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Niels Albertsen and Bülent Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen, 'Artworks' Networks – Field, System or Mediators?',  
published by the Department of Sociology, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YL, UK  
at <http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/papers/Albertsen-Diken-Artworks-Networks.pdf>

#### **Publication Details**

This web page was last revised on 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2003; the paper was previously published at <http://comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/soc105bd.html>.

## **Artworks' Networks - Field, System or Mediators?**

### **Niels Albertsen and Bülent Diken**

#### **Abstract:**

Focusing on the connections between the artwork and its internal and external network, the article presents four different approaches to the sociology of art developed by Lyotard, Bourdieu, Luhmann, and Hennion and Latour. While Lyotard emphasises the transcendence of the artwork in relation to its network, for Bourdieu the work of art is part of a network and it is its "social genesis" that grounds the artwork as an artwork. In contrast to Bourdieu, Luhmann conceives of art as an autopoietic system and the artwork as a communicative artefact. Yet, in this, the materiality of the artwork disappears in communication, which is why Hennion and Latour's approach to the world of art as heterogeneous networks of human and non-human mediators is significant. "Thinking with" these different approaches, the article produces three main results. First, Bourdieu's and Luhmann's otherwise very different sociologies significantly parallel each other regarding arts and modernity. Second, the question of artwork radically unravels the difficult relationship between social theory and material objects, and in this respect, most contemporary social theories (e.g. Bourdieu's and Luhmann's) remain incessantly modernist. Third, a focus on sociology of art demonstrates that the conceptual vocabulary of social theory must be reconsidered. Further, the article demonstrates an attempt at discovering a "lucid illuso" and specifies the Spinozist moment in Bourdieu's social theory.



## Keywords

actor-network, autopoiesis, communication, fetish, illusio, mediators, necessitation, sociology of art, Welt

## Introduction: Artwork versus Network

There is no history of art, Lyotard claims, there is only a history of cultural objects. As a cultural object, the work of art can be inscribed into “a network of internal and external conditions” and can become an object for historical, sociological or political-economical inquiry. As a work of art, however, the work cannot be reduced to its network because it hides an “excess”, an “intensity” that surpasses the conditions of its production and reception. It bestows a persisting “promise about happiness” that “never stops *transiting intransitively*” through epochs or styles. The work, however, invites a “commentary” that “does justice to its intensity” and itself employs “an abundance of and in language”. There is indeed an analogy between the conditions of the artwork and commentary (Lyotard, 1992: 14-15).

As a work of art, then, the artwork is open for artful commentary; as a cultural object, it is an object for theory and research. Hence another clean-cut, modern division: commentary versus science, artwork versus network. This division reinforces the well-known polarisation between internal and external approaches to art. Bourdieu (1992), on the contrary, insists, alluding to Spinoza’s intellectual love of God, that the “necessitation” of the work of art, that is, positioning it in the structures and struggles that pertain to the field of art, intensifies the experience of art. The work is part of a network, and the same goes for the commentary as well. The separation of work and network leads to the misrecognition of this sociological truth.

Both Lyotard and Bourdieu give an account of “love of art”, but in radically different ways. Lyotard, following Kant, concentrates on the transcendence of the work; Bourdieu, following Spinoza, focuses on its historical immanence. Lyotard, of course, would never agree this. Its network cannot ground the work as work of art, which is also to say that Bourdieu’s attempt to reduce the intransitive transition of the work to historical necessity leads to the reduction of the work to a cultural object. Indeed, when Bourdieu (1992b, p. 110) claims that “everything is social”, this sociologism seems to affirm Lyotard’s suspicion, and one wonders how Bourdieu’s “science of the work of art” (Bourdieu 1992, 247) can transcend the internal-external divide. He theorises the work of art as a fetish emerging from the “magic” of (the belief-system of) the field of art, in which the work of art itself is a stake in the struggle for domination. The work of art thus tends to disappear into a “network”, and the commentary into “magic”.

While such sociologism can be accused of being violent toward arts (see Heywood, 1997), this is hardly the case with Luhmann’s (1995) “cool” sociology of art. Describing the system of art as an autopoietic system, Luhmann necessarily accepts the way the system itself observes itself, and can present a sociological theory of how works of art are produced as works of art rather than as fetishes. He can approach the work as a work of art from a sociological point of view because he is disinterested in symbolic violence and cultural domination. Luhmann can achieve this insight by defining the social as communication and the work of art as a communicative artefact. In this, however, the materiality of the work seems to disappear in communication, the “*sui generis*” of sociality. Yet, as Hennion and Latour (1993: 21) argue, the world of art is less a communicative system than a heterogeneous network of human and non-human mediators. Within such networks, fetishism is not a question of belief and magic but, rather, of mediators that always transcend mediators. The world of art is then neither a field nor a system but an actor-network, and the commentary its mediator.

In the following, we present some features of these different sociologies of art and we assess their strengths and the weaknesses with an emphasis on the polarisation between the internal and the external understandings of art as well as the materiality of the artwork. Doing this, we establish some hidden social theoretical convergences and mutual implications among these approaches. We start with Bourdieu’s.



## The Artwork as Fetish

According to Bourdieu (1992), Duchamp's readymades deliver sociology a privileged access to art. Duchamp's iconoclasm demonstrates the "collective belief" that grounds the "artistic order" (p. 261). To understand this, however, one has to consult Mauss' theory of magic, which, in order to explain the belief in the efficacy of magic, moves from the instruments, operations, representations and personal characteristics of the magician to the social universe in which magic is developed and practised (p. 400). One has to understand the "magical group" to understand magic; collective belief gives the magician his efficacy, which is misrecognised as being the magical powers of the magician (p. 240). The artistic creativity has similar roots. Signing a readymade, the artist gives it a market price, which is disproportional to the cost of the readymade, and this magical effect is due to the whole social universe that recognises and authorises him (p. 240). This social universe of believers, the field of art, includes everyone engaged in art as artist, art historian, politician, gallery-owner, teacher, parent, and so on (Bourdieu, 1980: 221; Bourdieu, 1992: 318f). The more people involved the greater the effect of belief and its misrecognition. Consequently, a cycle of consecration emerges. "The more complicated is the cycle of consecration, the more it is invisible, the more its structure is misrecognisable, the greater is the effect of belief" (Bourdieu, 1980: 206). In combination, then, Duchamp and Mauss demonstrate how the field of art as a universe of belief produces "the value of the work of art as fetish by producing the belief in the creative power of the artist" (Bourdieu, 1992: 318).

