a point against the intra-party opponents, indicating a move in an MP’s

parliamentary career as a politician or stealing the initiative from another MP representing the same voter clientele.

The style of the parliamentary rhetoric is deliberative, oriented toward weighing the advantages and disadvantages of proposals. Other rhetorical genres, the epideictic aspect of beautiful speeches and the forensic aspect of judging the character and significance of past acts, must be subordinated to the deliberative genre in parliamentary eloquence. Deliberations, which aim at acquiring the majority of votes in the parliament, also differ from negotiations, which aim at reaching a compromise between parties. Compromises reached through negotiation are a part of parliamentary practice, but they are always conducted with the majority principle as the *ultima ratio* in the background.²¹ The estimation of numerical majorities is a crucial aspect of the eventual modifications of the proposals in order to achieve at least some results or to alter the terms of the current political constellation. Outside parliament there is no similar priority given to the deliberative genre of weighing the alternatives over other rhetorical genres, nor to taking the current political constellation in consideration.

The distinctive quality of parliamentary deliberations is, however, a direct result of the procedural quality of parliamentary politics. Even a majority cannot override parliamentary procedure, especially those procedures intended to ensure that both opinions for and against are heard in the presence of the adversaries at each stage of the parliamentary process. The procedure also requires the MPs to transform their proposals from what-questions to when-questions. The same holds true with regard to the introduction of new items to the agenda or debates surrounding the procedure itself.

Historically, it is in the parliamentary procedure that we can see most explicitly how what Quentin Skinner referred to in his *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* as »the rhetorical culture of the Renaissance« is politically continued in the English parliament. In Renaissance England »the most important activities of a good citizen are essentially rhetorical in character.«²² Skinner quotes Francis Bacon's concept of »the politic part of eloquence« and characterizes it as »the force of which derives from the capacity to help a speaker to adjust his arguments to suit different audiences.«²³ The politic part of eloquence required, in other words, the acceptance of the Roman ideal of arguing *in utramque partem*: »The dictum that there will always be two sides to any question eventually became proverbial, and already underpins the treatment of proverbs and *loci communes* in many writers of the English Renaissance.«²⁴

The ideal of arguing for and against as the cornerstone of the history of parliamentary procedure is emphasised in the Austrian jurist Josef Redlich's classical study *Recht und Technik des Englischen Parlamentarismus*. A number of specific

parliamentary practices, such as the parliamentary immunity of the MPs, the equality of the MPs to one another and the neutrality of the speaker, only become intelligible in terms of a rhetorical conception.²⁵

The act of speaking for and against in the presence of one's adversaries is reflected in the organisation of parliamentary procedures in terms of a rotation between speeches presenting opposing views. Accordingly, the entire parliamentary procedure is based on the practice in which opposing points of view are heard and discussed at each phase of dealing with a particular issue. The monotonous repetition of the same standpoint for hours at a time easily becomes a target in anti-parliamentary politics. In the French Third Republic, the president of the Assembly had the duty to keep the debate lively by rotating the speakers for and against.²⁶ The temporal and rhetorical character of parliamentary procedures also alludes to the priority of the procedure over its substance as a decisive characteristic of parliamentary politics.

The procedural principle of a rotation between speakers illustrates most explicitly the rhetorical culture of arguing *in utramque partem*. This rhetorical view on parliamentarism can be contrasted with another famous view, namely the thesis that the point of parliamentarism lies in the ›search for truth.‹ Its main proponents are François-Pierre Guizot and Carl Schmitt. The former claims that the discussion »oblige des pouvoirs à chercher en commun la vérité«,²⁷ whereas Schmitt puts forth the following thesis in his *Die geistesgeschichtliche Lage des heutigen Parlamentarismus*: »Das Parlament aber ist der Platz, wo man deliberiert, d.h. in einem diskursiven Vorgang, durch die Erörterung von Argument und Gegenargument, die relative Wahrheit gewinnt.«²⁸ Schmitt refers to Guizot, but seems to go so far as to consider this to be the point of »government by discussion.«

If we turn our attention to the main classics of British nineteenth century parliamentary government, however, no such reference to truth can be found. In his *Essay on Political Tactics* (written 1791/published 1818), Jeremy Bentham characterises the parliamentary procedure as a strictly negative task of avoiding inconveniences in the parliamentary practice. »The object is to avoid the inconveniences, to prevent difficulties, which must result from a large assembly of men being called to deliberate in common. The art of the legislator is limited to the prevention of everything which might prevent the development of their liberty and their intelligence.«²⁹ Similarly, in *Considerations on Representative Government*, John Stuart Mill explicitly insists on the role of listening to opposite views. He regards the parliament as »(a) place where every interest and shade of opinion in the country can have its cause even passionately pleaded, in the face of the government and of all other interests and opinions, can compel them to listen.«³⁰ For Walter Bagehot, »a government by discussion (...) at once breaks down the yoke of fixed customs.«³¹ In other words, it indicates a moment of rupture as opposed to one of producing harmony. When

judging the originality of the English achievements in »government by discussion«, he adds that »it has developed more of all kinds of people ready to use their mental energy in their own way.«³²

