

mediator – коллокация intermediar*

1. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt the real and First Source of Uncertainty 37 sometimes exquisitely small differences between the many ways in which people 'achieve the social'? I am afraid so. Mediators vs. intermediaries It would be possible to attenuate the differences between the two schools by saying that 'naturally' all social scientists agree that groups
2. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt As the following quotes from Durkheim's famous passage on the role of totems in group-making show, the difference is extremely subtle between a mediator and an intermediary. Does the totem express the group, facilitate its cohesion, or is it what allows the group to exist as a group?
3. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt I will need in this introductory book, it makes a huge difference whether the means to produce the social are taken as intermediaries or as mediators. At the beginning, the bifurcation seems small, but it will later on lead us into different territories. To be sure, this nuance will be
4. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt made elsewhere.³¹ As we will slowly discover, it is this constant uncertainty over the intimate nature of entities—are they behaving as intermediaries or as mediators?— that is the source of all the other uncertainties we have decided to follow. Once this definition is in place, we can see that
5. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt later, see p. 88). The real difference between the two schools of thought becomes visible when the 'means' or 'tools' used in 'construction' are treated as mediators and not as mere intermediaries. If this looks like splitting hairs, well it is, but this is because the tiny difference in direction taken
6. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt feel, the touch, the color, the sparkling of silk and nylon, this social difference might not exist at all.³² It is this infinitesimal distinction between mediators and intermediaries that will produce, in the end, all the differences we need between the two types of sociologies. To sum up the contrast
7. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt types of sociologies. To sum up the contrast in a rudimentary way, the sociologists of the social believe in one type of social aggregates, few mediators, and many intermediaries; for ANT, there is no preferable type of social aggregates, there exist endless number of mediators, and when those are transformed
8. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt the major distinction will be to decide whether the agency—once provided with existence, figuration, and opponents—is treated as an intermediary or as a mediator. In both cases, the outcome of the actor's account will be deeply different.⁶⁰ It is crucial for what follows to understand that this
9. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt the first: 'Give me the cause and I will have the effect.' But this is not the case when the two terms are taken as mediators. For intermediaries,

there is no mystery since inputs predict outputs fairly well: nothing will be present in the effect that has not been in

10. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt to exist. 62 To detect those differences we need a benchmark of textual quality that allows us to measure, so to speak, the relative density of mediators over intermediaries, something like taking the temperature of the textual account. As we will see in reviewing the fifth source of uncertainty, this will
11. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt choosing some figuration over some other ones in the place of the actors, but from the increase, in the accounts, of the relative share of mediators over intermediaries. This will be the tell tale sign that indicates to us what is a good ANT study. For all these reasons, if
12. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt human intentions until they are made alive again by some historian. Objects, by the very nature of their connections with humans, quickly shift from being mediators to being intermediaries, counting for one or nothing, no matter how internally complicated they might be. This is why specific tricks have to be
13. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt why the study of innovations and controversies has been one of the first privileged places where objects can be maintained longer as visible, distributed, accounted mediators before becoming invisible, asocial intermediaries. Second, even the most routine, traditional, and silent implements stop being taken for granted when they are approached by
14. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt an 'assembly drawing'.⁹⁷ The third type of occasion is that offered by accidents, breakdowns, and strikes: all of a sudden, completely silent intermediaries become fullblown mediators; even objects, which a minute before appeared fully automatic, autonomous, and devoid of human agents, are now made of crowds of frantically moving humans
15. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt between a social factor and some other phenomenon? This is where we have to use again the crucial distinction I introduced earlier between intermediary and mediator. Is the element B, whose emergence is triggered by a factor, treated as a mediator, or is it construed as an intermediary for some
16. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt abandon the convenient shorthand of social explanations, to split hairs indefinitely about what is or is not a group, to trick intermediaries into behaving as mediators, to register the queerest idiosyncrasies of the humblest actors, to set up long lists of objects participating in action, and to drop the background
17. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt text may become a bifurcation, an event, or the origin of a new translation. As soon as actors are treated not as intermediaries but as mediators, they render the movement of the social visible to the reader. Thus, through many textual inventions, the social may become again a circulating entity
18. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt by the social fluid through which the traces are rendered again present, provided something happens in it. In an actornetwork account the relative

