Abstract

The politics of critique. Bruno Latour and the scholar as a political actor. Fredrik Portin, Postdoctoral scholar, Department of Religion, University of Gothenburg, Sweden and Department of Theology, Åbo Akademi University, Finland, fredrik.portin@abo.fi

In the article I argue, through the sociologist and philosopher Bruno Latour's works, that critique is a political endeavour. The first part of the paper analyses Latour's description of politics as re-presentation and thereafter I argue that the necessity for re-presentative politics makes critique an essential part of politics. In the second part, an analysis of Latour's argument that the scholar is a political actor is carried out. The conclusion is, that to the extent that the scholar expresses critique, he or she will be engaged in politics. Finally, I analyse what, according to Latour, constitutes good and bad critique from a political perspective.

Keywords: Bruno Latour, scholar as critic, politics, re-presentation, matter of fact versus matter of concern

The Politics of Critique

Bruno Latour and the Scholar as a Political Actor

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In this article I will argue that critique is a political activity and that the critic therefore should be understood as a political actor. The argument will be based on the political philosophical thinking of the anthropologist and sociologist Bruno Latour.

Latour is professor at the Paris Institute of Political Studies and is one of the world's most discussed and referenced contemporary figures within the humanities and social sciences. As one of the founders of Actor-Network-Theory he is mainly known for his methodological-theoretical work. But besides his research into scientific inquiry, he has discussed a wide range of topics, including economics, law and religion. One area of his thinking that has not been given any greater attention is his political philosophical thinking.[1] This is unfortunate, as his political philosophy is able to clarify certain aspects of his work in other areas of research. Specifically, I argue that his academic endeavours are political in nature, as it can be summarized as an attempt to give public legitimacy to those social actors that are marginalized by other social actors. This endeavour can be seen throughout Latour's works. It is also consistent with his political philosophical thinking. For that reason, in his engagement with critical studies, it is possible to discern an effort to challenge those forms of critique that marginalize the concerns of different social actors. Specifically, he challenges the forms of critique that does not conform to, what he describes as, re-presentative politics.

The challenge with presenting the political philosophical thinking of Latour is that he does not make it clear how his thinking can be combined into a coherent political philosophy. The reader is therefore faced with a tedious task of combining different aspects of his thinking to such a coherent theory, and when one feels one has succeeded, the rug is pulled when

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one realize that there is another line of thought that challenges the presumably attained coherence. This makes Latour's political philosophy somewhat elusive as he adds complexity to complexity never allowing the reader to think that an issue can easily be understood let alone resolved.

It should therefore be clear that it is impossible to give a complete description of Latour's political philosophical thinking. I will, however, in the following reconstruct his thinking in a way that makes it relevant for understanding critique as a political activity. Specifically, his thinking on critique will be related to the endeavours of the academic scholar.[2] The first part investigates how Latour defines politics, the second part how this definition relates to critique, and the last part discusses how the critical responsibilities of the scholar should be understood according to Latour.

Re-presentative Politics

When politics is discussed it is often conceptually reduced to an activity within a political system. Political scientists, for instance, tend to make such a reduction for the purpose of limiting the field of research in order to make the study of politics manageable.[3] The media, too, presents politics in a similar fashion, which has contributed to making this understanding of politics dominant in the public consciousness.[4] The problem with such an understanding is, however, that politics becomes reduced to an activity among those who have obtained a position of leadership within the political system. Politics becomes synonymous with the undertakings of mainly professional politicians, which creates a sharp distinction between those who are within the political system and those who are subject to their politics.[5]

Latour opposes a limited understanding of the political and emphasizes that one

> can be a member of Parliament and not talk in a political way. Conversely, one can be at home with one's family, in an office, at work, and start talking *politically* about some issue or other even if none of one's words have any apparent link with the political sphere.[6]

The decisive factor is thus not the arena where politics occurs, but the *manner* in which one can be said to be engaged in politics.

