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POLITICAL RITUAL AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION[1]

STEVEN LUKES

Abstract The article is concerned with the role played by rituals in the politics of advanced industrial societies. First, after considering the disputes of the anthropologists, a working definition of ritual is offered. The central, critical part of the paper discusses a range of attempts that have been made to apply a particular theory of ritual—the Durkheimian theory—to the politics of modern societies, specifically the United States and Britain. These 'neo-Durkheimian' analyses (of Shils and Young, Blumler *et al.*, Lloyd Warner, Bellah and Verba) are criticized for using too simple a notion of social integration, and for making too narrow a selection and offering too narrow an analysis of political rituals. Their approach is further criticized for closing off a whole range of significant and critical questions about political rituals—questions which bring out their cognitive role and the cognitive dimension of the exercise of power in stratified, conflictual and pluralistic modern industrial societies. Finally, it is suggested that, once those questions are asked, one arrives at a view of many political rituals that pictures them, not as promoting value integration, but as crucial elements in the 'mobilization of bias'.

> . . . questions of conventional and ceremonial behaviour in Britain, at least, have not attracted the attention of sociologists. (Gluckman 1962: 48)
>
> . . . so far, social anthropologists and sociologists have not taken the study of modern political rituals very seriously. Are they generally rituals of conflict? On the whole, this does not seem to be so in Britain, a country in which ritual is important at various levels of the polity. Perhaps the induction of an American President shows more openly the balance of cohesion and conflict, between interests, parties and offices. But Americans tend to play down the rituals of formal office; does ritual reassert itself elsewhere in the complex structure of American life, through churches and through social orders? Is modern society as a whole becoming 'deritualized', as followers of Max Weber tend to assume? Or does ritual reassert itself somehow in all polities, as it did in Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia? The fair answer is that we do not know. (Mackenzie 1967: 212)

THIS paper is concerned with the role played by rituals in the politics of advanced societies. It is in part a polemic against a body of theorizing about such rituals to which a number of sociologists have recently contributed, though it concludes with some positive suggestions. This is, as Professor Mackenzie's remarks suggest, a relatively uncharted and unexplored area, infested with theoretical difficulties and ideologically controversial issues, into which this is merely an exploratory foray. After extracting a working definition of ritual from the disputes of the social anthropologists, I will discuss a range of attempts that have been made by some sociologists to apply a particular theory of ritual—the Durkheimian theory—to the politics of modern societies. I will criticize these attempts and, finally, suggest an alternative approach which raises wider questions and promises a more satisfactory analysis of the role of ritual in political life.

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The Definition of Ritual

It is social anthropology which has made this topic its own: as Mary Douglas has observed, 'we have got to the position in which Ritual replaces Religion in anthropologists' writings' (Douglas 1966: 65). There is, however, considerable dispute among anthropologists about how ritual is to be identified and interpreted. As Edmund Leach has written,

> even among those who have specialized in this field, there is the widest possible disagreement as to how the word ritual should be used and how the performance of ritual should be understood (Leach 1968: 526).

Most writers agree in seeing ritual as rule-governed—in the sense of being both patterned and usually involving normative pressure on its participants. They disagree about whether, on the one hand, ritual is definitionally to be linked with religion (or with religion and magic) and in particular with mystical or non-empirical or supernatural beings or powers (Wilson 1957: 9, Gluckman 1965: 251, Firth 1951: 222, Notes and Queries 1951: 175); or whether, on the other, ritual need not be inherently religious, so that relevant similarities between religious and non-religious rituals come into view (Nadel 1954: 99). There are two strong arguments in favour of the latter alternative. First, not all cultures make a clear distinction between the natural or empirical and the supernatural or non-empirical, nor do they all make it in the same way (and can it in any case be clearly drawn?). Accordingly, analysing their practices by means of a category which presupposes such a distinction could be distorting or even irrelevant. Second, there are practices which are, in all or most relevant respects, similar to religious rituals—such as the civic rites of the Greeks and Romans, or the ceremonies of Confucianism—but in which reference to the supernatural or mystical is either not central or else absent: in such cases there seems no good reason to withhold the label of ritual. And indeed, we are precisely interested in looking at modern political rituals, in which the mystical or supernatural often play little or no role.

Some anthropologists have traditionally stressed the irrational or non-instrumental character of ritual, others its expressive or symbolic nature. A modern instance of the former view is Jack Goody's definition in terms of 'standardized behaviour (custom) in which the relationship between the means and the end is not "intrinsic", i.e. is either irrational or non-rational' (Goody 1961: 159). Leaving aside the question of specifying non-contestable criteria of rationality, this offers a useful account of how the anthropologist actually proceeds: for it is precisely the apparent irrationality of certain activities and beliefs which leads him to see them as symbolic. An activity, it has been suggested, is symbolic where the means 'appear clearly disproportionate to the end, explicit or implicit, whether this end be that of knowledge, communication or production' (Sperber 1974: 16). But what, then, does the symbolic nature of ritual consist in? It seems unduly loose to see it simply as the 'expressive, even dramatic' aspect of acts which have 'meanings' and involve 'mental associations' (Beattie 1966: 60 and 1970: 240) or, quite generally, as the

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'aesthetic' and 'communicative aspect of behaviour', that is, an 'aspect of almost any kind of action', that which ' "says" something about the individuals involved in the action' (Leach 1968: 523, 524 and 1954: 13). On this view, all activities would be rituals. Here it would seem most profitable to follow Radcliffe-Brown (1952) in characterizing the referents of ritual symbolism as having a special significance or social value within the relevant social group (a significance and value which the ritual itself serves to reinforce). Such referents are objects, relationships, roles situations, ideas, etc., which have a special place in the life of the group and towards which at certain times, through the mediation of ritual, the attention of its participants is drawn, at different levels of consciousness and with varying emotional charge.