- proportion of mediators to intermediaries is increased. I will call such a description a risky account, meaning that it can easily fail—it does fail most of
19. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt a portrait.¹⁹³ It is always part of an artificial experiment to replicate and emphasize the traces generated by trials in which actors become mediators or mediators are turned into faithful intermediaries. There is nothing less natural than to go into fieldwork and remain a fly on the wall, pass out
 20. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt groups and agencies might be multiplied; and the controversies about matters of concern might be mapped. Only those who have never tried to write about mediators instead of intermediaries will say that this is an easy task, something akin to 'mere description'. For us, on the contrary, it requires exactly
 21. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt transformations, that is, if we make sure to pave the whole way from one site to the next not with intermediaries but with full-blown mediators. If we do this, we will render visible the long chains of actors linking sites to one another without missing a single step. It
 22. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt faraway places in Asia and, very vaguely, by some techie from the maintenance staff somewhere on campus. Especially important are the different pressures exerted by mediators and intermediaries, the later adding, as we know, predictability to the setting, while the former might suddenly make it bifurcate in unexpected ways. At
 23. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt point during the lecture, something could break, be it the microphone, the speaker, perhaps even the teacher. If any of the intermediaries mutates into a mediator, then the whole set up, no matter how solemn or controlled, may become unpredictable. No wonder interactions provided social scientists with the strong impression
 24. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt justification, interactions, and so on, because the only possible activity that context could bring was that of a cause in search of consequences, of a mediator looking for some passive intermediaries that would faithfully carry its forces. But this is no longer the case with ANT: the theory of action
 25. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt vocabulaire de Deleuze. Paris: Ellipses. INDEX Abbott, E. 172n Flatland 204 accounts 80-81, 122-4, 127, 138 Accounting Standards Board (IASB) 229n actant 54 -5, 199 action 22, 44 -7, 174 actor-network 133, 169, 179, 217-18 actor-network account, proportion of mediators to intermediaries is increased 133 actor-network-theory see ANT actor/system quandary 169 -70, 217 actors, able to propose their own theories of action 57 can download theories
 26. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt a discipline among others 258- 63 what sort of political epistemology ? 254-8 'concrete' and 'abstract', do not designate specific type of character 62 concreteness, increase of relative share of mediators over intermediaries 61 connectedness, size and zoom should not be confused with 187

connections, traceable and continuity 221, 245 connectors, why they are so efficient at formatting the

27. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt through some window pane 122-8 figurations 53-4, 58, 199 figurative painter 54 first move: localizing the global, from panopticon to oligopti- con 175-83 localizing the global 173-4 panoramas 183-90 first source of uncertainty 27-30, 182 mediators vs. intermediaries 37- 42 no relevant group to make up social aggregates 29 no work no group 34-7 traces left by formation of groups 30-4 fishermen 106 -7, 109, 132 five sources of
28. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt report 128 cause does not allow effects to be deduced 58-9 definitions 39, 106 more there are the better 217 proliferation of generates quasi-objects and quasi-subjects 243 real names 240 mediators and intermediaries 40, 105, 202 'mere construction' 92 Merton, Robert K. 95, 95n metaphors, help counterbalance the weight of social inertia 220 metaphysics, discipline inspired by philosophical tradition and 50 metaphysics
29. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt objective' matter and 76 might determine and encourage human action 72 nature of 22 nowhere to be said and everywhere to be felt 73 overflow their makers, intermediaries become mediators 85 play a role 87 quickly flip-flop their mode of existence 81 recede into the background 80 role from incommensurability of their modes of action 74 role for
30. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt stuff 66, 75, 115, 233, 236, 244 social, the, actors, Don't define for them what makes up the social 36 cannot be substituted 99 difference whether means to produce are intermediaries or mediators 38 difficult to scrutinize where naturalism reigned 263 296 Index social, the (cont.) difficult to show as artifact produced by causality 110 effect of two maps with different
31. Latour, Bruno - Reassembling the Social_ An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford, 2005).txt can take 37 clout of 'more scientific' departments on their independence 83 connect vast arrays of life and history 22 done more than 'discover' what society is 262 few mediators and many intermediaries 40 filter out everything which does not look like uniformed 'social actor' 55 forgetting 'power relations' and social inequalities and 86 have misunderstood nature
32. Latour, Bruno - We Have Never Been Modern (Harvard, 1993).txtThe Beginning of the Past 67 3.8 The Revolutionary Miracle 70 3.9 The End of the Passing Past 72 3.10 Triage and Multiple Times 3.11 A Copernican Counter-revolution 76 3.12 From Intermediaries to Mediators 3.13 Accusation, Causation 82 3.14 Variable Ontologies 85 3.15 Connecting the Four Modern Repertoires 88 4 RELATIVISM 91 4.1 How to End the Asymmetry 91 4.2 The Principle of Symmetry Generalized 94 4.3 The Import-Export System
33. Latour, Bruno - We Have Never Been Modern (Harvard, 1993).txtthat same Constitution at once cancelled out the distance by practising the contrary, by measuring humans and things alike with the same yardsticks, by multiplying mediators in the guise of intermediaries. The pre-postmoderns, for their part, truly believe that speaking subjects are incommensurable with natural objects and with technological

