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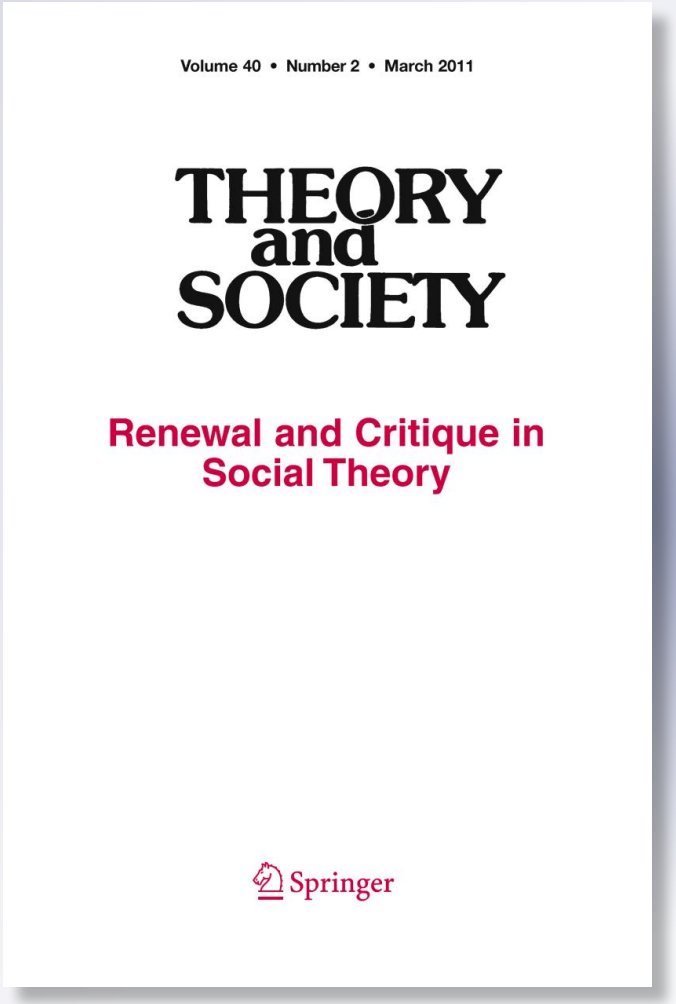

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Does acclamation equal agreement? Rethinking collective effervescence through the case of the presidential "tour de France" during the twentieth century

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Abstract This article discusses the integrative function frequently assigned to festive events by scholars. This function can be summed up in a proposition: experiencing similar emotions during collective gatherings is a powerful element of socialization. The article rejects this oft-developed idea according to which popular fervor could be an efficient tool to measure civic engagement. It raises the following question: what makes enthusiasm "civic", "patriotic", "republican" or simply "political"? Based on a study of French presidential tours in France from 1888 to 2007, this article casts a different light on the topic. The enthusiasm of the crowds interacting with the successive French presidents is not civic because an inquiry may find "patriotism" into participants' minds. It can be called civic simply because the forms and meaning of the festive jubilation, which may be summarized into the formula: "if spectators applaud, it means they support," necessarily preexist its multiple manifestations.

Keywords Political ritual · Festivals · Crowds · Social integration · Popularity · Collective behavior · French presidency

Making collective effervescence a research problem

The description of crowd gatherings as melting pots for shaping and creating collective identities is one of the most commonplace ideas in social sciences literature. This is especially true of so-called ritual or ceremonial activities. Sociological studies of liturgies and gatherings, whether they be civilian religious celebrations (Warner 1959; Bellah and Hammond 1980 for the United States; Ozouf 1976 and Ihl 1996 for the French case), national funerals (Ben-Amos 2000), conventions and electoral campaign meetings (McLeod 1991), Olympic displays

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(Rothenbuhler 1988 and 1998), royal coronations (Shils and Young 1953; Blumer et al. 1971), or "mass events" (Nora 1972) such as the assassination of J. F. Kennedy (Greenberg and Parker 1965) or the Fall of the Berlin Wall (Tiryakian 1995), all share a common premise: these moments fulfil a clear integrative function. The celebrations socialize those who take part in them, they are the mold in which common values are created and strengthened. In short, ceremonies shape citizens: it is their highest scientific interest, much as it was, for their planners and organizers, their profane attraction. This observation is borne out by the frequent apparition of the expression "*powerful symbols*" in literature (for instance, Edelman 1971), without, all too often, anybody knowing just from what these symbols derive their power, and how it manages to conquer an audience. This alleged efficiency is all the more astonishing as it seems to be confirmed even when the individuals affected are remote from one another. This "long-distance" effect has been shown, for instance, in the wake of Tarde's work on the making of press readerships at the end of the nineteenth century (1989 [1898]), by Benedict Anderson's classical book on the soaring development of the "imagined communities" (1983) or by Dayan and Katz's analyses (1992) dedicated to the Pope's international trips and to the global representations of Lady Diana's wedding and death. Especially, it is not limited to "mass approbating rituals" (Paxton 2004). At the other end of the spectrum, demonstrations and other protest events, precisely because they are often considered as "secular rites" (Moore and Myerhoff 1977), are described as having functions of initiation, integration, and ceremonial renewal of social groups (for different examples, see Goodwin et al. 2001 and Reiss 2007).

Any reader familiar with these topics will have detected hints of Emile Durkheim's analyses (for different readings, see Lukes 1975; Peacock 1981; Alexander 1988), the notion of "social effervescence," as the moment when the supposedly central standards of social groups overwhelm the minds of the audience, being of central importance in his work (for the most recent literal use of Durkheim's effervescence theory, see Collins 2004a, pp. 32–46). The French sociologist has developed in great detail this analytical perspective, destined to long-term scientific posterity, in the "preliminary questions" of the *Elementary forms of Religious Life*. Its central point is the setting up of a very clear distinction between thought and action. The latter is originally (hierarchically) separated from what relates to the realm of beliefs and representations:

> Religious phenomena naturally fall into two fundamental categories: beliefs and rites. The former are states of the opinion, they consist of representations; the latter are set action modes. Between both these classes of facts lies all the difference which sets apart thought from movement (Durkheim 1991 [1912], p. 92).

The function of the rite is to reconcile thought and action by creating the belief in things designed for that very purpose. Here is the universal functionality, seldom clearly demonstrated, ascribed to ritual practices: to create a social link in the subconscious of the profanes who do not know that they are made to believe in something by being led to do or say things imbued with holy character. This separation/re-integration process between thought and action in the "modern" theory of the rite (Bell 1992) is significant because the interpretive primacy of the

investigator is formed at this very level. The opposition between the thinking investigator and the acting investigated person increases the distinction between the conceptual aspects of the religion or of the culture studied (beliefs, myths, ideologies, symbols) and the intellectually mediocre ("*thoughtless*") nature of the ritual action, deemed to be formal, repetitive, routine, automatic, etc. This distinction being made, both terms are reconciled through the action performed in the rite, as though it could fill the unavoidable gap between the dead of routine and the quick of mental categories. Furthermore, it is precisely this process that enables solving the problem raised by values, beliefs and "representations": these are invisible by nature. The ritual action enables, from the observer's viewpoint, the participants to re-motivate them by planting in their minds the beliefs that they must have to do what they actually do, thereby reconciling body and soul while justifying the efficiency of the rite: "if the investigated people do (feel) this, they are bound to believe in that."

It is obviously at this stage that the problems raised by the Durkheimian vulgate are most acute. Let us introduce three of them.

(a) How do we know that norms exist as a whole, and in which ways are they forceful? For instance, should we follow Jesus Casquete when he reminds that any social movement contributes to shape the unity of a group:

> Indeed, to the extent that [demonstrations] provide participants with the sense of being engaged in a common cause with a large number of like-minded people who share similar feelings about an issue, mass gatherings also work as opportunities to cement a given social group (2006, p. 48).

Casquete insists precisely on the collective dimension of the action, thereby assimilating what is social with what is performed by several people: feeling common emotions molds the union of consciences; feeling and experiencing together weave the social bond.

(b) Secondly, can we rely on the observation of collective behaviors to deduce what individual participants are thinking, or to decipher authoritatively their "inner thoughts and feelings"? It is exactly what David Kertzer does in the following statement:

> By repetitively employing a limited pool of powerful symbols, often associated with emotional fervour, rituals are an important moulder of political beliefs (1988, p. 95).

Kertzer notes the pre-eminent place occupied by "emotional fervor" in the certification process: only this fervor may testify to the evocative power of symbols and to the existence of beliefs. As we see, such a demonstration matters, even if it is most often implicit: the knowledgeable assertions regarding the efficiency of collective gatherings do not admit that reports of enthusiasm serve as evidence. When they do acknowledge what they owe to these descriptions (see Collins 2004a again), they do not truly question the quasi-mechanical validity of the swing from effervescence to support ("if they applaud, it must be because they are supportive")

and what it involves in terms of assumed engagement of individuals and regarding the status of jubilation.

(c) *In fine*, this type of explanation by the convergence of representations raises a tricky but conventional (third) problem of circularity in the reasoning: participating in a gathering would give access to the system of beliefs, which, in turn, would account for the participation. Or in other words: the support explains the participation that, in return, shows and strengthens the support. Durkheim again: "Everything is common to all. The movements are stereotyped; everybody carries out the same actions under the same circumstances and such conformism of behaviour only translates the conformism of thought" (1991 [1912], p. 46).