From the above, exceedingly condensed, discussion, I suggest we can extract the following definition of ritual: *rule-governed activity of a symbolic character which draws the attention of its participants to objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance.*[2]

There are a number of acute methodological problems involved in the study of ritual, chief among them being how to establish whether one interpretation of its symbolism is more valid than another. The observer cannot simply accept the actors' interpretations, the 'rationalizations of the devout' (Leach 1968: 523); indeed, these will themselves need to be interpreted. On the other hand, he cannot be completely uncontrolled in his interpretations. His task is to interpret the ritual within its context: the objects of thought and feeling which are the referents of the symbolism, and their special significance within a given social context, are matters that must be empirically established. On the other hand, and especially insofar as the symbolism is not explicit, he will find crucial explanatory clues by comparison with quite alien contexts and from general theoretical ideas he brings to bear. The observer's interpretation will, inevitably, be theory-dependent, but *his* theories can hardly be independent of native interpretations, whether of ordinary participants or of ritual specialists, or of their behaviour (Turner 1962 and 1969). Thus reference to native accounts is both indispensable and non-definitive, and this poses real problems for verification and falsification in the interpretation of ritual. Probably the most one can hope for in this area is to achieve interpretations which can be compared with one another for plausibility and tested (supported and even sometimes refuted) in the light of new data (Sperber 1974: 78).

The arguments we are to consider follow the Durkheimian tradition in singling out the social reference of ritual symbolism, discounting or reinterpreting supernatural or mythical interpretations in social terms ('Behind these figures and metaphors, be they gross or refined, there is a concrete and living reality', namely, 'Society' (Durkheim 1915: 225)); and in seeing the effects of ritual as socially integrative. I shall, in fact, argue that, aside from their other failings, these views fail to exploit one crucial element in the Durkheimian theory of ritual. In order to support both that claim and my examination of these attempts to account for

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the meaning and functions of modern political rituals, I must, however, briefly refer to the source of these attempts, namely, the Durkheimian theory of religion and ritual.

The Durkheimian Theory

This has essentially three component elements: first a (causal) theory of how certain situations, those of 'collective effervescence', generate and recreate religious beliefs and sentiments, renewing *représentations collectives* which relate to sacred beings; second, an *interpretation* of religious beliefs and practices; and third, a (functional) theory of the consequences of those beliefs and practices.

Durkheim's interpretation of religious belief and ritual has, in turn, two aspects. He saw them as 'representing' social realities in two senses: first, as a cognitive means of interpreting the social world, rendering it intelligible, albeit in a metaphorical and symbolic idiom, so that religion is a sort of mythological sociology—'a system of ideas with which the individuals represent to themselves the society of which they are members, and the obscure but intimate relations which they have with it' (Durkheim 1915: 225); and second, as a way of expressing and dramatizing social realities, providing a 'flag', a 'rallying sign', a set of 'dramatic representations', analogous to 'games and the principal forms of art' (pp. 220, 358, 379, 381). Again, the consequences of religion operate at two levels: that of the individual and that of society as a whole: individuals are 'strengthened in their social natures', while 'the group periodically renews the sentiment which it has of itself and of its unity' (p. 375).

Durkheim maintained that certain features of religion, which he claimed to discern in its 'elementary' forms, were functional prerequisites of all societies. While religion was abandoning its cognitive role to science (including sociology) the function he saw ritual as playing in recreating and strengthening social integration was universal and indispensable. In this sense, he wrote, 'there is something eternal in religion which is destined to survive all the particular symbols in which religious thought has successively enveloped itself'—and he continued:

> There can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which make its unity and its personality. Now this moral remaking cannot be achieved except by the means of reunions, assemblies and meetings where the individuals, being closely united to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments; hence some ceremonies, which do not differ from regular religious ceremonies, either in their object, the results which they produce, or the processes employed to attain those results. What essential difference is there between an assembly of Christians celebrating the principal dates of the life of Christ, or of Jews remembering the exodus from Egypt or the promulgation of the decalogue, and a reunion of citizens commemorating the promulgation of a new moral or legal system or some great event in the national life? (p. 427).

Durkheim was struck by what he saw as the pathological state of his own society, signified, as he saw it, by the very lack of public rituals. He saw this lack as an index of social pathology, of a transitional state of 'uncertainty and confused

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agitation', (p. 428—amended trans., S.L.), which would be overcome; but a number of contemporary sociologists have argued, in particular with reference to Britain and the United States, that there is no such absence of ritual—that a Durkheimian analysis can be made of contemporary political rituals in these societies showing them to be important mechanisms of social integration. Let us look at some of these neo-Durkheimian arguments.

The Neo-Durkheimians

Edward Shils and Michael Young see their interpretation of the meaning of the British Coronation (Shils and Young 1953)[8] as 'merely restating the interpretation, in a particular context of [Durkheim's] more general view' (p. 67). The Coronation was, they claim, exactly the kind of ceremonial of which Durkheim wrote, 'in which society reaffirms the moral values which constitute it as a society and renews its devotion to those values by an act of communion' (p. 67). The Coronation Service itself was 'a series of ritual affirmations of the moral values necessary to a well-governed and good society' (p. 67). The service and the procession which followed it were 'shared and celebrated by nearly all the people of Britain'—'in these events of 2nd June the Queen and her people were, through radio, television and press and in festivities throughout the land, brought into a great nation-wide communion' (pp. 70–1). This popular participation throughout the country 'had many of the properties of the enactment of a religious ritual' (p. 72). There was 'the common sentiment of the sacredness of communal life and institutions . . . people became more aware of their dependence on each other, and they sensed some connection between this and their relationship to the Queen. Thereby they became more sensitive to the values which bound them all together' (p. 74). On sacred occasions—of which the Coronation is only one extremely 'august' form—'the whole society is felt to be one large family, and even the nations of the Commonwealth, represented at the Coronation by their prime ministers, queens and ambassadors, are conceived of as a "family of nations" ' (pp. 78–9). Shils and Young sum up their analysis of the Coronation's meaning as follows:

> A society is held together by its internal agreement about the sacredness of certain fundamental moral standards. In an inchoate, dimly perceived and seldom explicit manner, the central authority of an orderly society, whether it be secular or ecclesiastical, is acknowledged to be the avenue of communication with the realm of the sacred values. Within its society, popular constitutional monarchy enjoys almost universal recognition in this capacity, and it is therefore enabled to heighten the moral and civic sensibility of the society and to permeate it with symbols of those values to which the sensitivity responds. Intermittent rituals bring the society or varying sectors of it repeatedly into contact with this vessel of the sacred values. The Coronation provided at one time and for practically the entire society such an intensive contact with the sacred that we believe we are justified in interpreting it . . . as a great act of national communion (p. 80).