Although politics according to Latour should not be reduced to any specific arena, it is limited in the sense that it is distinguishable from other practices. As such, politics should not be confused with, for example, science, economics or religion, because each one of these "modes of existence" have different criteria for determining what is true and false.[7] They

have, as Latour writes, different "felicity conditions."[8] Therefore, Latour wants to establish the basic criteria for judging what is true and false in politics.

The task is problematic as politics generally, in the Western world, is judged based on criteria which Latour argues are foreign to the essence of politics. He argues that politics is often understood through "double-click" thinking.[9] Double-click thinking is based on a notion that knowledge can be communicated without any loss of information.[10] From a double-click perspective, to be truthful in politics is therefore understood as an endeavour to realize a political positions within the political system by, among other things, challenging alternative political positions. It is therefore natural, Latour argues, to be infuriated when politicians do not, for example, keep their campaign promises, as people assume that the information previously conveyed during the campaign will be transported into the political system undistorted, meaning that the politician is expected to be true to the political ideals that got him or her elected to office.[11]

Although the endeavour to publicly realize one's own vision of the good should not necessarily be condemned, Latour argues that such an endeavour does not conform to the felicity conditions of politics. In contrast to a double-click perspective, he argues that political truth is not acquired by struggling to realize one's own political wills and desires. Political truth is rather acquired in actively striving towards the truth from a pluralism of concerns. The essence of politics will therefore be "re-presentation". Here he does not use the word representation in the usual sense, where politicians are understood as representatives when they are elected to serve within a political system. He argues that a politician is the one who is willing to publicly present the concerns of the public – a re-*presentative*. The main service such a politician offers is not in realizing any particular political position within a political system. Rather, someone aiming for politics needs to be willing to listen and take in the diversity of concerns in society and present them publicly. Thus, a politician becomes the public figure whose responsibility it is to present the plurality of concerns well.[12]

Latour furthermore emphasizes that politics does not end after the public has been presented, because as soon as a presentation has finished the process has to be repeated. The politician needs to return to the general public that is constantly shifting and again be willing to listen and take in the diversity of concerns in society and present them publicly. Politics isn't therefore only presentation. It is *re*-presentation. Latour writes:

> The truthful [politician] is not the one who is right while others are wrong, who is obeyed more than others, who sees further than others; it is the one who decides to tell the truth because, without fearing the cost, s/he travels the entire route again from the multitude to the unit and back, checking twice, both ways, that there is no *direct* relation between the multitude and its unity.[13]

Insofar as a politician can be perceived as engaged in true politics, he or she will not move along a straight rational line. Instead, the politician moves along a "curved" path – never able to settle along any given road towards a known goal, only able to again and again present the ever-changing multitude of matters of concern in a society.[14] Politics is consequently understood as a practice that orientates between many different rationalities and not just a practice of faithfully representing a single rationality: "we should be able to free political talk from the domination – the dictatorship – of straight double-click information."[15] Politics thus works, in the sense that it assumes its own basic criteria for acquiring truth, when it is allowed to transpire instead of being terminated by forcing the plurality into a given rationality.

The Necessity of Critique

Consequently, politics can take a true or untrue form, according to Latour. A true form of politics is one that allows and increases political re-presentation, while the untrue form of politics interrupts political re-presentation.[16] For this reason, it is important to emphasize that political re-presentation is consistent with an idea of critique. If the purpose of politics is to increase re-presentation, then those structures that restrict or prevent re-presentation needs to be challenged – they need to be critiqued.

I would argue that one of Latour's basic academic purposes is to challenge the untrue politics that society encounters due to modernity.[17] Particularly in the influential book *We have never been modern* (1991) Latour challenges what he describes as modern rationality, which limits what can be considered a public affair. Based on modern rationality the future needs to be modern, in the sense that it renounces any pre-modern aspects of life that cannot offer any long-term stability. Pre-modern rationality, e.g. religious rationality, must consequently be challenged to prevent it from hindering future modernization and human progress.[18]