This article puts to the test this integration postulate through a case study. It wishes to discuss two specific and already mentioned points: on the one hand, the idea that the collective character of the gathering would suffice to found the sociality thereof (i); on the other hand, the fact that it would be possible to infer the support of the participants from the observation of jubilant demonstrations (ii). It questions both of these arguments, highlighting their connection and the extent to which this link between them is problematic. The hypothesis put forth consists in showing that the sociality of the event does not lie in the collective character of the applause and cheers, but in that jubilation is always a prerequisite to its multiple manifestations. Thus, disproving the equation "what is social *equals* what is done together" amounts to rethinking jubilation, and not seeing it as the simple result of an addition of the participants' willful cheering and approval: cheers and applause cannot be considered mechanically as correct indicators of the participants' thoughts (Rappaport 1979). To demonstrate this conclusively, we must specify the status of the gestures and tools of celebration by showing that they do not necessarily need expressive volitions or intents. Why can they lack intention? Precisely because the forms, but also the meaning of the cheers and applause (i.e., the support that they supposedly prove) are always pre-established. The criterion of their social nature simply consists in saying that no individual could be the first or the single one to behave in such a way. In other words, the point is, in a conventional sociological perspective, to perceive that we are dealing here with social institutions in the Maussian sense of the term, and to contemplate to what extent this instituted character should lead us to reshape our analyses of collective phenomena.

Let us consider the example (to which we shall return at the end of the article) of the displaying and waving of flags that characterizes the celebration of the 4th of July in the United States (and 10 days later in France). Numerous specialists in social sciences would undoubtedly agree to consider such a display of flags as a testimony to Americans' patriotism (for a suggestive use of counts of flags after September 11 in different US towns, see Collins 2004b). To what extent may such an assertion be held as true? My answer is the following: it can be held as true, not so much because every citizen might thus assert his intention to support the government or to celebrate American values, but because the displaying or flag-waving is a personal gesture that assumes, even before it is carried out, the existence of a public counterpart identifiable in the institution of the pre-established and codified use of

the sign. Those who put out flags do not decide over the meaning of their action, regardless of the reasons they may (or not) ascribe to it. In other words, the fact that the meaning of the flag-waving is thus taken care of advantageously enables everybody, if need be, to dispense with explanation and justification. The fact is that such a gesture is depersonalized in that it does not depend on the participants' intents: one can wave the flag thinking about the founding fathers, but also about one's job, or the evening's basketball game, without altering the visible significance of the gesture.

The ensuing discussion is based on the investigation of a specific material: the crowd gatherings prompted by the 604 trips made by the President of the French Republic throughout the metropolitan provinces between 1888 and 1998 (for details, see Mariot 2006, 2007). Setting aside both World Wars, the Head of State leaves Paris six times a year, in average, and not a single year is spent without trips. After a cursory presentation of peculiarities and interests of this case study, I provide reasons that may account for the undisputed success of this political practice: they refer to the social efficiency of the formula "if the spectators applaud, it means they approve." In the end, a critical reappraisal of this same formula's sociological applications may lead to revise the status ascribed to behavioral manifestations of jubilation.

Data and method

The investigation is based mainly on the complete perusal of the documents in the AG series (Presidency of the Republic) of the National Archives dedicated to official trips, to which systematic investigations were added (i.e., still over the whole century and according to a formal serialization principle) in four departmental archival centres (Jura, Bouches-du-Rhône, Seine-Inférieure, Meurthe-et-Moselle) and two municipal ones (Nancy and Marseille). For the recent trips, an ethnographic investigation has been conducted, using a model close to the investigation by Lang and Lang (1953), during visits made by the late President F. Mitterrand in Lille and Besançon: systematic observation of the cheering behaviors within the audience and passing round a close-ended questionnaire among spectators (one form offered to every tenth person encountered behind the barriers). A conventional investigation on secondary written sources in the National Library was added to the survey (regarding travel souvenir albums in particular) and an investigation in iconographic documentation (films of the TV news kept by the National Audiovisual Institute, photographic series of the National Archives).

The demonstration thus rests on three pillars: it essentially develops an argumentation based on quotations taken from archive extracts (or argumentation by exemplifications), to which are added complementarily a serial iconographic analysis as well as statistical and cartographic processing of a database formed from variables covering 604 trips accounted for between 1888 and 1998 (i.e., 1028 days and 3540 stopovers in different cities and villages).

The website dedicated to the investigation provides a detailed overview of the tables and maps prepared from this database as well as of the photographs and films used. See http://www.jourdan.ens.fr/~mariot/.

The unflappable certification of jubilation

I could have chosen to grasp what is at stake in these moments of collective jubilation by focusing on "monster events" that punctuated twentieth-century history, such as those mentioned earlier. But such an analysis would have been biased by a major pitfall: the heterogeneous nature of those events and their organizers. In contrast, the public appearances of heads of state in the countryside during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have the apparent advantage of continuity if not identity. The continuity is purely formal from the standpoint of the promoters of the visit, since the function of the French head of state underwent profound constitutional and political changes during the period.[1] On the other hand, this continuity is remarkably less illusory regarding the figures of jubilation. Investigation from a long-term perspective shows that, beyond changes of government, parliamentary majority, or the political label of the president, all commentators of his trips, whether supporters or opponents, laymen or scientists, proceed in an identical fashion: they deliver certificates of jubilation.

Let us begin with the reports established by those with a vested a priori interest in the success of the presidential visit. The demonstrative mechanism put forth in these accounts can be summarized by the systematic use of a formula whose apparent simplicity seems as obvious as it is difficult to deny: gestures bear witness to thoughts; behaviors convey states of mind. No one encapsulated this approach better than the mayor of Montpellier in his speech welcoming President Lebrun in 1939:

> I fear I would be an awkward or unreliable interpreter of these sentiments if you yourself had not seen them expressed all along the itinerary followed by your *cortège*. Mr. President, the joy you have seen on all these faces, the cheers of free men, are profoundly echoed in the hearts of everyone. They are the faithful translation of thoughts, common feelings and sincere affections for everything your person stands for today.[2]

This extract from his speech is interesting in that it explicitly states what frequently remains implicit and unspoken: on the one hand, the only evidence of the effectiveness of presidential visits lies in observable behavioral expressions; on the other hand, these faces and cheers are precisely mere physical expressions of the heart and soul, or, according to the mayor's far better formula, "the faithful translation of thoughts." What the commentators, whether presidents, police officers or journalists, propose is indeed evidence in the form of bodies filled with emotion. At one of Charles de Gaulle's numerous speeches delivered in public places during a tour of the Franche-Comté region in 1962, he declared that the future of the nation was "well assured." Although he repeated this expression of reassurance at almost

[1] Since 1965, the French President is elected by the people, as in the United States. Before 1958 and the Fifth Republic, he was elected by the Parliament. Since that date, the link is direct between the head of the state and the citizens. And the constitution of the current Republic greatly increased the President's powers. But once again, this considerable change did not notably affect the principles of the presidential "tour de France," which remain the same at least from Charles de Gaulle to François Mitterrand's terms. See Knapp & Wright 2001, and Mariot 2007.

[2] Speech by the Mayor of Montpellier dated 2/07/1939, National Archives (hereafter AN) 1AG62. Unless indicated otherwise, translations of archive material or French books are mine.

every stop, the president took the trouble of backing it up by a sort of irrefutable fact: "Judging by the number of people assembled here and by what I read in the eyes of the young people."[3] The next day, the reporter for the regional daily newspaper confirmed the visit's success. Once again, the emotion visible in the faces of attendees served as indisputable evidence:

> De Gaulle has been enthusiastically welcomed everywhere in the Jura. [...] We have seen too many faces filled with emotion to have any remaining doubts: the welcome was warm everywhere. And, incidentally, there were ripples of applause everywhere.[4]

To judge by such reports, the collective gatherings during presidential trips had what some social scientists would be quick to call a "Durkheimian consequence." Commentators used the description of behaviors as the basis for demonstrating that the mechanism of the trip had achieved its purpose by creating or manifesting the union, or even better, the communion of hearts:

> When the train moved off, the many travellers on the platform warmly acclaimed the President. [...] Cheers rang out and continued all the way from the station to the prefecture. On sidewalks, on balconies, at windows, people applauded and waved handkerchiefs, shouting: 'Long live Poincaré! Long live the Republic!' The entire population communed in the same feeling of patriotic union.[5]

This demonstrative logic is so profoundly shaped by unending repetition in travel accounts that it even allows journalists to weave metaphorically the visual and auditory brilliance of festive decorations and devices with the emotions in the participants' deeply affected hearts. Quite often, the vocabulary used to describe firecrackers and fireworks coincides with that of ovation and cheering; they interpenetrate to form a whole in which "the action" of the firecrackers suggests, through small touches and subtle shifts, the ultimate meaning of the applause:

> To reach the Faculty of Medicine [of Bordeaux], the cortège went through working class districts that send Socialists to parliament. The sight was new, even for people jaded about the ovations. Joy illuminated the people's faces, cheers burst forth like rockets.[6]

If the cheers "burst forth like rockets," it is because, like them, the cries of socialist workers rise up in the sky and pay homage. In other words: whereas the tribute of pealing bells and firing a canon 101 times is mandatory and part of protocol, the tribute of applause is spontaneous and voluntary. The firework display is thus transposed into "illuminated" bodies, which participate in expressing the greatness of the head of state and the power of the moment, and simultaneously manifest the success of the integrating function of the presidential gesture. In an

[3] Speech in Saint-Claude, on 16/06/1962, Departmental Archives (DA) of Jura 247W 28.
[4] *Le Progrès* dated 17/06/1962.
[5] *Journal Officiel (JO) de la République Française* dated 13/03/1913, n°87, p. 2873–2876.
[6] Paul Belon and Paul Gers, *Les Voyages du Président de la République. Centre et Sud-Ouest, juin 1895*, Paris: Berthaud Frères, Moulin, Imp. E. Auclaire (s. d.), 32 p., fig., p. 20.