There is something tautological to this collective belief in art. Everyone believes in the value of art and the powers of the artist because everyone else does it. In the "social microcosm" (Bourdieu 1997: 119) of the field of art, the belief in the value of art reproduces itself: "The circle is closed" (Bourdieu, 1980: 221). Basically, therefore, belief is grounded in the field, which itself resembles a game. The field presupposes some rules of the game and the presence of interested players, both of which further presuppose a fundamental belief in the value of the game. This primordial belief is what Bourdieu calls "illusio": a "specific form of belief" that is more internal and much deeper than "explicit" forms of belief (Bourdieu, 1987: 122). Explicit belief is founded in the collective belief that springs from the field, but the field itself is founded in the tacit belief of the *illusio*. The explicit belief in art and in artistic creativity is "the visible expression of this tacit belief" (Bourdieu, 1992: 238). *Illusio* is the taken for granted condition of discussion, a "non-justifiable investment" that can only be "rationalised *post festum*" (Bourdieu, 1997: 122f). It resides both in the body and in the mind as the seriousness of playing, demanding that one's libido is invested in the game (Bourdieu, 1994: 151-3). The investment of libido reproduces the game, and playing the game reproduces further investment (Bourdieu, 1992: 319, 237).

There is no deeper grounding of the game or of its rules than such circular relations. *Illusio* is a "tacit adherence to *nomos*" (Bourdieu, 1997: 122), and *nomos* is the tautological constitution of the game (p. 116). In the case of art, "the purpose of art is art, art has no other goal than art" (Bourdieu, 1994: 159). However arbitrarily instituted (Bourdieu 1997: 116), tautologies are though decisive regarding distinctions between games. *Nomos* is the "grounding point of view [...] which defines the right of entrance to the field" (Bourdieu, 1994: 310). As a game, then, the field emanates from a self-referential, self-constituting and self-reproducing constitution supported by an *illusio*. In order to exist as a game, however, the field of art needs competent players endowed with the right sense of seeing things and actions as art (Bourdieu, 1992: 310). The sense of the game is obtained through social exercise and resides in the habitus, that is, in the embodied dispositions of the player to act according to cognitive, evaluative and practical structures of behaviour (Bourdieu 1994: 22f). Habitus and field are thus involved in an "ontological complicity" (p. 151). The game is, however, not pure play but a competitive game of struggle and power. "The *collusio* of the agents in *illusio* is the foundation of the competition that opposes them one another" (Bourdieu, 1992: 316). The competitive game is a polarised "field of force" (p. 323) consisting of opposed positions determined by reciprocal relations in a network of objective relations (p. 321) which is rooted in an unequal distribution of different forms of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic (Bourdieu, 1983: 183, 185, 191). The *nomos* of the field implies the "denegation of the economy" (Bourdieu 1994: 160); art is for art's sake and not for commercial success. But the economy is not absent. Hence the denegation produces a division of the field into two subfields. On the hand, there is



a restricted field of artistic production, in which art is produced for art's sake, cultural and symbolic capital are dominating, and the economy partly functions as a pre-capitalist gift economy. On the other hand, there is an extended field of production, in which external demand and commercial success play the upper hand. Here economic capital dominates cultural and symbolic capital. The larger the extended field the less autonomous is the field of art as a whole, and vice versa (Bourdieu, 1992: 211, 202, 302f).

### A Lucid Illusio

The field of art is created historically in the process of the differentiation of modern society,[1] by a multitude of institutional conditions that remove art from political and religious functions and reduce it to its function as art (Bourdieu, 1992: 402-404). In this process art-producers and art-consumers are socialised into approaching art as art. There is nothing less "natural" than this ability. The more purified the game of art becomes, the purer the works of art get. The work of art is autonomised because it is relative to the autonomising field of art. The "invention of the pure gaze is accomplished in the movements of the field itself towards autonomy" (p. 411). The struggle between orthodoxy and avant-garde in the restricted field leads to a successive purification of art as form, to the primacy of form over function and of the enunciation over the enunciated (p. 412). In a simultaneously internal and external struggle, the history of the field accomplishes a "veritable essential analysis" of art, which does not require any reference to "transcendent significations" (p. 411). The result is a certain irreversibility and "cumulativity" of the field. The more art is purified, the more the practical mastery of the tradition of the field is necessary for playing practically in the field, both as a producer and as a consumer (pp. 413, 335ff). Paradoxically, and due to the same purification, art also comes to deny its own history and dependency of the field. The more works of art are created on the basis of "purely formal" criteria, the more they disavow their social context. Concomitantly, artworks are increasingly produced for deciphering, interpretation and commentary. "The pure production produces and presupposes the pure reading, and readymades are so to speak nothing else than the limit for all those works which are produced for commentary and by commentary" (p. 421).

Such pure and internal readings of works of art take a scholastic view dependent on a situation (*skholè*), in which players, liberated from practical necessities, can play with meanings and significations, a situation typical of autonomised social fields. This produces a series of "scholastic fallacies" rooted in the misrecognition of the social conditions of *skholè*. Among such fallacies are the ontologisation of art as a "universal essence" and the disavowal of the institutionalised limits to the free play of signification and deciphering. The "historical transcendental" (Bourdieu, 1992: 397) of the field is transformed into a transhistorical essence, and specific viewpoints as well as the privileges related to participation in the field are legitimised by such universalisation (Bourdieu 1994: 221-234; 1992: 418-424). In other words, "universalisation [...] is the universal strategy of legitimisation" (Bourdieu, 1994: 241).

What, then, is the status of the work of art in Bourdieu's science of works? Works of art are fetish objects constituted through collective belief, and they are purified objects emerging from the power struggles of the field. They are objects of false universalisation and false transcendence. No wonder, then, that the scientific analysis of art is (mis)conceived by art lovers as "iconoclastic violence" (Bourdieu, 1992: 261) towards the arts. Bourdieu, however, also talks about art as "the sublimated essence of the universal" and as "the highest conquerings of the human enterprise" (p. 15). There is more to say about universalisation than legitimisation, and more to say about illusio than illusion. Bourdieu's stance towards this ambivalence is revealed in his reading of a text of Mallarmé's (pp. 380-384). First, Mallarmé demonstrates "the objective truth of literature as a fiction based on collective belief". Second, he defends the "salvation of literary enjoyment" against any objectification. And third, as an elitist, he wants to keep the secret about "the literary mechanism" of the illusio; only the chosen few should have this insight, since widespread knowledge of illusio as an illusion would threaten the existence of the game (p. 241). Mallarmé holds the view that the enjoyment of literature can only be saved from being an "illusion, if it is rooted in the *illusio*". Now, says Mallarmé, the sensuous enjoyment of literature has as its "motor" the idea of something beyond, and this beyond, we know, does not exist. Hence, enjoyment is driven by



something like a “fetishism by decision”. Only great men may know that, and they only can express it in “the mode of denegation” (pp. 382-83).