Latour wants to challenge this notion of the modern, as it creates a sharp boundary between those who are "modern" and those who are perceived as "pre-modern." This creates a power dynamic in public life where only those who are considered to be modern can have any public

legitimacy, while pre-moderns must restrict their perceived out-dated rationality and practices to a private sphere of existence or, preferably, fully embraces a modern rational attitude. The term "modern" thus creates a situation where a large group of people will not be re-presented in public life. For that reason, Latour wants to challenge "the moderns," because as long as anyone can be modern, then no (re-presentative) politics is possible.[19]

In this sense it becomes obvious that for the plurality to be re-presented – that is, for politics to take place – structures and rationalities that restrict, or even prevent political re-presentation need, to be challenged. Because, according to Latour, such structural and rational obstacles exist, critique needs to be a necessary and fundamental aspect of politics – at least if it is to have any kind of success.

The Scholar as an Ambassador for Peace

In the book *War of the Worlds* (2002) Latour describes politics as a willingness to go to war. He is not arguing that politics is synonymous with violence, or even, as the political theorist Carl Schmitt claimed, that war needs to be a possible outcome of politics.[20] He instead asserts that *conflict* is an essential part of politics.[21] He further argues that modern enlightenment rationality imagined that conflicts in public life could be avoided by creating rational structures that prevent conflicts from starting. Thus, if societies became modern, peace would be possible. But as Latour emphasizes, this would only be a superficial peace, as it avoids dealing with conflicts that are inevitable in any multicultural society and that are capable of tearing apart the stability that the moderns perceive can be attained. He therefore urges the moderns to again "go to war" so that conflicts that demand their attention can be confronted.[22] Latour writes: "In contrast to the history that sought to modernize, the West has to admit to the existence of war in order to make peace: to accept that it has had enemies, to take seriously the diversity of worlds [and] to refuse to accept mere tolerance."[23]

An interesting question that arises from this line of thinking is what role can the scholar play in this war. As Latour asks: "Should we be at war, too, we, the scholars, the intellectuals?"[24] Have scholars a responsibility not only to describe the world, but also through their research actively try to change it, to challenge structures of domination that prevent re-presentative politics? Consequently, if critique is a political activity, should scholars then be critical?

Some scholars might answer no. Latour explains that the enlightenment created a distinction between "matters of fact" and "matters of

concern". On the one hand, from a modern perspective a matter of fact is natural, in the sense that man cannot by will or desires affect what constitutes a fact. On the other hand, a matter of concern is social or cultural, in the sense that nature or non-human objects cannot dictate what constitutes a human concern.[25] This division has given rise to two public institutions that preserve the boundaries between the two – the laboratory and the political system. Especially the university, which upheld laboratories, became an arena for matters of fact, while politics subsequently dealt with matters of concern.[26]

Latour explains that, from a modern perspective, matters of concern should not be confused with matters of fact. What constitutes a political matter should not be allowed to influence scientific research, as the scholar is looking for facts that exist independently from human will and desire. If these different matters were confused, the scholar's quest for facts would, according to modern logic, be affected by e.g. ideological, religious or moral demands. Objectivity would thereby be compromised. For this reason, politics should never be confused with science and the scholar should avoid confusing his or her scientific role with his or her political inclinations. Scholarly critique should accordingly be questioned, for what mandate does one, *as a scientist,* have to criticize any politics?

It can be argued that Latour to some extent supports such a view, as he himself makes conceptual distinctions between politics and science. However, it is apparent that science and politics in his thinking cannot be separated in the figure of the scholar, as both science and politics represent aspects of academic research. This is true for all forms of science, but I will discuss how politics is present in social sciences, according to Latour.[27]

Latour argues that as soon as human interactions are observed in the social sciences scientific ideals tend to become secondary to the political desires of the scholar. In the first half of the book *Reassembling the social* (2005) he claims that much of social science research can be characterized by an underlying politics. This political inclination becomes apparent when social scientists apply an overarching theory of the social that explains why and how people form stable networks. In this way people are understood to arrange their relations on the basis on e.g. power or economic incentives. But when a comprehensive theory is allowed to serve as an explanation for the relationships described, it will always, according to Latour, have a privileged position in relation to the social actors that the social scientist is attempting to describe. People's ability to act freely is therefore marginalized as their activities are interpreted in accordance with a specific theory of the social.[28]