34. Latour, Bruno - We Have Never Been Modern (Harvard, 1993).txtas if they wanted to simply repress them. On the contrary, they recognized their existence but emptied it of any relevance by turning full-blown mediators into mere intermediaries. An intermediary - although recognized as necessary - simply transports, transfers, transmits energy from one of the poles of the Constitution. It is
35. Latour, Bruno - We Have Never Been Modern (Harvard, 1993).txtmade of pure forms, the belief in the existence of a modern world was inescapable. The whole difference hinges on the apparently small nuance between mediators and intermediaries (Hen-nion, 1991). If we seek to deploy the Middle Kingdom for itself, we are obliged to invert the general form of the
36. Latour, Bruno - We Have Never Been Modern (Harvard, 1993).txtis therefore breached, since purification is considered as a useful work requiring instruments, institutions and know-how whereas in the modern para FROM INTERMEDIARIES TO MEDIATORS 79 digm there was no explicit function and no apparent necessity in the work of mediation. Kant's Copernican Revolution, as we have seen, offers
37. Latour, Bruno - We Have Never Been Modern (Harvard, 1993).txtcollective out of which people and things are generated. At last the Middle Kingdom is represented. Natures and societies are its satellites. 3.12 From Intermediaries to Mediators As soon as we bring about the Copernican counter-revolution and place the quasi-object in a position below and equidistant from the former
38. Latour, Bruno - We Have Never Been Modern (Harvard, 1993).txtasymmetrical tasks, one of which ignores nonhumans and the other 80 REVOLUTION humans, and suppose symmetrical historians who will compare the two balance sheets when using mediators or intermediaries. In the modern world of the Copernican Revolution there will be no new entities, since we are supposed to split it in
39. Latour, Bruno - We Have Never Been Modern (Harvard, 1993).txtnow enumerate the entities endowed with autonomous status, we find far more than two or three. There are dozens. Does nature abhor a FROM INTERMEDIARIESTO MEDIATORS 81 vacuum or not? Is there a real vacuum in the pump, or could some subtle ether have slipped in? How are the Royal Society'
40. Latour, Bruno - We Have Never Been Modern (Harvard, 1993).txtwe redistribute essence to all the entities that make up this history. But then they stop being simple, more or less faithful, intermediaries. They become mediators - that is, actors endowed with the capacity to translate what they transport, to redefine it, redeploy it, and also to betray it. The serfs
41. Factures_Fractures_ From the Concept of Network to ... Attachment (1999).txt other, action that is controlled. This catastrophic move renders it impossible to activate either the individual or society, because they are deprived of assistants, intermediaries, mediators, or means of any kind. What can be engendered with the "faire-faire" is not attainable as long as the making is on one
42. Latour, Bruno - On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods (Duke, 2010).txt God, Nature, Truth, and Science could be," to which other voices (or sometimes the same) answer: "Alas (or fortunately), we cannot do without images, intermediaries, mediators of all shapes and forms, because this is the only way to access God, Nature, Truth and Science." It is this quandary that we
43. Latour, Bruno [ed.] - Making Things Public_ Atmospheres of Democracy (MIT, 2005).txt is accessible through other means (theory), and that it is permissible to abandon