ironic account of the first presidential "tour de France" during the term of Sadi Carnot (1888–1894),[7] the journalist Paul Belon mocks those narrative commonplaces by mixing them with the more prosaic interests of restaurant and café owners who, he correctly notes, are always the first to be "caught up" by and in the symbolism of the event, if one wishes to adopt, as a counterpoint, the ritualizing tone usually used to analyze this type of event:

> The great city was in a state of upheaval. [...] The official world was the first to be affected. [...] Just when the contagion was spreading to part of the population, especially hotelkeepers, lemonade sellers and restaurant owners, the burst of enthusiasm was suddenly cut short by a bit of news [...]. A failure of government republicans in the cantonal elections had, it was said, produced a disastrous effect.[8]

At the same time, even the ironic P. Belon does not completely sever the link between the thrill of the senses and that of minds, as the following extract demonstrates: in it, he slides imperceptibly from the shimmering of the lights to that of the bodies mixed together, then to joy and frolicking (possibly quite intoxicated) to fraternization, a far more political register that gives a glimpse of the underlying discourse on the rite as a moment of integration of individuals into a group that transcends them:

> At this time of night, under the warm clarity of the gas lamps outlining public monuments, as if under the variegated glow of the lanterns and coloured glass festooning the square, the shimmering, colourful population fluctuates joyfully, frolics, rejoices and fraternises.[9]

Nevertheless, as we can see, these images are always collective. In that sense, they give numerical legitimacy to the interpretation, but any explanation in terms of individual approval must remain fragile. To make up for this weakness in argumentation, crowd descriptions are almost systematically accompanied by images of "believing" individuals that make it easier to postulate the personal motivation (be it pre-existing or new) of the behavior. The journalists begin by calling upon an undeniably intentional individual attitude, and then by a sort of narrative contagion, extend this impulse to the minds of the other persons present who, while perhaps doing less than the exemplary case selected, are now liable to undergo the same kind of interpretation.[10] The reports proceed using a back-and-forth approach going from the individual to the group, the eminently voluntary gesture of the former serving as

[7] Paul Belon held an accreditation from the presidential press office for the *Petit Journal*, one of the four "one schilling" daily newspapers then reaching one million copies sold. At the end of President Carnot's term, he wrote, as a fictional and tongue-in-cheek account, its memories of presidential visits: *En suivant Monsieur Carnot, notes humoristiques*, (following Monsieur Carnot, humoristic notes) Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit et Cie, 1893, p. 174. In addition, he autographed the book for Ernest Judet, "head of political editorial staff" in the *Petit Journal*. He then made, with Paul Gers, the official photographer to the Presidency, all the memory plates of Felix Faure's trips (see previous note).

[8] Ibid., p. 43–44.

[9] Ibid., p. 144.

[10] On the construction of a group of journalists embedded with the President and on the way they work, see Mariot 2006 chapter 2. I tried to explain why journalists do not write or tell us that the President always does the same things along his travels.

evidence for interpreting those of the latter. A few figures, as ordinary as they are frequent, dominate this narrative ensemble: they consist in systematically noting along the official itinerary the presence of elderly people, of peasants in the field waving to the official cortège, or of participants who, more deserving than others, manage to find an unrestricted view of the event. In every case, the operation consists simply in noting the efforts deployed to come and see the president. The attribution of meaning to these behaviors, while not systematic (one of the strengths of these accounts is their strictly neutral appearance), is nevertheless frequent. The description then proceeds to contrast the confused swarming of spectators struggling for a view on the crowded sidewalks with the brilliance of individual initiative rewarding those who succeeded in rising above the mass, both literally and figuratively. Sometimes, the scene even allows the author to establish a hierarchy of commitment and worthiness. This is typically the case on rainy days, when some offer their protective services to the president by opening their umbrellas while others, arguably less apt to please, nevertheless came and stayed, obviously, "in spite of the rain" (and for American readers who saw Barack Obama campaigning in Virginia, bare-headed under the rain, it is all too obvious that such political uses of the weather are not typically French![11]):

> We are crossing the *département* [*Isère*] in the pouring rain, and despite that, the people press at the level crossings to cheer the president. [...] In Châlons-Saint-Côme, a mayor grabbed the umbrella from the hands of Mr. Carnot's servant to have the honour of opening it.[12]

In the course of these journeys and reports, a set of commonplaces narratives took shape that were repeated endlessly, individual images typical of the motivation of the participants whose exemplarity can be cited as a model. The travel accounts we have examined thus far, established by presidential entourages and journalists accredited at *l'Élysée* Palace, by shifting back and forth between group and individual figures, lead us to make a simple observation: from the beginning to the end of the twentieth century, the political machinery of the journey seems to have consistently satisfied those who promoted it and described it. In other words, in reading the accounts of the 604 listed official trips, one would have trouble to find a single example of a trip that the various observers would have described as failed because it had not attained its ostensible goal. That is to say, there was not a single trip that did not attest to the president's popularity by the regularly observed presence of cheers. This statement may seem surprising. Some will dispute its reality by pointing out the weaknesses in the argument based on examples used in this article. Yet it is impossible to provide a single counter-example, and that is precisely what should draw our attention. Others will prefer to object by noting that I have not examined the accounts of political opponents. Let us then find out what they have to say: how did opposition newspapers and commentators describe the presidential tours?

[11] For Obama, see the article (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/09/28/despite-rain-26000-virgin_n_129981.html) and pictures (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/10/28/obamas-day-in-the-rain-ph_n_138677.html). For some other uses of the rain in the French case, see my website.

[12] On the way to Grenoble, on 18/07/1888, E. Bertol-Graivil, *Les vingt huit jours* …, op. cit., p. 83.

The opponents' dilemmas

Let us clarify things up front: to assert that official presidential trips are a political practice that never fail obviously does not mean that some visits, even recent ones, have not been the occasion of hostile shouts, insults, or whistles. There has even been spitting in the face of the president (at the time of a visit to a Parisian suburb by the candidate Chirac in early 2002), or manure thrown on his car by angry farmers (during F. Mitterrand's visit to Blois in 1991). Every president has crossed paths with his lot of demonstrations known as "dependent" because they are provoked by an official visit, or other "incidents" en route, scrupulously recorded by the police—and meticulously noted or even counted by historians. These "local tests," because they underscore the ability of the head of state to take the risk of physically approaching people (the risk of assassination of personalities, whether attempted or successful, is a reminder that it is potentially deadly), are even one of the reasons for an official trip: without the threat of booing, there can be no demonstration of popularity. But the fact is, except in rare instances,[13] these tests have usually remained mere episodes. They do not call into question the very principle of the trip, mainly because—as one of the most frequent formulas used by crowd commentators emphasizes—they fail to "drown out the applause and the cheering," which are often observed to be powerfully encouraged by the presence of hostile banners.

On the other hand, emphasizing the absence of "failed trips" (in the specific sense that the accredited commentators did not report their minimum expected quota of cheers) does not mean that the deed of the trip is never criticized. There are articles from far left and far right newspapers that strongly reject even the principle of presidential journeys. In the early twentieth century, the socialists regularly accused President Poincaré, nicknamed for the occasion "His Majesty Raymond I," of aping royal lavishness.[14] During de Gaulle's "tour de France," the communists called for a boycott by mocking the "De Gaulle circus" assimilated at the time to the vulgar advertising caravan of the "Tour de France" bicycle competition. Other journalists, again belonging to the leftist press, preferred the highly effective register of local downplaying. This consisted in indicating that the illustrious visitor had not attracted any more people than an ordinary market day, a match played by the local team or any other event:

> In Privas, while the crowd appeared dense close to the podium, it was far more scattered in the rear. There were fewer people than for the procession of floral floats, people said. In Tournon, Place Paul Faure was half-empty, and on the station platform, the passage of the Tour de France would have brought out three times more.[15]
>
> The president attracts fewer people than the Aurillac rugby team for an ordinary championship game.[16]

These comparisons of visits with other occasions for gatherings are unquestionably effective but locally limited: their advertising spaces recall that they have their full effect

[13] The tomatoes (or oranges) thrown at Guy Mollet, the "président du Conseil" (Prime Minister), in Algiers on 6 February 1956, constituting a well-known incident in French history.

[14] *Le droit du Peuple* dated 29/07/1913.

[15] *L'Humanité-Dimanche*, page "à travers l'Ardèche," (travelling through Ardèche) n°684 du 01/10/1961, AN 5AG1/485.