The regular presence of opposed views also distinguishes parliamentarism as a paradigm of a rhetorical political culture from the sociological view of the parliament as a *locus* of conversation among others, which has been popular since Jürgen Habermas's *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*.³³ The parliament is no place for polite conversation, as was the practice in the clubs, salons, coffee-houses and so on, for none of them was based on the regular presence of adversaries. Rather, they sat in the competing clubs, salons and coffee-houses, or used journals and publishing companies for mutual conversation at distance. In other words, the great advantage of the parliament lies precisely in the situation in which the adversaries are not located outside the audience, but actually sit in the same audience as the adherents. In this sense the chance of the inherent possibility in parliamentary politics lies in the persuasion of one's adversaries or becoming persuaded by them. It is precisely for this reason that the parliament also needs a procedure that includes regulations that might sound »Byzantine« to outsiders, as Eugène Pierre, the long-term secretary of the president of the French *Assemblée nationale*, remarked.³⁴

The aesthetic, temporal and rhetorical gap between the MPs and the citizen voters is based on the situation that the parliamentarians are exposed to an intense thematisation of time and speech. A tacit requirement for the parliamentarian is to learn the procedure, to which, both the rhetorical and temporal dimension of politics is built in. In this sense an MP can both time her actions and situate them in the context of controversies in an extraordinary manner. Similar requirements – and occasions – are hardly ever posed for other types of politicians, inclusive the professional party functionary and the lobbyist.

As compared with the MP, the citizen voters have a greater freedom to choose when and how to act politically. They can be content just with voting, engage in punctual interventions in the case of crisis, in which the »politics-as-usual« seem not to be sufficient, or participate in movements that more or less regularly follow the parliamentary and governmental politics from a critical distance.

As a complement to the routine parliamentary practices of the MP, competent occasional politicians among the citizen voters are also highly valuable. Such occasional politicians outside the parliament would be able to read new signs of time in the political conditions, constellations, styles and concepts, which tend to be lost in the daily parliamentary struggles. Or, the parliamentarians manage the rhetoric of politicking within a given *Spielraum*, but sometimes it is the occasional politicians outside the parliament who are more fluent in the rhetoric of politicisation that also opens new *Spielräume*, or, better yet, *Spielzeiträume*, also for parliamentary politics.³⁵

Citizen voters as MPs of the election-day

One of the main potential pitfalls faced by the MP is to consider the world as reflective of the parliament and to misjudge the political effect of their debates and decision on the lives of the citizen voters. Another failure of the insider perspective of an MP might lie in the routinisation of all parliamentary decisions and in not grasping what is crucial and what is secondary. In both respects, the rhetorical control exerted by the voters both in elections and in public debates play a crucial role in the extension of the audience of parliamentary deliberations. The deliberative rhetoric among occasional politicians indicates a moment of control with regard to the affirmation of the rhetorical culture of parliamentary democracies.

Most aspects of parliamentary eloquence remain outside the rhetorical repertoire of the citizen voters. Parliamentarians live in a highly rhetorical culture, which is distant from that of the everyday life of almost anyone. The practices of a ›bourgeois‹ life do neither require constant deliberation between alternatives or an estimation of the political effects of one's own activities. The priority of procedure over substance frequently appears to be incomprehensible from the viewpoint of ›everyday life‹, and the notion that words are deeds may be even more difficult to accept. In the sphere of ›bourgeois‹ life and work, the rhetorical view that in every case one has good grounds to argue for opposite viewpoints would easily lead to not getting anything done. In this sense we can easily understand at least some of the antiparliamentary commonplaces, such as the accusations of *bavardage*.³⁶

In a famous passage from *Du contrat social*, Jean-Jaques Rousseau writes: »le peuple anglais pense être libre; il se trompe fort, il ne l'est que durant l'élection des membres du parlement.«³⁷ This passage is commonly used to legitimate a critique of electoral and parliamentary politics. This critique presupposes that voting implies the renunciation of one's voice to the representatives, a view that is well expressed in the German term *Stimmabgabe*, and even more explicitly in the old practice of the *Wahlkapitulationen* of the electors in the Holy Roman Empire.