Mallarmé gives an “unsatisfactory answer” to a good question, concludes Bourdieu. What would be a satisfactory answer, then? Telling the truth about *illusio* while counting on that the fetishism by decision will keep the literary game going? This would be “faith” in the value of art rather than belief in the value of art (p. 384). But is this possible without a certain dose of *illusio*? Bourdieu seems to have an implicit idea of something like a lucid artworld, a play of the game of the arts, which is founded in a lucid *illusio*. We cannot get rid of *illusio*, because it is at the very root of sociality (Bourdieu, 1983b: 2-3). The obliteration of *illusio* means exclusion from sociality. Then, there is “an originary form of fetishism at the foundation of all action” (Bourdieu, 1982: 48).[2] This is the case even for science that founds itself on a “scientific *illusio*” (Bourdieu, 1992: 458). Sociology can illuminate its audience about the *illusio*; however, it cannot and should not destroy it, which would bring with it the dissolution of the fields and thus the disappearance of the social. Yet, sociology can bring about the possibility of a freedom in *illusio*, of an *illusio* without illusion. Sociology can give the actors positioned in the field the “freedom” based on an insight into the social conditions of the field, and hence the possibility of dominating the game and its *illusio* (Bourdieu, 1982: 3f). This includes the liberation from misrecognitions, “false transcendences”, executions of power, and legitimations founded in the *illusio* as well (Bourdieu 1982: 56). In other words, the tacit *illusio* may become a lucid *illusio*, something like a reflexive faith. “One can always enter the game without illusion, by a conscious and deliberate decision” (p. 54).

Universality is, as mentioned, not only a category of legitimisation. The field constitutes the universal through its rules of the game, through the “experience of restriction, or better, censorship, internal and external, that the field imposes” on its members (Bourdieu 1994: 235). There is a cumulative history of the field and this history creates the artworks with high levels of accomplishment (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 87). The sociological-political answer to fetishism and universalising legitimisation of the field is even more universalisation! The universal, i.e. reason, resides in the autonomised fields. Therefore, first of all, autonomy must be defended against current tendencies towards commercialisation (Bourdieu 1992: 467f), and secondly, the privileges as to participation in these fields must be broken. One has to fight for “the universalisation of the conditions of access to the universal” (Bourdieu, 1994: 233). All people should be given the possibility of training toward a lucid *illusio*, and this is, as a political and ethical program, the “Realpolitik of reason” (p. 235).

### **Necessitation and the Intellectual Love of Art**

The idea of a lucid *illusio* closely relates to the “*amor intellectualis rei*” (Bourdieu, 1992: 14), which Bourdieu evokes from Spinoza: an intellectual, not scholastic, love of art that is aware of the social conditions of the artwork. In future such intellectual love may become universalised, but it can also be attained here and now by necessitation, by demonstrating the network of the artwork. Necessitation means showing the necessity of the work of art as it is determined by the position of the work and its creator in the field. The singularity of the work stems from the singularity of this position (p. 14). By reconstructing this “point” in the network, one can “sense” the work of necessitation, a reconstruction, which takes place not through commentary or hermeneutic interpretation but through a distanced, scientific reproduction of the production of the work. “It is not sympathy that leads to real understanding, but real understanding that leads to sympathy, or, better, to the kind of intellectual love that [...] accompanies the discovery of necessity” (p. 418). Hence understanding by necessitation can include the very strange and antipathetic, whether it is an ordinary, profane human being or Heidegger (p. 416). Sensing the accomplishment of necessity is an “active submission to the singular necessity” of the work of art. “Active” because it is a reconstruction in the mode of science of necessitation, “submission” because of the necessity. Hence necessitation resembles the work itself which is produced through a similar submission. Necessitation contains “an assimilation of the object to the subject and an immersion of the subject in the object” which can turn our love of art into an intellectual love of art (p. 14).[3] If there is anything absolute about the work of art, then, it is its necessity. If, as Lyotard argues, the work “transits intransitively” through epochs, it is because of its necessitation. The sensibility



towards historical necessity replaces the sensibility towards an absolute transcendence (p. 429).

According to Bourdieu, the science of artworks must render *illusio* reasonable without involving itself in the *illusio* and without turning it into the illusion it seems to be for someone observing the field of art from outside (Bourdieu, 1994: 241; 1992: 320). How is this seemingly impossible task possible? By way of necessitation. Through the mode of science necessitation establishes a distance to the *illusio* of the field of art and renders *illusio* reasonable by creating the intellectual love of art. The field, then, is the key to the transcendence of the internal-external divide (Bourdieu, 1992: 288). The field provides the means of “taking a viewpoint on the whole of viewpoints” (p. 291). There is no distinction between the analysis of works of art as works of art and as works in social networks. Therefore Bourdieu reacts aggressively to this distinction:

It is always the same! I am always surprised that people decline recognising this truth: *Everything is social!* The style, the form, just as well as the rights of authors [...] Saying that everything is social is simply saying that there is no transcendence, and that writing, with all its specificities, remains a social phenomenon, which cannot be explained otherwise than by the social (Bourdieu, 1992b: 110).

The concept of the field enables an integration through re-grouping different scientific viewpoints on art. Bourdieu’s intention is to provide those viewpoints with the means to such a re-grouping (Bourdieu, 1992b: 109). One wonders, however, whether such re-grouping does not have consequences for a sociological conception of the social. If writing is a social phenomenon, what then is the social?

### Art and Communication

With Luhmann, the *sui generis* of sociality is communication.[4] The understanding of art as a differentiated social system implies that communication operates in the context of art. Such communication should not be merely “on art” but, rather, “through art” (Luhmann, 1995: 36). Only on this condition the work of art can be understood sociologically as art. Luhmann defines communication as the unity of the difference between information, communication (*Mitteilung*) and understanding.[5] Information is the theme or content of communication, *Mitteilung* is the communicative act of addressing others, and understanding is the perception by the other of communication as a “sign of information” (Luhmann, 1992: 24). If communication is not understood as a sign of information, there can only be “mutual sensation” (p. 38). If, on the other hand, the difference between *Mitteilung* and information is understood, communication can produce further communication from its own elements. Such “further movement” of communication is the autopoiesis of communication (p. 38). Communication can be both linguistic and non-linguistic “indirect” communication such as “standardised gestures” (Luhmann, 1995: 35f). Communication through works of art belongs to non-linguistic communication even when the form of art is linguistic (p. 45f).

