

(...) If, for instance, a social difference is ‘expressed in’ or ‘projected upon’ a detail of fashion, but that this detail—let’s say a shine of silk instead of nylon—is taken as an intermediary transporting faithfully some social meaning—‘silk is for high-brow’, ‘nylon for low-brow’—then it is in vain that an appeal has been made to the detail of the fabric. It has been mobilized purely for illustrative purposes. Even without the chemical difference between silk and nylon, the social difference between high- and low-brow will have existed anyhow; it has simply been ‘represented’ or ‘reflected’ on a piece of cloth that has remained wholly indifferent to its composition. If, on the contrary, the chemical and manufacturing differences are treated as so many mediators, then it may happen that without the many indefinite material nuances between the feel, the touch, the color, the sparkling of silk and nylon, this social difference might not exist at all. It is this infinitesimal distinction between mediators and intermediaries that will produce, in the end, all the differences we need between the two types of sociologies.(...)