It is at this stage that Latour presents Actor-Network Theory (ANT), a theory that has had a great impact within social sciences. ANT can be described as an attempt to describe instances of human and non-human interaction without the observer – the social scientist – adding anything to the description that is not empirically verifiable. To the extent an explanation is given for why these associations between the different actors happen, it is not based on any comprehensive theory of the social. Instead, the actors are themselves allowed to contribute to such theories, while the social scientist avoids forcing his or her own theories on their reality. Methodically, ANT can therefore be understood as a practice of observing these occurrences of associations as unique events – the result of something that happens at a specific time and place that for the moment forms a social context. The actors themselves are, from an ANT-perspective, understood as the best interpreters of their own actions.[29]

Latour seems to support the notion that social scientists should only deal with factual issues and thus avoid dealing with politics. However, this impression start to unravel in the second half of the book. According to my reading of *Reassembling the social,* Latour does not merely provide an argument for science in the book, but also for politics within an academic context. The book begins with Latour's attempt to rehabilitate social sciences by highlighting the underlying politics, which he argues forms a basis for much of the social sciences, and then shows how politics can be avoided with an ANT-perspective. However, after the methodological thinking of the social scientist has been rehabilitated, the argument in the book is turned around as Latour reintroduces politics in the work of the social scientist. He starts arguing, among other things, that the social scientist can help the observed social actors to understand their own activity by gathering them into a common context. The social scientist can *present* the social actors and their matters of concern publicly because the social scientists have been willing to listen and take in their diversity. Since the social scientists are able to re-present the public in this fashion, they accordingly can and should be considered as valuable political actors in society.[30]

Latour thus contends that the scientific role of the social scientist should not be separated from his or her political role. This idea is further emphasized in the book *An inquiry into modes of existence* (2013) in which he argues that the first goal of the social scientist should be to develop an ANT-perspective, as it encourages the social scientist to follow the social actors instead of just forcing them into a given context. But when society consequently has been opened – when all the social actors have been laid bare[31] – the political work should commence.[32] In the book he devises a fictional anthropologist as a literary technique and it is interesting that he uses political vocabulary to describe the societal role this character. For this anthropologist to be able to give relevant descriptions of the moderns,

Latour writes that she needs to develop a "diplomatic" attitude in public life.[33]

This is an attitude that is emphasised because a diplomat is, according to Latour, someone who does not straightaway reject someone as irrational or pre-modern. Instead, a diplomat follows the actors and is concerned with presenting their matters of concern well. He or she has the responsibility of making all the different actors' concerns public, for the purpose of allowing a large and diverse group of social actors to take eachother's concerns seriously. Latour writes:

> Diplomats know that there exists no superior referee, no arbiter able to declare that the other party is simply irrational and should be disciplined. If a solution is to be found, it is there, among them, with them here and now and nowhere else. Whereas [modern] rationalists would not know how to assemble peace talks, as they will not give seats to those they call "archaic" and "irrational," diplomats might know how to organize a parley among declared enemies who [...] may become allies after the peace negotiations have ended.[34]

The diplomat is accordingly an ambassador for peace in a time of war – he or she is always looking for ways to bring plurality together into unity.

Good critique, bad critique

Summarizing Latour's reasoning, the scholar should be understood as a political actor. By further emphasizing that the academic scholar should cultivate a diplomatic attitude, Latour is able to clarify what constitutes good political agency. From Latour's perspective it is accordingly from this idea of good political agency that critique within academia can be assessed.