How, then, can works of art communicate the unity of the difference between information, *Mitteilung* and understanding? The *Mitteilung* springs from the artificiality of the artwork. The work is created for others and the artefact addresses others, as artefact. The informational aspect emanates from the forms of the work, that is, from its “structure of distinction” (p. 70). The formation of works of art consists in the making of differences of form. Luhmann links the concept of form to the operation of “observation”, defined as making a distinction and an indication of one side, in distinction to the other side, of the distinction (see Brown, 1969). Observation is “the smallest unity of the event of art which cannot be undersold” (p. 368). In this regard, one might say that form follows distinction, since form is always double-sided, always difference (Luhmann, 1990: 10). Even if only one side is indicated, another non-indicated side always goes with it. Thus an “inner and an outer side” of the distinction emerge, and “both are the form”. The concept of form is a differential concept[6] that always includes a “double-sided form” (p. 10). The creation of artworks is operating with such forms. A distinction and indication triggers a process in which connections of form are reworked by crossing the boundaries of the first form (p. 14). A first accidental distinction makes it possible to investigate what happens on the other side when something is added to the first side (p. 11). But there must be a “fit”:



The specificity of the forms of art is due to [the fact that] the determination of one side does not keep completely open what shall happen on the other side. It does not determine the other side, but it withdraws the determination of the other side from [sheer] arbitrariness. Whatever happens there, must “fit”. (Luhmann, 1995: 189)

This process goes on until the reciprocal restrictions of the forms enter into each other. An object becomes an artwork in the process through which the forms, of which it makes use, increasingly reduce the domain of possibilities to the point that “the forms close circularly, reciprocally comment each other, and confirm that with which one had started” (Luhmann, 1995: 62, 63). Through connections of form, the artwork arises as a “reworking of accident into necessity dependent on accident”. After the “accident” of the first distinction, the work controls its own production and transforms the artist into an observer. The dependence of necessity on the initial accidents is, on the other hand, what the work of art owes its individuality (Luhmann, 1990: 11).

The perception of an artwork, too, is based on an observation of connections of form. If the finished work is to be observed as a work of art, the observer must decipher the “structure of distinctions of the work” (Luhmann, 1995: 70). Communication through art must take place by means of the distinctions internal to the artwork itself. The information is “externalised in the work” and the Mitteilung of the information “is given by [the] artificiality” of the work (pp. 89, 70). To understand art is to understand that this is the case. Such communication is communication by means of sensation, which is rather peculiar to art, since sensation generally is not communication.[7] Further, communication through sensation does not imply consensus, neither does communication through language. What is important in this respect is that the distinctions of form in the artwork ensure that the communication between the artist and the perceiver of art does not take place at random (p. 76). The work of art is, then, in itself a network of distinctions (p. 63). But, as part of a differentiated system of art, the artwork is also part of a more comprehensive network of communication. The work only emerges as an artwork through a “recursive networking with other works of art and with [...] verbal communication about art” (p. 90). The autopoietic system of art thus consists of two aspects, communication through works of art and communication on works of art.

### **The Function of Art as *Weltkunst***

As an autopoietic system, the system of art not only has to (re)produce its elements in its own communicative network but also has to perform a non-substitutable societal function. Modern society is functionally differentiated not only in the sense of being divided into interdependent species of labour but also in the much stronger sense of being differentiated into non-substitutable autopoietic systems which take care of one and only one societal function (Luhmann, 1995: 215ff). Modern society is organised according to “the primacy of one-function systems” (Luhmann, 1987: 116). In this regard modern art functions as “*Weltkunst*”, world-art (Luhmann, 1990: 15). By “world” Luhmann means “all that exists”. From a differential point of view, however, all that exists cannot be observed. For any observer (observing system) *Welt* is always differentiated into system and environment (*Umwelt*), and the unity of this differentiation is unobservable for the observer. *Welt* is the concept of this unobservable unity of difference. A unity of difference may be observable for another observer operating by another distinction, but then unobservability moves to the unity of this new distinction which takes over the function of the “blind spot” (Luhmann, 1990: 15). As the blind spot of any observer, *Welt* is “*Welt after the Fall*” (Luhmann, 1984: 284).

In what sense, then, is art *Weltkunst*? This cannot mean that the world as an undifferentiated unity is directly observable in art, since there is no such “thing” as an absolute world (“*Welt schlechthin*”) for any observation. As the unity of the “unmarked state” prior to observation (Luhmann, 1990: 15), the world never turns up in observation, not even in all observations taken together. But it goes along with all observations as their blind spot, remaining “transcendentally presupposed” (p. 20). As the artist reworks the connections of form, the unobservable unity of one differential form is made visible by another form which has its own unobservable side. In this sense the artwork is a making visible of the invisible on the condition that “the invisible is preserved” (p. 14). The artwork, then, is *Weltkunst* in the sense that it “makes the world visible and invisible”. The artwork indicates that as soon as one form



becomes important then there also emerge other possibilities based on other forms, that the “world will only show itself in distinctions of distinctions”, that is, “never” (p. 20). By pointing at other possible forms while at the same time being part of the world, the artwork lets “the world of the also possible appear in the world” (p. 39). Being a “reworking of accident into necessity dependent on accident” (p. 11) the artwork at the same time indicates that “also in the realm of only possible order can be found” (Luhmann, 1995: 236). The *artwork* implies that the world is always possibly something else (as the unity of some other distinction). In the medium of the sensual (painting, sculpture, music) or of the imagination (literature) art creates within reality a fictional reality, splitting the world into an imaginary and a real reality. Art realises a “doubling of reality”, providing a position from which “something else can be determined as reality” (p. 229-30).