In a more recent study of public attitudes to the Monarchy, at the time of the Investiture of the Prince of Wales (Blumler *et al.* 1971), the authors conclude that their findings 'are more consistent with the religious analogy of the hold of the

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Queen on the imagination of her subjects than with the idols-of-mass-entertainment analogy'. It is, they write,

> as if the Investiture brought to the fore a profound emotional commitment to the Monarchy, to the representatives of which the vast majority of people were prepared to extend an exceptional degree of respect. Most ordinary Englishmen were caught up in the spirit of the event to an extraordinary degree and communicated their enthusiasm to each other. The feelings about the Queen and Prince Charles which the Investiture evoked, managed to fuse personal with public concerns in a symbolic fashion that Durkheim would have understood.

Certain 'fundamental social values (family solidarity, national pride) were reaffirmed'; and indeed the whole occasion, in the authors' view, 'played the part of a ceremony, not only of rededication, but also of reconciliation' (pp. 170, 171).

For Lloyd Warner (Warner 1959 and 1962) 'Memorial Day and similar ceremonies in the United States are one of the several forms of collective representations which Durkheim so brilliantly defined and interpreted in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*' (Warner 1962: 30). The 'Memorial Day rites of Yankee City and hundreds of other American towns . . . are a modern cult of the dead and conform to Durkheim's definition of sacred collective representations'. They 'consist of a system of sacred beliefs and dramatic rituals held by a group of people, who when they congregate, represent the whole community' and they are 'sacred because they ritually relate the living to sacred things' (Warner 1959: 278). Warner analyses 'the unifying and integrative character of the Memorial Day ceremony—the increasing convergence of the multiple and diverse events through various stages into a single unit in which the many become the one and all the living participants unite in the one community of the dead' (Warner 1962: 16). The ceremony consists in 'the progressive integration and symbolic unification of the group' (Warner 1962: 18). Warner summarizes his own thesis as follows:

> Memorial Day ceremonies and subsidiary rites (such as those of Armistice or Veterans' Day) . . . are rituals of a sacred symbol system which functions periodcally to unify the whole community, with its conflicting symbols and its opposing, autonomous churches and associations. . . . in the Memorial Day ceremonies the anxieties which man has about death are confronted with a system of sacred beliefs about death which gives the individuals involved and the collectivity of individuals a feeling of well-being. Further the feeling of triumph over death by collective action in the Memorial Day parade is made possible by recreating the feeling of well-being and the sense of group strength and individual strength in the group power, which is felt so intensely during the wars . . . when the feeling so necessary for the Memorial Day's symbol system is originally experienced. (Warner 1962: 8).

Warner is here taking Durkheim's analysis very seriously. Following what he calls Durkheim's 'important theoretical lead', he argues that war provides that period of creative collective effervescence, of heightened 'interaction, social solidarity and intensity of feeling' which 'produce new sacred forms, built, of course, on the foundations of old beliefs' (Warner 1959: 273). In brief, Memorial Day is 'a cult of the dead which organizes and integrates the various faiths and national and class groups into a sacred unity. It is a cult of the dead organized around the community cemeteries. Its principal themes are those of the sacrifice of the solider dead for the living and the obligation of the living to sacrifice their

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individual purposes for the good of the group . . .' (Warner 1962: 8). Along with Christmas, Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July, it is part of the 'ceremonial calendar of American society' which 'functions to draw all people together to emphasize their similarities and common heritage; to minimize their differences, and to contribute to their thinking, feeling and acting alike' (Warner 1962: 7). And Warner directly compares this ceremonial calendar with the seasonal alternation of secular and sacred ceremonial periods found among the Australian aborigines (e.g. *ibid.* and Warner 1959: 277).

Robert Bellah's discussion of 'Civil Religion in America' (Bellah 1968) applies the 'Durkheimian notion that every group has a religious dimension' (p. 21) to American society as a whole. He offers an analysis of Kennedy's Inaugural on the assumption that it indicates 'deep-seated values and commitments that are not made explicit in the course of everyday life' (p. 4). He argues that, distinct from personal religious worship and association,

> there are, at the same time, certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share. These have played a crucial role in the development of America's institutions and still provide a religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life, including the political sphere. This public, religious dimension is expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols and rituals that I am calling the American civil religion. The inauguration of a president is an important ceremonial event in this religion. It reaffirms, among other things, the religious legitimation of the highest political authority (pp. 5–6).

From the earliest years of the Republic, Bellah writes, in a highly Durkheimian formulation, there has existed 'a collection of beliefs, symbols and rituals with respect to sacred things and institutionalized in a collectivity' (p. 10). The formative, creative periods, determining its sacred symbolism, were, first, the Revolution (seen as the final act of Exodus leading the American Israel from the old lands across the waters to the New Jerusalem) and then the Civil War (introducing, especially with Lincoln, a new theme of death, sacrifice and rebirth). It has, writes Bellah, 'its own prophets and its own martyrs, its own sacred events and sacred places, its own solemn rituals and symbols' (p. 20). Borrowing selectively from the religious tradition, it has been able 'to build up without any bitter struggle with the church powerful symbols of national solidarity and to mobilize deep levels of personal motivation for the attainment of national goals' (p. 15).

