

Nathaniel A. Rivers

Rhetorical Theory/Bruno Latour

*Enculturation*

Episode Two: “Attitude” Transcript

*Music begins: Sigur Ros, “Svefn-g-englar”*

*Sliding title: Rhetorical Theory / Bruno Latour*

*Title Slide: Episode Two: “Attitude”*

*Block quote:*

In the newly emerging paradigm, we have substituted the notion of collective—defined as an exchange of human and nonhuman properties inside a corporate body—for the tainted word “society”. (Latour, *Pandora's Hope* 193)

*Slow pan over image of bubbles on oil.*

Narration: Latour’s project can be described in many ways. In this episode, I am going with “escaping the double bind of science and politics while holding on to the two Greek inventions: demonstration and democracy.” One thing Latour is thus up to in books such as *Pandora's Hope* and *Politics of Nature* is to imagine the methodological implications of *collectives*, Latour’s third way past either *nature* or *society*, which are exclusionary, either/or realms.

*Slow pan over image of bubbles on oil.*

Narration: In *Pandora's Hope* Latour describes the five different ways in which humans and nonhumans associate in collectives. The first is *translation*, which is the work of articulating humans and nonhumans. The second is *crossover*, which is the exchange of properties between humans and nonhumans. The third is *enrollment*. Enrollment is the seducing of nonhumans into the collective. The forth, *mobilization*, is

putting these seduced nonhumans to work, which produces unintended effects. And the fifth is *displacement*: how collectives move once they take shape.

*Slow pan over image of bubbles on oil.*

Narration: As a social scientist, Latour is interested in tracing the intellectual moves (or the analytical or inquiry moves) of tracing such collectives. What I'd like to suggest in this episode of Rhetorical Theory/Bruno Latour is that rhetoric has something to offer to this move. Whereas previous episodes have looked at what Latour has to offer rhetoric, this episode looks at what rhetoric might have to offer Latour. And what rhetoric has to offer Latour in this work is its focus on attitude.

*Block quote:*

But even then (in my *Grammar of Motives*) the term "attitude" for *quo modo* [how] did not quite come clear. If it had, my Pentad would have been a Hexad from the start. (Burke, *Attitudes Toward History* 193)

*Slow pan over image of bubbles on black surface.*

Narration: Following Burke, I argue that what Latour is after is a change in *attitude*, in mode, in attunement. Latour wants to maintain important distinctions but he wants to do so differently, with a new attitude. This is why Latour, I think, writes the way that he does and as much as he does: he wants souls; he wants to change the way we move through the world.

*Slow pan over image of small bubbles on blue and green surface.*

Narration: Rhetoric, more than any other discipline or field of study (talk about old metaphors) is uniquely suited to study the production and circulations of attitudes. Attitude for Burke is incipient action. Attitude for Burke, as well, is the positioning between symbolic action and nonsymbolic motion. It is where we are at; it is how we are positioned. So whereas Latour positions the work of collectives as a largely intellectual pursuit, rhetoric would add an attunement to attitude. Not simply what we do, but how we go about doing it.

*Slow pan over image of clear bubbles orange surface.*

Narration: Latour, finally, is not against drawing lines between humans and nonhumans or between matters of fact and matters of concern—he simply wants to draw lines differently. This is not simply an abstract intellectual task, but an embodied, attitudinal task. Again, as Burke reminds us, it's not just what we do but how we go about doing it. And that is best defined in terms of attitude. And attitude is precisely rhetoric's playground.

*Block quote:*

The task of today can be summed up in the following odd sentence: Can we learn to like scientists as much as politicians so that *at last* we can benefit from the Greeks' two inventions, demonstration and democracy? (Latour, *Pandora's Hope* 265)