[16] *Le Cantal ouvrier et paysan* dated 23/05/1970, AN 5AG2/695.

only within the territory of the visit, where they are a relevant piece of information for the reader (which is not the case for someone from outside the region, and still less for an American reader!). We therefore could have expected opposition newspapers to offer reports directly attacking the fabricated, artificial and well-prepared routine aspect of the official promenades. Yet this type of report is very seldom encountered. The short article published in 1849 in *L'Atelier, organe spécial de la classe laborieuse* under the title "Presidential trips" represents a remarkable exception, precisely because it stigmatizes both the conformism of the cheering and the extreme repetitiveness of the visits:

> What do the more or less warm cheers of the populations pressed together along the passage of the holders of power actually prove, when they deign to make a visit at the request of the local authorities who need to parade their devotion to the established order of things? In our opinion, absolutely nothing. […] It is always the same programme, the same personnel, the same enthusiasm: a reception by the local authorities under an arch of triumph erected for the occasion; a speech by the mayor; a review of the national guard; a banquet with more or less constitutional toasts; a ball at the town hall, etc. That is what all those who govern France invariably encounter. Nothing has changed, not even the men in charge of speaking.[17]

The mocking observation of the routine leads the author of the article to reject the idea that public appearances of the head of state can be taken as an indication of popularity, except to state, as he does, the equal and regular sharing of it by various political figures and governments throughout history, at least in ordinary political contexts. This is why this form of radical comparison was not reiterated systematically later on, except within the scope of press caricatures.[18] Indeed, the argument used here results in a paradox in the form of a truism: if we limit ourselves to noting the jubilation, we inevitably end up attesting to popularity. Yet the effects of the paradox are potentially devastating for all the traveller's opponents. The alternative is simple, but for them, always unsatisfactory. Either the commentators refuse to accept cheering behavior as a regular, natural testimony of grassroots commitment and support, in which case they must withdraw from the game because they do not agree to play by one of its most essential rules, which will allow their own champion in the future to enjoy the usual benefits of acclaim. Or they agree to describe the behaviors, and therefore to note the presence of cheering, and they fall into the trap since their critical posture leads them to discuss the reality, strength, or value of the approval to which this behavior testifies. Calling into question the fact that jubilation is the manifestation of approval is the "choice" that was sometimes adopted by the communist newspaper *L'Humanité* in opposing General de Gaulle. Observing the presence of applause, the reporter could denounce "an enterprise of stultifying the masses before whom one

[17] *L'Atelier, organe spécial de la classe laborieuse*, 1840–1850, vol 3, Ed. de Paris, EDHIS, 1978 (fac. sim.), p. 387.

[18] See, for example,the drawing published in *L'Humanité* dated 6/10/1913 (for Poincaré) with this caption: "On the road again: same players same game." Or the famous sketches by Caran d'Ache showing Carnot as an automaton made of "articulated wood" to mock this "President who salutes and goes out" (reproduction in *Le Petit Marseillais* of October 1913).

shamelessly parades an idol,"[19] or suggest elsewhere the existence of a "cheering brigade."[20] The argument is obviously very dangerous in that it could, here again, backfire on its promoters at any event mobilizing an audience made up of their own supporters. A less radical option, but hardly more reliable, consists finally in playing the game of assessing the cheering with the commentators remaining imprisoned in the descriptive register of effervescence (if one applauds, it means he or she supports). The editorialist of a socialist newspaper accepts the terms of the travel account, even and including at the price of fragile interpretive contortions, when he writes:

> For four days, the government press and the official radio took charge of the considerable hype over the 900-kilometre trip which took on all the features of an advertising masquerade. Who would dream of denying that there were a lot of people along the route of the official cortège? Is there any decisive significance in the fact that the crowds were bigger in Mâcon than in Montluçon, in Le Creusot where the sun was shining than in Vichy where it was raining? Who would imagine that General de Gaulle could not get several tens of thousands of men, women and children to come out along his passage? But when we read in the press or hear on the radio the words "enthusiasm", "rejoicing" or "wild enthusiasm", respect for the truth compels us to say that the weakest among them would still be an exaggeration to qualify the dominant sentiment of the crowd, which was curiosity.[21]

Yet, like his adversaries when they deduce support and popularity from jubilation, the editorialist is incapable of proving his point. Above all, by placing himself on the same terrain—that of commenting on the crowd—he too recognises "the facts" like his reporter colleague from the newspaper *L'Aurore* two months later:

> I have kept in my mind the picture of the long avenues of Toulouse, the squares where compact, warm crowds crammed together. The warmth of the welcome rose along with the sun into the pure sky. The crowd was too big to count; it cheered the head of state for a long time and sang a deep *Marseillaise* along with him. Those are the facts and anyone who would say the contrary would be lying.[22]

What are these facts, to what do they testify, why is it so natural to resort to them and use them as evidence, and finally, above all, why is their discussion or contradiction so difficult as to lead to accusations of lying? Noting the continuity and conformity of travel accounts should prompt us to wonder not who—adversary or ally—is the source of the commentary, but rather how the deductive logic of the demonstrations leads virtually unfailingly to certificates of success. Only by analyzing what lends its effectiveness to the commentators' formula will we be able to solve the paradox it implies: the observation of festive unanimity in the accounts is so recurrent, both in number and expression, that one is led to assume the equal popularity of governments and of the values they represented or the individuals heading them.

[19] Article in *L'Humanité* dated 11/05/1959 intitled "A monarch visiting his subjects," AN 5AG1/456.
[20] *L'Humanité Dimanche* dated 22/02/1959, regional chronicle, AN 5AG1/453.
[21] *L'Aurore* dated 16/02/1959.
[22] *Libération* dated 20/04/1959, AN 5AG1/455.

"If they applaud it means they are supportive": the distributive economy of jubilation

Before engaging in the discussion of its scientific uses, let us try to account for the extraordinary social efficiency of the jubilation formula. Its underlying psychological mechanism can be easily implemented, all the more so as it rests on two foundations that each tends to make the gesture of cheering the consequence of an act of the will: the spontaneous vocabulary of jubilation and the figure of the citizen free from any coercion.

The passage from behavioral manifestations to conscious decisions that might cause them seems to be in line with the very meaning of the words "applause" or "cheering." A "thin" description of applause (striking the hands together in a continuous rhythm) cannot adequately and fully convey what the fact of applauding represents; in itself a "thick" mode of description, in which approval is already embedded in the language (it is comparable to the fact of obeying, implying a gesture that physically manifests obedience—for example, clicking one's heels together—although this alone is still inadequate to convey obedience). The embedding of approval in the language: that is what dictionaries enlist through their definitions. The effectiveness of the formula as a basis for "the popularity" of the acclaimed man or cause therefore rests largely on a philosophy of consciousness enclosed in our natural language. When the members of the official cortège "see" the jubilation, they immediately "recognize" the public's approval. Yet, as John Searle (1992, pp. 93–94) showed through other uses of folk psychology, the established propositions in the area of describing crowd behavior are not empirical hypotheses, because it is impossible to prove they are false. The connection "if X applauds (or shouts cheers), it means X approves or supports" cannot be proven false, not because the approval is undeniable (insofar as it could be proven through empirical operations of knowledge), but because the belief or support is largely included in the very meaning of the expressions "applaud" or "shout cheers." Describing the crowds at political visits without presupposing this approval therefore seems virtually impossible, for the vocabulary of jubilation carries spontaneous motives: in the French case, jubilation that is orchestrated or staged is no longer jubilation; it is a "slap" (*une "claque"*).

To understand why the subtle shift from cheers to "states of mind" is largely recognized and accepted, it is necessary to indicate how the "mentalist" dress in which it clothes the applause could be fitted to the body of "autonomous in their will" citizens, mainly thanks to the meticulous work of specialized spokesmen. Like the ballots of the electorate in voting booths, whose totals and measurements must be commented upon in order to state even the most simple verdicts (who won and why?), voices from the street are anonymous and silent as far as their individual motivations are concerned. Votes and cheering are both practices that one can validly accomplish knowing that one will not have to make them explicit or justify them. Inseparably individual and collective, they are at once mute from the standpoint of their individual reasons and quite talkative as soon as the interpretive breach opens up: "if they do this, it means they believe that." In both cases, specialised commentaries (always intervening *after* ballots have been cast and cheers expressed) construct aggregates with items devoid of any inherent principle of gathering or

aggregation, whereas that is precisely what is presupposed when formulas such as "the city" or "the whole country has taken to the streets" are employed. Inasmuch as it succeeds in giving a common meaning to gestures that are formally similar but without any explicit justification, the formula of the subtle shift from cheering bodies to approving souls can also be likened to electoral commentaries.

Commentaries and not vote counts. Indeed, it is important to note that the aggregation achieved by the connection "if one cheers, it means he approves" makes it possible to distinguish between electoral or poll counts and crowd aggregations (and to explain why the former cannot be substituted for the latter). Howard Becker (1997) proposes an interesting "trick" to handle this problem. It consists simply in seeking the generic proposition present in any syllogism. The sociological interest of "looking for the major premise" lies in the fact that in the social world it is usually absent, impossible to find, hidden because it "goes without saying". Thus, the strangeness of beliefs and behaviors often implies that it can be explained by digging up a main premise. In this case, the proposition to explain is as follows: "the spectators applaud, therefore they support." Yet, the truth of this proposition implies the existence of a major premise that would be "all applause means approval." This is the phenomenon to which the analyses of folk psychology point when they say further that the generalizations they develop are valid only according to a *ceteris paribus* clause or, in other words, only if one does not take into account misunderstandings in our ordinary interactions, which are possible though (fortunately) rare.

The slight shift that brings out the major premise "all applause means approval" in relation to the dictionary definitions concerns the quantifier "all," the logical operator of the connection between behavior and state of mind. But in this case, "all" does not introduce plurality; it does not count or total anything (unlike electoral quantifiers of the type "a few," "many," "a majority," "X% of"). As in the Socratic syllogism, the universal quantifier "all" distributes a quality (approval) to the elements of the class under consideration, and this distributive link is true regardless of the number of elements taken into consideration. Mortality is true for any man, as is the approval of any applause, regardless of the number of individuals who applaud. And conversely, the class may perfectly well have only one member, for example in the proposition: "any satellite of the earth in a moon." Whenever one can observe cheering, one can conclude the presence of support: it is the distributive nature of this link that is important and provides the basis for the effectiveness of proximate proofs, not the fact that there are few or a great many cheers. This is clearly shown by the use of the conditional form in generic propositions: "For any x, if x is applause, then x is a sign of support." Perhaps this makes it easier to understand, through the opposition of these two logics, plurative (countable) and universal (distributive), why the use of polling and the television to find out, measure, or inform "opinion" have never rendered presidential visits (nor political meetings or party conventions) obsolete: it is precisely by showing support in the flesh that they achieve something else than operations of knowledge and information.