Finally, I shall consider Sidney Verba's analysis of the popular reaction to the Kennedy assassination (Verba 1965).[4] Citing Durkheim's theory that religious symbols represent society and are socially integrative, he suggests that 'this central symbolic role in a modern secular society is pre-empted by the political symbols that stand on the highest level for the society—in the American case by the Presidency above all'; 'political commitment in the United States contains a prime component of primordial religious commitment' (pp. 353, 354). 'The reactions to the assassination', Verba writes,

> —the intense emotion, the religious observances, and the politico-religious symbolism—are evidence (though hardly proof) that such commitment exists. And the President is the appropriate focus of this

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commitment . . . he is . . . the symbol of the nation. And, as Durkheim stressed, the symbols of nationhood are more than particular objects that are made to stand for something larger; they are major constitutive elements of polities and societies . . .

But where does this central commitment to the symbols of nationhood—in this case the presidency—and to the nation thus symbolized originate? Early socialization of children is one source, but periodic ceremonies and collective events that allow the members of the society mutually to reinforce each other's commitment by collective activities are another way. In the relatively simple societies of which Durkheim wrote, this was accomplished by periodic reunions and ceremonials. In a complex and widely extended society like the United States, a society without the ceremonies of royalty, such reunions and common observances are somewhat rarer, though national elections and some national holidays may be examples of such events. The assassination crisis is important here because it is probably the nearest equivalent in a large modern nation-state to the kind of intense mutual rededication ceremony that is possible in a smaller and simpler society. There are several features that make it such a ceremony. The fact that it involved almost total participation is important. The figures on the universality of information and involvement are overwhelming as evidence of the ability of the mass media—television in particular—to link a large nation together. Furthermore, the media communicated not only information but shared emotion. . . . It was in many cases shared by families gathered around television sets, it was shared in church services and other community ceremonials, but it was intensely and widely shared through the media themselves. Not only were the emotions of individual Americans involved, but they were made clearly aware of the emotions of their fellow Americans (pp. 354–5).

Verba lays very great stress on the integrative effects of the assassination (this must be the first conservative case for political assassination) and he sees this in essentially Durkheimian terms: the crisis was 'the occasion for an unexpected rededication ceremony' (p. 358), which 'brought to the fore a pre-existing commitment—a commitment fundamental to the political community in the United States'. (p. 358). He writes of 'traditional, religious and indeed somewhat magical aspects of political commitment' and suggests that this 'may be the kind of primordial emotional attachment that is necessary for the long-term maintenance of a political system' (pp. 359–60). This may be 'what holds a complicated and pluralistic political society like the United States together' (p. 359). Thus 'many of the functions that religion and religious symbolism perform elsewhere in holding society together are performed in the United States by the central political symbols' (p. 353).

Criticism

What exactly do these neo-Durkheimian analyses claim to be the role of ritual in contemporary politics? They turn out on inspection to make a number of distinct claims: (1) political ritual is an *index* or *evidence* of (pre-existing) value integration (it indicates 'deep-seated values and commitments' and provides 'evidence' of 'primordial religious commitment'); (2) it is an *expression* of such integration ('society reaffirms the moral values which constitute it as a society'); (3) it is a *mechanism* for bringing about such integration (serving to 'mobilize deep levels of personal motivation for the attainment of national goals'); and (4) it itself *constitutes* such integration (consisting in 'the progressive integration and symbolic unification of the group' and functioning 'periodically to unify the whole community'). Thus these various relations are claimed to exist between ritual and

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value integration. It is further claimed, after the fashion of normative functionalism, that value integration is the central aspect of the integration of a society; value consensus maintains the equilibrium of the social system. Thus political rituals play a crucial part in the integration of modern industrial societies.

The first thing to be said about these analyses is that they conceptualize this latter integration in far too simple a manner. Shils and Young state baldly that a 'society is held together by its internal agreement about the sacredness of certain fundamental moral standards'—and as examples of such integrative moral values they cite 'generosity, charity, loyalty, justice in the distribution of opportunities and rewards, reasonable respect for authority [*sic*], the dignity of the individual and his right to freedom' (Shils and Young 1953: 65). (They never even consider the possibility that there might be divergences in the interpretation of such values within a society.) The other neo-Durkheimians make comparable assertions about the integration of society: hence, for instance, Verba's reference to 'what holds a complicated and pluralistic political society like the United States together'.

But 'what holds society together'—the so-called 'problem of order'—is an exceedingly complicated problem to which these writers propose an excessively simple answer. The first question is whether, to what extent, and in what ways, a society *does* 'hold together'. That question must be answered first, before one can seek to determine what factors are responsible for its putative integration: specifying the *explanandum* must precede seeking explanations. In order to examine it seriously one must distinguish at least the following separable issues: (1) the continued participation of a society's members in its institutions and practices; (2) their conformity to its norms; (3) their sharing of a common consciousness and acting in concert; (4) the complementarity or reciprocity of their activities and roles; (5) the compatibility of their interests; (6) the degree of coherence of segments or parts of society; (7) the functional compatibility or 'degree of fit' between a society's core institutional order and its material base (the degree of 'system integration'); and (8) the persistence of structural features of the society over time. The writers we are considering—like normative functionalists in general—fail to separate out these importantly different issues, and in fact focus mainly on (2). Moreover, the *explanation* they offer in terms of shared values is very partial, and can itself be seen as requiring further explanation. In short, value consensus takes one very little way indeed towards solving 'the problem of order', and, insofar as it exists, itself requires explanation.