So, the function of art in modern society is to create realities within reality and to show that reality could be ordered otherwise, a function that lies in “the demonstration of compulsions of order in the realm of the only possible” (p. 238). Such ordering may be multiple and may include high degrees of freedom, which corresponds to the condition of modernity. What is significant, however, is that art makes “the unavoidability of ordering as such” visible (p. 241). Like science and religion, art makes “the invisible visible” (Luhmann, 1990: 14), but not in the same way. Art neither competes with science for a better observation (p. 40), nor with religion in making visible something transcendent (Luhmann, 1995: 229). Even though art may function as religion, the function of art as art is not to make an unobservable God observable in the world. Art embraces the invisibility of the world, that there is no outside to observe it. Art “explicates the world from within” (Luhmann, 1990: 45), or, art is immanent in the world, which is also one reason why Luhmann avoids concepts as “the sublime” (Lyotard) in the context of art. Such concepts transform the reciprocal closure of the forms into a “divinatory event” and replace the observation of the form-order (“Formordnung”) of the work, turning the form-order into something arbitrary, which only the concept can account for as necessary. Yet, being itself an ordering of forms, the work of art does not need such “further labelling” (Luhmann et. al., 1990: 66). Because it is immanent, art cannot be understood through descriptions borrowed from religion (Luhmann, 1990: 45). Only as immanent *Weltkunst*, that is, only as a network of distinctions of form, art constitutes a non-substitutable function in modernity. Observed through other distinctions (such as those in Bourdieu’s *Distinction*) “art is not observed as art” in a sociological way, with a concern for “that which in social respects characterises the access to the world through art” (p. 21).

### **The Objecthood of the Artwork and the Materiality of Mediators**

Regarding art as an autopoietic network and the artwork as a network of distinctions, the materiality of the object is not decisive. The reciprocal specification of forms does not spring from the material properties of the medium or from the purpose or utility of the object (Luhmann, 1995: 62). Objects become artworks because of the reciprocally restrictive distinctions of forms. Works cannot exist, of course, without materials and artists, their biographies and struggles of interest, but such “structural couplings”<sup>[8]</sup> between the system of art and its environment are not what makes an artwork an artwork (Luhmann, 1995: 131). The artwork and the artist have to exist materially for communication through art to take place (p. 86), but that is not what constitutes the communication. The “material realisations” of artworks are excluded from “art as a communications-system”; they are “resources” for the communicative system but not the communication itself (p. 131f).

Only the “objecthood” (Objektheit) of an artwork counts within the system of art. Objecthood and objects are repeatable designations without counter concepts, but they are demarcated against everything else; they are “forms with another side that stays undetermined”. An object is a concrete object precisely on the condition that its unity is not determined. In order to analyse an object, one has to specify its unmarked other side (p. 80). Objects are conditioned on observation (p. 56); the reiteration of a distinction and an indication are what gives them their stability. What is significant is, therefore, not the object’s material substance or stability. To claim this would only be one way of observing it. The durability of objecthood comes from the repeated use of the same distinction, from the reiterated distinction of the object from everything else. Stabilised objects “give themselves” through “the recursive application of communications to communications” (p. 81). The material thing may be short lived, situations



may vary, but the object can keep its identity as objecthood because it is communicatively determined by the single distinction of being different from everything else (p. 82). Such objects, or, in Serres' terminology, "quasi-objects", can retain both variation and recognisability in changing social constellations. The objecthood of the object is determined by the fact that the "social field of regulation always already is thought of as being part of its sense as object". As an object, objecthood is the object of sensation. The meaning to be sensed, however, is not the material substantiality but the "social regulations" (p. 81). Art is produced in the realm of the sensuous by means of the fixation of forms in things (or sequences of events). The "form-decisions which are let into the things is a guarantee of the possibility of observing observations at the same object" (p. 124). So, even if the material substratum is important for the object, it is not the guarantee of the objecthood of the object, which can only be granted by the distinctions of form.

Following Mead and Serres, Luhmann emphasises that stabilised objects have a "time-binding function" (p. 80), which is more important for the stabilisation of social relations than social contracts and communicative consensus (p. 81). Communicative co-ordination orients itself "by things, not by grounds", and, in this, the identity (*Selbigkeit*) of the object replaces the accordance of meaning (pp. 125, 124). For Hennion and Latour (1993), too, things are decisive regarding the stabilisation of social relations. But there is an important distinction to observe in this context. For Luhmann the materiality of the artwork is part of the environment of the art system. One cannot have an autopoietic communicative system that consists of "marble and bodies, thoughts and communication, paper and printing ink" (Luhmann, 1995: 131f). He may be right about this, but for Hennion and Latour this claim implies that the conception of sociality as communication and differentiation must be questioned. Human sociality is a sociality that includes material things as well as humans, and this "collectivity" (Latour, 1993: 107) consists of linkages between elements, which are communicatively incommensurable from the point of view of communicative systems theory. Things interacting with human interaction "localise" human interaction by "framing" it into sequential, "complicated" interaction in contradistinction to the "complex" sociality based on the simultaneous presence of a multiplicity of variables found among simians and baboons. Simultaneously, things render action "global" by mediating the links among actors, which are absent for one another in time and space. Paradoxically, then, it is things that make human interaction specifically human. What is specifically human is "sharing" sociality with things (Latour 1996b: 233-35).

The social sciences traditionally have explained the relation between human sociality and things in three ways, Latour argues: as tools, as infrastructure and as projection screens. None of these perspectives present the social as something shared between humans and things. First, as tools, things are the faithful transmitters of social intentions. Second, as infrastructure, things establish and interconnect a material base for the flow of the representations and signs of the social world. And third, as projection screens, things function as the carriers of signs and symbols of social status or as fetishes, i.e. as things that are conceived of as acting socially while their action really stems from the human sociality itself (Latour 1996b: 235f). There is, however, a fourth possibility, which implies "accepting a certain dose of fetishism" (p. 236), namely the understanding of things and humans as mediating one another. Contrary to intermediaries, which function perfectly in so far as they disappear in the mediation and let the mediated pass without interruption, and contrary to the fetish, which distorts and hides, the mediator is "active and productive" (Hennion 1997: 12, 14). It performs something by itself, and this performance cannot be reduced to the effect or distortion of something else. A mediator is never "exactly the cause or the consequence of its associates", of other mediators (Latour, 1996: 237).[9] The performance of the mediator is an "event" (p. 237), which is partly "causa sui" (Latour, 1996b: 88), partly mediated by other mediators.