Thus, the language and normative characteristics we have just discussed combine to inform a view of jubilation that reduces the crowd to a group of interchangeable individuals. Cut off from the groups to which they belong, these

atomized individuals can be aggregated in various ways according to the similarity of their behavior (cheering or protesting), impersonal and identically transferable elsewhere at another moment, exactly in the way electors can be aggregated based on their ballots, or consumers on the basis of the purchased objects. Only through such a framing can one understand the processes of politicizing collective behaviors, and therefore how the popularity (of men or causes) and social aggregates (as far as the public is concerned) are fabricated *ex-post*. In this sense, the images of jubilation are perfectly in agreement with the normative functioning of the modern Western political world, insofar as it rests, particularly through the figure of the citizen-voter, on staging separated individuals, dis-embedded from their ordinary social attachments (those *homo clausus* so well described by N. Elias, 1998).

The impossible invention of mores

What consequences do those perceptions of mass ceremonies in liberal countries have in scientific terms? They usually consist in adopting the point of view of those events' promoters, in other words in making the following assumption: since participation in these gatherings is not forced or imposed, it should be seen as a necessarily spontaneous act of civic voluntarism. In the first place, it is the convergence of thoughts that explains the participation. But as they are by nature invisible, a second movement has to be added to the demonstration: "the rite creates/entails the belief" not so much because it would lead to automated belief, but because it is realized collectively. Through this "shiver in the spine" thematic, the act of having shared emotions is said to unite consciousnesses. And, luckily for the interpreting investigator, would bear testimony of this unison. The argumentation remains fragile, but it is always the same. Barry Schwartz concludes his study of Lincoln's funeral rites by saying that the people did not celebrate a controversial president (there was no consensus about his policies), but "ultimate realities": the "integrity and power of the state" (1991, p. 361). Maybe Schwartz is right. But how can we be sure of that? His evidence—the shared participation in the funeral—is not very different from those given by "profane" commentators, be they journalists or politicians. Above all, it remains highly questionable:

> Although people disagreed intensely about Lincoln's worth as president, their common participation in his funeral expressed and reinforced their common identification with the nation (Schwartz 1991, p. 360).

In such studies, collective rites assume the status of privileged instruments of social integration through this mechanism of converging representations, the circularity of which has frequently been noted (participation in the gathering at once reveals and strengthens the system of beliefs, which, in return, explains the participation). I therefore wish to present and discuss certain elements of this analytical model, sometimes designated with the terms "inner Republic" in France or "civil religion" in the United States.

The demonstration rests mainly on an argument formulated by the historian Gérard Noiriel in a discussion of the concept of "nation." He put forth a short but radical criticism of those works that see a "nation" as a result or an emanation of

collective representations deemed to be its basis. Discussing Pierre Nora's line of reasoning in *Les lieux de mémoire*, he writes:

> What proof do we have, for example, that in the 19th or the 20th centuries, all the members of the working classes identified with this national "being together"? And if it were not the case, would it necessary lead us to conclude that those individuals did not belong to the nation? (Noiriel 2001, p. 111).

It is obviously the second part of the objection that is decisive. One could summarize the historian's work by saying that it consists in demonstrating and drawing the implications of this idea: the absence of a feeling of belonging in no way affects the quality of being French. Indeed, it does not rest on the manifestation of a private commitment to an identity (it is not a personal choice), but on complex methods of remote identification of individuals by the state, mainly through granting papers separating those entitled to state benefits (the "nationals") from those deprived of those rights (foreigners). Can this type of counter-argument (if the feeling is absent, does it make any difference?) be used in the very field in which the perspective of the feeling of belonging seems best established, i.e., that of collective gatherings (again see Collins 2004a)? To attempt this, one must call into question the fact that acting together suffices to define the social character of the relationship.

One of the most problematic aspects for proper sociological understanding of what a festivity is lies in the fact that it usually involves a collective activity. Why is that problematic? Because it implies the cooperation of many individuals (in general, people do not celebrate alone) is enough to determine its social character. Yet, most often, discussions about the definition of the "social dimension" cease before even discussing the tautological idea that a gathering is said to be social because it is collective. Why? Because these discussions are aimed first and foremost at noting the inadequacy of a purely intersubjective definition of the social bond. The philosopher Margaret Gilbert thus proposed to go beyond the intersubjective character of the Weberian social relation (two people who take each other into account in order to avoid each other are already performing a social act) by positing that society lies in the affirmation of a collective "we" (a "plural subject") (Gilbert 1989, 1990). She uses the example of a promenade and wonders what distinguishes two agents who have decided to take a walk together from two others who take individual walks at the same time on the same path. The answer, which Weberian individualism could not give, lies precisely in the desire to do something in common and the awareness of that desire: in this case, the very type of social action is collective action, performed together (but that could also, ironically, be carried out "alone"). Within this scope, the social rules are akin to conventions that are jointly accepted following deliberation between the participants: a collective entity decides on rules that will have to apply to the whole group. Thus, we are still in a contractual representation of the social bond in which agreement is said to arise from the consensus of individual wills.

Yet it is precisely this kind of assimilation of the social dimension to the collective that, paradoxically, leaves the door wide open to individualistic reduction. Indeed, since the social character of the scene results from the fact that it implies a "we," it becomes possible, traditionally, to summarize this whole as the mere sum of the wills that make it up. If there is an intention to celebrate or to honor (for

example, a head of state, a government or the values that it stands for), multiplied by the number of individuals present, then there is a celebration or ceremony. Is such a reduction possible? To find out, let us try and determine its consequences. When we say this, we are taking for granted that one individual, on a particular day, was able to imagine, for the first time, the program of a celebration. Here is how it happened, since festivities had to be invented: he had the idea or the desire to celebrate something or someone, formed a mental representation of it and then discussed it with others. The promoters of festivities then agreed on a certain number of gestures that seemed appropriate to them (but here we may ask: how did they know that those behaviors were appropriate ones?) to manifest the idea of celebrating: for example, clapping their hands, cheering or shouting "Long live ….," acclaiming, waving flags, shining spotlights, shooting a cannon, or throwing their hats into the air. These behaviors were gradually recognized as effective, and their legitimacy was established as devices constituting the category of "festivities or ceremonies." This is a process that V. Descombes summarizes as follows: "The institution is thus the objectification of the individual behaviors which, through repetition, end up taking a stable form (thanks to the success of the previous performances)" (2003, p. 33). This is precisely a schema "of temporal habituation" of the kind used by John Searle to describe the "birth" of "institutional facts," those that (in opposition to brute facts) exist because people think they exist. Searle takes the example of the border. Originally, there was a wall of stone surrounding the territory of a tribe, in other words, a natural physical barrier. The wall deteriorates over time, leaving only the mark of a line of stones. Yet, through habit, the line of stones will continue to perform symbolically the function that the wall naturally achieved: it has thus acquired a new status (with collectively recognized rights and prohibitions), that of a border (Searle 1995, pp. 39–40, 71).

According to this perspective, the consensus on the rules to follow arises from a form of original convention with the particular characteristic of being reaffirmed, or better still, founded again, at regular intervals over time, as many times in fact as several individuals have the common intention of celebrating. It is in this sense that we can understand Renan's famous formula on the "everyday plebiscite": a regular reassertion of the "consent, the clearly expressed wish to continue living together" (1992 [1882], p. 54). Because participation in collective action stems from the free will of the subject, each individual must in some way reinstitute for himself the gestures that he thinks are adapted to the situation, as if they were not imposed from the outside, as if he had never realized or learned them before. This is the reason why writings that view participation in sovereignty festivities as the physical manifestation of active commitments or the visible actualization of an "inner Republic," must further support the idea that it is always for the first time that the individual follows the rule consisting in cheering, and always for the first time that the rule he or she follows is followed:

> Individuals can follow a rule only by instituting it for themselves. It matters little what has been done before them or what they themselves have already done a thousand times. This is like the social contract in the political philosophy of liberalism: first the contractualist agent explains that it is necessary to trace existing political laws back to an initial convention, as if one

> were seeking to recover an original event; next, the agent discovers that the initial convention is not a prehistoric fact, that it is a perpetual living present, an act of ongoing creation of the normative order as it applies to us. Similarly in this case: the established rule can provide the agent with a model only if he makes it a guide for his conduct, and therefore establishes it as a model. Consequently, it is as if the agent were the author of the practices and customs that he observes in his conduct (Descombes 2004, pp. 438–439).

No doubt all of us can play our part in teaching and instituting customs or other mores. But do we invent them? At this point, it may be useful to substitute a classical sociological perspective to the voluntarist point of view previously presented. Obviously, such a shift should not be made out of mere fidelity to disciplinary habits, but, I think, because the sociological viewpoint offers a more realistic description of what participation in a collective gathering actually involves.

A sociological conceptual framework: effervescence as a pre-established institution

In a manifesto-article, P. Fauconnet and M. Mauss strove to reveal the "sign of exteriority" that they make the fundamental criterion of recognition of social facts. Contrary to what Durkheim put forward,[23] it is not the obligation (and the sanction that can result from its violation) that characterizes social norms, but the fact that their existence precedes individuals: "Whether or not the individual is prohibited from deviating, they already exist from the moment he asks himself how he should act" (Fauconnet and Mauss 1969 [1901], p. 149). In other words, "social ways of acting and thinking" are not established as a result of a commitment of wills; they are "pre-established" to be able to be reproduced elsewhere and later. Mauss and Fauconnet say very clearly that sociology is built on the rejection of a deliberative or contractual conception of the social bond in which two individuals, born adult and "autonomous in their will," meet. Instead, they offer an eminently more realistic view, that of a society that is always already there, in which people grow up, subjected from birth to multiple processes of socialization, the very ones that make it possible to understand how "models of conduct" can "penetrate individuals from the outside" (ibid.).