But it is, in any case, empirically questionable how much value consensus there is, even in liberal democracies such as the United States and Britain. Reviewing the available evidence, Mann has argued (Mann 1970) that there is a very much lower degree of value consensus in such societies than consensus theorists seem to suppose.[7] If Mann is right, then the social cohesion of such societies cannot be attributed to a high degree of shared commitment to general values throughout their populations—though it may require such shared commitment among their

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elites (see McClosky 1964). Mann's thesis is that the compliance of subordinate classes is then to be explained, not by their participation in a value consensus, but in terms of their *lack* of commitment to a consistent set of values and beliefs that would translate their concrete experiences into radical politics. If we wish to explain that lack, 'we must rely to some extent on the Marxist theories of *pragmatic role acceptance* and *manipulative socialization*' (Mann 1970: 437). On this view, the problem is not to explain why there is universal agreement over a set of internalized, integrative values and norms in terms of, say, political ritual and symbolism, but rather to explain the continuing compliance of subordinate groups in terms of their members' participation in activities, performance of roles and conformity to norms to which no realistic alternatives are perceived or imagined. I shall suggest below that an examination of political ritual could be highly pertinent to such an explanation.

It is not only arguable that the neo-Durkheimians, and consensus theorists generally, greatly overstate the degree of shared value commitments in liberal democracies. There are other societies which are, arguably, integrated (in a number of respects) in the *absence* of value consensus. Consider the case of Northern Ireland—which manifestly continues to 'hold together', in most of the ways specified above. That this is so clearly requires explanation, and that explanation can hardly avoid reference to the continuing functioning of the economic substructure. As the Northern Ireland Ministry of Commerce stated in an advertisement, at the height of the recent troubles,

> Every day tens of thousands of Northern Ireland Protestants and Roman Catholics work together, and, as the record shows, work hard. In the two years 1970 and 1971 manufacturing output rose 13 per cent (1970: 7·2 per cent—1971: 6·1 per cent). Productivity in 1971 was up 6·7 per cent ... (*The Times*, April 13 1972).

And, of course, the explanation will equally refer to the exercise of power by the dominant groups, so visibly backed in this case by physical force. But the more general, and theoretically significant, point which emerges out of this example is that value consensus is not merely not sufficient to ensure social integration; it is not even necessary. There are, to put it another way, functional alternatives to value consensus. The case of Czechoslovakia since 1968 demonstrates this with peculiar clarity.

So far, I have argued that the neo-Durkheimians have contributed virtually nothing to our understanding of the extent to which, and ways in which, modern industrial societies are integrated—first, because their conception of social integration is too simplistic, and second, because their assumption of value consensus is empirically questionable. I now wish to suggest that they make little contribution to our understanding of political rituals, because their approach (focussing on allegedly integration-strengthening rituals) is unduly narrow. That narrowness is revealed both by the selection of the rituals they analyse, and by the analyses they offer of the rituals thus selected.

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Thus, in the first place, they select rituals which ostensibly support their view of social integration around a single value-system—that is, rituals which express a hegemonic ideology. But there are, of course, other contemporary rituals which express alternative and non-official attitudes and values. Consider, for example, the alternative Memorial Day parades staged in recent years in protest against the Vietnam war. Consider May Day parades in capitalist (as opposed to communist) societies. There are, indeed, interesting differences between these—both between different countries and within a given country. (Compare the Communists' and the *gauchistes'* parades in France.) In general, such parades may promote consciousness and solidarity only to the level desired by the leaderships of working class parties and trade unions. Consider the rituals of sport—both the games themselves (e.g. a Cup Final between Tottenham and Liverpool, symbolizing North–South tensions) and the activities of spectators[8] (e.g. the community singing, the Royal Box to which the players proceed at the game's end at the Cup Final; or the behaviour of Welsh rugby crowds at Wales–England matches, or of black American boxing fans at black *versus* white fights, or of Czechs at ice hockey matches with the Russians). Again, strikes and other industrial actions can usefully be seen in this light. (On the other hand, these last cases, and to some extent those of sport, bring out an interesting feature which distinguishes them from, say, parades, or marches and demonstrations—namely, that they *are*, to some degree at least, what they symbolize: strikers *are* standing up to the bosses, it *is* black *versus* white in the ring, North *is* struggling against South, Wales against England, the Czechs against the Russians. What this shows is, perhaps, no more than that rituals may be more or less indirect; and, conversely, that 'direct action', and instrumentally oriented activities in general, may have their symbolic or ritual aspect, and that to identify this is not *eo ipso* to deny or debunk their non-symbolic aspect. To see them as rituals is to tell half the story.)

In this way, the neo-Durkheimian game can, no doubt, be played in reverse, to show how collective effervescences can serve to integrate and strengthen subordinate social groups, whether these are engaged in a struggle within the existing social order, or are aiming to challenge it, or at the extreme, overthrow it. (On the other hand, there are other, mixed cases, such as ethnic parades, as on St Patrick's Day, in New York, which express both the common consciousness of subordinate groups *and* the dominant, melting-pot ideology.)

An interesting example of the possibilities of such an analysis is provided by John Berger in an article written at the height of the French May Events of 1968 (Berger 1968). Berger offers a highly Durkheimian analysis (though I have no evidence that he has read Durkheim) of the meaning and functions of demonstrations. Demonstrations, he writes, are 'rehearsals of revolutionary awareness'. A demonstration is 'a *created* event which arbitrarily separates itself from ordinary life'. The 'importance of the numbers involved is to be found in the direct experience of those taking part in or sympathetically witnessing the demonstration

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. . . The larger the demonstration, the more powerful and immediate (visible, audible, tangible) a metaphor it becomes for their total collective strength':

> I say metaphor because the strength thus grasped transcends the potential strength of those present, and certainly their actual strength as deployed at a demonstration. The more people there are there, the more forcibly they represent to each other and to themselves those who are absent. In this way a mass demonstration simultaneously *extends* and *gives body* to an abstraction. Those who take part become more positively aware of how they belong to a class. Belonging to that class ceases to imply a common fate, and implies a common opportunity . . .