As an event, the doing of the mediator is action. "The idea of mediation or event enables us to retain the only two characteristics of action that are useful, i.e. the emergence of novelty together with the impossibility of ex-nihilo creation" (Latour, 1996: 237). This concept of action separates the concept of the actor from relations of cause-consequence and human intentionality. An actor is anything that "lets/makes happen", an actant in the semiotic sense (Gomart & Hennion, 1999: 226). An actant can be both human and thing, "literally can be



anything provided it is granted to be the source of an action" (Latour, 1996c: 53). Hennion and Latour use as an example the puppeteer surprised by the behavior of his puppets. The relationship between the puppeteer and the puppet can be explained as a "causal" relation, in which force is merely "transmitted". This is, however, misleading. "Why make puppets, if everything is in the manipulation except the illusion. Why pass through the small figure?" Yet, if the puppet is conceived of as a mediator, then the pattern of explanation changes. The mediator is an "event which disturbs what comes in and what goes out. Speak to a puppeteer and he will tell you about what his puppets make him do" (Hennion & Latour, 1993: 21. Cf. Latour, 1994: 601 and 1996: 237). It is decisive regarding mediation that the event stems from material heterogeneity. It emerges from the process through which "the passage through another matter, another figure, modifies the relations of force" (Hennion & Latour, 1993: 22). What is translated through mediation is modified. The objectivity of objects in mediation is, then, no longer founded in Luhmann's communicative objecthood but in things, and this should be taken literally. The durability of the mediating thing is its material durability, its weight regarding the stabilisation of social interaction is its literal weight (Latour, 1996: 230, 235, 236).

In Luhmann's world, too, the event is a significant concept; a communication is an event in time. If another communication is not linked to the event, then communication disappears. Communicative systems are systems of events that are recursively linked together in time, observed from the distinction between future and past (Luhmann, 1995: 37). What is new is a distinction in time, the signal of a "transition from an unmarked to a marked state of the world" (p. 55). Hennion and Latour, however, would argue that such an event is possible only if material heterogeneity intermingles with the difference between future and past. As an actant, the mediator makes a difference as to what it mediates. It is, at the same time, also associated with that which it mediates. The mediator itself is mediated and it generates new mediations. "When one acts, others proceed to action" (Latour, 1996: 237). There is, then, no original non-mediated action and no first operation of a distinction as in Luhmann's world, only mediators of mediators. The action of the actant is always distributed and shared with other actants (p. 237). In so far as network means such a distribution and the concept of actor refers to that of the actant, the mediator is simultaneously a network and an actor, an associated event. "Actor and network [...] designates two faces of the same phenomenon" (Latour, 1996c: 15, 18f), an actor-network, or perhaps more precise, an "event-network" (Gomart and Hennion, 1999: 225).

### **Mediation and Artwork's Work**

Works of art emerge and are perceived through a multiplicity of human and non-human mediators, and they are themselves such mediators. As a mediated mediator, an artwork of course can be an association of "marble and bodies, thoughts and communication, paper and printing ink" (Luhmann, 1995: 131f). The mediation of art invites two central questions related to artworks: how is their production and reception mediated, and how do they themselves work as mediators? While the first question points toward a de-differentiation of art (in contrast to Bourdieu's and Luhmann's differentiated modernity), the second hints at the possibility of a re-differentiation, with a focus on the specific ways in which artworks do their mediating work differently from other "types"[10] of mediators.

Regarding the first question as to how artworks are mediated let us dwell on Bourdieu's concept of the field of art. From a mediator point of view, this concept theorises a relational network occupied by mediators between subject and object, but in a way that is distorted by the theory of fetishism and belief (Hennion, 1993: 123). Further, the network of the field primarily relates human mediators. Except for great artists with a strong influence on the restructuring of the field, humans seem to operate more like intermediaries for structural relations of force than as mediators. Likewise, non-human mediators show up more as finished works than as material means for the production of works. One may thus wonder how the field of art is stabilised without non-human mediators. If, however, the field re-includes both human and non-human mediators, a different picture emerges.

Due to its allographic nature, music is a paradigmatic example regarding mediators in art; it has to be executed, i.e. mediated.[11] One can, for instance, ask where music is: in the score,



in the instruments, in the musicians, in the concert hall, in the recording...? Music is, of course, the association of these and many other mediators. One cannot find “a limit beyond which music is only music, the work finally a closed object”; the music itself is a mediation (p. 380). Only by its mediators music can have any durability (p. 297). One cannot, regarding music, play the work of art against the mediators. Mediators also have a vital role regarding the differentiation and struggle between genres. Some mediators are more central in some genres than in others. To be schematic: the score is central in classical music, the community around instruments is central in ethnic music, the media are central in pop music. Often, musical controversies are controversies about mediators, e.g. reciprocal accusations of deployment of the wrong mediators. “A necessary instrument for some is for others the means of putting music into the service of other interests—the market, technique, the spectacle, consumption”. Adherents of each genre of music naturalise their own activity, while they readily (in a sociological way) reduce others to the interests of producers, production processes, or to the illusions of the believers or the fetishism of the consumers (p. 301). Music, like art in general, is polarised into rival domains of purity and popularity. These domains may seem to be distant from one another, yet a system of mediators can account for inter-connections. Thus, a geography of the domains drawn by the distribution of types of mediators (the scene, the instrument, the score, the disc...) can show subterranean connections among the domains (p. 303). Consequently:

There is not on the one hand variety theatres, on the other serious music; commercial musics, caught in the object relation which fixes them, stereotypes them and transforms them into fetishes, and true musics, which live above the death of their objects. There are as many discs, media, instruments—and [as much] idolatry of human stars—in classical music as there are active mediators, discipline of representation, sacralisation of objects—and self-submission of fans to abstract genres—in the variety theatres and rock. [...] Music-for-the-public, or music-for-the-music. [...] Each of these opposed forms borrow from the other. (Hennion, 1993: 314f)

Such analyses provide a more sophisticated understanding of the networks of fields than Bourdieu's approach can do, and achieve this without losing the sight of oppositions. Turning now to the second question of how the work of art itself works as a mediator, Latour seems to claim that what specifies mediation in art in contrast to mediation in science and religion is that there is no (narrow) specification. The specific quality of mediation in art is the non-hierarchical multiplication of mediators. In a certain way this resembles Bourdieu's claim that the necessitation of the artwork in the “mediations” of the field intensifies the aesthetic experience. Latour argues: “The more I read about the intermediary steps that make up the picture of the Night Watch, the more I may like it. Constructivism adds to the pleasure, going, so to speak, in the same direction, toward the multiplication of mediators” (Latour, 1998: 423). There is no need for a “stable hierarchy” of mediators in art; on the contrary, the speciality of art history is to deploy “mediations without threatening the work itself—l'oeuvre—” (p. 422).[12] However, Latour also seems to claim that artworks' work as mediator may resemble mediation in religion. Such mediation is person-making or, rather, presence-making, re-sensing the event of presence through the redirection of attention. Presence, “by the very passage of time, is always lost” (p. 434). Presence is an event that disappears in time if another presentation is not presented. The repetition of the sentence “I love you” has, “when uttered rightly”, i.e. with a right verbal gesture (“the trembling of the voice, the tone”),[13] the “virtue of putting both the speaker and the listener in the presence of one another again and anew” (pp. 428, 435). In a parallel way, religious works of art worthy of the denomination do not represent stories from the Bible or a transcendent God; they redirect attention once again towards the presence of life. Seeing such works, in the right way, mediated by adequate knowledge, is “no longer the accessing of a substance beyond the present setting, but being designated now, here, in the flesh, as someone receiving freely the gift of life anew” (p. 431).