denotation altogether. Yet if we are to take media seriously, as active mediators and not passive intermediaries, then connotation must remain immanent to denotation. For us, the public can only be accessed through its denotation. If we

44. Morality and Technology_ The End of the Means (2002).txt technology (and by a good many other forms of existence whose difference does not interest us here). Every technological initiation pays for the multiplication of mediators in the creation of intermediaries. The growth of Downloaded from tcs.sagepub.com at UNIV OF CHICAGO LIBRARY on October 2, 2014 256 Theory, Culture & Society 19(5/6) the
45. On Actor-Network Theory_ A Few Clarifications (1996).txt to make them more transparent, but to recognize and relish their thick, rich, layered and complex matter. Instead of being mere intermediaries, they had become mediators. From a means, meaning has been made an end in itself. For twenty years the best minds have been busy exploring all the
46. Thou Shalt Not Take the Lord's Name in Vain (2001).txt it speaks of now, of us, of final achievements that are for now, not for later. Religious talk has the strange property of considering only mediators and not intermediaries acting as vehicles for accessing something that is absent. My formulation seems odd at first, because we are accustomed to considering
47. What is Iconoclasm_ (2002).txt Nature, to Truth, to Science could be." To which other voices (or sometimes the same) answer: "Alas (or fortunately), we cannot do without images, intermediaries, mediators of all shapes and forms, because this is the only way to access God, Nature, Truth and Science." It is this quandary that we

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To take two of the very few technical terms I will need in this introductory book, it makes a huge difference whether the means to produce the social are taken as intermediaries or as [mediators](#). At the beginning, the bifurcation seems small, but it will later on lead us into different territories. To be sure, this nuance will be fully visible only at the close of this book—if the reader is patient enough to reach it! Yet we should try to get familiar with it as early as possible as it will be our shibboleth throughout.

First Source of Uncertainty 39

An intermediary, in my vocabulary, is what transports meaning or force without transformation: defining its inputs is enough to define its outputs. For all practical purposes, an intermediary can be taken not only as a black box, but also as a black box counting for one, even if it is internally made of many parts. Mediators, on the other hand, cannot be counted as just one; they might count for one, for nothing, for several, or for infinity. Their input is never a good predictor of their output; their specificity has to be taken into account every time.³⁰ Mediators transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry. No matter how complicated an intermediary is, it may, for all practical purposes, count for just one— or even for nothing at all because it can be easily forgotten. No matter how apparently simple a mediator may look, it may become complex; it may lead in multiple directions which will modify all the contradictory accounts attributed to its role. A properly functioning computer could be taken as a good case of a complicated intermediary while a banal conversation may become a terribly complex chain of mediators where passions, opinions, and attitudes bifurcate

at every turn. But if it breaks down, a computer may turn into a horrendously complex mediator while a highly sophisticated panel during an academic conference may become a perfectly predictable and uneventful intermediary in rubber stamping a decision made elsewhere.³¹ As we will slowly discover, it is this constant uncertainty over the intimate nature of entities—are they behaving as intermediaries or as mediators?—that is the source of all the other uncertainties we have decided to follow.

the sociologists of the social believe in one type of social aggregates, few mediators, and many intermediaries; for ANT, there is no preferable type of social aggregates, there exist endless number of mediators, and when those are transformed into faithful intermediaries it is not the rule, but a rare exception that has to be accounted for by some extra work— usually by the mobilization of even more mediators!

But this is not the case when the two terms are taken as mediators. For intermediaries, there is no mystery since inputs predict outputs fairly well: nothing will be present in the effect that has not been in the cause. But there is always a problem with this apparently scientific way of speaking. If it were really the case that input predicts output, then it would be better to disregard the effects and be attentive to the causes where everything interesting has already happened—at least potentially.