This analytical perspective was to be systematized by Norbert Elias in his *Society of individuals* (1991 [1939]). Thus, he devotes the whole of the first two points developed in this text, synthesizing the foundations for the approach used in *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*, to showing that it is "the interdependence of human functions" that "bind the individual" (he takes the examples of the relationships of parents to children, husband to wife, lord to serf, king to subjects, manager to employees). The social order and its rules do not come from adding a "multitude of acts of will" or from a "common decision" (Elias 1991, p. 56). This explicit rejection of a contractualist perspective takes two forms. On the one hand, Elias endeavors to dissipate the image of society as a brick wall: "individuals are not bonded to each

[23] See item III of the "Préface à la seconde édition" (1901) of the *Règles* (*Rules,* 1895) wherein Durkheim explicitly refers to the article by Mauss and Fauconnet to amend his definition of social facts (Durkheim 1987 [1895], p. XXII).

other by cement" but indeed are "parts of a whole" in the sense that every human aggregate is based on a non-additive but functional grouping of the individuals that make it up (ibid., pp. 48–51). On the other hand, he discusses at great length the artificial character of analyses that represent "society essentially as a society of adults, fully developed individuals, who have never been children and will never die". Observing the fact that "there is no zero degree of social dependence of the individual, no beginning" gives us the means to understand, once again, the processes "of assimilation of socially pre-established schemas" (ibid., pp. 62–64).

Armed with these perspectives, it is now possible to understand why, when commentators of presidential visits see signs of enthusiasm, they immediately recognize approval. To understand that what is seen directly is indeed collective jubilation, for it to be correctly named, described, and commented upon, jubilation has to exist as a social institution in the sense that Mauss and Fauconnet gave to that expression:

> All the ways of acting and thinking that the individual finds pre-established, which are usually transmitted through education, are social. It would be helpful to have a special name to designate these special facts, and it seems that the word "institutions" would be the most appropriate. Indeed, what is an institution if not a set of already instituted acts and ideas that individuals find before them and which are more or less imposed on them? (Fauconnet and Mauss 1969, p. 150).

One might object here that it is neither new nor stimulating to insist on the idea that the forms and décors of gatherings do not come out of the blue. The operation is of interest only because it invites us to change radically the analytical perspective applicable to festivities and ceremonies, in particular because it has consequences that are altogether central for the status that can be given to jubilatory behaviors, from the most formal (displaying a flag) to the most personal in appearance (applauding and cheering). Indeed, it leads us to refuse to define political attitudes on the basis of particular inner lived experiences and feelings. What allows us to infer the "political" character of the feeling (as it appears in the frequent addition of adjectives such as patriotic, national, civic, citizen, etc.) is the recognition of an institutional context or, one might way, a situation of acclaim that puts the participants in the presence of festivity and its customary devices. To maintain that social representations do not emerge from a community of feeling implies going back to what can be called "the analytical problem of the shiver in the spine." In discussing the definitions of the sacred based on the notions of awe, attraction, and dread, V. Descombes suggests the path to follow:

> It is doubtful that one could identify religious sentiment as such if one had not already recognised an institutional context in its religious character. Already in the Latin vocabulary, the sacred has meaning only in opposition to the profane. What is important, therefore, is not to scrutinise lived experience to discern its religious quality, but to distinguish the situations that give rise to profane response such as ceremonial or divinatory conduct (Descombes 2005, pp. 462–463).

It is not the fact of shared feeling that produces political sentiment but rather the recognition of the festive context, the impatient, excited expectation that "makes Saturday night the best part of Sunday"(Ozouf 1976, p. 78), which calls or

commands a typical conduct of cheering. And the rule consisting in clapping one's hands and shouting "Long live…" to express this jubilation is valid not only for the "contracting parties" of a particular event (as if they agreed amongst themselves, by intersubjective adjustments in the action, on what had to be done to honor or to rejoice), but above all for all possible cases in the future. It allows the symbol of clapping hands to be recognized and accepted, elsewhere and afterwards, as a manifestation of support or tribute. Thus, we understand that the private investment of the participants can be quite variable, not necessarily consciously formulated, without calling into question, weakening, or reinforcing the social meaning conferred upon the event: this meaning does not depend on the reflexivity or the degree of internalization of any participant in particular. If the feeling is absent, it will not change anything. Following this lead, I wish to come back to the assessment of the gestures of flag-waving and illumination by showing how jubilation can be correctly prepared without becoming artificial. It is through local orchestration, which refers mainly to setting up the material and cognitive frame that have been learned, that makes the event recognized by those to whom it is intended, particularly in its behavioral expectations (Lang and Lang 1953).

The depersonalization of jubilation

How can the reversal of perspective attempted above be heuristic? Only through this point of view can we grasp what is otherwise incomprehensible: that crowd enthusiasm is predictable without being artificial.[24] Or, to put it in another way: the sources that urgently try to predict the jubilation before actually witnessing it, be they police, press, or public servants, are not the product of a gigantic deception (it would indeed be difficult to understand how it could manage to persist without being denounced). Indeed, a close look at the archives of presidential trips leads to a surprising initial observation: the local pre-reports of the prefectoral and police administrations usually predict quite accurately the size and enthusiasm of the actual crowds drawn by the visits. On the occasion of President Millerand's trip on the Seine between Rouen and Le Havre in 1921, the prefecture established a document summarizing the events planned in the villages along the banks of the river. In a surprising way a priori, since the document had been written before the celebration, it indicates several times, along with mention of fireworks and music or decoration, that the "flags are waved," or that "appropriate cheers [*vive le président*] are shouted out."[25] Yet there is no reason to see trickery or an exercise in clairvoyance here: police forces and administrators know, when they include hurrahs and cheers in programs of festivities, that the effervescence will indeed be present. They know this not because, in keeping with the Orwellian fantasy, the spectators will be turned into brainwashed machines, but simply because political festivities have for a long time

[24] It should be noted in passing that what is perfectly accepted and even valued in an activist or associative framework is curiously denied to "national" festivities in which the truth of behaviors presupposes their spontaneity.

[25] Note "manifestations des communes riveraines" (manifestations of the adjoining villages), 26/7/1921, AN 1AG21 and AD Seine-Inférieure, 1M336.

been a social institution for which the prerequisites for (good) functioning can be easily achieved. As long as the organizers have been cautious enough, they will be able to rely on a wide apparatus of celebration, which has regularly proven in the past its effectiveness in mobilizing a crowd.

Much evidence of this phenomenon can be found. First, we may recall that real "failures" among such events (when no jubilation is present) are extremely seldom. Above all, it is possible to observe what happens when the material framing of the ceremony is lacking, for want of money of "good will" or when things do not go according to plan. Two examples of *a contrario* interpretation bring out clearly the importance of the participants' recognition of festive situations: if they do not take place, that is to say, if the context of the celebration is not or only poorly established, nothing happens.

R. Dalisson offers an illustration when he describes a case in which there is no money available for ceremonies. This frequently occurred for celebrations of anniversaries of the *Trois glorieuses* revolutionary days, under the Monarchy of July, simply because the length of the festivities weighed upon budgets already used up by the feast of Saint Philippe, on May the 1st. What happened in these instances? Nothing. The festivities were simply reduced, with prefectoral authorization, to two or even a single day (Dalisson 2004, p. 84). One cannot fail to raise the following question: does the absence of finances, and thus of fireworks, games, distributions, and decorations ultimately make patriotic investment or the expression of "grassroots" sentiments in vain or impossible? In other words, does participation depend on the clear recognition of a situation that should give rise to "festive behavior" (a context in which shouts, cheers, and applause are at once appropriate and expected)? Let us repeat: only a positive reply to this question coherently explains the fairly systematic predictability of jubilation.

The second example is slightly unusual since it deals with an attempt, in the end unsuccessful, to subvert the ceremonial framework. On the occasion of the arrival of President Millerand in Dieppe in 1923, a "group of citizens" handed out a tract calling for silent participation:

> Today, […] your money is being thrown away profusely on ironic arches of triumph, grotesque decorations and sumptuous banquets […]. Citizens of Dieppe, do not allow the luxury of war profiteers and the verbiage of their flatterers to hide from the truth, the poverty and the scandal the representative of the state. Let your silence and your sadness along the passage of the official cortège clearly reveal your dissatisfaction and your reprobation of the administration and local representatives. Signed: a group of citizens of Dieppe.[26]

By calling for silence and sadness more than "insurrectionary" shouts, the local activists show that they had perfectly perceived wherein lay the force (and the potential weakness) of this type of event: in the absence of any jubilation more than in the noisy competition and shouting match between "supporters" and "opponents."

[26] Report to the prefect in the special constabulary of Dieppe, n°1221, dated 28/07/1921, AD Seine Inférieure, 1M337.

But at the same time, one grasps how largely vain, or at least very difficult, the task is: it would be necessary to count on a very sizable mobilization, or on a group that was particularly motivated and united in adversity for the adoption of such an attitude, for it to become tenable in public without the gaze of others thwarting the very possibility of remaining impassive. Silence, because it is socially inappropriate here, demands the presence of determined, trained activists (e.g., today those in Act Up die-ins), not that of ordinary citizens.

Here we recognize an argument made by Ann Swidler regarding the social obligation of ritual. She too sees participation in occasions like National Secretary's Day not as motivated by a deep appreciation of one's secretary but rather as by recognition of how not participating might be negatively sanctioned (Swidler 2001, p. 163). Such a mechanism is also at work during presidential visits or any other political ceremony. There is a powerful social incentive to participate because everybody worries about the signal his or her actions will send. It is not easy to stand apart or to refuse, when participation appears to be general, contributing to face-to-face subscription, decorating one's house when all the neighbors do, helping the local committee when members come ringing at the door or ... cheering in unison (for examples, see Mariot 2006, second part).