The redirection of attention toward presence is accomplished by the work of art through “cracks”, “shaking”, “trepidation” or “discrepancies of the visual display”; in renaissance art, for instance, this occurs through cracks in the perspectival organisation of the picture (pp. 432, 430, 436). This effect of the artwork can be seen as its presence-making gesture. There is no point in looking beyond or beneath such gestural redirection of attention. The message is the gesture, the enunciation redirecting attention away from some informative content. Further



questions only lead into a spiral of mediators that redirect the sight further, to further messengers, like angels.

Religious mediators, Latour says, resemble “slightly, but only slightly” the mediators of arts: there is no stable hierarchy in the spiral of religious mediators (p. 435f). But one wonders whether this is the whole story about art and religion. Religious paintings without a gestural quality lack not only theological but also artistic values, “as if mediators of different sorts supported one another and the art ones refused to sit where their person-making brethren has been excluded” (p. 433). Furthermore, even the iconoclasm of modern art shares in common with religious painting the avoidance of information transfer to be able to redirect attention to “what really counts” (p. 432). Why this fit between the mediators of art and of religion, if not because of a close family-resemblance? Hennion suggests, more frankly, that we should “listen to the theologians” in order to understand works of art as mediators:

The mediation which has been theorised by the theologians, the one of grace or plenitude [...] is the one that musicians know: the instrument, the score, the playing itself, the ‘presence’ of the interpreter on the scene [...] all these necessary links [...] are producers of music, all supported one by the other, for making, at times, the music appear in the middle of us. The theological knowing, forgotten, incomprehensible for moderns, of the presence-mediation contra the absence-mediation, that is the ordinary bread of musicians [...] we don’t search for objectivity in music, but for grace. (Hennion, 1997c: 13)

This is not to posit an identity between religion and art but, rather, an argument for the adequacy of a convergent vocabulary to “talk about our presence at a reality”. A vocabulary, which is adequate to the invisibility of its object, and which can recognise that “mediation is active and productive, it makes the music”. A vocabulary, which considers music not as an external object; music “only exists in us, if it transforms us, transports us, moves us”. We do not use artworks, we put ourselves “at their service”, i.e. at their listening; art lovers enter a “relation of accepted subjection, in which the work [...] veritably acts its taster” (p. 14). To accept subjection to the artwork’s gesture, to its redirection of attention, oscillating “between active and passive”, “letting oneself be swept away, seized by some thing which passes” (Gomart & Hennion, 1999: 243, 227, 224), abandoning power to the objects and suspending the self; this all brings us back to fetishism. What we have here is the acceptance of “a certain dose of fetishism” in practice. Which is very much like the deliberate, the decided fetishism Bourdieu wanted Mallarmé to universalise. The lucid *illusio* of the ordinary art lover.

### **Conclusion: Artworks’ Networks**

“A certain dose of fetishism” is not a recipe which Bourdieu would like to accept. To be sure, one can in the field of art find institutionalised rituals and self-confirming circular networks of belief and consecration, which can be diagnosed as fetishism. Bourdieu wants to liberate the enjoyment of art from fetishist belief, which implies that a lucid *illusio* and a deliberate fetishism is possible. Bourdieu can only find such lucidity and deliberateness among some elitist artists and, in a certain sense, in his own science of works of art. The necessitation of the artwork precisely is an “active submission” to the singular necessity of the work. Here lucidity is provided by research. Then he postpones the universalisation of a deliberate fetishism beyond elitist artists and the science of works of art to a more rational future, while, for now, reasonable people can fight for it. But the lucid *illusio* is already here, universalised among art lovers; Bourdieu just cannot find it. The reason seems to be the fear of fetishism, scholasticism, intellectualism, and a still missing exploration of the implications of the claim that “everything is social, form, style, writing”. An integrated science of artworks, which can regroup various disciplines focused on art, is likely to lead to a re-grouping of the components that enter the sociological definitions of the social. Bourdieu is critical of the intellectualism and scholastic fallacies of approaches focused on decoding and deciphering art, but he ignores that such approaches may contribute to the understanding of the way mediators do their social work. The implication of which is that sociality is something shared with things. Once this step is taken, the paradox of a deliberate submission to objects disappears.

Both Bourdieu and Luhmann are sociologists of a differentiated modernity and both see the autonomisation of art as the autonomisation of the form. Through differentiation as an



autonomous field or an autopoietic system, art becomes “essentialised” as form. Except for some remarks on the difference between literature and science as rhetorical forms related to *illusio* (Bourdieu, 1992: 59ff, 455ff), Bourdieu does not have much that is sociological to tell us about form as form. Curiously, and contrary to Bourdieu’s basic epistemological position, the concept of form seems to be imported, without problematisation, from artistic discourse or other disciplines. Only the forces and restrictions of the field, working towards the purification of art as form, seem to be sociological within the science of artworks. The theory of art as a fetishistic system of belief seems to function as a barrier: the creation of form disappears in the circular creation of the creators. But if form as form is social then it should be theorised sociologically. This is what Luhmann can deliver without creativity and form disappearing into belief and fetishism. The differentialist theory of observation and communication even can account for such “fetishistic belief” as the submission of the artist to the form-development of the work of art and the submission of the perceiver to the “deciphering” of the structure of form-distinctions of the work.

