ARTICLE 5

Lifting a Stone

Grégoire Falque · 8 September 2026

A stone, on the ground, weighs nothing for anyone. It is there, that is all. People walk past it, they do not see it, or they see it without looking. Its mass exists, somewhere, in the laws of physics. But its weight exists for no one. It sleeps.

The day someone lifts it, something changes. Not the stone: it is made of the same matter as yesterday. What changes is that there has been, once, a body that bent down, an effort that was exerted, a resistance that was passed through. The weight was not in the stone. It was born of the encounter.

It is a simple idea, almost childlike. And it is precisely what has disappeared from our lives.

I. The world where nothing is lifted any more

We live in a world that has done away with the effort of lifting. A click replaces a gesture. A notification replaces a decision. A piece of information passes through and disappears, with nothing to stop it, hold it in place, force it to weigh. Everything slides. Everything fades. The stones are still there, their mass intact, but no one lifts them any more, and their weight is never revealed.

This is not a complaint against progress. It is a finding, almost neutral: we have gained in fluidity everything we have lost in weight.

A message read is wiped out by the next one. A petition is signed with a click and costs no one anything. An outrage goes round the world in an hour, then nothing. All of this works, and none of it weighs. None of it has taken place, in the strictest sense of the word.

II. What “taking place” means

There is a difference, slight but real, between a piece of *information* and a *fact*. Information can be accurate and never have taken place: it circulates, it is passed on, it is forgotten, and tomorrow another replaces it.

An act cannot be taken back. Once a cobblestone has been thrown into a pond, it has been thrown. No one, not even the person who threw it, can go back on it. It is no longer a piece of information that another will come to replace. It is a fact, dated, located, which now exists independently of anyone's memory.

It is this difference, tiny and absolute at once, that the Bureau des Protocoles has taken on the task of producing.

III. What remains

For it to be produced, two liftings are needed. The mandator's first: deciding that there is cause, *il y a lieu*, and giving a mandate. Then the administrator's: executing the act to the end. Neither one, alone, lifts the stone.

Sometimes a third party lifts it, without having asked to. An administration, an inspector, an algorithm. It mandates nothing: it checks, it taxes, it classifies. In 2016, two fraud inspectors came to ask what proved that a cobblestone was really thrown into the pond. They were not trying to lift the stone. They lifted it all the same: their question gave it weight. It is the strangest lifting of all, because the one who does it does not know that he is doing it.

When the act is complete, a lead cube is cast: 1.3 kilograms, in the mandator's name, the time of the act struck into the metal. It is entrusted to the mandator on deposit. It is not a trophy. It is not a representation of what was felt. It is the mass that remains, very concretely, once the act has taken place: the proof that one day, someone lifted a stone that no one lifted any more.

One might think the Bureau des Protocoles sells objects. It sells none. It executes acts, and the object is what remains of them. What it produces is a before and an after. Before: something passing through, without form, without trace, as real as it is fragile. After: a fact, settled in the world, that nothing can ever erase.

Between the two, nothing happened but a gesture. But that is precisely what we have stopped allowing ourselves.

Bureau des Protocoles · 11, rue Campagne-Première, Paris 14th · Registered office: Paslaz · gregoire.falque@gmail.com · gregoirefalque.com