And Berger goes on to discuss the symbolism of the choice of the demonstration's location, as near as possible to some symbolic centre, either civic or national, rather than some strategic centre, thereby symbolizing the capturing of a city or capital. The 'symbol or metaphor is for the benefit of the participants': they transform the areas they march through into a 'temporary stage on which they dramatize the power they still lack'. The demonstrators 'become corporately aware that it is they or those whom they represent who have built the city and who maintain it. They see it through different eyes. They see it as their product, confirming their potential, instead of reducing it' (pp. 754–5).

Again, there are other contemporary political rituals, equally ignored by these writers, which, while expressing dominant values and interests, do so in societies in which value consensus is manifestly absent or minimal. Consider, for example, the Orange Order's rituals in Northern Ireland. Of these, Richard Rose has written that the 'most striking ceremony is an annual parade on the Twelfth of July, when Orangemen, wearing black bowler hats and orange collarettes, parade for hours through Belfast and other major centres, under banners commemorating major battles in the establishment of Protestant rule in Ulster three centuries ago'. Rose cites a letter in the *Belfast Telegraph* with an unconscious echo of Durkheim:

> Orangemen that day not only commemorate a very significant military and political victory, but a great deliverance from Roman slavery, in much the same way as the Jews each year commemorate their deliverance from bondage in Egypt.

'In an exclusively Protestant state', writes Rose,

> such a ceremony would be an occasion expressing communal solidarity, as Independence Day is in America or in any ex-colonial nation. In a regime with divided authority, however, the parades of Orangemen—especially when they march through Catholic quarters of towns—intensify discord, for Catholics regard the marches as a show of force by those who have conquered them (Rose 1971: 258).

In this case, collective effervescences serve not to unite the community but to strengthen the dominant groups within it. Ritual here exacerbates social conflict and works against (some aspects of) social integration. The same result may flow from rituals of subordinate groups at certain times and places: consider the Petrograd Soviet or the street demonstrations during the French May events. On the other hand, these cases may be contrasted with some of the other conflictual rituals mentioned above (parades, some but not all strikes, rituals of sport) which appear (à la Gluckman) to express and institutionalize, even exaggerate in ritual

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form, underlying social conflicts whose continued existence, together with the social order which contains them, is accepted as given and unchangeable by participants and observers. These rituals may be said to contribute to social integration but not to value consensus.

Thus the selection by the neo-Durkheimians of official and allegedly value integration-strengthening rituals is exceedingly narrow. But so also are the analyses they offer of these rituals. These anlayses begin and end with the official interpretation and altogether fail to explore, not only different levels of symbolic meaning in the rituals, but also socially-patterned differences of interpretation among those who participate in them or observe them. Such an investigation would, of course, immediately raise the question of the extent to which such official rituals succeed in promoting the value consensus which is their rationale.

This leads us to the final objection to the neo-Durkheimian view of ritual—namely that it is one-sided and uncritical. It fails, in other words, to raise a whole range of significant questions about the relations between ritual and society, between political symbolism, on the one hand, and social realities and possibilities, on the other.

Suggestions

In order to substantiate this claim, let us recall the definition of ritual proposed above: namely, *rule-governed activity of a symbolic character which draws the attention of its participants to objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance*. My main positive suggestion is that political ritual should be seen as reinforcing, recreating and organizing *représentations collectives* (to use Durkheim's term), that the symbolism of political ritual *represents, inter alia*, particular models or political paradigms of society and how it functions. In this sense, such ritual plays, as Durkheim argued, a cognitive role, rendering intelligible society and social relationships, serving to organize people's knowledge of the past and present and their capacity to imagine the future. In other words, it helps to define as authoritative certain ways of seeing society: it serves to specify what in society is of special significance, it draws people's attention to certain forms of relationships and activity—and at the same time, therefore, it deflects their attention from other forms, since every way of seeing it also a way of not seeing. I suggest, in short, that we should go beyond the somewhat simplistic idea of political ritual expressing-producing-constituting value integration seen as the essence of social integration (which is the banal but widely applied aspect of Durkheim's theory) and take up instead the fertile idea that ritual has a cognitive dimension (this being, in any case, the central and original part of Durkheim's theory), though placing it (as Durkheim did not) within a class-structured, conflictual and pluralistic model of society. I believe this to be a more illuminating way of interpreting rituals than that of the neo-Durkheimians: it suggests that such rituals can be seen as modes of exercising, or seeking to exercise, power along the cognitive dimension. On this

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view, the explanandum ceases to be some supposed value integration, but rather the internalization of particular political paradigms or *représentations collectives*, whose role in political life requires investigation.

Once we see matters this way, we are in a position to ask various questions about political rituals which the neo-Durkheimians notably fail to ask—questions such as the following: Who (i.e. which social groups) have prescribed their performance and specified the rules which govern them? Who (which social groups) specify the objects of thought and feeling they symbolize—specifically, certain forms of social relationship and activity—as of special significance? Who exactly holds them to be specially significant, and significant in what ways? In the interests of which social groups does the acceptance of these ways of seeing operate? And what forms of social relationship and activity are in consequence ignored as of less or no significance? Under what conditions are political rituals most effective in getting participants and observers to internalize the political paradigms they represent? How are such rituals used strategically by different groups, exerting or seeking power in society?

Such an approach would go well beyond the conventional study of politics which, as Edelman puts it, concentrates on who gets what, when and how, on 'how people get the things they want through government', and focus instead on mechanisms through which politics 'influences what they want, what they fear, what they regard as possible and even who they are' (Edelman 1964: 20). It would explore the symbolic strategies used by different groups, under specifiable structural conditions, to defend or to attain power *vis-à-vis* other groups (see Cohen 1974 and Lukes 1974). It would also examine the ways in which ritual symbolism can provide a source of creativity and improvisation, a counter-cultural and anti-structural force, engendering new social, cultural and political forms, involving what Turner calls 'liminality' and 'communitas', as, for instance, among millenarian and revivalist movements (Turner 1969 and 1974; and Bocock 1974, ch. 8).