Now we could practise a *paradiastolic* rhetorical redescription³⁸ and, sharing Rousseau's view on liberty as the absence of dependence,³⁹ give his dictum another normative variation. We could do so by inverting the common understanding of the relationship between elections and parliamentary politics and by understanding voting as an act of the prolongation of the parliamentary activities by the entire electorate. In other words, every voter should consider herself to be an MP on election-day – that is, to use her political imagination and make and attempt to decide between the candidates as if she herself were an MP. John Stuart Mill's ideal that »he would be bound to do if he were the sole voter, and the election depended upon him alone«⁴⁰ provides a good approximation of that practice.

In his *Wahlrecht und Demokratie in Deutschland*, Max Weber accentuates another dimension in the freedom of the voter.⁴¹ For Weber, the political point of voting lies in the possibility of the citizen to transcend her social ›being‹ by her own ›doing‹, that is to act independently of her socio-economic position as an individual and equal citizen among others.⁴² The citizen voter is free on the election-day in the sense that she acts in the ballot box in the same manner as an MP deliberating and deciding between alternatives in the parliament. In the elections, the alternatives are incarnated in the candidates themselves. The point is not to regard the parliament as an extension of the distribution of the already existing opinions among the voters, but, conversely, to view the elections as an occasion to extend the parliamentary deliberation and decision to the citizen voters. When Weber speaks of citizens as occasional politicians and not as opposed to politicians,⁴³ the point can be extended in similar terms to include the voters as MPs of the election-day.

In 1895, the Paris correspondent of the Viennese *Neue Freie Presse*, Theodor Herzl, published a book on the French parliament entitled *Das Palais Bourbon*. He accepted the common disgust with the parliament as a lived reality, but wanted to rehabilitate the political value of parliamentary government and understood that something must be changed in this respect. He made the following proposal, quoted from the 1995 French re-publication:

Quelque chose doit changer. Ou bien le mode d'expression de la vie publique doit redevenir honnête, à la manière d'autrefois; ou bien le peuple »souverain« doit se familiariser avec la transformation du langage, afin qu'il ne se sente plus trompé lorsque les vieux discours prennent un sens nouveau, plus subtil ou plus vicieux. Si le peuple et le parlement ne se comprennent pas, toute cette forme de gouvernement est remise en question.⁴⁴

Judged in retrospect, the parliamentary mode of government has not been quite as discredited as Herzl feared. Still, his idea that the citizen voters should have a better understanding of the parliamentary transformation of language and its politically motivated conceptual changes is extremely valuable also in terms of the rhetorical and temporal distance between the parliamentarians and the citizen voters. This distance should not, however, be reduced to a parliamentarisation of everyday life. Still, both the transfer of the parliamentary procedure to the election process and the application of analogies of it to the deliberations and decisions in non-parliamentary instances would help the citizen voters to better understand the singularity of the parliamentary style of politics. Similarly, such analogies could increase their chances to act like parliamentarians both on election-day and in other situations of ambiguous deliberation. For the citizen voters, it is time to give up the ideal that the

MPs would be ›like themselves.‹ Instead, we need parliamentarians who are proud of being politicians.

The antiparliamentary populists have by no means lost their standing. It is, nonetheless, my conclusion that the main enemies of the parliamentary style of politics are those MPs who want to be like ›ordinary people.‹ There are MPs who do not want and do not dare to face the radical contingency of politics. They want to capitulate to the requirement of translating politics into temporal terms and before the confrontation with a plurality of alternatives in the rhetorically constructed parliamentary deliberations. What is needed is MPs who want to be politicians and who take on the challenges of rhetorical and temporal distance to the citizen voters.

