Thomas Jefferson's First Inaugural Address in MR Text Format (March 4, 1801) with Observations on the Tyranny of the Majority and Tyranny of the Minority

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THOMAS JEFFERSON’S FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS IN MR TEXT FORMAT (MARCH 4, 1801) WITH OBSERVATIONS ON THE TYRANNY OF THE MAJORITY AND TYRANNY OF THE MINORITY,  
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ABSTRACT.  
Our Constitutional Logic presents the 1,724 words of Thomas Jefferson’s First Inaugural Address, delivered March 4, 1801. The table annexed hereto presents this work in MR Text format. For OCL’s present purpose TJ’s invocation of TOM-TOM – the mathematical logic which supplies no convenient repose between the tyranny of the majority and the tyranny of the minority – is drawn to the reader’s attention.

Key Words: Thomas Jefferson, first inaugural address.

A. INTRODUCTION. “All, too, will bear in mind this sacred principle,” Jefferson’s Address runs, “that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression. Let us, then, fellow-citizens, unite with one heart and one mind.”

Jefferson obtained a majority of the electoral votes in the ballots contested in the House of Representatives. His opponent was his right-hand-man in New York City, Aaron Burr, leader of the Republican party in its quest for power in the 1800 elections. The President of the United States polled third in the electoral college nominating process. Adams is the only outgoing President to be too rude to show up for his successor’s inaugural. By tradition, death is held a better thing to do than to emulate Adams’ example.

B. TOM-TOM: TYRANNY OF THE MAJORITY-TYRANNY OF THE MINORITY. The foregoing shows that Jefferson knew something about the tyranny of the minority; his supporters could not, at the beginning, win over enough of the minority to make itself the majority, in the contested election of 1800, which was thrown into the House of Representatives. First, quantification is accepted: that is, a body operates, insofar as product is concerned, on the majoritarian principal.

(Quantification would also be accepted if the minoritarian principle were accepted so that the will of 65%, for example, could be defeated by 35% given the two-thirds majority rule in effect.)
TJ does not explicitly discuss TOM-TOM, but, as OCL has pointed out, any attempt to upset the tyranny of the majority (50+%) by moving the bar upwards only grounds the tyranny of the minority. Hence TOM-TOM must be accepted as grounding 50+% and that is the end of the matter. Given quantification at any figure, this figure is the beginning and end of the matter.

Second: why does it matter that delegates paid careful (but not perfect) attention to procedures which governed balloting (by delegate) and voting (by state)? Fidelity to form is, at least, a function of practice. Most people in an artificial environment – such as in venue – where ordered discourse is facilitated by parliamentary procedure – expect that results will be, most of the time, received by them as inevitable outcomes, even if these outcomes may surprise those doing the balloting.

C. A Sports Metaphor May Explain These Points. Assume players engage in patternable behavior on a field of play. Afterwards they are asked to name features of their behavior. They might respond with the following: (a) There is a beginning, middle and end to each session of play. ‘We know where we are as the clock counts off the remaining minutes of play.’ (b) A score attaches to each session of play. ‘We believe that our behavior is a cause of that score.’ In other words, they don’t believe that the outcome is totally random or beyond their ability, individually or collectively, to affect the outcome. (c) ‘We do not know the ultimate score of the session which engages us, but we expect that, on failure of our side to win, we will not be wholly exonerated.’

These predicates are portable to other fields of human endeavor.

OCL expands as follows:

**Expectation of quantification:** The player expects effort is measurable; this includes all effort mediate to the outcome. Everything you do may be measured, taken down and served back to you.

**Expectation of determinacy:** This variable that will yield information that informs the player (in idiomatic English) ‘where’ she is in the course of each session.

**Rational hope:** This plays off quantifiability, the variable that, when set to 1 or 0, for instance, yields a win or loss, success or failure, at the conclusion of each session. In other words, it is rational for a delegate to hope that behavior on her part, given a successful outcome, will be credited to her efforts.

**Rational fear:** This plays off causal inference, but to the opposite effect. In other words, it is rational for a delegate to fear that behavior on her part, given an unsuccessful outcome, will be treated as a factor in that unsuccessful outcome.

(These are not tactical choices. A player can engage her own rational hope and rational fear in the same breath. Listing them informs choices urged by a player’s
manager (in sports) or party whip (in venue). The division between the two very loosely overlaps offensive and defensive moves, as in ‘playing to win’ and ‘playing not to lose’.)

The points TJ makes are as follows: the will of the majority must be reasonable. This is no appeal to moderation as a measure of the merit of any outcome. Instead, what supports TJ’s point is that once the tedious and trivial be reasonable as to outcome is cast aside (this is merely merit), the only thing for the majority to be reasonable about is the procedures they adopt at the beginning of any process.

D. ENTER THE PERSUASION GAP. At some point in the venue or information exchange, be it at the beginning, middle or end of that process, a persuasion gap will materialize. TOM-TOM flows from quantification. If there is persuasion gap in 100 venues how often will the gap be closed or even reversed? Is it 30% or only 20% of the time? What we have here is the right of the majority not to make a fool of itself.

The reason why the majority can’t ‘close down’ the minority 100 times out of 100 is that at some point, some of the majority will listen to the minority – and be persuaded – or more likely, a member of the majority (at any time-step) will listen to his colleagues and be dissuaded of their position and move into the ranks of his former opponents.

Thus, even if we think of the rights of the minority in the narrowest possible terms the analysis drives us backwards to better merit outcomes, because more assumptions are teased out and QA drives mean-times-between-failures down.

So better merit outcomes are at stake; whether the majority is formed early and withstands attack or the majority coalesces out of an early and vulnerable majority and a persuasive minority.

E. TABLE ANNEXED. For the Table Annexed hereto and for on-line access to Peter Aschenbrenner’s articles, tables and charts see purdue.academia.edu/PeterAschenbrenner or works.bepress.com/peter_aschenbrenner/

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