But negative sanctions alone do not explain why individuals participate in rituals. Because they are based on instituted behaviors whose public meaning is pre-established, rituals can relieve individuals from the necessity to motivate or justify their actions. They have something that we could call a liberating aspect. Participating does not imply a deliberate commitment. It presupposes only that people do the right thing at the right time, whatever they might be thinking, by doing so. Some may be deeply involved in the celebration, others less or not. This institutionalization of cheering behavior is beneficial in three respects:

1. First of all, in the process, it allows the supervisory institutions to save on the cost of individual doctrinal persuasion as well as the efforts and commitment requested from participants.
2. Next, it limits the expression of jubilation or discontent to recognised forms.
3. Finally, it avoids forcing people to make individual judgments, for themselves or for others, about what they are doing, or in any case, every time they do it. In other words, these are practices that can be validly carried out knowing that, if all goes well, their rationale will not have to be made explicit or justified: the participants are in no way asked to "take a position individually on a *credo* that is normally proclaimed within the scope of a collective rite in which support to the doctrine is depersonalised from the outset" (Héran 1986, p. 262). To allow a participation without implication: that's the ritual's old secret, able to ward off even the risk of negative sanctions.

To illustrate this essential point, one could compare it with another study of rituals of obedience in Syria under Hafez el-Assad. The author, Lisa Wedeen, gives particular attention to ceremonies in which the citizens must recount extraordinary stories (altogether incredible) in which the leader is presented as flying in the sky or holding the sun in his hands. In several instances, she wonders why the regime has introduced ceremonial policies based on external, unverifiable manifestations of loyalty, explicitly requiring participants to "pretend" rather than on mobilizing

genuine "inner" beliefs (1998, pp. 506, 510). To this argument one might counter with the following question: is what Hafez el-Assad's subjects do or say in these ceremonies merely the appearance of belief, whereas their "true" belief would remain hidden in their minds, requiring the researcher endeavoring to describe it to get inside their heads? On the other hand, is it not better to consider that their belief is wholly contained in its demonstration? It seems to me that is exactly what the commentators on the nineteenth-century imperial tours were saying:

> The rural populations stood at intervals along the train route, and the groups, headed by the local authorities, engaged in energetic demonstrations of joy and devotion.[27]

The fact that enthusiasm for the imperial visits had to be "energetically demonstrated" would nowadays no doubt lead to denouncing the event as having been the occasion for an organized "slap" or "cheering brigade." Yet, by positing that effervescence is demonstrated, Poulain-Corbion, "the historiographer" of imperial journeys, simply explained that the jubilation was prepared. Precisely because of this well conceived preparation, the situation was recognized to be as expected, and the appropriate attitudes could surface in the form of "energetic demonstrations."

In the same way, I argue that people are following institutional rules when they applaud or demonstrate. These behaviors are wrongly if typically interpreted as shared individual sentiments and purposes. Doing that, I put the emphasis on the motivation for participating rather than on the consequences of the event for the participants. But one may ask: does the ritual then accomplish nothing?

If we think about the presidential staff or, more largely, about the political world, the answer is clearly no: all the commentators say that the travel is efficient in building a strong popularity. So the ritual acts as a classic self-fulfilling prophecy: like opinion polls, it produces faith in all the politicians' minds about their own ability to become leaders, and we have evidence to prove it (Mariot 2007). Maybe it is what Lisa Weeden meant when she wrote that the important thing is not why people participate, but what the ritual effects are. By acting as if they believe in the authoritarian leader, it is true that people in Syria convey the impression that ritual breeds consent. But they do no more than conveying such an impression, and they do so first and foremost from the viewpoint of external observers: Hafez el-Assad's policemen and political staff, as well as, maybe, the social scientists who study the regime. In itself, this constitutes an important conclusion for our understanding of what political popularity is.

Regarding the public, however, answering the "effect question" is far more difficult. The same mechanism may be at stake: it is possible that, like the politicians, the people see the cheers and thereby acknowledge the success of the presidential performance, at least in the heat of the moment. But there is a huge difference: most of the time, we have no explicit evidence of such an effect on

[27] *Récit du voyage de Leurs Majestés l'Empereur et l'Impératrice en Normandie et en Bretagne, août 1858*, (Account of the travel of their majesties the Emperor and the Emperess in Normandy and Brittany, August 1858) par J.-M. Poulain-Corbion, the historiographer of the imperial travel, Paris, Amyot publisher, 1858, p. 22.

members of the audience, apart from the fact that we too are able to record the emotional fervor! When Randall Collins (2004a) argues that the key to ritual is the "emotional energy" that is produced by the close proximity of bodies, repetitive action, and so on, does he really do an interpretative operation other than swinging from reports of enthusiasm (or anger) to certification of efficiency? In that precise case, the conclusion is clear: if we reject such an interpretation regarding the motivation of the participants, we also should banish it regarding the supposedly effects of the ceremony. We have to choose. The proof by the motivated bodies cannot work to explain the effects of participation, but can no more its reasons (or vice versa).

Festive apparatus and inner inspiration

Before concluding, I would like to summarize the contributions from the standpoint presented here by offering a reinterpretation of what might be called the "inaugural scene" of studies on national holidays. The latter is to be found frequently in the writings on presidential visits, where commentators never miss an occasion to point out, whenever they encounter it, the presence of meaningful gestures, despite the absence of the head of state, for example, when dwellers of a village close to the official itinerary nevertheless take the trouble to wave flags and ring the bells when the procession passes nearby without actually crossing through the village. Olivier Ihl offers one of the best illustrations of the phenomenon in his history of 14th of July celebrations. He writes that one must give up "the idea that festivities mean the street filled with a hubbub of enthusiasm, a swarm of people going overboard and shouting, and the canopy of light covering the city from fireworks and illuminations." He immediately goes on to explain:

> A celebration can be as much in the gesture carried out, far from the crowd and the gaze of others, to decorate a little house on a deserted hill […]: a peasant couple attaching a piece of tricolour calico to the door of their house and lighting their window with a candle. Not to be seen—there are no neighbours in sight—but to take part in an uncounted movement, illuminate a fragment and testify to an emancipation (Ihl 1996, pp. 28–30).

This example serves as a paradigm: far more than a public explosion, a celebration of the Republic must be an inner inspiration. A collective inspiration, of course, but first in one's thoughts: a conscious commitment, both private and simultaneous, that can do perfectly well without decorative devices and amusements.

What happens if one attempts to describe this scene as mere discipline in a specific situation? O. Ihl is quite right to posit the exemplary nature of village flag-raising and waving as at once solitary (no neighbors in sight) and yet fully social. On the other hand, he is mistaken when he situates its social nature in the solitude of the gesture being transcended by its simultaneous character. In so doing, he cancels out the interest of having chosen an isolated flag and continues to assimilate the social to the collective, simply by bringing out the driving force behind the operation: distinct wills that are conscious of acting or thinking together. The framework remains strictly intersubjective, even if the interaction is at a distance: if there were no

temporal concomitance, there would be no (or no more) social dimension to waving the flag, because it is the fact of having the same feeling or the same thought at the same time (of co-experiencing) that makes it possible to speak of a community ("national" in this case).

There is, however, another way of talking about the social character of the event that does not rest, as this one does, on a description in "natural" terms, as if the citizens had the will to express their support and for that purpose agreed—by what kind of magic?—on a gesture of flag-raising and waving that is somehow eternally reinvented whenever necessary. The argument consists in maintaining that the intention of doing something is not an inner state, but a mental disposition that only belongs to someone (and can only be attributed to them) if the contextual conditions in which such an intention is possible are present (for details, Mariot 2008). The intention to cheer (and then the conclusion it entails, regarding the approval to which it testifies) can be attributed only in a ceremonial or festive context, i.e., in a situation in which clapping hands means applause and acclamation. It is thus a question of proposing a description in "civil" terms, in other words, a description in which the gesture of displaying and waving flags carries with it normative meanings that are conventionally connected to it from the outside, by the customary as well as legal institution of the Bastille day on the 14th of July. Continuing in this vein, the event is not social because it is an aggregate of solitary operations of the mind (a sum of acts of inner activism), but indeed because flag-waving and illuminations are "festive techniques" that the two peasants cannot be the first or the only ones to use in to celebrate their "national holiday" (which nevertheless, as we can see, does not prevent them from doing so all by themselves). The rule that lays down the meaning of the gesture is pre-established: the mere activation of a subjective intention to "support the Republic" would be useless if it could not take form and become recognizable as a common idea (a shared proof if not a prejudice), in the twofold apparatus of illuminations and flag-waving. The social bond materialized in the candle and the flag is the prerequisite for the exercise of a political will, not its consequence (see Descombes 2004, chap. 46, 47, 52–55). I am therefore obviously not maintaining that there are no manifestations of civic voluntarism on national holidays, but simply that the figures imposed by waving flags and cheering are not part of it, because their meaning is pre-established as reliable proof. This is essentially a call for caution whenever we are tempted to suggest intellectually thought-out or solidly formulated reasons for acting. For the participants' commitment to compensate for a lack of décor and festive devices, rare and difficult conditions are necessary: the presence of determined activists.