Notes

- 1 The paper was originally presented at the workshop entitled *The Formation of Representative Democracy* of the European Science Foundation Network *The Politics and History of European Democratisation* (PHED), which was held in Malaga in October 2003 in the presence of, amongst others, Frank Ankersmit and Pierre Rosanvallon. The following workshops are: *Democratisation of Political Rhetoric* (Jyväskylä, May 2004), *Representative Democracy and the Politics of Gender* (Turin, February 2005), *Temporalisation and Professionalisation of Politics* (Greifswald, May 2005) and *Challenges to Representative Democracy* (Copenhagen, December 2005). The Network is organised by a 10-member Co-ordinating Committee led by the author. In the spring of 2003 the Network arranged an Internet-based application for Young scholar grants by which a number of post-doctoral scholars or doctoral students were selected as participants. A two-volume workshop publication is planned. Further information can be found on the ESF-website http://www.esf.org/esf_article.php?section=2&domain=5&activity=2&language=0&article=299 and the flyer <http://www.esf.org/articles/299/phed.pdf> (7.9.2004). See also a short presentation of the PHED Network in the *History of Concepts Newsletter* at http://www.helsinki.fi/hum/nordic/concepts/hocn6_web.pdf (7.9.2004), 37-39.
- 2 See Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le sacre du citoyen. Histoire du suffrage universel en France*, Paris 1992; idem, *Le peuple introuvable*, Paris 1998; idem, *La démocratie inachevée*, Paris 2000; Frank Ankersmit, *Aesthetic Politics*, Stanford 1997; idem, *Historical Representation*, Stanford 2002; idem, *Political Representation*, Stanford 2002.
- 3 Thomas B. Macaulay, William Pitt, in: *The Miscellaneous Writings and Speeches of Lord Macaulay*. Vol. 3, London 1889 (= <http://ibiblio.org/gutenberg/etext00/3mwsml10.txt> [7.9.2004]).
- 4 Walter Bagehot, *Physics and Politics*, Boston 1956 (1872).
- 5 See, for example, Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*, Cambridge 1996.
- 6 See Frank Ankersmit, *History and Tropology*, Berkeley 1994.
- 7 Idem, *Politics*, as note 2, 46.
- 8 Ibid., 47.
- 9 See also idem, *Representation*, as note 2.
- 10 Rosanvallon, *La démocratie inachevée*, as note 2, 62, also 49.
- 11 Pierre Rosanvallon, *Pour une histoire conceptuelle du politique*, Paris 2003, 32.
- 12 See Reinhart Koselleck, *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik*, Frankfurt am Main 2000.
- 13 See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique*. Vol. 1, Paris 1985 (1960), esp. 234; and my interpretation Kari Palonen, *Politik als Vereitelung. Die Politikkonzeption in Jean-Paul Sartre's Critique de la raison dialectique*, Münster 1992, esp. 122-124.
- 14 This distinction, which offers a view on the temporal layers of politics that differs from that of Ko-

selleck and is adapted to the internal times of parliamentary politics, will be developed in more detail in a book with the working title *From Future Generations to Next Elections. Parliamentarism, democratisation and the politics of limited times.*

- 15 I use the generic feminine for political agents independently of their gender, except in cases in which doing so would be anachronistic, as in the French Third Republic.
- 16 See Max Weber, *Wahlrecht und Demokratie in Deutschland* (1917), in: Max-Weber-Studienausgabe I/15, Tübingen 1988, 155-189.
- 17 See Hannah Arendt, *Vita activa oder Vom tätigen Leben*, München 1981 (1958/6), 166-171.
- 18 See Eugène Pierre, *De la procédure parlementaire. Étude sur le mécanisme intérieur du pouvoir législatif*, Paris 1887; Josef Redlich, *Recht und Technik des Englischen Parlamentarismus*, Leipzig 1905.
- 19 See Max Weber, *Politik als Beruf* (1919), in: Max-Weber-Studienausgabe I/17, Tübingen 1994, 35-88.
- 20 See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels*, in: *Situations VIII*, Paris 1972, 373-455, here 377.
- 21 See Weber, *Wahlrecht*, as note 16, 168 f.
- 22 Skinner, *Reason*, as note 5, 87.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 97.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 99, emphasis Q.S.
- 25 See Redlich, *Recht*, as note 18, 37-67.
- 26 See Pierre, *procédure*, as note as 18, 98-109.
- 27 François Guizot, *Histoire des origines du gouvernement représentatif*. Vol. II, Paris 1880 (1851), 14.
- 28 Carl Schmitt, *Die geistesgeschichtliche Lage des heutigen Parlamentarismus*, Berlin 1979 (1923), 58, also 9.
- 29 Jeremy Bentham, *Political Tactics* (1791/1818). Ed. by J. Michael James, Cyprian Blamires, and Catherine Pease-Watkin, Oxford 1999, 15.
- 30 John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, Buffalo 1991 (1861), 117.
- 31 Bagehot, *Physics*, as note 4, 117, also 135.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 148.
- 33 See Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, Neuwied 1962.
- 34 See Pierre, *procédure*, as note 18, 6.
- 35 See Kari Palonen, *Four Times of Politics*, in: *Alternatives* 28 (2003), 171-186.
- 36 For a critique see Mill, *Considerations*, as note 30, 117.
- 37 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, Paris 1966 (1762), III.XV.
- 38 See Skinner, *Reason*, as note 5, chapter 4.
- 39 See also Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, Cambridge 1998; and idem, *A Third Concept of Liberty*, in: *Proceedings of the British Academy* 117, London 2002, 237-268.
- 40 Mill, *Considerations*, as note 30, 208.
- 41 For Weber as a representative of a rhetorical conception of parliamentarism see Kari Palonen, *Max Weber. Parliamentarism and the Rhetorical Culture of Politics*, in: *Max Weber Studies* 4 (2004), 271-290.
- 42 See Weber, *Wahlrecht*, as note 16, 170.
- 43 Weber, *Politik als Beruf*, as note 19, 41.
- 44 Theodor Herzl, *Le Palais-Bourbon. Tableaux de la vie parlementaire française*, Paris 1995 (1895), 158.