From a political perspective, not all critique is good critique. Specifically, Latour wants to challenge such scholarly critique that argue from a fact-oriented approach. That is, where the critic criticizes X as it is inconsistent with Y, which is understood as a fact. The problem with a critique that is concerned with matters of facts is that it is not applicable within a political context. As argued, double-click thinking is not condusive to politics. The critic therefore bypasses the process of re-presentation by giving a factual claim a privileged position. Although it might be possible to argue that certain factual claims are true from a scientific perspective – for example that the climate is changing or that neoliberal economic policies induces a maldistribution of wealth – the critic will consequently interrupt the process of re-presenting a plurality of matters of concern by making all these concerns conform to his or her factual claims. Latour

argues that it is even worse if the critic trivializes other social actors' matters of concern by judging them as either "fact-objects" – they are true because they are verifiable – or "fairy-objects" – they are not verifiable and therefore untrue fantasies. Latour writes: "To state it bluntly, the critical thinker will put everything he does not believe in on the list of fairy-objects [...] and he will put everything in which he firmly believes on the list of [fact]-objects."[35]

This "critical barbarity," as Latour calls it, is undiplomatic and also non-political in nature. One could possibly argue that this form of critique is *too* scientific, in that it functions according to the belief that politics is or should be based on factual reasoning. Critique in this sense is iconoclastic in that it destroys the objects others have carefully maintained, while also emphasising one's own objects as more important because they are factually "true."[36] Latour writes: "What [the critics] do to our favourite objects is so horrific that certainly we don't want them to come any nearer."[37]

Critique can according to Latour serve an important purpose, as no re-presentation is possible as long as public life is based on a given rationality – a rationality that has acquired a factual status. Critique can challenge such rationality, but the purpose of critique is not merely iconoclastic. Its higher purpose is to make politics possible again. A critic is therefore not interested in spreading facts, but relishes when the plurality of matters of concern that a society holds can become a public affair.[38]

Conclusion

Latour's call for politics offers an interesting challenge to scholars. He urges them not only to be comfortable with a fact-oriented role, but also stresses that they many times have a responsibility to be political actors and therefore also to be engaged in critique. This is a perspective on academic activity that I think has great relevance when confronting views that challenge evidence-based standards for truth. In a "post-truth" political climate many scholars have started to defend scientific knowledge in the public sphere.[39] Therefore, it was understandable that thousands of scholars, on April 22, 2017, "marched for science", with the purpose of defending science and criticising a fact-resistant political environment.

Discussions on scientific knowledge are undoubtedly important and scholars should publicly emphasise the importance of scientific knowledge. However, according to Latour's thinking, it is also important to stress that a renewed commitment from scholars to society cannot be unilateral. From a political perspective a matter of fact can only be assessed from a plurality of matters of concern[40] and the belief that it is

possible in a political context to give scientific knowledge a privileged rational position is to misunderstand the contemporary public arena where scientific knowledge needs to be defended. Scholars have to be able to critique those voices and trends that marginalize their academic endeavours, but it becomes apparent that it is only by being willing to listen and take in the diversity of concerns in society that scholars can confront society well. And if they are not willing to engage with society according to political criteria, then social actors will continue to formulate their own truths independently from the knowledge that the scholars have to offer.

In conclusion, the scholar should not be confined to merely a fact-oriented role, according to Latour, but must also be considered a political actor. This becomes all the more relevant when understanding critique as an academic endeavour. As I have argued, critique constitutes an important aspect of political action according to Latour. However, it is clear that to the extent that critique can be considered political, it needs to conform to the felicity conditions of politics. Accordingly, the overall aim of critique should be to enable re-presentative politics.

Critique is therefore an activity that comes with great responsibility. The critic has the tools to destroy everything that he or she does not "believe in." But Latour urges the critic not to use these tools for destructive purposes. When the critic approaches a valuable object – that is, someone's matter of concern – the critic should rather nurture it so that it can be presented publicly. This is a moral responsibility, and as such, the critic cannot act however he or she wants. Not even in the defence of what he or she perceives as a matter of fact.

Notes

1. A notable exception is Graham Harman's book *Bruno Latour. Reassembling the political* (London, 2014).

2. In this article I will with "scholar" refer to such professional academic actors who systematically conduct research within a university. Consequently e.g. natural scientist, social scientists, humanists are counted as scholars. Although the emphasis in this article will be on those scholars who work in universities, I do not rule out the fact that there also are active scholars outside of the university.