The third type of occasion is that offered by accidents, breakdowns, and strikes: all of a sudden, completely silent intermediaries become fullblown mediators; even objects, which a minute before appeared fully automatic, autonomous, and devoid of human agents, are now made of crowds of frantically moving humans with heavy equipment. Those who watched the Columbia shuttle instantly transformed from the most complicated human instrument ever assembled to a rain of debris falling over Texas will realize how quickly objects flip-flop their mode of existence. Fortunately for ANT, the recent proliferation of ‘risky’ objects has multiplied the occasions to hear, see, and feel what objects may be doing when they break other actors down.⁹⁸ Official enquiries are happening everywhere to map out for us the fabulous extension of what social ties have become in the hands of technical setups.

If some ‘social factor’ is transported through intermediaries, then everything important is in the factor, not in the intermediaries. For all practical purposes, it can be substituted by them without any loss of the nuances. If society explains religion, then society is enough. If society explains law, then society is enough. If society explains science, then . . .

Is it not counterproductive in the end to abandon the convenient shorthand of social explanations, to split hairs indefinitely about what is or is not a group, to trick intermediaries into behaving as mediators, to register the queerest idiosyncrasies of the humblest actors, to set up long lists of objects participating in action, and to drop the background made of solid matters of fact for the foreground of shifty matters of concern? How ridiculous is it to claim that inquirers should ‘follow the actors themselves’, when the actors to be followed swarm in all directions like a bee’s nest disturbed by a wayward child? Which actor should be chosen? Which one should be followed and for how long? And if each actor is made of

another bee's nest swarming in all directions and it goes on indefinitely, then when the hell are we supposed to stop? If there is something especially stupid, it is a method that prides itself in being so meticulous, so radical, so all encompassing, and so object-oriented as to be totally impractical. This is not a sociology any more but a slowciology! Zen masters can puzzle over the many conundrums of their austere discipline, but not the writer of a sociology treatise. Either she proposes a project that is affordable and manageable or we sue her for disinformation.

As soon as actors are treated not as intermediaries but as mediators, they render the movement of the social visible to the reader. Thus, through many textual inventions, the social may become again a circulating entity that is no longer composed of the stale assemblage of what passed earlier as being part of society.¹⁸¹ A text,

¹⁸¹ This is referred to as 'objects of value'. See usage in Greimas's study of Maupassant, Algirdas Julien Greimas (1988), *Maupassant: The Semiotics of Text. Practical Exercises. Fifth Source of Uncertainty* 129

in our definition of social science, is thus a test on how many actors the writer is able to treat as mediators and how far he or she is able to achieve the social.

Thus, the network does not designate a thing out there that would have roughly the shape of interconnected points, much like a telephone, a freeway, or a sewage 'network'. It is nothing more than an indicator of the quality of a text about the topics at hand.¹⁸² It qualifies its objectivity, that is, the ability of each actor to make other actors do unexpected things. A good text elicits networks of actors when it allows the writer to trace a set of relations defined as so many translations.

In order to trace an actor-network, what we have to do is to add to the many traces left by the social fluid through which the traces are rendered again present, provided something happens in it. In an actornetwork account the relative proportion of mediators to intermediaries is increased. I will call such a description a risky account, meaning that it can easily fail—it does fail most of the time—since it can put aside neither the complete artificiality of the enterprise nor its claim to accuracy and truthfulness.

A good text is never an unmediated portrait of what it describes—nor for that matter is a portrait.¹⁹³ It is always part of an artificial experiment to replicate and emphasize the traces generated by trials in which actors become mediators or mediators are turned into faithful intermediaries. There is nothing less natural than to go into fieldwork and remain a fly on the wall, pass out questionnaires, draw maps, dig up archives, record interviews, play the role of a participant-observer, compile statistics, and 'Google' one's way around the Internet. De-scribing, inscribing, narrating, and writing final reports are as unnatural, complex, and painstaking as dissecting fruit flies or sending a telescope into space.

