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Latour Reading Response

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You know what they say, “When one door closes, another one opens.” Well, that saying is not always true. In Bruno Latour’s article “Where are the missing masses?”, he discusses the concept behind the invention of the door. The point that Latour is trying to make throughout this piece is that there is a missing link to the moral laws of society that make all humans behave properly. So, what can be done to instill a universal knowledge of the “right” way to do a task so that life will be easier for all? Latour says in his piece that in order to balance our own accounts of society, we must look at non-humans to fulfill certain needs. Latour then explains the concept of the door. In my opinion, and before I read this piece, the concept of the door seemed to me to be a simple one. A door is a barrier in a hole in a wall that allows us to move freely from one area to another, without letting everything have access to move freely between the hole in the wall. Without a hole in a wall, there would be no way to get in or out of an area. However, on that same note, with a hole in a wall, anyone and anything can pass through. With the concept of the door, there are limitations as what can pass through the hole in the wall. But alas, there is a problem, as Latour states, with the invention of the door. How can we be sure that people would know how to use the door properly? When the door was first invented, people had to be taught how to use it. To teach society how to use the door would take time and energy, without a guarantee that people would grasp the information fully. So instead, one person was taught how to use the “door”, and performed the task for all who came through. Now, I could go on into more detail about Latour’s description of the sequence of events preceding the invention of the door, but I do not believe that is what his intention of this article is about. The point that I think Latour is secretly trying to make in his article is this: we, as living, functioning humans, take for granted the simplest of devices in our world. Even as technology and society are advancing, we expect others to do things that we are too lazy to do ourselves. There is a lack of initiative among groups of individuals that should be cause for alarm. Saying that, I must give credit to those individuals who do take all their time, money and effort to find solutions to problems ranging from “how to close a door” to the grandest of problems such as global warming and the cure for cancer. We can create “non-humans” to do certain tasks that we find are unsuitable for “humans” to do, but that raises the question of what is the real value of a human life? I predict that in the next 50 years, computers and robots will be able to do everything that a living human can do. What will the need for human beings be then? Are we taking too much of an advantage of technology, or are we simply trying to find ways to make our lives easier on a daily basis? Moral of the story to me is that instead of relying on other humans/objects to do something for us, we should simply learn how to do a task ourselves, and be thankful that we have that knowledge to do so. But one must always make sure to “not let the door hit us in the ass on the way out.”

\* “Door” quotes credit given to my mother, who had a lot of “door” puns to give when discussing this article with her.