3. Above all, the political scientist David Easton has been influential in describing politics as a "system." According to him politics is the activity that creates and implements such decisions that are based on social needs in a community. This process differs from other processes – e.g. economic – and can therefore according to Easton be studied. This understanding has furthermore, according to him, the great advantage that it simplifies academic work on the political as it clearly limits the object for political scientific research. See David Easton: *The political system. An inquiry into the state of political science* (New York, 1953), 129. See also David Easton: "An approach to the analysis of political systems" in *World politics* no. 3 (1957). For a detailed description

of politics understood as a political system, see Guy B Peters: "Politics is about governing" in Leftwich (Ed.): *What is politics? The activity and its study* (Cambridge, 2004). For a detailed argument from Easton on why political scientists should study political systems, see David Easton: *The analysis of political structure* (London, 1990), 3–16.

4. Adrian Leftwich: *Redefining politics. People, resources and power* (London, 1983), 5.

5. Ibid., 11; Adrian Leftwich: "Thinking politically. On the politics of politics" in Leftwich (Ed.): *What is politics? The activity and its study* (Cambridge, 2004), 5–6, 13–14. See also Andrew Heywood: *Politics* (New York, 2002), 5–6.

6. Bruno Latour: "What if we talked politics a little?" in *Contemporary political theory* no. 2 (2003), 145. It is worth noting that according to Latour a "politician" doesn't only describe professional civil servants who have been elected to serve within a political system. Instead everyone in larger and smaller contexts can be political and therefore a politician according to Latour's thinking. Therefore it is not a given that e.g. a president or a minister is political only because they are generally thought of as politicians.

7. See Bruno Latour: *An inquiry into modes of existence. An anthropology of the moderns* (London, 2013), 17–18.

8. Ibid., 18, 21; Latour: "What if we talked politics a little?", 145–146.

9. Double-click is a reference to opening files on a computer by double-clicking the mouse button. See Latour: *An inquiry into modes of existence*, 93.

10. See Ibid., 93–94.

11. Such an understanding of politics is one of the reasons, according to Latour, why populist movements are increasing in influence in the world, in that they argue that politicians do not represent the people and therefore need to be challenged by the people. See Latour: "What if we talked politics a little?", 147, 160–161.

12. See Ibid., 149–156.

13. Ibid., 153. See also Latour: *An inquiry into modes of existence*, 338.

14. Instead of a straight rational line, Latour thus argues that politics has a circular movement. In this political circle, the multitude of concerns is gathered around a political actor who presents their affairs publicly. The process is then continued when this politician returns to the multitude to re-engage with their matters of concern. Re-presentation thus takes the form of a circle – it has no beginning and no end and it constantly moves along a curved path. And as soon as someone interrupts this movement by setting rational criteria that are alien to politics, then the circle is broken. See Ibid., 338–342; Latour: "What if we talked politics a little?", 149–154.

15. Ibid., 146–147; Latour: *An inquiry into modes of existence*, 337, 344.

16. Ibid., 148.

17. See Fredrik Portin: *Hopp om en okänd framtid. Förutsättningar för en inklusiv offentlighet utifrån Bruno Latours och Alasdair MacIntyres tänkande* (Turku, 2016), especially chapters 2 & 3.

18. See Bruno Latour: *We have never been modern* (Cambridge, 1993).

19. See Ibid. See also Bruno Latour: *Reassembling the social. An introduction to actor-network-theory* (Oxford, 2005), 250.

20. Schmitt believed that the essence of politics consisted of the division between friend and enemy, which generally speaking entails that politics is able to identify to whom one's ultimate loyalty is directed and to whom no loyalty is required. He further argued that war therefore would always be a possible outcome of politics as conflicts between enemies can at any time escalate into violence. To deny the possibility of war

is thus an unpolitical stance according to his thinking. See Carl Schmitt: *The concept of the political* (London, 2007), 29–35.

21. In this regard, Latour's thinking is compatible with Schmitt's thinking as both argue that conflict constitutes an essential part of politics. However, they differ in that Latour does not perceive that the purpose of politics is to establish boundaries between friend and enemy. Instead, the aim of politics, according to his thinking, should rather be to dissolve boundaries between different actors in conflict. See Mark B Salter, William Walters & Bruno Latour: "Bruno Latour encounters international relations. An interview" in *Millennium. Journal of international studies* (2016), 6–7. See also Portin: *Hopp om en okänd framtid*, 184–192.