Despite the similarity between Bourdieu and Luhmann concerning form, much of what for Bourdieu remains within the artistic field, belongs, for Luhmann, to the environment of the system of art. Bourdieu’s extended field of artistic production can by and large be considered as a part of Luhmann’s environment, because demands from the environment (economic, taste) function as barriers to the reciprocal fitting of forms into necessity dependent on accident. With the extended field thus relegated to the environment, Luhmann’s observation of art as communication through art seems to be strongly “anchored in high modernity’s understanding of art which conceptualises the work of art as an autonomous form, emerging through the play of the inner law of the form and the free will of the artist” (Groys, 1996: 161). Bourdieu might argue, even if he himself seems committed to the same understanding, that Luhmann’s commitment is an exclusive one, and as such stands more as a stake in the game of art than a sociological theory of art. Further, even taken as a theory of art in the restricted field, Luhmann’s is a narrow theory. As a theory of communication through art and on art, it is not about force, conflict and the divisions of the field, but restricts itself to what Bourdieu calls “space of possibles” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 103f).[14] However, in this limited sense, Luhmann’s theory can be regarded as the “missing link” in Bourdieu’s theory in so far as Bourdieu also is committed to modern purity.

Luhmann’s exclusion of the materiality of the object from the system of art is of course in line with this modernist narrowness. As Groys emphasises, if materiality were allowed, one would find the outside of art within the system of art itself as its “dim space”, in which all possible power struggles and intrigues take place, and in which the “materiality of the artworks opens the possibility of dealing with art as with non-art” (1996: 163f). Bourdieu does not take this possibility seriously either, reluctant as he is because of the fear of fetishism to extend the ingredients of the field to non-human actors. In this respect, Bourdieu’s and Luhmann’s works are indeed symptomatic of modern social theory regarding its difficulties in dealing with material objects. The inclusion of materiality opens up for a complexification of the networks of the field (and a loosening and de-structuralisation of the concept), in which the pure and the impure mix, and, as a corollary, the modernist stance becomes decreasingly plausible. To add, whereas for Bourdieu any eventual religious aspect of art as a fetishised belief should be fought by a *Realpolitik* of reason, and whereas Luhmann insists that the invisible *Welt* of the *Weltkunst* is immanent, not religious, Hennion and Latour are much less reluctant towards religion. Religious forms of knowledge may be informative about art. For Bourdieu “everything is social” implies that there is nothing transcendent, and the same goes for Luhmann regarding *Welt*. For Hennion and Latour, however, the point is rather that the distinction transcendence/immanence is a product of mediations, not a point of departure, and in this sense irrelevant. They are, so to say, better Spinozists in that eternity and immanence are one.

To end with, let us go back to Lyotard’s art-commentary, to his distinction between art and cultural objects, and the intransitively transiting work of art. As against such a common enemy Bourdieu, Luhmann and Hennion/Latour suddenly unite. Against Lyotard’s internal-external divide, Bourdieu would argue that the idea and practice of prolonging the work of art in commentary is not outside but part of and conditioned by the field of art (1992: 471). The practice of creating artworks “for commentary and by commentary” (p. 421) is produced in the



field of art. The separation of commentary and field is a misrecognition of this sociological datum, and the source of many scholastic fallacies. Luhmann would hold the view that Lyotard's commentary is thoroughly social and part of the autopoietic system of art as communication on art or even through art.[15] Hennion and Latour would maintain that Lyotard merely associates yet another mediator with the work of art. As to the intransitively transiting work of art, Bourdieu would link this universality to the necessitation of the work in the field. If there is something absolute about it, it is a historical absolute founded in the historical transcendental of the field. Luhmann would argue that what is transiting intransitively is precisely the socially constructed work, which, as *Weltkunst*, always has blind spots open to further observations, or commentary (Luhmann, 1995: 71). Against Bourdieu, yet recognising the fecundity of necessitation, Danto argues that historical necessitation cannot account fully for the future of the work. "[T]he work's power is present in it however much or little we may happen to know about the field [...] There are autonomous experiences with art, which does not entail that art itself is autonomous" (Danto, 1999: 216f). Here mediators come to help. Bach's work surely transits intransitively across historical epochs. How? By a multiplicity of mediators (cf. Hennion 1997b: 420-27). So, strong arguments multiply against Lyotard's salvation of the work of art from the network. The work, rather, is a network in networks, a mediator among mediators. It is precisely this notion of the mediator, the actant, that "allows the types of relations between elements in a network to proliferate far beyond the usual sociological terms such as influence, power, exchange, domination, conflict, or strategy" (Gomart & Hennion, 1999: 226). The recognition of actants as being different from actors opens up a range of possibilities not considered by standard social theories and makes it possible to find types of mediators in discourses other than those of the social sciences. Paradoxically, however, Lyotard precisely delivers a contribution to this reticular understanding of art: the artwork as gesture.

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[1] On Bourdieu as a theorist of modernisation see Lash, 1990: 239ff.

[2] “The relation to the sacred, whether of a religious or an artistic nature, is only one particular—and limited— case of the enchanted or fetishistic relation to the social world, which is the initial and primitive form of the experience of the world” (Bourdieu, 1983b: 8).

[3] On necessitation see further Bourdieu, 1986, Bourdieu et. al., 1993: 910-14 and Karsenti, 1995.

[4] “Communication [...] is a genuinely social (and the only genuinely social) operation” (Luhmann, 1997: 81).

[5] Communication “differentiates and synthesises its own components, namely information, Mitteilung and understanding” (Luhmann, 1992: 24).

[6] And Luhmann a philosopher of difference (see Luhmann, 1984: 26).

[7] “Art makes sensation available for communication” (Luhmann, 1995: 82).

[8] Luhmann’s concept for an autopoietic system’s adaptation to necessary conditions in the environment without such conditions operating directly in the system (see Luhmann, 1997: 100ff).

[9] Neither is, according to Bourdieu, the habitus exactly the cause or the consequence of action or structure. One may therefore pass from Bourdieu to the perspective of mediation by “generalising the mediation of habitus to all actants” (Latour, 1994: 601).

[10] “..we have to consider heterogeneous associations of mediations plus the types of mediations that group or gather the entities in completely different aggregates” (Latour, 1998: 428).

[11] The same holds for plastic arts, and increasingly so, as they have become more and more performative (allographic). This may seem paradoxical at a time when music is striving towards “objectivity” in electronic forms (cf. Hennion, 1997c: 147-151).

[12] Similarly, Baecker states that “art can place any distinction at disposal” (1990: 100).

[13] On a similar notion of gesture in Wittgenstein, see Albertsen, 2000.

[14] The space of possibles is the space of the “objective potentials” for action in the field as they are perceived by the actors (Bourdieu 1992, p. 326).

[15] Luhmann’s theory of communication has certain parallels to Lyotard’s (see Luhmann, 1995: 37).