To deploy simply means that through the report concluding the enquiry the number of actors might be increased; the range of agencies making the actors act might be expanded; the number of objects active in stabilizing groups and agencies might be multiplied; and the controversies about matters of concern might be mapped. Only those who have never tried to write about mediators instead of intermediaries will say that this is an easy task, something akin to 'mere description'. For us, on the contrary, it requires exactly as much invention as a laboratory experiment for every new case at hand—and success is just as rare. If we succeed, which is not automatic and is not obtained simply by putting 'PhD' at the bottom of one's signature, a good account will perform the social in the precise sense that some of the participants

in the action—through the controversial agency of the author—will be assembled in such a way that they can be collected together.

This means that we have to follow the path indicated by the process of delegation or translation explained in Part I. As we have also learned in the preceding pages, this deployment might take the shape of a network on the condition that every transport be paid in transformations, that is, if we make sure to pave the whole way from one site to the next not with intermediaries but with full-blown [mediators](#). If we do this, we will render visible the long chains of actors linking sites to one another without missing a single step. It might be empirically hard but we should not expect major theoretical hurdles.

Especially important are the different pressures exerted by [mediators](#) and intermediaries, the later adding, as we know, predictability to the setting, while the former might suddenly make it bifurcate in unexpected ways. At every point during the lecture, something could break, be it the microphone, the speaker, perhaps even the teacher. If any of the intermediaries mutates into a [mediator](#), then the whole set up, no matter how solemn or controlled, may become unpredictable.

because the only possible activity that context could bring was that of a cause in search of consequences, of a [mediator](#) looking for some passive intermediaries that would faithfully carry its forces. But this is no longer the case with ANT: the theory of action itself is different, since we are now interested in mediators making other mediators do things. 'Making do' is not the same thing as 'causing' or 'doing': there exists at the heart of it a duplication, a dislocation, a translation that modifies at once the whole argument. It was impossible before to connect an actor to what made it act, without being accused of 'dominating', 'limiting', or 'enslaving' it. This is no longer the case. The more attachments it has, the more it exists. And the more mediators there are the better.²⁹⁸

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On the contrary, they recognized their existence but emptied it of any relevance by turning full-blown [mediators](#) into mere intermediaries. An intermediary - although recognized as necessary - simply transports, transfers, transmits energy from one of the poles of the Constitution. It is void in itself and can only be

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less faithful or more or less opaque. A mediator, however, is an original event and creates what it translates as well as the entities between which it plays the mediating role. If we simply restore this mediating role to all the agents, exactly the same world composed of exactly the same entities cease being modern and becomes what it has never ceased to be - that is, nonmodern. How did the modern manage to specify and cancel out the work of mediation both at once? By conceiving every hybrid as a mixture of two pure forms. The modern explanations consisted in splitting the mixtures apart in order to extract from them what came from the subject (or the social) and what came from the object. Next they multiplied the intermediaries in order to

reconstruct the unity they had broken and wanted none the less to retrieve through blends of pure forms. So these operations of analysis and synthesis always had three aspects: a preliminary purification, a divided separation, and a progressive reblending. The critical explanation always began from the poles and headed toward the middle, which was first the separation point and then the conjunction point for opposing resources - the place of phenomena in Kant's great narrative. In this way the middle was simultaneously maintained and abolished, recognized and denied, specified and silenced. This is why I can say without contradicting myself that no one has ever been modern, and that we have to stop being so. The necessity of multiplying intermediaries to reconstruct the lost unity has always been recognized - thus no one except the postmods really believes in the two extreme poles of Nature and Society radically distinct from free-floating and disconnected networks - but as long as those intermediaries were seen as mixtures made of pure forms, the belief in the existence of a modern world was inescapable. The whole difference hinges on the apparently small nuance between [mediators](#) and intermediaries (Hen-nion, 1991).

If we seek to deploy the Middle Kingdom for itself, we are obliged to invert the general form of the explanations. The point of separation -and conjunction - becomes the point of departure. The explanations no longer proceed from pure forms toward phenomena, but from the centre toward the extremes.

