



On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods (Science and Cultural Theory)

Bruno Latour

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On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods continues the project that the influential anthropologist, philosopher, and science studies theorist Bruno Latour advanced in his book *We Have Never Been Modern*. There he redescribed the Enlightenment idea of universal scientific truth, arguing that there are no facts separable from their fabrication. In this concise work, Latour delves into the “belief in naive belief,” the suggestion that fetishes—objects invested with mythical powers—are fabricated and that facts are not. Mobilizing his work in the anthropology of science, he uses the notion of “factishes” to explore a way of respecting the objectivity of facts and the power of fetishes without forgetting that both are fabricated. While the fetish-worshipper knows perfectly well that fetishes are man-made, the Modern icon-breaker inevitably erects new icons. Yet Moderns sense no contradiction at the core of their work. Latour pursues his critique of critique, or the possibility of mediating between subject and object, or the fabricated and the real, through the notion of “iconoclasm,” making productive comparisons between scientific practice and the worship of visual images and religious icons.

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