22. See Bruno Latour: *War of the worlds. What about peace?* (Chicago, 2002).

23. Ibid., 29.

24. Bruno Latour: "Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern" in *Critical inquiry* no. 30 (2004), 225.

25. See Latour: "What if we talked politics a little?", 231–237: Latour: *Reassembling the social*, 109–120.

26. Latour: *We have never been modern*, 10–11.

27. He makes the same argument for natural sciences. See Bruno Latour & Steve Woolgar: *Laboratory life. The construction of scientific facts* (Princeton, 1979); Bruno Latour: *The pasteurization of France* (London, 1988).

28. Latour makes a distinction between "explaining" and "describing" an empirical material. An ANT-researcher is satisfied with simply describing the networks he or she is observing, while the social scientist who cling to a general theory of the social want to explain what's happening. It is specifically this tendency to want to explain that Latour describes as political, a trend he argues can be challenged with ANT. See Latour: *Reassembling the social*, 136–138. See also Bruno Latour: "The politics of explanation. An alternative" in Steve Woolgar (Ed.): *Knowledge and reflexivity. New frontiers in the sociology of knowledge* (London, 1988).

29. Latour: *Reassembling the social*, 47–50, 61–62.

30. See Ibid., especially pages 258–262.

31. One of the more controversial aspects of Latour's thinking is his emphasis that not only humans should be considered as actors. Instead, he believes that even non-human actors should be taken into account if you want to be able to give an adequate description of an actor-network. This is one aspect of Latour's thinking that adds complexity to his understanding of politics, in that non-human actors according to this line of thinking also should be understood as having political agency. Due to climate change Latour argues that the climate expresses such an agency. See Bruno Latour: *Facing Gaia. Eight lectures on the new climate regime* (Cambridge, 2017).

32. Latour: *An inquiry into modes of existence*, 35–36.

33. See Ibid, 12, 46.

34. Latour: *War of the worlds*, 37.

35. Bruno Latour: *On the modern cult of the factish gods* (London, 2010), 14. See also Latour: "Why has critique run out of steam?", 240–241. In the quote I changed "cause-objects" to "fact-objects." This change was made to conceptually match the reasoning above. It is however clear that both concepts are interchangeable in Latour's thinking.

36. For a discussion on iconoclasm, see Latour: *On the modern cult of the factish gods*, 8–11. It is relevant to ask if the same criticism can be directed towards Latour. Isn't he also an iconoclast who destroys modern rationality – a rationality that others carefully have nurtured? Indeed, to some extent this is a correct analysis. But at the same time his purpose isn't to destroy all the objects that the moderns value. Instead, his aim is to "take them down" to the same level as all the other objects so that they can be compared and valued for their uniqueness. But according to his thinking that can never happen as long as the moderns can be "modern" – that is, as long as modern rationality has a dominant position in public life. Hence the need for critique, for it is only by "de-mythologizing" the moderns that all objects, modern and non-modern, can be compared and valued. See Latour: *An inquiry into modes of existence*, 143. See also Latour: *Reassembling the social*, 165–172. It is also worth noting that the purpose of the book *An inquiry into modes of existence* is to try to present the moderns again after they have been critiqued – he wants to re-present modern rationality. The argument of the book is that the moderns through an excessive emphasis on double-click communication lost the ability to understand themselves and all that they value. With anthropological methodology Latour thus highlights what constitutes the characteristics of modern rationality and is thereby able to present them again to the world. See Latour: *An Inquiry into modes of existence*, 12–13.

37. Latour: "Why Has critique run out of steam?", 240.

38. Ibid., 246.

39. See Matthew d'Ancona: *Post-truth. The new war on truth and how to fight back* (London, 2017).

40. Latour writes: "[We] concentrate our passionate interest on only those things that are for us worthwhile matters of concern" (Latour: "Why has critique run out of steam?", 241).