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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 Silico-

c 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 premo-

dern cultivation of practices of worship and praise if we want to overcome
the life-threatening crisis of contemporary democracies?