Most significantly for the theme of this paper, it would examine the cognitive dimension of social control within modern class-structured societies, revealing the manifold ways in which institutionalized activities, seen as rituals, can serve to reinforce and perpetuate dominant and official models of social structure and social change, of, say, the 'kingdom', the 'Empire', the Constitution, the Republic, the nation, the socialist state, of 'democracy', a 'free society', the 'rule of law', the 'public interest', 'socialism', 'socialist legality', the 'road to communism', of political order and political conflict, and indeed of the very nature and boundaries of 'politics'. That official ceremonies, such as the Coronation, Memorial or Independence or Bastille Day, the Presidential Inaugural, even the reactions to the assassination crisis, or the Lenin centenary, the October Revolution parades, and the mass visiting of the Lenin mausoleum in the U.S.S.R. do this is plain enough. They draw people's attention, and invoke their loyalties, towards a certain, powerfully-evoked representation of the social and political order. But many

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other institutionalized activities that are *not* primarily identified by their participants as rituals, play an exactly similar role.

Most obvious of these are the elaborate and public forms of judicial and quasi-judicial activity. Indeed, the ritual and symbolic aspect of the law, maintaining and developing *représentations collectives*, has been far too little studied. 'The abstract ideals of the law', wrote Thurman Arnold, 'require for their public acceptance symbolic conduct of a very definite pattern by a definite institution which can be heard and seen'. They are dramatically presented and 'memorialized by particular ceremonies' and thereby become 'moving forces in society'.

Indeed,

> The institutions which throw about the law that atmosphere of reality and concreteness so necessary for its acceptance are the court and the law school. The one produces the ceremonial ritualistic trial; the other produces a theoretical literature which defends the ideal from attack by absorbing and weaving into its mystical pattern all the ideas of the critics . . . (Arnold 1962: 45).

'The Law' is, from this point of view, a vast apparatus of ritual and symbolism, devoted to instilling the powerful vision of a social order in which justice is achievable through the following of regular and sanctified procedures. As Arnold has eloquently put it, the 'rule of law'

> ordinarily operates to induce acceptance of things as they are. It does this by creating a realm somewhere within the mystical haze beyond the courts, where all our dreams of justice in an unjust world come true. Thus in the realm of the law the least favored members of society are comforted by the fact that the poor are equal to the rich and the strong have no advantage over the weak. The more fortunately situated are reassured by the fact that the wise are treated better than the foolish, that careless people are punished for their mistakes. The trader takes heart by learning that the law ignores the more profitable forms of dishonesty in deference to the principle of individual freedom from governmental restraint. The preacher, however, is glad to learn that all forms of dishonesty which can be curbed without interfering with freedom or with economic law are being curbed. The dissatisfied minority is cheered by the fact that the law is elastic and growing. The conservative is convinced that it is becoming more and more certain. The industrial serf is told that no man, not even his great employer, is above the law. His employer, however, feels secure in the fact that his property is put above ordinary legislative law by the Constitution, which is the highest form of law there is. It protects us on the one hand from arbitrary power exercised without regulations. It saves us from the mob, and also from the dictator. It prevents capitalism from turning into communism, democracy from becoming the rule of an unthinking people. It gives all people an equal chance for success, and at the same time protects those who have been born in more favored positions of privilege and power.

In this way, the law is 'the greatest instrument of social stability because it recognizes every one of the yearnings of the underprivileged, and gives them a forum in which these yearnings can achieve official approval without involving any particular action which might joggle the existing pyramid of power' (Arnold 1962: 34–35).

Consider, again, the activities of legislatures, such as debates, question-periods, committee investigations, and so on. Though these obviously have their 'efficient' or instrumental aspects of criticizing, controlling, and deliberating, there is much to be said for seeing them, with Crossman, as among Bagehot's 'dignified' and 'theatrical' elements of the Constitution, serving to 'excite and preserve the

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reverence of the population' (Bagehot 1963: 61).[9] As Beer has suggested, one central function of modern legislatures is to 'mobilise consent'—not merely to the views and policies of government, but to the parameters of the managed capitalist economy, with its many complex coercions. They define what the citizen takes for granted and thereby set limits to what it is realistic to change, by reinforcing the dominant definitions of the meaning of 'politics', of the nature of significant political divisions, and of the proper channels and permissible limits of political conflict.

A parallel analysis could be made of administrative activities in the United States, such as business regulation which, proclaiming values such as the public interest, fairness, the protection of rights, etc., can be seen as symbolically creating and sustaining 'an impression that induces acquiescence of the public in the face of private tactics that might otherwise be expected to produce resentment, protest and resistance' (Edelman 1964: 56). Indeed, it is scarcely exaggerating to suggest that most of the regular activities of politicians, lawyers and administrators can be seen, aside from their manifest and instrumental functions, as symbolizing to themselves and to the wider public the potent representation of a relatively well-ordered society in which justice broadly prevails and governments are responsive to citizens. Edelman puts this as follows:

> To quiet resentments and doubts about particular political acts, reaffirm belief in the fundamenta rationality and democratic character of the system, and thus fix conforming habits of future behaviour is demonstrably a key function of our persisting political institutions: elections, political discussions, legislatures, courts and administration. Each of them involves motor activity (in which the mass public participates or which it observes from a distance) that reinforces the impression of a political system designed to translate individual wants into public policy (Edelman 1964: 17).

This indeed, makes it 'possible for men to believe that they live not in a jungle, but in a well-organized and good society' (Salomon 1955: 100); or, at the very least, it presents the existing social order as relatively unalterable and sets severe limits to what can realistically be changed by political means.