Typically, the instruments and manifestations of celebration come under the class of "institutional facts" already mentioned: their characteristic feature is that they are based on "constitutive rules" that take the form: "X counts as Y in the context C" (Searle 1995). Because these rules confer upon them a new function that they did not have by themselves (the demonstration of approval is not inherent in the clapping of hands), institutional facts are artifacts constituted by language. This twofold level of representations is what characterizes institutional reality and explains the fact that "natural man," i.e., a man "in the state of nature," in other words, not yet socialized, cannot through his own abilities be the first or the only one to use them. For a star-spangled banner to be recognized, without even thinking about it, as the American

flag; or for clapping hands to be treated as a sign of approval or consent, the recognized social meaning of the clapping hands or the textile fibres attached to the pole (in France vertically blue, white, and red, as in the United States, but striped and spangled with multiple stars) must pre-exist. In other words, the words "flag" and "applause" must be available.

Even before the rules constituting celebrations can be the subject of intellectual interpretation (before applause can be the subject of commentary as to the support it manifests), their practical mastery must be presupposed. The idea here, taken from the philosophy of Wittgenstein, consists in maintaining that if the rules of the 4th of July can dictate proper behavior to an American citizen, it is because the citizen has learned to follow them, therefore because he has already followed them many times. And, V. Descombes (2004, p. 449) adds, "that means that it is never the first time that he follows the rule (if he understands it) nor the first time that the rule is followed (since it is a model that he had to learn to use)."

This conclusion, as we can see, takes us back to the individualistic argument presented above, according to which a subject "autonomous in his will" always applies a rule that he wants to follow for the first time (since each time he must give his private assent to it once again). It appears perfectly acceptable from a logical standpoint, since it consists simply in stating that to follow a rule correctly, one has to have learned to do so, and therefore to have abided by the injunctions of an instructor (validated by the answers "yes" or "no, that is not how it should be done"), without yet knowing or understanding that one was in the process of following a rule. However, insofar as this argument forces us to "conclude that things never began" (ibid., p. 452), it remains quite disturbing for common sense: everyone knows that he or she has been able to invent or adopt a personal rule for him or herself and therefore be the first and only to follow it (when going on a diet, deciding on how often one plays a game, in the education of children, etc.); beyond that, it is difficult to let go of the idea that institutions are indeed "historical inventions" to that we should be able to assign, if not a birth date, at least a "beginning" or an "origin," however approximate.

In asserting that there is never a first time when a rule is followed, we are in no way asserting that an individual cannot invent a game and be the first to play it (Georges Perec, for example, successfully imposed upon himself the constraint of writing a book without using the letter "e"). In saying this, we simply wish to claim that in such an instance, the individual is testifying to his personal intention (psychological condition) and also, simultaneously, to the fact that he lives a regulated social life (de facto condition), in other words in a social life in which the notion of rule (those formalised for "4th (or 14th) of July") precedes and carries with it a whole background of practices, established customs, and institutions: "I can make a rule for myself if the context authorizes that the rule I make for myself holds" (ibid., p. 453). The proposition reaffirms, by reformulating it, the idea that ceremonial objects or movements by themselves do not possess any particular semantic property. The meaning of the applause is not intrinsically contained in the behavior of clapping hands together: suggesting a will to applaud is to speak simultaneously of the mind of spectator and of the society in which he lives.

To shed light on this point and its implications, the short stories of original foundation aforementioned may be referred to. Let us start with the parabola of the

boundary. Having reached this point, we are more apt to understand how artificial the gradual passage from a physical wall to an immaterial border can be. Because either the original wall already served as a border, allowing duly "authorized" people to go through and prohibiting those without the proper I.D. to pass, and in that case, it must be admitted that the civil idea of a border necessarily preceded the stone rampart that did not create the border; or the wall did not have that function when it was erected, but then it is altogether hard to see how its slow disappearance could have given rise to the idea of a border, with its attendant rights and obligations. In the first case, the presence or absence of a door in the wall no doubt pointed to the pre-existence or the non-existence of the idea of a border even before the wall was put up; in the second case, it is the making of a door that reveals that the border has been established, in a much clearer way than the slow crumbling of the wall. In other words, J. Searle is perfectly right when he suggests that the inhabitants "continue to recognize the line of stones as a boundary" ("the people involved continue to—and watch this vocabulary closely—*recognize* the line of stones as a *boundary*"), but then he must draw the consequences therefrom: if they persist in seeing a boundary there, it is that the idea already existed when the wall was erected, and hence there is no transition from the physical to the symbolical here, or from the natural to the civilian, contrary to what the author puts forward:

> Now, we are supposing that the wall, though it is no longer a large physical structure but simply a line of stones, continues to perform the same function that it did before, but this time not in virtue of its physical structure, but in virtue of the fact that the people involved continue to accept the line of stones as having a certain status. […] I propose to call such functions *status functions*. As this example is intended to make clear, the transition from physical function to status function can be gradual, and there may be no exact point at which we can say, the status function begins and the physical function ends. The vocabulary is revealing. 'You can't cross that' can mean either 'It is too high' or 'It is not allowed' (or both) (Searle 2005, p. 8).

The equivalence between "too high" and "not allowed" is here deceptive: either the white line fulfils the same function as the wall, and then it already acted as a boundary, but without its materiality playing a part in this function that already ought to be ascribed thereto by the inhabitants; or the wall was too high to be jumped over (Searle undoubtedly wants to indicate thus that it had no passage point), but then it was not a boundary whose crossing could be authorized, only a barrier.

Perhaps the emphasis laid by J. Searle on the idea that the wall becomes a boundary by reason of the progressive collective recognition of this function (but one hardly sees by which social magic such a recognition could be brought about) is due to the decisive place he grants to the notion of "collective intentionality" in his theoretical architecture. Again, it leads him to assimilate the social to the collective: just before the example of the boundary, he indicates that "hyenas hunting a lion and Congress passing legislation are both cases of social facts" (1995, p. 38). Why is it so? Precisely because the author stipulates that "any fact involving collective intentionality is a social fact." On the other hand, the passing of laws (but not the group hunting of hyenas) is an institutional fact, a "special subclass of social facts" that is considered particular to human societies and characterized by its double level

function-status (X counts as Y in C) (Searle 1995, p. 38). Because the border is clearly an institutional fact, its birth cannot stem solely from the principle of collective intentionality.

I believe the same process can be observed with regard to the invention of ceremonies. I told the story of an individual who must have, one day in the distant past, imagined what would one day become a program of festivities, with its highlights, instruments, and formulas. According to the type of argument that I put forth, the story should have been shortened, its formula being only that my "first" organizer "imagined a celebration." But one will immediately spot the artificiality of the situation: how could one imagine a celebration where none exists, in a society in which hypothetically the material and ideal components that identify a celebration of sovereignty are absent? In this sense, the word "program," although it added a more accurate or realistic meaning to the sentence, paradoxically added confusion to what I was saying. For if it were thereby a question of maintaining that an individual could single-handedly come up with a new program or a new festive gesture for the first time, then the proposal remains altogether acceptable. There is no doubt, for example, that the raised fist or extended arm (like gestures of greeting and signs of recognition) have a special historicity during the interwar period, and some research (Burrin 1986; Vergnon 2005) has even (successfully) undertaken the task of finding the supposed sole if not chief propagator of these gestures. On the other hand, it does not make sense to imagine that someone saluted or manifested a sign of recognition for the first time, since the sign of recognition presupposed the idea of recognition of the other that depends on a particular social environment and, in that sense, has no beginning. Similarly, one could multiply the supposedly new festive programs: nevertheless, one can never invent or reinvent the idea of celebration and the ways of doing things that make an event a celebration. That is why, no matter how innovative they may be, the programs always end up resembling each other.

Conclusion

To conclude, let us summarize the two parts of our demonstration. The economy of the presidential travel story is based on a logical mechanism whose effectiveness is so consistent that it explains why such trips continued to be made over such a long period of time. This mechanism relies on the perfectly monotonous deductive cogs in their conclusions once the premises of cheering have been recognized: if the participants applaud, it means that they approve. The problem stems from the fact that the general proposition of the syllogism (all applause means approval) cannot be verified completely. The solution proposed to escape from this deductive circle consists then in describing the circumstances of the cheering. This involves describing the material conditions enabling the event to take hold of an audience, in the sense that people recognize the responses as appropriate and expected in the context (let us assume it is an electoral victory or a 4th of July holiday celebration) and adopt cheering behavior.

The conclusions of this itinerary lead to a different perception of what "civic enthusiasm," for example, actually is: it is not enthusiasm produced by a pro-active civic action, but more simply enthusiasm manifested in a civic situation recognized

as such by the participants. No doubt it is true that wearing a flag on a lapel comes down to expressing one's patriotism: the critics had to find other problems as soon as the then Senator Obama put a flag pin on his jacket lapel. That does not imply, however, that widespread dissemination of the gesture must be interpreted as the physical result of a sum total of inner deliberations, but merely that the flag bears a meaning conventionally associated to it by an institution. In other words, in this case it is not the intention that counts, since the absence of intent does not affect the socially recognized meaning of sporting the flag (or of its refusal, by the way).

This "solution" will obviously disappoint all the fans of festive fever, the illness in which, on the occasion of a sudden rise in temperature, the bodies of sovereigns are suddenly divided, flags become totems, and cheers the crucibles of popularity. Yet I believe this article shows it does possess some value. Among others, the value of looking at administrative and police sources otherwise than as an enormous mystification. Another is not to base the effectiveness of political festivities on the civic spirit (always postulated but never compulsory) of the participants or the evocative power (regularly taken for granted but seldom verified) of the symbols and values conveyed by them. And a further value is to view participation in celebrations outside the rigid alternatives of automated sheep and motivated activists, to allow for conformism in the play between constraint and consent. This allows quite a bit of room for all those who consider it reasonable or realistic to assume political behavior is not always a conduct of ideological support. If only for those three reasons, the disappointment should, I think, be attenuated.

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