

JOHANNES HOFF

Digital Metrics in the Age of Online Culture Wars Policies of Praise and the Quest for Democratisation

Abstract

Since the 1990's the digital revolution has inspired the prophecies of Silicon Valley pundits that we are about to enter a leaderless society. Yet, the cyberutopian excitement about the 'wisdom of the crowd' has given way to an unprecedented disillusionment since 2016 at the latest. If we want to learn from this sobering experience, we must face the decisive problem: Every democracy is founded on practices of acclamation and praise. Social networks like Facebook have turned such practices into a manipulative tool that undermines the democratic pursuit of the true and the good and reinforces competitive mimetic habits. What can we learn from the premodern cultivation of practices of worship and praise if we want to overcome the life-threatening crisis of contemporary democracies?