But it is, undoubtedly, elections which are the most important form of political ritual in liberal democratic societies, partly because of their central place in the official ideology of such societies, partly because of the high degree of mass participation they involve. Likewise, ever since the 1936 Constitution, they have had a no less important role in the U.S.S.R. where the extremely high voting figures evidently have considerable symbolic significance. Participation in elections can plausibly be interpreted as the symbolic affirmation of the voters' acceptance of the political system and of their role within it. The ritual of voting draws their attention to a particular model of 'politics', of the nature of political conflict and the possibilities of political change. Moreover, it both results from and reinforces the belief, in which there is normally little truth, that elections give them an influence over government policy.[10] In this way, participation in elections—that minimal but most basic democratic activity—appears as the essence of 'democracy'

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and thereby contributes to the stability of both the liberal and the socialist democracies.

So the ritual of elections, alongside that within legislatures, law-courts and the administration, can play a significant role in legitimating and perpetuating the political paradigms or *représentations collectives* which contribute to the stability of the political system, by helping to define its very nature, and to define away alternatives to it. In this way, political rituals can be analysed as part of what has been called the 'mobilization of bias' (Schattschneider 1960: 71)—that 'set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals [*sic.*] and constitutional procedures ("rules of the game") that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at the expense of others' (Bachrach and Baratz 1970: 43).[11] And parallel analyses could be made of rituals that are not 'predominant' or hegemonic—whether these are subordinate and oppositional but posing no challenge to the existing social and political order, or else radically oppositional and representing a real challenge to the existing order.

In sum, then, I have argued a threefold case. First, I criticized the neo-Durkheimians for using too simplistic a notion of social integration, and for making too narrow a selection and offering too narrow an analysis of political rituals. Second, I further criticized their approach for closing off a whole range of significant and critical questions about political rituals—questions which bring out their cognitive role and the cognitive dimension of the exercise of power in class structured, pluralistic and conflictual modern industrial societies. And third, I suggested that, once we ask these questions, we arrive at a view of many political rituals which pictures them, not as promoting value integration, but as crucial elements in the 'mobilization of bias'.

Notes

1. This is a well-travelled paper. It began life as a seminar paper at Oxford and was subsequently presented at Harvard, Nanterre and the Free University of Berlin. I hope it has benefited from the interestingly different reactions it provoked and also from the helpful critical comments of David Apter, Hans-Peter Dreitzel, Graeme Duncan, Anthony Heath, R. W. Johnson, Frank Parkin, and Dan Sperber.
2. These objects may, of course, be multiple and occur at different levels of meaning. As Turner writes, ritual symbols 'condense many references, uniting them in a single cognitive and affective field' (1974: 55): they are '*multivocal* or *polysemous*, i.e. they stand for many things at once. Each has a "fan" or "spectrum" of referents, which tend to be interlinked by what is usually a simple mode of association, its very simplicity enabling it to interconnect a wide variety of *significata*' (1962: 125). Moreover, these 'are drawn from many domains of social experience and ethical evaluation' (1969: 52), including physiological and 'normative' or moral phenomena, including principles of organization.
3. For an incisive critique, see Birnbaum, 1955, and also Bocock 1974; 102–4.
4. For a persuasive critique, see Lipsitz, 1968; also see Verba's reply (Verba, 1968).
5. For a very useful spelling-out of some of the complexities embedded in this question, see Cohen, 1968, Ch. 6.
6. See Lockwood, 1964.

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7. Cf. Goldthorpe 1974, which plausibly characterizes British *economic* life as in 'a situation of anomie', with ' "disorderly" industrial relations, the "wages jungle" and general economic "free for all" ' and 'little consensus on the principles which *ought* to apply' (pp. 222, 233, 226).
8. Compare the role of cricket in the West Indies, and the riots which matches against the English teams provoke (when the home team loses). As Patterson argues (Patterson, 1969), 'In the West Indies, a test match is not so much a game as a collective ritual—a social drama in which almost all the basic conflicts within the society are played out symbolically. At certain moments this ritual acquires a special quality which reinforces its potency and creates a situation that can only be resolved in violence'. Cricket is the Englishman's game, and yet it also gives the West Indian masses 'a weapon against their current aggressors, the carriers of the dominant English culture in local society'. Indeed,

> A test match is in fact one of the few exceptional occasions when the West Indian lower classes feel solidarity. The atomism created by poverty, conflicting values, and charismatic politics loses its divisiveness in the presence of the game. Here at last, —in the medium of genuine heroes,—the only heroes in a land barren of other heroes or a heroic tradition—the masses respond as one, share a common experience, bite their nails in a common war of nerves against a common enemy—against 'Them' (pp. 988–989).

   Patterson's all-too-brief analysis strikes me as a model of how such rituals should be analysed, displaying sensitivity to different interpretations of the same ritual among different social groups.
9. A role which is, moreover, made the more effective by the occasional, overt and successful performance of their instrumental functions. The occasional success of backbenchers in checking or even reversing government policies greatly enhances the symbolic effectiveness of Parliament as a mobiliser of consent.
10. Compare Edelman '[Participation in elections] is participation in a ritual act, however; only in a minor degree is it participation in policy formation. Like all ritual, whether in primitive or modern societies, elections draw attention to common social ties and to the importance and apparent reasonableness of accepting the public policies that are adopted . . . elections could not serve this vital social function if the common belief in direct popular control over governmental policy through elections were to be widely questioned' (Edelman 1964: 3). Cf. Edelman 1971: 23. See Hamilton 1972 Ch. 3 for a valuable discussion and suggested explanations of the considerable gap in the U.S. between popular wants, on the one hand, and legislative and executive accomplishment, on the other.
11. There are, of course, considerable difficulties in using the concept of the 'mobilization of bias'—now much discussed in the literature of community power (and examined by the present writer in *Power: A Radical View*, London: Macmillan, 1974). But these difficulties are certainly no less serious than those generated by the notion of 'value-consensus'; and it is the contention of this paper that the use of the former concept opens up a whole range of significant empirical questions which the use of the latter closes off.

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