We shall no longer explain the innovation of the air pump by reaching alternately into the two urns of Nature and Society. On the contrary, we will refill these urns, or at least profoundly modify their contents. Nature will emerge altered from Boyle's laboratory, and so will English society; but Boyle and Hobbes will also change in the same degree. Such metamorphoses are incomprehensible if only two beings, Nature and Society, have existed from time immemorial, or if the first remains eternal while the second alone is stirred up by history. These metamorphoses become explicable, on the contrary, if we redistribute essence to all the entities that make up this history. But then they stop being simple, more or less faithful, intermediaries. They become [mediators](#) - that is, actors endowed with the capacity to translate what they transport, to redefine it, redeploy it, and also to betray it. The serfs have become free citizens once more.

By offering to all the mediators the being that was previously captive in Nature and in Society, the passage of time becomes more comprehensible again. In the world of the Copernican Revolution, in which everything had to be contained between the poles of Nature and Society, history did not really count. Nature was merely discovered, or Society was deployed, or one was applied to the other. Phenomena were nothing but the encounter of already-present elements. There was indeed a contingent history, but for humans alone, detached from the necessity of natural things

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The task was no longer to make them more transparent, but to recognize and relish their thick, rich, layered and complex matter. Instead of being mere intermediaries, they had become [mediators](#). From a means, meaning has been made an end in itself. For twenty years the best minds have been busy exploring all the consequences of this major turn away from the naïve model of communication. Their often structuralist interpretations have been dismantled, but what remains is a toolbox to study meaning productions. ANT sorts out from this toolbox what is useful to understand the construction of entities. The key point is that every entity, including the self, society, nature, every relation, every action, can be understood as a “choice” or a “selection”

of finer and finer embranchments going from abstract structure — actants — to concrete ones — actors. The generative path that is thus retraced gives an extraordinary liberty of analysis compared

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to the impoverished “social vocabulary” that was used earlier — and is now in fashion again. Of course the structural rendering of these choices — differences — and embranchments — dichotomies — are not kept by ANT, but essential traits of semiotics are kept. First, the granting of humanity to an individual actor, or the granting of collectivity, or the granting of anonymity, of a zoomorphic appearance, of amorphousness, of materiality, requires paying the same semiotic price. The effects will be different, the genres will be different, but not the work of attributing, imputing, distributing action, competences, performances and relations. Secondly, actors are not conceived as fixed entities but as flows, as circulating objects undergoing trials, and their stability, continuity, isotopy has to be obtained by other actions and other trials. Finally, what is kept from semiotics is the crucial practice to grant texts and discourses the ability to define also their context, their authors — in the text —, their readers — in fabula — and even their own demarcation and metalanguage. All the problems of the analyst are shifted to the “text itself” without ever being allowed to escape into the context (Greimas 1976). Down with interpretation! Down with the context! The slogans of the the 60s and 70s “everything is a text”, “there is only discourse”, “narratives exist by themselves”, “we have no access to anything but accounts” are kept in ANT but saved from their ontological consequences. This salvation, however, does not come by falling back on the pre-deconstruction common sense — “after all, there is a social context up there and a nature out there” — but by extending the semiotic turn to this famous nature and this famous context it has bracketed out in the first place.

What is Iconoclash_ (2002).txt

Why? Because we are digging for the origin of an absolute - not a relative - distinction between truth and falsity, between a pure world, absolutely emptied of human-made intermediaries and a disgusting world composed of impure but fascinating human-made mediators. “If only, some say, we could do without any images. How so much better, purer, faster our access to God, to Nature, to Truth, to Science could be.” To which other voices (or sometimes the same) answer: “Alas (or fortunately), we cannot do without images, intermediaries, mediators of all shapes and forms, because this is the only way to access God, Nature, Truth and Science.” It is this quandary that we want to document, to fathom and, maybe, to overcome. In the strong summary that Marie-José Mondzain proposed of the Byzantine quarrel over images, “La vérité est image mais il n’y a pas d’image de la vérité.” (Truth is image, but there is no image of truth.)³